

## Beverage Trends



### It's teatime at bars across America as mixologists experiment with high-impact flavors

**(Oct. 16)** - It seems as though I hear about a new fanciful flavor for cocktails almost every day, but one ingredient that has been adding a kick to alcoholic beverages nationwide — tea — does not contain alcohol at all.

In fact, tea is one of a number of new nonalcoholic ingredients that are being embraced by bartenders. It's now possible, for instance, to buy lavender-flavored simple syrup, and gingerbread syrup — a favorite of mine when I'm working with cognac behind the bar — also is available. And almost any nut you can think of is represented by a flavored syrup.

Again and again, mixologists and even liquor producers are calling on versatile tea to flavor their most creative concoctions.

There's green tea vodka and green tea liqueur on the market. There's a cream liqueur that tastes like chai — the spicy, milky tea from India. **Also, there's an intense liqueur made in California that's based on lapsang souchong tea. It's one of, if not the, most interesting liqueurs I have ever tasted.**

To take a look at who is using tea these days, we'll start out at the very trendy [Hotel Gansevoort](#) in Manhattan's Meatpacking District. There you can order a Tropical Peony Punch, made with tropical peony white tea and a tot of either rum or vodka. The drink is garnished with a peony, naturally.

Junior Merino, bar maestro at The Modern, also in Manhattan, created a pretty spectacular drink called Diversity using a base of manzanilla sherry, a little honey-flavored liqueur, and green-tea-flavored vodka for a recent cocktail competition. The drink made it into the finals.

In San Francisco, Kieran Walsh, bar manager at the [Solstice Lounge](#), a funky joint with great food that I visited earlier this year, used the aforementioned lapsang souchong liqueur to create Mamere, a bourbon-based drink that also involves bitters, simple syrup and kumquats.

And at [Stonehurst Manor](#) in North Conway, N.H., bartender Jeff Grdinich uses chilled chai, without the customary milk, to make a drink he calls Goody 2-Shots. In various other cocktails, Grdinich uses freshly brewed and chilled lapsang souchong and jasmine green teas.

Back in San Francisco, Alison Harper, bar manager at Prana, an Indian-fusion restaurant, collaborated with chef Jamie Lauren — hailed by the San Francisco Chronicle as a "Rising Star" — to create the Tea of the Gods cocktail. It's a mixture of black tea, lapsang souchong liqueur, tequila, fresh lime juice and agave syrup.

Finally, we return to New York to find a tea-infused drink called Cháfariz at [Alfama](#), a highly acclaimed Portuguese restaurant in the West Village.

No longer just a warm, calming beverage, tea has found new life as a delightfully unexpected element in high-impact cocktails at some of the country's trendiest spots.

E-mail the author at: [gary@ardentspirits.com](mailto:gary@ardentspirits.com)