

## HOLY SPIRIT | BÉNÉDICTINE LIQUEUR IS FINDING ITS WAY BACK ONTO SAVVY COCKTAIL MENUS.

**B**énédictine, the zesty herbal liqueur whose recipe has been guarded for five centuries, is finding new life at bars and lounges around the U.S., where bar chefs are pouring it into elegant cocktails, surprise combos and promoting it as an after-dinner snifter.

Invented in Normandy in 1510 by a Venetian monk as an elixir, Bénédictine is comprised of 27 ingredients, including tea, saffron, myrrh, cinnamon and lemon peel.

The appeal is in the added layer it offers classic and creative cocktails. "Even a small amount of Bénédictine adds an extra dimension to a drink," says Jeff Hollinger, bartender and manager at Absinthe in San Francisco. "Slightly herbal and slightly sweet, it pairs well with Tequila and so many spirits." Hollinger is fond of livening up any brown spirit with a touch of the liqueur—such as in his Manhattans.

Consider the Sidecar, too, says mixologist John Myers of The Grill Room in Portland, Maine. "Bénédictine adds a sultry, sexy zing to the classic sour drink. It's a matter of texture—the liqueur gives that indefinable tactile zing." Classic "monk-y" drinks such as the Quiet Nun, he adds, entice with a silky blend of equal parts Bénédictine, triple sec and cream.

At Café Adelaide and the Swizzle Bar in New Orleans, cocktail chef Lu Brow uses it in the Singapore Sling because "though the drink has 10 other ingredients, Bénédictine imparts the key aromatic element."

The liqueur's upstart younger sibling, B&B (a brandy and Bénédictine mix), is also creating a stir in modern bars, where bartenders are reviving classic cocktails with a splash of the product. Drier on the palate than Bénédictine, B&B blends well with rye, gin and whiskey. Comprised of a 60-40 blend of Bénédictine and Otard brandy, the drink was created in 1927 by a bartender at New York's '21 Club and then produced commercially at the Bénédictine Palais in Normandy.

Bénédictine's versatility is evident in Monk's coffee, a judicious blend of Bénédictine and coffee that has long marked the after-dinner table. But now that tea is all the rage, Tim Lacey, bar manager at the Asian-inspired Spring restaurant in Chicago, serves up Bénédictine or B&B in oolong tea.

—DEBORAH GROSSMAN



PHOTOS LEFT FAR NIENTE