



Bartenders are putting nutritious ingredients (like snap peas!) into their concoctions. Could drinking actually be good for you?

Blueberry
Lavender Mojito.
Recipe pg. 45.

To your health



or a lot of health-minded foodies, cocktails are the undiscovered country. At the grocery store or farmers market, we know exactly what foods we want—and what's good for us. But ask us, "What's your pleasure?" and many of us tend to fall back on uninspired college favorites loaded with sugar and artificial flavors. Well, recent research and a new wave of imaginative bartenders and chefs suggest it's time to start filling your highball glass with the same delicious, antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables you use in your kitchen. Even better, studies show that a little alcohol might

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make those healthy ingredients healthier and more easily absorbed.

"A 2007 study by Thai and U.S. researchers found that alcohol enhances the antioxidant capacity of fresh fruits, increasing their ability to scavenge free radicals from the bloodstream," says Breea Johnson, M.S., R.D., L.D.N., an integrative nutritionist and registered dietitian in private practice in Chicago. The discovery, which was made accidentally by researchers attempting to preserve strawberries and blackberries by treating them with alcohol, has generated a lot of media buzz, so to speak. Of course, no nutritionist, including Johnson, suggests you start downing more than one drink a day (see "Is Alcohol Good for You?" on pg. 44). But a new generation of mixologists are working hard to make sure that one drink is the healthiest and most delicious cocktail you've ever had.

"When I first heard the recipe for the Snap Pea Irinha, I thought the bartender was punking me," says Paul Abercrombie, author of *Organic, Shaken and Stirred: Hip Highballs, Modern Martinis, and Other Totally Green Cocktails* (Harvard Common Press). "But I was happily surprised by how well the sweetness of the snap peas played off the zip of the black pepper and the botanicals in the gin. Bizarrely tasty, refreshing and full of vitamins!"

Developed by Adam Seger of Chicago's Nacional 27, the Snap Pea Irinha was inspired by a visit to a Chicago farmers market. "I was amazed at how sweet the sugar-snap peas were," Seger recalls, "and I decided to do a sugar-free version of the Brazilian caipirina." Abercrombie sees the "green cocktail" trend as a logical extension of the whole, organic food movement. "If you prefer fresh, seasonal ingredients on your plate, why would you settle for less in your glass?"

That philosophy sits well with Maneet Chauhan, chef at New

Pear Lime
Chile Cocktail.
Recipe pg. 42.



Honey, a healthier alternative to traditional simple syrup, may help provide relief from seasonal allergies if it's made from the pollen of local flowers.

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In cultures where moderate drinking is more common than in the U.S., there tends to be a lower incidence of heart disease. But diets in those countries, such as France and Italy, tend to favor healthier fats and better-quality meat, and people overall appear to be more relaxed—taking long walks and afternoon naps.

York City's Vermilion, where she encourages a nutritional awareness and synergy between the kitchen and the bar. "Our food menu is all about the fusion of Indian and Latin cuisines, both of which use an incredible amount of fresh vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices," says Chauhan. "When you order a cocktail, you're getting a drink that's part of those traditions." Vermilion's cocktail offerings include the vodka-based Pear Lime Chile (made with jalapeño), Clementine-Cilantro Twist and the Ginger-Pomegranate Martini.

And are these so-called "green" concoctions actually good for you? "Yes, if you're comparing them with straight booze, or with sugary mixers or artificial sweeteners, which wreak havoc with your

blood sugar," says Johnson. "Snap peas are loaded with protein and fiber; chile peppers have capsaicin for digestion and circulation." But, as is always the case with alcohol, moderation is key. "Remember that the health benefits come from the nutrients in the produce and spices, not from the alcohol itself."

The unlikely bartender-as-nutrition-counselor paradigm has become more common these days. Vincenzo Marianella, bartender at Capo d'Oro in Santa Monica, Calif., puts out a lavish display of fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables sourced from Los Angeles' vibrant local farmers market scene. "It intrigues guests into ordering something they otherwise might not have thought of," he says.

If some of these vitamin-dense,

antioxidant-rich drink combos sound a little too unorthodox for you, consider one of Bridget Albert's favorite drink recipes. The author of *Market-Fresh Mixology: Cocktails for Every Season* (Agate Surrey) whips up a Spiced Beet Cocktail, whose very name has been known to put off even the most adventurous drinkers—until they take a sip. "I combine beet compote, tequila, mezcal, spices and lime," says Albert. "Beets protect against heart disease and cancer. And tequila? Well, tequila makes you want to dance."

