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Drinking Decisions: Twentieth-Century Marketing and Tradition in New Orleans Alcoholic Beverage Trends

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**DRINKING DECISIONS:
TWENTIETH-CENTURY MARKETING AND TRADITION
IN NEW ORLEANS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE TRENDS**

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by
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ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty years, the national beverage industry adapted to a growing interest in historic cocktails and classic recipes. Among the many rediscovered classics, New Orleans' own century-old recipes, like the Sazerac cocktail, garnered praise, national attention, and consumer embrace – even legislative endorsement. However, for most of the past forty years, the city retained a reputation as a place for wild abandon doused in alcoholic beverages of mediocre pedigree. Rather than dismiss the evolution of drinking trends from elegant, classic recipes to indulgent, high-proof booze-bombs as an inherent choice of local drinkers, this paper explores evidence in historic menus and the scholarship in New Orleans tourism marketing. From a careful examination of bar guides, advertisements, newspaper articles, menus and reviews, it is apparent that New Orleans did not eschew its appreciation for traditional, old-time cocktail customs. Rather, two parallel stories unfold; locals continued to demand beverages from previous generations, while business owners recognized the need to accommodate visitors wanting to experience the city's liberal relationship with liquor. Though the local community is not always harmonious with the dependency on tourism, local bar operators continually offered traditional, historic drink options while also catering to the needs of tourists who chose New Orleans for the escapist experience the city marketed.

Keywords: New Orleans, cocktails, drinking, Prohibition, tourism, alcohol

Introduction

Churning neon daiquiri machines whirl under fluorescent lights while pop music bounces off the historic brick facades of Bourbon Street in the French Quarter. On the same street, behind the closed doors of venerable restaurants like Galatoire's and Arnaud's, bartenders deftly craft nineteenth-century cocktails like the Sazerac or Absinthe Suisse. A convivial drinker in New Orleans has the freedom to choose between a garish, boozy beverage, or an elegantly tailored tippie made from a century-old recipe.

Images of New Orleans are a study in contrast. With historic buildings, streetlamps, ancient oaks, and horse-drawn carriages, preserved neighborhoods such as the French Quarter and Marigny epitomize a city frozen in time. Alternatively, screaming Spring Breakers wearing cheap, plastic Mardi Gras beads, and guzzling beer from half-gallon buckets while hanging from balconies belie a city steeped in tradition.

New Orleans only half-heartedly participated in the "noble experiment" of nationwide Prohibition, and the city retained its reputation for inventive alcoholic drinks while gaining notoriety for its abundant brothels and speakeasies. Over the course of the twentieth century, journalists lauded New Orleans' restaurants, nightclubs and grand hotels, while a simultaneous narrative rebuked the city's descent into debauchery. The romantic tale of civilized drinking paralleled sloppy over-indulgence. Along the way, restaurateurs, nightclub owners, bar and tavern operators capitalized by offering the steadfast classic concoctions that locals and discerning visitors demanded, but business owners also adapted to supply tourists with increasingly faster and boozier options.

Though it is easy to dismiss the proliferation of bars with whirling drink machines

and oversized to-go cups as the commodification of vice encouraged by a handful of opportunistic business owners, the evolution of drinking trends in New Orleans occurred on two parallel paths: tradition and nostalgia assured classic, pre-Prohibition cocktails retained their place on menus of elegant establishments, while business and civic leaders promoted the city to a tourism market that increasingly demanded potent and disposable drinking options to accompany their imitative cultural experiences. As a city with a cosmopolitan heritage and an enduring culinary legacy that includes alcoholic libations, New Orleans accommodates both the traditional drinker and the vacationing celebrant.

A History of Drinking: New Orleans as the Wettest City in America

To understand New Orleans' paradoxical relationship with alcohol, it is important to examine the cultural history of drinking during the city's formation. Founded in 1718, the French Catholics who settled New Orleans brought with them European drinking habits. Religious rituals meant wine was imbibed at nearly all meals, as well as at Catholic Mass. Early New Orleanians needed wine for the important religious ritual of communion, but ensuring an adequate supply from Europe was difficult. In response to the scarcity, colonists resorted to the use of local fruits to produce unsatisfactory wine, which they needed to consume quickly, since the climate was unfavorable for wine storage.¹ The heat and humidity of Louisiana was not conducive for growing grapes, so imported wine became a valuable commodity and sign of wealth. Fortified wine from Europe, such as sherry, port, and Madeira could survive long voyages, storage time, and inconsistent Louisiana weather. Protestants with conservative views of alcohol settled

¹ Elizabeth M. Williams and Chris McMillian, *Lift Your Spirits: A Celebratory History of Cocktail Culture in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 9-10.

the New England colonies, but the European Catholics who settled in Louisiana embraced wine and, notably, storage-stable spirits such as imported brandy and cognac.

Through the 1700's, taverns, inns, saloons, and cabarets abounded citywide.² However, the city officials grew concerned for the public's relaxed social relationship with liquor. A city ordinance from 1751 stipulated that six specific taverns could serve only travelers, boarders and sailors – and only in moderation. These businesses were subject to penalties if caught serving soldiers, “Indians [or] Negroes.”³ As New Orleans expanded in size, “the growing availability of rum, brandy, wine, and locally made beer also allowed per capita consumption to increase.”⁴ With sugarcane growing abundantly in the Caribbean, rum became the easiest spirit to obtain through the port of New Orleans. Common spirits distilled in New Orleans homes included tafia, a crude predecessor of rum made from pressed sugarcane juice. In 1764, the Governor of Louisiana reported to King Louis XIV, “The entire colony is stupefied on tafia.”⁵ Once the Louisiana sugar industry developed, rum made from the molasses of sugar production became a state product.

Changes in the city's demographics also informed its relationship to alcohol, while several mechanical advancements modernized drinking in public bars and taverns. The German immigrant population increased to 10% by 1850 and they demanded beer.⁶

² Richard Campanella, *Bourbon Street: A History* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 23.

³ Williams and McMillian, 16.

⁴ Ibid, 18.

⁵ Elizabeth Pearce, *Drink Dat New Orleans: A Guide to the Best Cocktail Bars, Neighborhood Pubs, and All-Night Dives* (New York, NY: The Countryman Press, 2017), 12-13. Jack D.L. Holmes, *New Orleans Drinks and How to Mix Them* (New Orleans, LA: Hope Publications, 1973), 11.

⁶ Jeremy Labadie and Argyle Wolf-Knapp, *New Orleans Beer: A Hoppy History of Big Easy Brewing* (Charleston, SC: American Palate Publishing, 2014), 24.

Popular barrooms of the mid-1800s, such as Joseph Zeigler's Beer Saloon on Royal, offered imported beer on ice in addition to nightly music.⁷ Sicilians and Italians immigrated to the French Quarter where they could "practice traditional urban trades" and became grocers, running fruit and vegetable stalls.⁸ While the Italians preferred wine, they also brought with them a taste for Italian liqueurs and café drinking customs.

