

Liqueurs Contribute Greatly To Your Financial Portfolio



If you're in need of a feather duster behind the bar, there's a fair chance your inventory isn't turning over quickly enough. Dusty bottles on the back bar are a dead giveaway that your carrying costs are needlessly high and your turnover rate is low.

Some beverage operations feature as part of their concept expansive back bars with a proportionately sizable selection of liqueurs,

brandies and exotic spirits. Under these circumstances a slow turn-over rate is considered acceptable. For others, carrying a limited offering of top shelf liqueurs is sufficient. In either case, a clear-cut plan on how to market your inventory is advisable.

Try to imagine operating a busy bar without liqueurs. You wouldn't be busy for long without

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products such as *Kahlúa*, *Bailey's Irish Cream* or triple sec. Consider what your business would be like with no *Amaretto* or *Grand Marnier*. With few exceptions, liqueurs are the essential flavor components behind most great cocktails and specialty drinks.

Staying ahead of the learning curve on liqueurs will likely have a significant impact on your business's profit picture. Selecting the right mix of liqueurs involves choosing among the classic proprietary brands, and the more recently released hits.

So if you've noticed a build-up of dust on the back bar bottles and are looking for a more viable remedy than the feather duster, consider the following marketing tips.

- **Float Programs** — For added value, give your clientele the option of enjoying their favorite mixed drinks with a nutritious liqueur float. For example, lace a Long Island iced tea with *Chambord*, a piña colada with *Midori*, *Kahlúa* or *Amaretto*, or a margarita with *Tuaca* or Grand Marnier. Better yet, serve the liqueur on the side in a sherry glass or Dutch cordial. It presents your clientele with the best of both worlds — they can sip some neat then mix the remainder into their drink.

- **Meltdowns** — For those aching to try out their blender, consider promoting **Meltdown Margaritas**, a novel spin on floating liqueurs. It's twist is that after the margarita has been blended and poured into a glass, the featured liqueur is drizzled on top. The liqueur slowly swirls its way down through the drink adding a marvelous flavor and creating a striking presentation. Top candidates for meltdowns include Chambord, Grand Marnier, Midori and *Goldschläger*. No need to stop at margaritas, though. Meltdowns are a dynamic way to enhance the presentation of scores of blended specialties. Consider a *Frangelico* meltdown piña colada, or a frozen Long Beach iced tea with a meltdown of amaretto. Liqueurs add color, enhance aroma, and help spike drinks with the most enticing flavors. It's a simple program loaded with interesting and profitable possibilities.

- **Martinis** — the martini is the most versatile of the classic cocktails, and is a natural for doctoring with a splash of liqueur. For example, a dash or two of *Godiva* in thoroughly chilled vodka is a **Chocolate Martini**, while *Di Saronno Amaretto*, *Frangelico* and vodka make the **Amber Skies Martini**.

- **Flavored Sparklers** — Champagne and liqueurs combine beautifully. The Champagne contributes effervescence and the liqueur adds the flavor. The new generation of Champagne drinks possess all of the necessary components for popular longevity and the majority of them feature liqueurs. The **Champagne Marseilles** is made with equal parts of Grand Marnier, Amaretto, *Stoli*, OJ and Champagne, **Pacific Rim** is a blend of Midori, peach schnapps and Champagne and the **Dry Arroyo** is a savory combination of *Chambord*, *Tia Maria* and Champagne.

- **Heat It Up** — Heat is one of a liqueur's best friends. Take for example the **Abbey Road**, a delicious blend of Chambord, Kahlúa, Amaretto and coffee, **Millionaire's Coffee**, equal parts of Kahlúa, Bailey's, Frangelico, Grand Marnier and coffee, and the **Foreign Legion**, a Cappuccino made with *Benedictine D.O.M.*, Frangelico, Amaretto, Brandy. Consider also the **Blueberry Tea**, a classy combination of Grand Marnier, Amaretto and hot tea and the **Irish Tea**, made with *Irish Mist*, Irish whiskey and hot tea. Also hot is mixing liqueurs with cocoa, such as combining Bailey's and *creme de banana* to make the **Jungle Milk**, and Godiva, *creme de menthe* and brandy to make the **Carte Blanche**.

- **Rate Of Return** — The longer your working capital sits in a bottle, the lower its rate of return. Track the depletion rate of your back bar items. From a financial perspective, products that take six months or longer to turn-over are costing you money. Unpopular, non-productive labels occupy valuable back bar space. Weed out brands that no longer sell and try your hand at marketing some fresh, new products.

