



Kiddie Cocktails — They're Not Just For Breakfast Anymore

As almost any parent will attest, kid's menus are a lifesaver. They're loaded with entrées created specifically with young folk in mind. These menus empower kids and give them an opportunity to order food they like and in portions that they can easily handle.

Open up the typical kid's menu and what likely won't be within its pages are specialty drinks marketed exclusively to kids. If there are special food items for kids, why not offer them special drink choices as well? Why make them suffer with the usual selections of post-mix sodas and orange juice?

Well, the fact of the matter is that good things happen when an eating establishment looks to enhance the dining experience for kids by offering them special things to drink. Showing

consideration for kids generates loyalty in their parents, as well as, increases the odds that the whole family will want to return another night.

If generating good will isn't motivation enough, there's also the little matter of generating more profits. While most of these small-fry specialties retail for less than their adult counterparts, they deliver relatively the same amount of gross profit. All things considered, marketing signature drinks to the minor leaguers makes good sense.

Creating Classics For Kids

To kids, special usually means being served a great looking, great tasting concoction, served in a sensational looking glass that mom and dad wouldn't normally let them drink from at home.

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The realm of possibilities has expanded greatly since the days of the kiddie cocktails and Shirley Temples. The philosophical orientation is to create specialty drinks that will knock their socks off.

For example, consider the **Mel's Chocolate/PB/Nana Shake**. Start with a tall specialty glass with a 16-20 oz. capacity. Paint the inside of the glass with ribbons of chocolate mocha sauce. Place two scoops of vanilla ice cream, 4 oz. whole milk, a large, ripe banana, 1 oz. chocolate syrup and 2 tablespoons of creamy peanut butter into the blender. Thoroughly blend, pour into the painted specialty glass and garnish with whipped cream. There isn't a person under the legal voting age who can resist it.

So where to start? Here are some ideas that should help you create an Olympic class beverage program for our country's youth.

- **LEMONADE** — This great American beverage is a good starting point. Using flavored syrups you can feature an unlimited variety of flavorful, colorful combinations, such as: blueberry lemonade or strawberry lemonade. Two other creative options are to blend lemonade with sorbet and fresh fruit into a slushy drink or mix Hawaiian Punch with lemonade and ice for a novel specialty.
- **SMOOTHIES** — Kids love smoothies, as long as they don't know that they're drinking something borderline healthy. Smoothies need not be more complicated than blending juice, fruit, yogurt and ice together. For fun, blend in a few cookies as well.
- **THE SPIN DOCTOR OF DRINKS** — Frozen drinks are tall, colorful, delicious and extremely lucrative. There are scores of creative blended specialty drinks ideally suited for young people. For instance, starting with an alcohol-free

strawberry daiquiri or piña colada, add a banana, some vanilla ice cream, a few sweet strawberries and a healthy dash of chocolate syrup. The creation will be something they'll talk about in school.

Consider promoting a swirled blended drink for kids. Swirls are made by combining in the same glass, two blended drinks with different looks but complementary flavors. An excellent example is swirling together an alcohol-free raspberry daiquiri and vanilla milkshake in the same glass.

- **SODA DRINKS** — Looking at life from a kid's perspective, every restaurant that their parents take them to offers the same selection of sodas. Why not offer these future voters sodas with unusual flavors that aren't typically stocked like black cherry, root beer, vanilla or kiwi strawberry? These sodas can also be used to create fabulous floats, such as: Mandarine lime soda and lemon sorbet, vanilla soda and chocolate ice cream or cream soda and Cherry Garcia ice cream. Add a splash of a complementary flavored syrup flavor to push the drink into the exceptionally tasty range.

Don't overlook the enduring popularity of the root beer float and the Coke ice cream float. Also, Martinelli Sparkling Cider is a kid favorite. Serve it by the glass or use it as the base of a signature drink.

- **HOT COCOA AND CHOCOLATE MILK** — When in doubt, call on a kid's best friend—chocolate. Make hot cocoa something truly special by floating a scoop of ice cream on top with whipped cream and a sprinkle of shaved chocolate. Hot cocoa can also be served with

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a layer of frothed chocolate milk on top. Chocolate milk can be served as a tall, slushy specialty drink by flash blending with ice in a blender.

- **THE POWER OF PRESENTATION** — Sure these drinks need to taste great, but they also have to look spectacular. Market kid's drinks in tall, durable specialty glasses. Frozen blueberries

or grenadine are great sources for color and a few dashes of vanilla extract creates an irresistible aroma. The coup de grace is using a red vine licorice stick with its ends cut off instead of a straw.

Have fun and think like a kid. The drinks will be a smash hit with the kids and their parents, too.

Robert Plotkin is a judge at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition and the author of numerous books including the 5th edition of *The Bartender's Companion: The Original Guide to American Cocktails and Drinks*. To read more from Robert (and other members of BarMedia) visit his blog, barmedia.com/blog. You can reach him at BarMedia— 1-800-421-7179 or robert@barmedia.com.

The Original Guide to Alcohol-Free Beverages and Drinks

Don't miss out on this hot new category! Serve delicious, taste-tested, alcohol-free specialties to your customers and friends and enjoy low cost and great taste in the process. These recipes span the breadth of alcohol-free mixology and include: blended drinks, coffee, tea, and cocoa specialties; ice cream drinks; specialties made with lemonade, juices and sparkling cider. If that isn't enough, also included are reviews of the best products to use when making your creations

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