Steamboats on the Mississippi were the perfect vehicles to export New Orleans' drinking culture, in addition to the spirits and beer produced in the city. Notably, a French Quarter bartender named Martin Wilkes Heron created a bottled drink in 1874 he named *Cuffs & Buttons*.⁹ Introduced to the world at the 1884 World Cotton Exposition, the mixture sweetened bourbon whiskey with an infusion of fruit and spices. Later, he rebranded his concoction Southern Comfort.¹⁰ Though locally-made brands gained popularity, wine continued to dominate the tables of the affluent, who preferred it during meals. The laboring class preferred beer and simple mixed spirits.¹¹

The 1860s were a crucial time of development for cold drinks. In 1868, the first commercial facility to manufacture ice opened in New Orleans. Though New Orleans built storage facilities to house imported ice shipped from the north, the refrigeration and beverage industry changed with the opening of Louisiana Ice Works on Tchoupitoulas Street. Two years later, Pelican Ice opened, and continues to operate as the oldest ice manufacturer in the country. In 1869, the George Merz's Old Canal Brewery installed refrigeration, changing the production output of beer for the city and sparking a

⁷ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 80.

⁸ Scott S. Ellis, *Madame Vieux Carré* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 10.

⁹ Jennifer Adams and Phillip Collier, *Phillip Collier's Mixing New Orleans: Cocktails & Legends* (New Orleans, LA: Philbeau Publishing, Inc., 2007), 31.

¹⁰ Williams and McMillian, 102.

¹¹ Oliver Evans, *New Orleans* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 161.

competitive race to modernize industrial brewing facilities.¹² By 1890, the formation of the New Orleans Brewing Association consolidated the major New Orleans breweries making it difficult for Northern competitors to buy them out.¹³ When the temperance movement began to affect policies throughout the state, breweries survived by making “near-beer” with an alcohol-by-volume measurement in the legal range.¹⁴ However, European spirits such as brandy and absinthe remained a dominant influence on beverage choice throughout the city, and several famous cocktails received praise and endorsements from by travelers.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a growth in popular mixed drinks made with local spirits. In a 1903 guide to restaurants, the writer closes by recommending three drinks: absinthe at the Old Absinthe House, the Ramos Gin Fizz, and the Sazerac, “a drink calculated to inspire you with a wholesome respect for its ingredients and I may say that when you have once formed its acquaintance, you will be sure to renew it.”¹⁵ Interviewed in 1912 for *The Daily Picayune*, bartender Fred Roses stated:

The old liqueurs have given way to brandy. Apricot brandy is in demand just now. We haven't much call for chartreuse, vermouth, absinthe or any of those old French drinks, although we fix 'em up occasionally for people who take them out of curiosity. It's whisky straight for the hard drinkers these days – cocktails and fizzes for the rest. New Orleans is the greatest place in the world for mixed drinks.¹⁶

¹² Labadie and Wolf-Knapp, 35.

¹³ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁴ Joy Jackson, “Prohibition in New Orleans: The Unlikeliest Crusade,” *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 19, no.3 (Summer 1978): 262.

¹⁵ “New Orleans Its Unique Viands Where To Get Them,” October 13, 1903, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (General), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁶ “Typical Drinks Of New Orleans - Some Special Concoctions That Have Made It Difficult for Orleanians to Keep Sober,” *Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: June 16, 1912.

In 1912, the ban on absinthe served as a trial run for the temperance movement. Sensational propaganda in Europe that demonized the distilled spirit gained traction in temperance publications throughout the US. In Switzerland and France, murder, domestic violence, civil disobedience, and crime were all linked to intoxication through absinthe. These international headlines made a powerful case to policymakers for the restriction of specific spirits. Though not widely known or consumed in the rest of the United States, absinthe was a ubiquitous ingredient in New Orleans cocktails, café rituals, and cooking. “New Orleans, boasting a Gallic tradition for high living, and having as one of its chief attractions the famous bars where many celebrated alcoholic concoctions were born, was not expected to welcome a ban on liquors.”¹⁷ Early drinking establishments were not just bars and saloons. Coffeehouses were also places to drink, and the European style of café drinking often involved an absinthe prepared with a traditional fountain drip of water over a sugar cube. The ritual was restricted, and imported absinthe prohibited when “the guardians of the public’s health...decreed that the ‘green eyed monster’ that lurks in the depths of the thin glass must be conquered.”¹⁸ Foreshadowing the eighteenth amendment, absinthe became the first casualty of the temperance movement.

Storyville’s closure also warned of impending Prohibition and was “regarded by many residents to be an example of unwarranted interference with local customs.”¹⁹ Designed by Sidney Story in 1897 to quarantine and tolerate prostitution, gambling and drinking, the district created a backbone of nightlife in the downtown area. Businessmen

¹⁷ Robert Hartsell Russell, “New Orleans and Nation-wide Prohibition as Reflected in the *Times-Picayune*, 1918-1920,” (master’s thesis, Louisiana State University, 1956), 3.

¹⁸ “Announcement that absinthe will no longer be sold in the United States,” August 4, 1912, Louisiana Works Progress Administration Collection, State Library of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA, <http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.org>

¹⁹ Ellis, 20.

entertained themselves and visitors with a sanctioned neighborhood of vice. However, in 1917, after the U.S. entered World War I, the War Department saw Storyville and “didn’t like the inevitable intersection of soldiers and sailors with whores.”²⁰ Despite stationed guards to prevent military men from entering Storyville, the sex trade thrived. Soldiers disguised themselves in civilian clothes to visit the brothels, and eventually the city of New Orleans submitted to federal pressure, closing Storyville in November 1917.²¹ Inadvertently, the closure of Storyville encouraged nightlife proprietors and madams to move deeper into the French Quarter, where New Orleans women began to move about freely. Ironically, reforms against Storyville encouraged an urban space for both genders and paved the way for a nightlife tourism industry.²²

When Prohibition finally passed in 1919, the city entered economic survival mode, attempting to maximize as much commerce as possible before legal restrictions.

During the month before the Eighteenth Amendment became law, the whiskey exports from the port of New Orleans increased phenomenally. In order to allow distillers and exporters to get their stock out of the country before such traffic became illegal, the federal government extended the deadline for these shipments from January 16 to January 26. Between mid-December and mid-January, 99,991 gallons of whiskey and 1,332,380 gallons of alcohol sailed downriver from New Orleans docks headed mainly for South America.²³

Though Prohibition greatly impacted shipping and receiving commerce, it did not drastically alter the cultural drinking patterns of New Orleans. Many breweries remained operational, making malt products and soft drinks; in addition, pharmacists continued to

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918 – 1945*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 105-106.

²² Ibid, 110.