So go ahead, dabble a little. Recipes from Adam Seger, Maneet Chauhan, Paul Abercrombie and Bridget Albert follow. If you don't drink alcohol, leave it out; virgin versions are just as tasty. >>

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Snap Pea Irinha

By Adam Seger, mixologist at Nacional 27, Chicago

For this recipe, you muddle lime and snap peas (grind with a pestle to bring out their distinctive flavors). Keep the pods and lime in the glass or strain.

- 1 lime cut into eighths, center pith discarded
- ¼ cup snap peas (more for garnish)
- 1 ounce agave nectar
- 1 ½ ounces gin
- Crushed ice
- Cracked black pepper

In a heavy rocks glass, muddle lime and snap peas until pods are crushed and the lime is juicy. Add agave and gin. (Strain if you prefer.) Fill with ice and stir. Finish with pepper. Garnish with snap peas.

Per serving: 254 calories, .03 g fat (0 g saturated), 1 g protein, 38 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 5 mg sodium

Pear Lime Chile Cocktail

By Maneet Chauhan, chef at Vermilion, New York City

The unusual note of jalapeño peppers in this drink comes from muddling two jalapeño slices and then garnishing with a sliced whole pepper on the glass.

- 2 slices of jalapeños (thin sections)
- ½ lime (in 2 quarters)
- 2 ounces agave nectar
- 2 ounces pear liqueur
- 2 ounces vodka
- Crushed ice
- Club soda
- Whole jalapeño (for garnish)

In a shaker, muddle jalapeño slices, lime and agave nectar. Add pear liqueur, vodka and ice. Shake well and strain into a tall cocktail glass. Top with club soda and garnish with a sliced jalapeño.

Per serving: 603 calories, <1 g fat (0 g saturated), <1 g protein, 92 g carbohydrates, <1 g fiber, 11 mg sodium >>

(Six to savor)

Some of the healthiest and tastiest cocktail mixers don't come in containers—you find them at the farmers market and spice store. Lynn House, bartender at Chicago's Graham Elliot says, "My philosophy is, 'Why should I mix top-shelf spirits with mediocre mixers?'" Our experts show you how to do the real thing with their favorite healthy cocktail ingredients.

Beet juice Taste before you cringe: Its distinctive flavor goes well with vodka, and the deep-red glow of the beets comes from the antioxidant anthocyanin, which helps rid the body of free radicals that have been linked to cancer and heart disease.

Carrot juice Famously packed with beta-carotene, fresh-pressed carrot juice is also a naturally occurring sweetener that pairs well with sour and bitter flavors. Try mixing with fresh ginger and Campari.

Cinnamon Research suggests the sweet yet slightly bitter spice, which goes nicely with rum, can help regulate blood glucose.

Honey A healthier alternative to traditional simple syrup, honey may help provide relief from seasonal allergies if it's made from the pollen of local flowers. Mixes well with rum, especially when it's hot.

Pomegranate juice Antioxidant-rich pomegranate juice is a popular source of color and fresh taste in cosmopolitans and martinis. A 2010 study published in the journal *Cancer Prevention Research* found that the ellagitannins plentiful in pomegranates may help slow or even prevent the growth of breast cancer cells.

Rosemary The pinelike notes of rosemary go well with other botanicals and honey, and the essential oils in this fresh herb help improve digestion and boost immunity.

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Snap Pea Irinha.
Recipe pg 42.

(Is alcohol good for you?)

Numerous studies have identified a correlation between moderate drinking (defined as one to two drinks a day) and a longer, healthier life. But to date, no study suggests what specific role alcohol plays in longevity. "In cultures where moderate drinking is more common than in the U.S., there tends to be a lower incidence of heart disease," notes nutritionist Breea Johnson. "But diets in those countries, such as France and Italy, tend to favor healthier fats and better-quality meat, and people overall appear to be more relaxed—taking long walks and afternoon naps." Most practitioners will not "prescribe" alcohol for any health condition and are careful to note that drinking more than one cocktail a day can do more harm than good to your liver and brain.

