

Esquire

The Champagne
of boilermakers.



Ludlow Liquors'
Alta Vida:
Miller High
Life, mezcal,
sangrita, and a
baby-corn elote.
↓

THE BEST BARS

IN AMERICA, 2019

Twenty-seven places to grab a mighty beverage
Illustrations by **Kelsey Dake**

The Polynesian's
Commodore Daiquiri.



OAKLAND

CDP

• CDP—kitchenese for chef de partie, the chef's right-hand (wo)man—has equal reverence for food and beverage, which translates to a fun and refined night out. It is the successor to chef James Syhabout's two-Michelin-starred restaurant, Commis, just next door. While the cocktails are next-level, CDP has a particular affinity for grape-based spirits from France, perhaps the noblest efforts in a bottle. *What you're having:* The Dudognon Reserve cognac. 3861 Piedmont Avenue—Stephen Satterfield

PALM SPRINGS CALIFORNIA

THE CASABLANCA LOUNGE
AT MELVYN'S

• The last time I was here, a drunk lady was heckling the piano player. I was in heaven. The joint has since been "restored," but don't let that scare you off. Housed in the Ingleside Inn, at what used to be the *Variety*-by-the-pool winter getaway for everyone from Howard Hughes to Salvador Dalí, the low-desert piano bar still comes across as a sort of classy-sleazy Botoxed cabaret where you might guzzle ice-cold Stoli and listen to Burt Bacharach chestnuts hours before an asteroid obliterates the planet. *What you're having:* Don't get fancy, buster. Avoid confusion and ask for a dirty martini. 200 West Ramon Road—J.G.

A different kind of
floral drink.



PHILADELPHIA

HOP SING LAUNDROMAT

• Yes, the strict door protocol at Hop Sing (after you ring a buzzer by an unmarked grate in Chinatown) seems designed to annoy. But we have been inside owner Lê's hidden palace of bibulous delights, and we can assure you that it represents a gold standard of elegant sipping. *What you're having:* The Henry "Box" Brown (named after a slave who escaped to freedom by mailing himself from Virginia to Philadelphia in a crate) is a miracle of freshly pressed red grape juice and aged rum. 1029 Race Street—J.G.

PORTLAND OREGON

EXPATRIATE

• When you tire of minimalism, you crave the Marie Kondo-thwarting pleasure of maximalism: an aesthetic of plush overstuffedness that you associate with record stores and the libraries of Oxford dons. Expatriate excels in that realm of scattershot provenance and bohemian luxury. *What you're having:* The Kangaroo, a martini-style drink with a kick. 5424 NE 30th Avenue—J.G.

SAN DIEGO

RAISED BY WOLVES

• Sit by the fireplace in the mall liquor store. The wall rotates. You are now in what looks like an oil baron's fever dream of a grand bar: fountain, thrones, velvet. It's not all theater—the drinks have that luxe *je ne sais quoi*, too. Drops of Laphroaig poke through in a beet cocktail. There's a breeze of coconut in an Irish-whiskey drink. When you leave, the blinding lights of an Apple store shock you back to reality. What was that? Can we go back? 4301 La Jolla Village Drive—K.S.

A dive bar Raised by Wolves is not.





DRINK OF THE YEAR

THE (UPGRADED) DIRTY MARTINI

To purists, it's a martini that has been sullied by cheap olive brine. To its increasing number of bartender-admirers, it's a canvas for boozy umami masterpieces like the Mare from Le Sirenuse or the olive-infused vodka number from the Streamliner (shown here).



Sho 'Nuff from Pacific Cocktail Haven.

SAN FRANCISCO

THE LINDEN ROOM

• The Linden Room is a refuge. Pinched pearl-in-oyster-ishly at the back of Nightbird, where chef Kim Alter runs the kitchen, this eight-chaired cocktail pocket has the feel of a fortituous afterthought. But Alter applies high standards to every sip, personally juicing fruit by hand in the mornings. *What you're having:* Look for anything made with what's fresh and in season. 292 Linden Street —J.G.

PACIFIC COCKTAIL HAVEN

• Your negroni has a caramel undercurrent that comes from pandan cordial. Your Thrilla in Manila delivers the citrus snap of calamansi. Thanks to visionary Kevin Diedrich, who was born in the Philippines, PCH's menu is abloom with shiso and coconut, Thai tea and lychee. *What you're having:* The Leeward Negroni, in which an Italian count wanders through the tropics. 580 Sutter Street —J.G.

VERJUS

• You are in the shadow of the Transamerica building, but it might as well be Bar Brutal in Barcelona. Verjus, from chef Michael Tusk and beverage director Matt Cirne of Quince, brings a decidedly European hybrid, the wine shop/bar concept, stateside. Decadent conservas, house-made pâté and sausages, and natural wines = the good life. *What you're having:* A pét-nat, first. 528 Washington Street —K.S.

SEATTLE

LUCINDA GRAIN BAR

• "As far back as 800 B.C., the first distilled beverages were being made from grains and cereals," says the Lucinda website. "This was the beginning of what we know of as alcoholic beverages." Hey, when he opens a new place, Edouardo Jordan likes to go deep. The chef behind Seattle's award-stockpiling JuneBaby has a knack for providing warm hospitality that happens to include an ameliorative dose of education. Yes, you will drink and eat very well at Lucinda Grain Bar, but you might also accidentally learn something. *What you're having:* A rhubarb daiquiri. 2120 NE 65th Street —J.G.



File under: world's fanciest bourbon drinks.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

MAXWELL PARK

• I started off at the fire pits with a sparkling wine from Brazil, and things got even more esoteric from there. More than 50 wines are available by the glass at this neighborhood bar, all temperature-controlled in different zones, and you can have them in a half pour, so go ahead, get that Bolivian red. *What you're having:* A flight. Brent Kroll and his fellow sommeliers know how to pull together some glasses that will surprise even the most jaded. 1336 Ninth Street NW —K.S.

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS WEST VIRGINIA

THE GREENBRIER LOBBY BAR

• Walking into the Greenbrier's lobby is kind of like having the world's most civilized hallucination: The iconic Dorothy Draper interior—a supersized riot of flowers, stripes, checkerboard marble, zebra, and shocking pink—is breathtaking. You'll need a drink, and you'll get one at the tufted, forest-green horseshoe that is the Lobby Bar. Try a perfectly mixed Signature Bloody Mary or a Greenbrier 1808 White Sulphur Julep that, like everything else about this southern institution, is deliciously classic and over-the-top all at once. 300 West Main Street —Sadie Stein



Pacific Cocktail Haven gives new meaning to PCH.