²³ Jackson, “Prohibition in New Orleans,” 266.

prescribe alcohol as a remedy for an assortment of ailments. Also, because of the city's long history with home distillation, many households continued to produce spirits for personal consumption. After the codification of the eighteenth amendment, enforcement of the law was left to individual states. Louisiana passed the Hood Act in 1921, allowing for the transportation of liquor for personal use. It also made home-brewing and private consumption legal in one's residence.²⁴ However, micro-production of liquor remained illegal and arrests quintupled in New Orleans during the first three years of Prohibition.²⁵

Suffering business-owners and drinkers were not the only people resistant to Prohibition. Religious leaders welcomed the return of low-proof options like wine. An anonymous author, signed only as "A Catholic," praised "President Wilson for urging the repeal of light wines and beer. He added that Cardinal Gibbons had been outspoken in favor of all makes of liquor and this action was a great victory for the cardinal and the majority of the Roman Catholic Church, who stood in favor of wines."²⁶

Restaurants and bars that enjoyed popularity and prominence before Prohibition tried to circumvent the law by serving behind locked doors in newly established private clubs. Enforcement raids continued so "other taverns disappeared in to office buildings behind strong doors to become speakeasies, or, as called in New Orleans, 'blind tigers.'"²⁷ Since enforcement by the police department was sporadic, the underworld of bootleggers and illegal distilleries began to thrive. One federal agent recorded that it only took him thirty-five seconds to receive an offer of liquor upon arrival to the city.²⁸ As

²⁴ Ellis, 32.

²⁵ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 103.

²⁶ Russell, 92.

²⁷ Ellis, 32.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

New Orleans developed the reputation as the wettest city in America, the city cultivated a new type of tourism. People travelled from across the country because they knew they could imbibe on a vacation.

Public Service: Sharing New Orleans Nightlife 1933-1941

Though the Volstead Act made it technically illegal to sell alcohol, the continuation of drinking traditions in New Orleans strongly outweighed enforcement of the law. While daily raids of producers of liquor occurred through the 1920s, police frequently turned a blind eye to peddlers and consumers of booze, especially in supper clubs and the private clubs of carnival krewes.²⁹ Instead, “marijuana and other drugs became an obsession with New Orleans’ law enforcement... [and] police eagerly cooperated with federal narcotics agents.”³⁰ Illegal gambling also kept enforcers busy, but it was also a source of income for the city through tax revenue and tourism dollars. “Exploitation of the budding tourism industry extended to controversial New Orleans attractions such as horse racing. ... During the 1930s, however, city leaders decided to harness gambling for the public good.”³¹ The Fairgrounds held a day to benefit the Welfare Committee, and politicians recognized the new source of revenue.

In the spring of 1933, shortly after Mardi Gras, an amendment to the Volstead Act re-legalized beer, and breweries pumped out gallons to the joyous public. The New Orleans Commission Council issued licenses for beer and wine in April, then later voted unanimously to issue permits for hard liquor.³² On April 13, 1933, nearly half a million gallons of beer were sold within hours, and police arrested eighteen people between noon

²⁹ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 103.

³⁰ Ellis, 39.

³¹ Stanonis, 78-79.

³² *Ibid*, 80.

and midnight for public intoxication.³³ The celebration featured on the front page of local newspapers, but when full repeal of the failed experiment ended Prohibition in December, the response in the city was anticlimactic.³⁴ Several reasons explain the lack of fanfare for the reintroduction of high-proof liquor in New Orleans bars, restaurants and nightclubs. First, December 5, 1933 fell on a Tuesday rather than on a weekend when more drinkers typically celebrate. Also, for several weeks prior to repeal, “dry agents stopped making raids on speakeasies,” and officials instructed the city police to leave bootleggers alone.³⁵ With no more hassle from law enforcement, purveyors of liquor started serving weeks before the official date of repeal. Economics also factored into drinkers’ purchasing enthusiasm. The cost of spirits and cocktails ranged from ten cents to fifty cents, and one interviewee at the time stated, “Right now, when money is scarce, quite a few people won’t want to pay higher prices for other drinks. The weaker beer didn’t have much ‘kick’ to it and wasn’t much good if a man wanted to celebrate. But it seems this beer will be strong enough for anybody.”³⁶

With the ban on liquor production lifted, New Orleanians looked forward to reviving locally made beer and spirits. Unfortunately, the 1912 ban on absinthe remained in effect. To the chagrin of New Orleanians, who nostalgically pined for an absinthe Suisse or frappé, the federal government still considered the ingredient grande wormwood (*artemisia absinthium*) a danger to consumers. One enterprising New Orleans man decided to create a facsimile of absinthe, using experience of production learned in

³³ “City Breweries Sell Out; Joyous Throngs Toast New and Old,” *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: April 14, 1933.

³⁴ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 115.

³⁵ “Return of Liquor Taken Quietly by City Celebrants: ‘High-Powered’ Beer Most Popular of Drinks of New Era,” *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: December 6, 1933.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

France during World War I. Omitting the controversial ingredient, grande wormwood, distiller J. M. Legendre created and released Legendre Absinthe in New Orleans in 1934. The Alcohol Control Bureau forced his company to change the name, so he released the product as *Herbsaint*.³⁷ Advertisements encouraged buyers to think of absinthe and Herbsaint interchangeably, and the slogan became, “Drink Herbsaint Wherever Absinthe Is Called For.”³⁸

As restaurant and nightclub menus began to feature famous New Orleans cocktails from before Prohibition, drinks such as the Sazerac, which required absinthe, were created with alternate ingredients. A New Orleans grocer created another absinthe-like spirit, as indicated in a cocktail recipe book from 1937. The Green Opal Cocktail “featured by Solari’s, manufacturers of Greenopal, the absinthe substitute that gives this cocktail its foundation” is a frappé bolstered with gin and bitters.³⁹ The influence of French absinthe remained consistently on New Orleans menus throughout the twentieth century. In a cocktail recipe book from 1973, the author notes, “Pernod may be the most familiar, but there are [other] varieties also very popular in New Orleans. Jacquin’s Liqueur d’Anis is a French product but is also produced in the United States from the patent by Charles Jacquin of Philadelphia.”⁴⁰

Though the Volstead Act spurred the outward migration of many experienced publicans and bartenders, some renowned barmen stayed behind and straddled the

³⁷ Adams and Collier, 38.

³⁸ Advertisement, *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: April 2, 1934. Advertisement, *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: May 8, 1936. Solari’s Greenopal also used the slogan “wherever absinthe is called for” in advertisements during the same time, but research indicates Herbsaint was the first to print the marketing message in April 1934 to promote its rebranding.

³⁹ Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Famous New Orleans Drinks & How To Mix’em*, (1937; repr., Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, Inc., 2000), 39.

⁴⁰ Holmes, 21-22.

fourteen-year divide. By early 1934, newspapers announced the return of famed bartenders and predicted New Orleans would reclaim its reputation as “the city of mixed drinks and famous bars.”⁴¹ The downtown area gained new clubs and bars, while providing escape to locals and visitors laden with the malaise of the Great Depression.⁴² But it was the grand restaurants and hotels that generated the most publicity during the 1930s.

The Roosevelt Hotel promoted its nightlife by broadcasting radio performances live from the Blue Room, and advertising the return of the Ramos Gin Fizz, made famous by bar owner Henry C. Ramos before Prohibition. The drink is a mixture of gin, cream, sugar, lemon juice, lime juice, an egg white, seltzer and most importantly, orange blossom water. The cocktail was a favorite of politician Huey P. Long, who made the Roosevelt Hotel his headquarters in New Orleans, and “reigned rent-free in a spacious corner suite on the hotel’s tenth floor.”⁴³ While campaigning in 1935, Long famously flew the bartender from the Roosevelt to join him in New York. He urgently requested the head bartender of the hotel, Sam Guarino to teach the bartenders at Long’s New York hotel how to make his favorite drink. Undoubtedly a publicity stunt, filmed and broadcast on television, Long and his bartender proceeded to mix and drink five Ramos Gin Fizz cocktails. “‘Now, this here champ,’ Long announced, ‘knows how to mix a Ramos gin fizz. The Ramos gin fizz is native in Louisiana. My grandpappy introduced it back in 1852. We saved the Ramos fizz for the American people during Prohibition. I’m

⁴¹ “Famous New Orleans Drinking Places: Thrills Await City’s Guests Who Drink,” *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: February 8, 1934.

