



FOR THE SANGRIA DE CERVEZA AT BULLA GASTROBAR IN DORAL, FLORIDA, LA RUBIA BEER IS MIXED WITH ST. GERMAIN, LEMON JUICE, AND PEAR PUREE.

## Beertails

BY BETH DEMMON

Beer cocktails are trending as demand for low-ABV, but well-crafted beverages rise.

**PEOPLE AREN'T DRINKING** fewer alcoholic beverages in the U.S., but they are drinking less alcohol. Low- to no-alcohol cocktails are becoming regular bar menu additions, and session beer—beer that's generally 5 percent alcohol-by-volume or less—has risen sharply in popularity over the past few years.

"People just can't seem to get enough low alcohol in large quantities," says David Holstrom, beverage consultant for Altabira City Tavern in Portland, Oregon. That's led bars and restaurants to not only emphasize lighter beer options, but also come up with creative ways to satisfy customers' need for inspiration without inebriation.

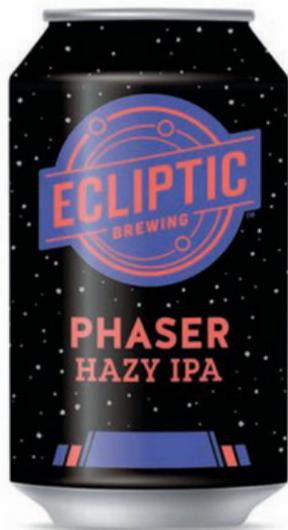
Enter the beer cocktail, which Caleb Clark, bartender at Lolo's Surf Cantina in Miami, predicts will be the biggest trend in cocktails in the next year or two.

The crossover concept isn't completely new.

Mexican-inspired drinks like micheladas—light beer mixed with lime and tomato juice and garnished with spicy seasonings—and Margavezas or Cervezaritas—blended margaritas with a bottle of beer added—have been mainstays on menus for decades.

Habitual cocktail drinkers and beer drinkers often stick to their preferred spirit of choice, but beer cocktails have proved to be a valuable way to disrupt conventional ordering routines.

Long Thai, New York City-based bar consultant, describes beer cocktails as a gateway for both types of consumers. "It's a cool feeling when I get a guest who hates beer enjoying a beer cocktail, or someone who isn't into cocktails, but loves beer, enjoying the beer cocktail,"



SIPS APPEAL

Ecliptic Brewing Phaser Hazy IPA

Brewed with oats, wheat, and a special haze-creating yeast strain, Phaser is a seasonal beer back by popular demand. To craft a beer cocktail with it, John Harris, owner and brewmaster, recommends pairing Phaser's smooth mouthfeel and tropical essence with flavors like grapefruit, lemon, and ginger. For food pairings, he recommends seafood dishes like steamed mussels, fish tacos, or sushi.

6.5% ABV  
PORTLAND, OREGON

Thai says. "Some guests are surprised how beer can be tasty in cocktails."

Many bartenders opt to reimagine classic cocktails by adding beer. Sage Swink, sales director for Boulder, Colorado-based FATE Brewing Company, created the Belgian Manhattan. Swink has been experimenting with beer cocktails for almost a decade and took second place in the 2017 Best Petrus Cocktail Competition for her Gose-Rita, created with FATE owner/cofounder Mike Lawinski. She prefers to put beer spins on well-known cocktails so people will be more willing to try them.

But Clark at Lolo's Surf Cantina prefers to introduce guests to beer cocktails that won't drum up any associations. "Americans aren't used to having beer in their cocktails yet, so creating fully new beer-based cocktails will forbear the urge to compare the cocktail to one that's going to taste totally different," he says.

Mainstream beer styles outnumber different liquor iterations, so there's generally no limit to what types of beer can or should be used in beer cocktails. Thai sees vast potential. "Any beer can be used to create a good beer cocktail. It really depends on how the person utilizes the beer."

Clark agrees to a point, turning to his experience as well as current trends to single out certain styles. "I recommend using IPAs or hefeweizens as a good starting place, but the world of beer is vast, so anything that

tastes full and interesting would serve as a great base," he says.

Chesapeake & Maine, Dogfish Head Craft Brewery's seafood restaurant in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, uses beer cocktails as an opportunity to stay on-brand with the parent company as well as a way to introduce visitors to Dogfish Head Distilling Company. Its sessionable SeaQuench Ale is the ideal backdrop for its Moscow Mule made with Dogfish Head gin. Combining all three concepts in one glass keeps profits in-house and captures the attention of completely different market segments in one fell swoop.

Will Duncan, director of hospitality at 16" on Center hospitality collective in Chicago, says he likes to incorporate beer into craft cocktails using unexpected, subtle ingredients like a sour beer syrup or hops-infused spirits.

"As awareness grows, we've seen demand increase. Our menu at Dusek's always features a variety of beer cocktails, and we'd absolutely recommend others play around with the category," Duncan says of the collective's beer-focused restaurant.

"As different types of beer emerge and people's palates evolve, we'll see beer used more and more often in cocktails," Clark says.

Swink shares his sentiment. "I think that you will see more and more beer cocktails popping up on menus," she says. "Bartenders are having fun with this new wave, and customers are more open to the idea as well." ■



LEFT: LOLO'S SURF CANTINA SERVES MEXICO CITY AND CHAVELA COCKTAILS, BOTH USING PACIFICO BEER. RIGHT: LONG THAI'S SMOOTH TALKER COCKTAIL.