In addition, a recent study in California of breast cancer survivors found that drinking more than three alcoholic drinks a week could increase a breast cancer survivor's risk of recurrence by 30 percent. "We suggest that women with a history of breast cancer should consider limiting themselves to less than half a drink per day," says lead researcher Marilyn L. Kwan, Ph.D.

Blueberry
By Bridget
Fresh Mix
This cocktail
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Blueberry Lavender Mojito

By Bridget Albert, author of *Market-Fresh Mixology*

This cocktail calls for lavender syrup: Bring 1 cup water, ½ cup super-fine organic sugar and ¼ cup dried organic lavender to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook for about 10 minutes, then pour through a fine sieve into a sterilized glass container with a lid and refrigerate.

10-15 mint leaves

1 ounce lavender syrup

Juice of ½ lime

15-20 blueberries (3 or 4 for garnish)

1 ½ ounces white rum

Crushed ice

Club soda

Cocktail pick or toothpick

In a tall glass, muddle mint leaves, lavender syrup, lime juice, 15 blueberries and rum. Muddle just enough to combine flavors, being careful not to over-muddle (you can strain if you prefer). Fill glass with crushed ice. Top with club soda. Stir until well-blended. To garnish, place 3-4 blueberries on a cocktail pick. Serve with a straw.

Per serving: 176 calories, <1 g fat (<1 g saturated), <1 g protein, 18 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 8 mg sodium

Spiced Beet Cocktail

By Bridget Albert, author of *Market-Fresh Mixology*

This drink uses Albert's "fresh sour" mix, which is best to prepare ahead of time: Combine 1 cup hot water with 1 cup super-fine organic sugar and 2 cups fresh lemon juice (the juice of about 8 lemons). Refrigerate in a sterilized glass container with a lid.

1 beet, peeled and sliced

Juice of 3 limes

2 teaspoons organic brown sugar

Pinch of ground ginger

1 ½ ounces silver tequila

½ ounce mezcal

1 ounce "fresh sour" mix

Crushed ice

1 beet leaf (for garnish)

In a sauté pan, add sliced beet, lime juice, brown sugar and ground ginger. Cover and simmer over medium heat for about 10 minutes, or until beets are tender. Stir occasionally to keep from sticking. Remove the beets and let the remaining liquid cool. In a shaker, add tequila, mezcal, about 2 ounces of cooled beet liquid and the "fresh sour" mix. Add ice. Shake well. Strain into cocktail glass. Garnish with beet leaf.

Per serving: 257 calories, <1 g fat (<1 g saturated), 1 g protein, 32 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 36 mg sodium

Pom-aniac

By Paul Abercrombie, author of *Organic, Shaken and Stirred*

If you don't have the shaker (a pint-size metal container) or cocktail strainer called for in this recipe, you can use any covered container and fine mesh strainer.

2 ounces organic pomegranate juice

1 ½ ounces organic vodka

½ ounce freshly squeezed organic lemon juice

½ ounce agave nectar

Splash of Campari

½ ounce maraschino liqueur or Cointreau

Ice cubes

Club soda or sparkling water (to top off)

2 thin rounds of cucumber (for garnish)

Organic lemon twist (for garnish)

Pour the pomegranate juice, vodka, lemon juice, agave nectar, Campari and maraschino liqueur into an ice cube-filled cocktail shaker. Shake vigorously for 30 seconds, then strain the mixture into an ice cube-filled glass. Top off with club soda and garnish with cucumber and lemon.

Per serving: 252 calories, 0 g fat (<1 g saturated), 1 g protein, 32 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 9 mg sodium ✕

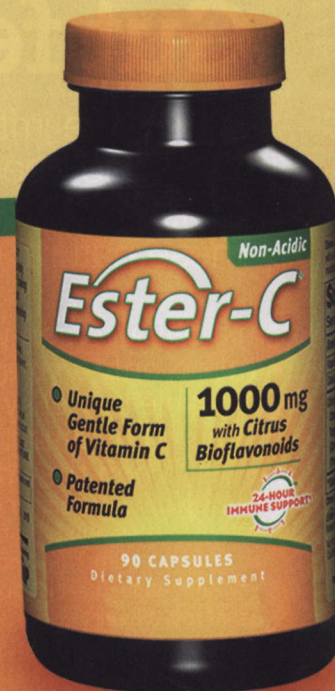
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¹Moyad, M. et al. *Adv Ther.* 2008, Oct; 25(10): 995-1009.

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