⁴² Campanella, “A Night on the Town in 1930’s New Orleans” Preservation in Print, May 2013.

⁴³ Garry Boulard, *Huey Long Invades New Orleans: The Siege of a City, 1934-36*, (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1998).

performing a public service, showing you.”⁴⁴

The stunt succeeded in cementing the national image of Huey P. Long as a bon vivant politician, but also in promoting the Ramos Gin Fizz as a celebrated, specialty New Orleans drink. It continued to appear on menus for nightclubs and restaurants, even as the Sazerac Bar maintained claim that the authentic version was only available in the Roosevelt Hotel. Some business owners tried to create specialty cocktails of their own, such as the Rum Ramsey at the Bon Ton Café, or the Antoine’s Smile. Roy Alciatore, proprietor of Antoine’s Restaurant, even went so far as to insist patrons not order a Ramos Gin Fizz. In a pamphlet advising guests on what not to do in polite dining, the restaurateur argued, “DON’T drink a gin fizz or any thick or sweet drink right before a meal. Such drinks may be delicious in their place, but they are decidedly out of place as appetizers. Would you drink a malted milk or cup of chocolate just before dinner?”⁴⁵ Despite discouragement, the drink secured a legacy in New Orleans and remained featured on menus consistently after Prohibition.

Another famed pre-Prohibition bartender was Leon Dupont, a French immigrant who was awarded the French decoration of *Cavelier de L’Orde du Merite Agricole* for his “help of the needy French individuals and families” of the French Quarter. Before Prohibition, Dupont received an invitation to mix drinks in the White House after bartending for an open house given by the Louisiana delegation in Washington. President Taft “tasted a drink made by Dupont... and invited him to set up a bar in the

⁴⁴ “Long Goes to New York With His Principal Interest in Ginn Fizz,” *State Times Advocate*, Baton Rouge, LA, July 25, 1935.

⁴⁵ Roy L. Alciatore, “Simple Don’ts for Polite Dining,” 1938, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Antoine’s), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

Blue Room of the White House for a party a few days later.”⁴⁶ In 1939, Dupont partnered with John Swago, famed mixologist from the pre-Prohibition Sazerac Bar; together they opened the St. Regis on Royal Street. The announcement featured 25-cent cocktails such as the Old Time Roffignac, the Side Car, and the Gin Fizz, New Orleans Special.⁴⁷

The Sazerac Bar also publicly promoted its longtime employed bartender, Aristide Martin, though there is no evidence that they outwardly marketed any other specific employees prior to the 1930s. An advertisement from the Sazerac Bar attempted to lure visiting physicians and surgeons of the Southern Medical Association: “If you would indulge in one thing that is typical of New Orleans as Mardi Gras, try a Sazerac Cocktail mixed at our bar by Aristide Martin, who for years has made Sazerac mixing a fine art.”⁴⁸ The head bartender noted as a “real old-timer,” who had served “the influential business man of New Orleans” for almost fifty years.⁴⁹ As a bartender on both sides of Prohibition, Martin witnessed the gender shift of social drinking, as increasingly more women began to partake in public spaces.

Nightlife and drinking in public became less gender-segregated as the social landscape changed, and men and women could drink together without repercussion. “Most Americans by the 1930s no longer thought of alcohol as a great evil and of women in bars as prostitutes.”⁵⁰ The concert saloons and taverns of the nineteenth century remained in the past, while a new business model rose to capture the patronage of both

⁴⁶ “N.O. Restaurant Owner Is Given Honor By France,” *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, Baton Rouge, LA: October 21, 1937.

⁴⁷ *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: November 11, 1939.

⁴⁸ *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: November 30, 1937.

⁴⁹ *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: January 14, 1937.

⁵⁰ Stanonis, 134.

men and women. The nightclub promised a “total-evening experience,” and catered to the “liberated lifestyles” women were exercising.⁵¹ In 1938, the Sazerac announced they would open to women on Mardi Gras day, but the *Times-Picayune* also reported that the Sazerac Bar would “serve them in their cars at the curb any day in the year after 6 p.m. [Head bartender, Aristide] Martin and his assistants admit that they derive no end of pleasure at being able to cater to the discriminating taste of the lady patrons this one day during every year.”⁵² What started as one day per year sparked business sense as New Orleanians changed their views on drinking and women. Alcohol as a moral threat to women no longer dominated business decisions. Women’s patronage, and that of the men they attracted, inspired the Roosevelt to open their doors to women indefinitely. In September of 1949, coinciding with the announcement that The Roosevelt secured the exclusive use of the Sazerac franchise, women were officially and permanently welcome in the bar.⁵³

The technological advancements in ice and refrigeration factored into how New Orleanians drank in the 1930s. With refrigeration, breweries could produce far larger quantities of beer and transport them longer distances to bars and restaurants throughout the city. Falstaff bought National Brewing Company in 1936, and quickly began to compete with Dixie, Jax, and Regal Brewing.

In 1935, the Choctaw Club of Louisiana ranked ice production as one of the top New Orleans industries, with properties aggregating more than three million dollars. The report also stated, “Eminent scientists, and others, are predicting that the time will soon

⁵¹ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 105.

⁵² “Ladies Can Visit the Sazerac Bar on Carnival Day,” *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: February 27, 1938.

⁵³ *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: September 30, 1949.

come when, in addition to stores, restaurants, etc., homes and apartments will be refrigerated with ice.”⁵⁴ The abundance of ice, and the introduction of the electric blender inspired a new style of mixed cocktail and gave bartenders the ability to create drinks quickly for the increasing number of tourists. In 1937, “the Waring Blender, named after and promoted by a popular big-band leader... premiered at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago. It proved wildly popular as a time-saver.”⁵⁵ Frozen drinks grew in popularity as more businesses and households could afford electric blenders. The Frozen Daiquiri appears in Stanley Clisby Arthur’s 1937 cocktail guide, and advises, “During the good old summertime a new sort of cocktail, with rum for its basis, has taken New Orleans by storm – a sort of snow storm. If you have not met the Frozen Daiquiri just picture a champagne glass filled with snow, cold as Christmas, and as hard as the heart of a traffic cop.”⁵⁶

When soda fountains grew in popularity during Prohibition, fruity concoctions such as the nonalcoholic “Hawaiian Special and the Mandalay Delight,” became base recipes by which post-Prohibition bartenders could quickly add alcohol.⁵⁷ Frozen daiquiris, made with white rum, lime juice and sugar, made their way to New Orleans nightclubs by way of Cuba. Subsequently, the use of a blender for mixing ice with nearly any cocktail began to show influence on restaurant menus. The 1940 dinner menu at Delmonico boasted frozen cocktails for \$0.75, along with curious concoctions, such as the Fire Fly, and the Lightning. Leading the drink menu, however, was the Sazerac, Old

⁵⁴ A.W. Hyatt, *Thirty-five years of progress in New Orleans*, New Orleans, LA, circa 1935, 87.