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- **Changing Of The Guard** — Certainly not everything new is good. Sometimes what is trendy today is a dust-catcher tomorrow. However, of late we've seen the release of a bumper crop of up-and-coming liqueurs. New labels to watch include:
 - **St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur** — This artisanal, handcrafted masterpiece is made in the foothills of the French Alps from wild elderflower blossoms, St-Germain has a curvaceous body, and pronounced aromas of tart citrus, pears, and honey. Its floral-induced palate is expertly balanced, and features layers of light fresh flavors, including mango, rock candy and tangy grapefruit. The finish is long and satisfying.
 - **Clément Créole Shrub** — Long a favorite throughout the Caribbean, the exotic, highly aromatic liqueur is a blend of Clément silver and barrel-aged rhums that are infused with spices—including vanilla, nutmeg and cloves—fresh cane syrup and grapefruit and orange peels from Curaçao. Créole Shrub adds magnificent spicy, floral, and zesty orange notes to a cocktail. There's nothing on the back bar remotely like it.
 - **Domaine de Canton** — Made in the heart of the France, the small batch, ginger-laced liqueur is crafted with a blend of VSOP and XO Cognacs and museum-grade eaux de vie, which is patiently macerated with baby Vietnamese ginger, Tahitian vanilla, honey and ginseng. The remainder of its ingredients is a closely held secret. The liqueur is sublime and it adds delectably warm and spicy ginger notes to cocktails.
 - **Plymouth Sloe Gin** — Black Friars Distillery—producers of Plymouth Gin—has resurrected its legendary, traditionally produced sloe gin. The succulent ruby red liqueur is made by macerating Plymouth Gin with fresh sloe berries and a touch of sugar all according to the original 1883 recipe. The first taste will convince you this is how sloe gin is actually meant to taste. The liqueur has a generous bouquet of sliced plums and vine-ripened raspberries, and a lingering, pleasantly tart finish of honey and berries. Plymouth's sloe gin is still in national rollout.
- **Luxardo Maraschino** — Also experiencing a renaissance in the States, Luxardo Maraschino is an Italian liqueur distilled from Marasca cherries, honey and cherry pits. Although a frequently used ingredient in early cocktail recipes, maraschino never regained its pre-Prohibition prestige—that is until recently. Its resurgent popularity in part can be attributed to the rebirth of the Aviation, a classic gin-based cocktail that uses maraschino in its construction.
- **Solerno Blood Orange Liqueur**—Those looking for a taste sensation with a more contemporary orientation need look no further than Solerno Blood Orange Liqueur, a new ultra-premium from Sicily. Solerno has a bittersweet, citrus and spice palate that's tailor-made for modern mixology. It's so full and voluptuous you can use Solerno as the base of a cocktail, or in a supporting role as a modifier.
- **Cointreau Noir** — The liqueur is an enchanting blend of Remy Martin Cognac and the grande dame of liqueurs, Cointreau. Introduced this in 2008, Cointreau Noir has a rich amber hue, a satiny, lightweight body and an irresistible vanilla and fresh citrus bouquet. It's so precisely balanced that the spicy wood flavors of the Cognac and vibrant orange notes of the Cointreau are enjoyed simultaneously, and to the same lovely degree. It's a marriage that clearly works.
- **Rothman & Winter Crème de Violette** — This Austrian newcomer is a delectable elixir handmade from fine grape spirits and cane sugar macerated with wild Alpine violets. Like maraschino, it was once a mainstay behind American bars, and a required ingredient in many venerated classics. Crème de Violette is a delicate, yet memorable slice of heaven.
- **Agavero** — Those looking to inject more passion into their drinks should consider stocking up on Agavero. The liqueur is a blend of barrel-aged tequilas sweetened with the essence of Damiana, a wild flower indigenous to the highlands of Jalisco renown for its brilliant fragrance and aphrodisiac properties. The sultry import has a spicy floral bouquet, and a semisweet, herbal

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palate. Agavero makes a marvelous modifier in cocktails. It marries beautifully with a wide range of spirits and the lively peppery notes on its finish are unexpected and quite pleasant.

- **X-Rated Fusion** — In a trade where flavor rules supreme, handcrafted X-Rated Fusion from France is a liqueur that warrants consideration.

Its opaque, electric pink hue in no way prepares you for the artful seduction to follow. The liqueur is surprisingly light-bodied with floral and citrus notes and a luscious, tropical fruit palate. Attention-grabbing and delicious are good traits to possess.

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.



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