⁵⁵ Wayne Curtis, *And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in Ten Cocktails* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2006), 183-184.

⁵⁶ Arthur, 61.

⁵⁷ Curtis, 222.

Fashioned, Martini, and Manhattan.⁵⁸ Even though bartenders were experimenting with sweeter, blended drinks that were quick to serve the trendy consumer, old pre-Prohibition cocktails remained on menus to satisfy traditional drinkers.

Two currents of alcohol consumption began to develop. One current pulled the classic mixed drinks through the dry years of Prohibition and repositioned them on menus and in glasses for New Orleans drinkers who valued tradition and the authenticity of the “old-timers.” Another current embraced expediency and novelty in mixed drinks, delivering an image of decadence to tourists who wanted to experience New Orleans as *bon vivants*. Business owners, restaurateurs and bartenders created menus that included both options, and packaged old cocktails such as the Sazerac and Ramos Gin Fizz as “authentic” New Orleans experiences. Not simply relegated to tourists, locals also imbibed these drinks with fervor. “New Orleanians, in other words, taught tourists that life was to be enjoyed and that carnal indulgence was mere participation in local culture.”⁵⁹

But while nightlife boomed in the French Quarter, tensions began to arise between residents and business owners. The tourism of drinking and dancing changed the economy of downtown, creating a service economy which catered to spirited nightlife. However, “municipal officials and urban businessmen worked hard to supervise drinking, sex, and the city’s reputation.”⁶⁰ Religious and civic organizations complained that the glut of bars and nightclubs were harmful to the French Quarter, though they neglected to note how upscale restaurants and entertainment establishments

⁵⁸ Delmonico Restaurant Menu, circa 1940, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Delmonico), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁹ Stanonis, 163.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 137.

injected the city's economy with much-needed tourist dollars.⁶¹ In 1939, preservation activist Elizabeth Werlein campaigned directly to the mayor for the more notable actions by the Vieux Carré Commission.⁶² “The trinity of the first wave of preservation – William Irby, Lyle Saxon, and Elizabeth Werlein – brought three great talents to bear. Irby had the money, Saxon was the master of publicity, and Werlein had the contacts and persistence.”⁶³ Their efforts, along with other residents, was for the “gradual revival of the Quarter as place for ‘nice people’ to live.”⁶⁴ In 1937, the Spring Fiesta developed as an annual event to show off the homes and gardens of the French Quarter, and demonstrate to the public that there was more to the old neighborhood than drinking and dancing.

Storm's Brewing: Wartime Drinking and Preservation 1941-1961

In 1938, the Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents and Associates, or VCPORA, formed to become a watchdog group spearheaded by preservationist, Elizabeth Werlein. Dedicated to the “preservation, restoration, beautification and general betterment of the Vieux Carré,” the group resisted the growing tourism economy of the downtown area. After the oil boom of the 1930s generated huge growth for the chemical and petroleum industry, “the city had established itself as a hub for military shipbuilding and manufacturing.”⁶⁵ This growth inspired politicians and business owners to promote “images of New Orleans as a charming city with beautiful and historical architecture,

⁶¹ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 118.

⁶² Ellis, 44.

⁶³ Ibid, 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 47.

⁶⁵ Kevin Fox Gotham, “Marketing Mardi Gras: Commodification, Spectacle and the Political Economy of Tourism in New Orleans,” *Urban Studies* 39, no. 10 (September 2002): 1740.

outstanding cuisine and excellent music.”⁶⁶ While this tactic nostalgically promoted the city for its culture, another strategy enticed visitors for a seedy respite. Lyle Saxon worked with politicians and businessmen to market “commercial sex and alcohol as part of the city’s exoticism.”⁶⁷ While this collective push to market the city as a domestic holiday destination generated tourist revenue, it also irked preservationists who rejected New Orleans’ reputation as a hedonistic resort.

The film industry also embraced the image of New Orleans nightlife and drinking. In 1939, the Scarlett O’Hara cocktail was invented as a tie with the film, *Gone with the Wind*, and featured the New Orleans product Southern Comfort. The titular characters honeymooned in New Orleans, and the mixture of Southern Comfort and cranberry juice became popular in the city. In 1940 a local newspaper proudly announced its popularity in Hollywood, “What with all the furor over G.W.T.W., Lindy’s here is featuring Scarlett O’Hara and Rhett Butler cocktails.”⁶⁸

When the U.S. entered the Second World War, New Orleans became the hub for southern servicemen, with the Naval Station on the West Bank and the Naval Reserve Air Station on the Lakefront. The war effort ramped up in the city with the modification of bayou boats at the Higgins plant in Mid-City. The war also wreaked havoc on the city’s nightlife with blackouts and curfews.⁶⁹ Rationing and shortages played heavily into what New Orleanians decided to drink, and whether or not they went to bars, restaurants and clubs outside the home. Hotels, restaurants and lunch stands followed Food Administration mandates to change their menus, observing meatless Tuesdays and

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Stanonis, 138.

⁶⁸ “Behind the Scenes in Hollywood,” *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: January 19, 1940.

⁶⁹ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 119.

Fridays, wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays, and porkless Saturdays.⁷⁰

Additionally, sugar rationing became emblematic of patriotism. Advertisements sternly warned civilians against consuming products that directly benefited the troops: “Sugar is both food and stimulant for the soldier. Consume less and the reduced ration will be sweeter.”⁷¹ When Rum and Coke became a popular drink order thanks to the Andrews Sisters’ hit song, “Rum and Coca-Cola,” it also became a ubiquitous order for troops during the war.⁷² But national sugar rationing meant popular soft-drinks such as Coca-Cola were in limited supply. In retail trade publications, Coca-Cola apologized for the reduced supply under wartime rationing, while competing New Orleans soft-drinks, Dr. Nut and Wright Root Beer (“rich in dextrose”), advertised availability.⁷³

The beer industry became a central force for beverage consumption in New Orleans after Prohibition and thrived during WWII thanks to clever partnerships with local retailers. American Brewing Company’s Regal Beer was made on Bourbon Street in a massive four-story structure complete with its own twin smokestacks and well for groundwater. “Like other city beer makers such as Falstaff, Dixie, and Jax, Regal worked hand in hand with bar owners to develop retail outlets for their products... it is not coincidental that nearly two dozen bars... clustered within two blocks of the Regal Brewery.”⁷⁴

In the beginning years of the Second World War, an advertisement in the

⁷⁰ Advertisement in “Tom Anderson’s New Café restaurant menu,” circa 1943, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Tom Anderson’s New Café), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Nancy Maveety, *Glass and Gavel: The U.S. Supreme Court and Alcohol*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 174.

⁷³ New Orleans Retail Grocers Association, *Grocers’ Day Annual* 42, no. 1 (September 1942), 21.

⁷⁴ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 140.

Louisiana Grocer advised druggists, “In these days of depleted and often missing grocery stocks, why not *expand*. There are good profits to be made from retailing beer. It is not rationed and not likely to be. Washington feels that beer is good for morale, especially with gasoline rationing making home entertainment more popular.”⁷⁵ Jax Brewery published advertisements encouraging the purchase of a case of beer in preparation for unexpected guests, while also touting their brand as a “beverage of moderation.”⁷⁶ Regal Beer suggested beer as a meal supplement: “a glass of Regal Beer, taken before dinner, will work wonders in giving you additional interest in the meal.”⁷⁷ Stocking beer was not only a smart decision for retailers, who could boost sales if positioning the cases near party snacks, but also a savvy purchase for home-buyers who could save on their entertainment budget by drinking and entertaining at home.

Beer companies also marketed through state pride, parallel industry partnerships, and domestic entertainment. Regal Brewery sponsored a radio show on WWL on the life of Winston Churchill, featured every night from 10pm.⁷⁸ Jax Brewery positioned themselves as partners to other industries in Louisiana. They proudly proclaimed they were, “the only large Brewery in Louisiana that was founded and is still operated by local people.”⁷⁹ They encouraged business partnerships and camaraderie with the sugar cane industry, stating that local Southern sugar played “a vital part in relieving wartime sugar shortages in this country.”⁸⁰ They also sponsored a woman’s softball team. Originally

⁷⁵ New Orleans Retail Grocers Association, Budweiser Advertisement, *The Louisiana Grocer* 43, no.4 (April 1943): 17.

⁷⁶ *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: January 3, 1941.

⁷⁷ New Orleans Retail Grocers Association, Regal Advertisement, *The Louisiana Grocer* 43, no.4 (April 1943).

⁷⁸ *State-Times*, Baton Rouge, LA: January 19, 1942.

⁷⁹ *Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: March 22, 1944.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

started by the Falstaff Brewery, the Jax Girls became a nationally recognized softball team. Not long after, Jax bought the franchise and “hired players who defeated them to come and work at the Jackson Brewery so that they could play on the Jax Girls’ team.”⁸¹

The beer industry promotional tactics proved successful, and announcements in trade publications for grocers boasted tax revenue increases in the billions due to the relegalization of beer. Though rationing and shortages caused purchasing changes for domestic buyers of butter, soft-drinks, soap and coffee, the Brewing Industry Foundation continued to reassure buyers that they were receiving regulated, quality beer.⁸²

In 1942, the War Production Board mandated that “all manufacture of whisky, gin and other beverage spirits for other than war purposes” cease, and all 128 distilleries in the country converted to the production of war alcohol.⁸³ When grain distilleries converted to produce war alcohol, bar and nightclub owners turned to the Caribbean to keep their bars shelves stocked with rum. Unable to buy and sell national U.S. products like whiskey, Caribbean rum “and shaken drinks that used it” inspired a new wave of mixed drink creation in New Orleans.⁸⁴ After the war ended, several major distilleries that profited from military contracts, expanded by acquiring small, local brands. The Tennessee-based company, Brown-Forman, bought New Orleans-based Southern Comfort in 1956.⁸⁵

During Prohibition, Pat O’Brien operated a speakeasy nightclub in the French

⁸¹ Mary Lou Widmer, *New Orleans in the Forties*, (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2007), 170.

⁸² “Beer Taxes Pass Three Billion Dollars,” *The Louisiana Grocer* 43, no.11 (November 1943): 1.

⁸³ “Whiskey Manufacture Ceases November 1,” *The Louisiana Grocer* 43, no.10 (October 1942): 6.

⁸⁴ Nancy Maveety, *Glass and Gavel: The U.S. Supreme Court and Alcohol*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 173.

⁸⁵ Robert F. Moss, *Southern Spirits: Four Hundred Years of Drinking in the American South, with Recipes*, (New York, NY: Ten Speed Press, 2016), 276.

Quarter accessible by the password, “Storm’s Brewing.”⁸⁶ By 1942, the club moved to a new location and created its famous Hurricane cocktail, thanks to a surplus of rum and uniquely shaped glassware. The mixture of Caribbean rum, lemon juice and passionfruit syrup became so popular that decades later, it evolved into a package mix. By 1973 the drink recipe involved a “passion fruit cocktail mix, such as that made by Jero.”⁸⁷ The mix, advised the recipe, came in red and green. “For the Hurricane, you need the red.”⁸⁸ New tropical drinks appealed to tourists and servicemen alike, who welcomed the atmosphere of music-filled nightlife as a distraction from the tensions of wartime. Also, as the tourism industry developed its marketing to both genders, women patronized Pat O’Brien’s Bar to watch the dueling pianos, and other business owners began to see women as “equal players in New Orleans’ nightlife.”⁸⁹ Women filled positions left vacant by men at war, and the feminism which arose from increased employment opportunities inspired social progression in public spaces. The city became a destination “where young, single women, seeking employment and freedom from small-town eyes, met uniformed men preparing for fight in Europe or the Pacific.”⁹⁰

When the war ended, thematic drinking and dining experiences became popular in downtown New Orleans. Nightclubs featured burlesque performers like Evangeline the Oyster Girl and Blaze Starr. Restaurants adopted décor inspired by images of the Pacific theater. Tiki, a tropical drink template and lifestyle, thrived in wave of thematic dining experiences in New Orleans. After opening in 1952, the Bali Ha’i at Pontchartrain Beach

⁸⁶ Adams and Collier, 101.

⁸⁷ Holmes, 84.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Stanonis, 139. Richard Campanella cites the dueling pianists as Mercedes and Sue, two women who took musical requests from servicemen. Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 129.

⁹⁰ Stanonis, 237.

became the standard for New Orleans tiki-style establishments. The restaurant featured their best-selling Mai Tai, a giant tiki bowl, and the Fogg Cutter. In 1959, at the Sheraton-Charles, the Outrigger Bar & Lounge advertised “all the romance and color, the fabled treasures, the tropical atmosphere of the far-away South Seas,” serving up Island drinks but also “your favorite American and New Orleans cocktails, too!”⁹¹

Menus in New Orleans increasingly catered to two distinct types of drinkers. The emerging trend to market fruity, exotic, escapist mixed drinks coincided with the traditional, nostalgic classic cocktails of New Orleans before Prohibition. Noting the palate of New Orleans drinkers in 1959, one writer explains:

the local taste does not seem to favor extremely dry beverages; the favorite cocktails, too (like the Sazerac), are on the sweet side, and when a native mixes an Old Fashioned or a Manhattan he will frequently add just a touch of herbsaint, which is an absinthe substitute with a sweet, licorice-like flavor.... Wine drinking is no longer very common in the city; the great middle-class beverage is now beer, here as elsewhere.⁹²

Home consumers and the middle-class bought and drank beer, while restaurants created menus that promoted signature, fruity beverages alongside classics. The Bon Ton Café listed the Martini, Manhattan, Tom Collins, Brandy Alexander, and Stinger alongside their signature fruity Rum Ramsey cocktail on a menu from the mid-1950s. Their menu also boasted glowing reviews from happy guests, such as: “The service is excellent, and the Rum Ramsey (and all other drink concoctions) are prepared with loving care.”⁹³

Even long-established restaurants, such as Arnaud’s, began to put specialty cocktails on

⁹¹ *This Week in New Orleans*, August 8, 1959, advertisement, 9.

⁹² Evans, 161.

⁹³ Bon Ton Café menu, circa 1955, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Bon Ton Café), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

their menu, “Not only are the usual cocktails served, but the unusual as well: Beauty and the Beast (Mrs. Cazenave’s specialty), French 75, Prince Ferdinand, Germaine’s Special, and the Count’s famous Ambrosia – the drink of the Gods.”⁹⁴ As New Orleans developed into a tourism destination, restaurants and beverage outlets raced to create unique identities that offered unusual concoctions and hoped to generate memorable brands through specialty drinks.

Bacchanalia or Bust: Pop Culture and the Go-Cup 1961-1971

Tourism marketing in the South centered on “backward-looking Old South nostalgia” during the 1960s, paradoxically coinciding with national movements for racial equality.⁹⁵ As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum with protests and sit-ins, business owners continued to develop New Orleans as an escapist destination, catering to outside tourists with offerings of vice and the promise of a *laissez-faire* nightlife free from social strife.

With the economic growth from purposeful marketing came a fully realized hospitality identity. Large hotels, such as the Omni Royal Orleans and the Inn on Bourbon, rivaled the prestigious Hotel Monteleone. By 1961, the Regal Brewery was demolished to make room for the Royal Sonesta.⁹⁶ As the reputation of New Orleans developed into a destination of escapism and moral abandon, lawmakers continued to monitor and regulate nightclubs and street prostitution. “Many agreed that a balance between naughty and respectable attractions had to be maintained,” with crack-downs on B-drinkers (girls paid by the establishments to solicit patrons to spend money on alcohol)

⁹⁴ The Story of Arnaud’s, June 27, 1950, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Arnaud’s), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁹⁵ Moss, 268.

⁹⁶ Ellis, 78.

and illegal gambling on premises.⁹⁷ The clean-up of vice on Bourbon Street garnered praise from the *New York Times*, though the paper also acknowledged the city's loss of allure.⁹⁸

Nightclubs of the 1940s and 1950s, which once featured trained and tantalizing burlesque dancers, became increasingly overtly sexualized. The entertainment evolved into striptease routines, sometimes accompanied by local union musicians who were required to play the same songs multiple times a night, satisfying short-term visitors with “old-school” standards. Though the turn-and-burn business model of catering to wandering tourists with short-attention spans became economically profitable, residents lamented that the lack of musical creativity on Bourbon Street led to the “demise of jazz in the city of its birth.”⁹⁹

Tourists sought an experience in New Orleans that was both nostalgic and uniquely foreign. In city marketing, New Orleans’ “tourism rhetoric suggests not only a distinction from other cities but also a cultural, historical, and ideological distinction from the United States, and occasionally the rest of the world.”¹⁰⁰ As the tiki-craze of previous years continued, restaurants and bars experimented with novelty beverages to fabricate imaginary locales. Drinking trends across the United States leaned towards sweeter, fruitier beverages, and a colorful lifestyle trend emerged, called “Backyard Polynesia” with “exotic cocktails.”¹⁰¹ Across the United States, old-style cocktail recipes became

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 81.

⁹⁸ *New York Times*, “Bourbon Street Losing Its Lure,” September 5, 1965.

⁹⁹ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 172.

¹⁰⁰ Lynnell L. Thomas, *Desire and Disaster in New Orleans: Tourism, Race, and Historical Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 32.

¹⁰¹ Jeff Berry, *Beachbum Berry's Potions of the Caribbean: 500 Years of Tropical Drinks and the People Behind Them*, (New York, NY: Cocktail Kingdom, 2014), 158.

increasingly unpopular.

As the Pina Colada invaded the U.S. mainland, it also precipitated a cocktail crisis there. Call it the Crushed Ice Age: with the ascendance of the counterculture, recreational drinking lost ground to recreational drugs; classic cocktails died out, but they weren't given a decent burial. Instead they were frozen. If you ordered a Sidecar, a Whiskey Sour or even a Planter's Punch during the Disco era, chances are it would be whipped in a blender filled with crushed ice. The frozen Daiquiri... became a fruit-flavored slush swirled with cream, sometimes even ice cream, then ignominiously topped with a spire of whipped cream.¹⁰²

New Orleans bars and restaurants catered to two parallel alcoholic beverage desires. As tourists flocked to the city for its relaxed drinking culture, they brought a vacation mentality and demanded the fruity, frozen beverages that fabricated an escapist experience. Meanwhile, cocktail menus at fine-dining restaurants and upscale hotel lounges continued to offer nostalgic classics.

Traditional cocktails remained on restaurant menus in the French Quarter, such as Begue's Creole Restaurant (now Tujague's), where the Sazerac, Absinthe Frappé, Absinthe Suisse, and New Orleans Gin Fizz cost \$1.25. They also offered the common Martini, Manhattan, and Old Fashioned.¹⁰³ Nearby, Broussard's Restaurant also listed the common standards, but touted their house specialties such as the Broussard's Special, the Broussard Smile, and a Frozen Daiquiri for \$1.50.¹⁰⁴ The famed Antoine's Restaurant touted their Louisiana Lullaby, a "jealously guarded" recipe made with rum,

¹⁰² Berry, 279.

¹⁰³ Begue's Creole Restaurant and Bar menu, signed by Mr. and Mrs. Philip Begue, September 2, 1969, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Begue's), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁰⁴ Broussard Restaurant and Napoleon Patio Menu, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Broussard's), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

lemon juice, and old-world French liqueurs Dubonnet and Grand Marnier.¹⁰⁵ Though classic, sweet and spirituous offerings catered to the local palate, younger visitors eschewed such formal drink recipes. “People still drank, of course, but style setters were now identified by their rejection of all that was rule- or recipe-governed. ‘Uptight’ was the worst of insults, and a free-and-easy, macramé and jug wine kind of spirit prevailed.”¹⁰⁶ The bohemian drinker arrived in the city, inspired by popular culture that promised a city of bacchanalia.

Specifically, the reputation of the downtown New Orleans nightlife scene was promoted through popular music and films. The image of abandon attracted young hippies and counter-culture travelers, enticed by “the chiseled Marlon Brando and elegant Vivian Leigh in *A Streetcar Named Desire*; the soulful, rebellious Elvis Presley in *King Creole*; and the bohemian acid-droppers Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda in *Easy Rider*. All these popular films presented the city as sexually charged, mysterious, and enticingly decadent.”¹⁰⁷ City business leaders recognized an opportunity to promote carnival as the “greatest free show on earth,” and several young hospitality owners met in 1968 to transform the holiday previously filled with “rich symbolism (i.e. Catholicism and Lent) to the current stage of spectacle divorced from deep-level religious symbols.”¹⁰⁸ Rejected from old-line krewes, these young entrepreneurs created larger truck-pulled parades, expanded the weekend of Mardi Gras, and “helped transform it into a more

¹⁰⁵ James Mayabb, *International Cocktail Specialties from Madison Avenue to Malaya* (New York, NY: Hearthsides Press, Inc., 1962), 64-65.

¹⁰⁶ Maveety, 221.

¹⁰⁷ Stanonis, 240.

¹⁰⁸ Gotham, “Marketing Mardi Gras,” 1744.

consciously tourist-focused reconstruction of New Orleans' heritage.”¹⁰⁹

Following the decline of traditional burlesque, tourists took to the streets to people-watch and enjoy music that spilled out from open doors of previously formal nightclubs. Instead of haranguing patrons to enter a club and pay a fee, enterprising business owners sold drinks to people on the street through auxiliary bars and windows. “Whereas historically the action was inside the exclusive private space of the clubs, now it shifted outside to the passing parade.”¹¹⁰ In the film *Easy Rider*, when the titular heroes arrive at “the Mardi Gras,” they order to-go beers and enjoy the spectacle on Bourbon Street before finding themselves dropping acid in a cemetery. Their character’s cross-country road trip to New Orleans is emblematic of the new opportunities for tourism afforded to the city with the construction of the interstate highway system.¹¹¹

As the city found its own cultural identity gaining even greater national prominence, elements of that identity came into sharp conflict with prevailing culture trends of the time. When New Orleans sought a bid for a professional football team during the first half of the 1960s, “persistent episodes of racial discrimination and harassment of black athletes in the French Quarter sullied the city’s tourist image and deterred collegiate and professional teams from competing in the city.”¹¹² It became essential for developing cities marketing themselves as progressive and modern to change discriminatory practices, as sports team and convention leaders “blacklisted cities that failed to integrate racially.”¹¹³ In 1970, “New Orleans legislators finally acquiesced to

¹⁰⁹ J. Mark Souther, *New Orleans On Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 145.

¹¹⁰ Richard Campanella, *Lost New Orleans* (London, UK: Pavilion Books, 2015), 95.

¹¹¹ Stanonis, 238.

¹¹² Thomas, 163.

¹¹³ Ellis, 74.

pressures by civil rights activists for a public accommodations ordinance that enforced desegregation in bars and other venues that had not voluntarily acceded to integration.”¹¹⁴

Specific liquor trends shifted nationally, creating new demands by tourists arriving in the city. Liquor brands that promoted exoticism and progress joined brands that previously promoted images of the nostalgic Old South. When the G.F. Heublein and Bros. purchased Smirnoff Vodka, they struggled with sales until enlisting the help of celebrities and a campaign that aligned with the three-martini lunch. “Heublein poured money into marketing promising, cleverly enough, that ‘Smirnoff Leaves You Breathless,’ and paying celebrities like Eva Gabor and Groucho Marx for endorsements. It was the perfect spirit for people who liked gin drinks but not the flavor of gin, and vodka martinis and vodka tonics abounded at the 1960s bar.”¹¹⁵ Vodka sales surpassed gin by the mid-1960s, and showed no signs of slowing, though New Orleans classic cocktails still favored whiskey and cognac. The ubiquitous Sazerac cocktail, originally made with cognac, then rye whiskey, began to appear on menus with bourbon, and “some writers suggest that Owen Brennan, dean of the Old Absinthe House and father of the founder of Brennan’s Restaurant, may be responsible.”¹¹⁶

More adventurous bartenders experimented with mixing cordials and created wildly named cocktails. One legendary bar owner, Nick Castrogiovanni, “who could make a brightly colored pousse café with thirty-two layers,” operated Nick’s Big Train Bar until his death in 1979.¹¹⁷ He created sweet, dessert-like cocktails such as the Banana Banshee, the Wedding Cake, and the Chocolate Soldier, plus drinks with

¹¹⁴ Thomas, 163.

¹¹⁵ Moss, 282.

¹¹⁶ Holmes, 24.

¹¹⁷ Howard Jacobs, “Remoulade,” *Times-Picayune*, March 31, 1965.

suggestive names such as the Screaming Orgasm, Between the Sheets, and 12 Italian Virgins in the Back Seat of A Volkswagen. When Hurricane Betsy blew down the roof of the bar, “it would have destroyed the handcrafted backbar, but it was supported for the entire length of the storm by Nick’s tightly crammed bottles of superfluous hooch. After that, Nick refused to let anyone touch those bottles, leaving them coated under a thick layer of dust and his own superstition.”¹¹⁸ His idiosyncrasies, and affordable, creative drinks fostered a following of college-aged partiers on Tulane Avenue.

Young drinkers and rabble-rousers also populated Bourbon Street to the chagrin of legislators. Newspapers reported that window hawking contributed to the city’s plummeting reputation, and they blamed hippie tourists and their go-cups for the ceaseless litter and filth. One way for a respectable tourist to escape the mire was to secure a vantage of the street party from atop a balcony. During Mardi Gras, drinkers enjoyed their frozen cocktails or cheap beer from above the debris.

Disneyland for Drinkers: Tourism and the World’s Fair 1971-1984

Recognizing the lure of Mardi Gras as spectacle, business leaders worked diligently to shape New Orleans’ reputation into one befitting a year-round tourist destination. By the 1970s, tourism boomed after successful preservation campaigns in the French Quarter, crackdowns on crime and litter, the expansion of Carnival festivities, and the broad changes in city leadership following the Civil Rights movement. With municipal influence, public downtown spaces were repurposed to enhance the visitor experience, and locals began moving out to suburbs.

As neighborhoods developed, small lounges and bars opened to accommodate the

¹¹⁸ Collier and Adams, 114-115.

local drinker hoping to avoid the tourist-packed French Quarter. Small bars helped foster neighborhood identities, such as that of the Irish Channel: “with the French Quarter such a mess – less decadent than simply tacky – there is a sense of community in the Channel, a life in the streets that does not exist in other areas.”¹¹⁹

During this time, city leaders encouraged tourism in New Orleans with suggestive ad campaigns that rekindled images of Storyville or touted the preservation of history.¹²⁰ With the construction of large hotels and the proliferation of chain nightclubs downtown, the tourist area expanded to encompass the entire French Quarter, upsetting residents of the neighborhood, who suddenly faced sharply higher rates of noise, crime, and litter.¹²¹ Though the city attempted to restrict window hawking by prohibiting sales of alcohol within six feet of the street, the conversion of Bourbon Street into a nightly pedestrian mall by 1971 facilitated outside revelry. By 1973, the city banned large-scale floats in the French Quarter, out of growing concerns for public safety.¹²²

Tourists arrived in New Orleans with the expectation that drinking booze and participating in spectacle were culturally endemic, fostering resentment from residents who saw the excess of alcohol consumption offered on Bourbon Street as a poor representation of the city experience.

Americans on either side of the culture wars hate Bourbon Street. But they hate it for entirely different reasons. Traditionalists on the Right hate Bourbon Street for its iniquity. Progressives on the Left hate it for its inauthenticity. The Right hates it for its commercialization of sin; the Left, for its commercialization of culture.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Jason Berry, “Great Bars of the Irish Channel,” *Figaro*, New Orleans, August 14, 1974.

¹²⁰ Souther, 171.

¹²¹ Ellis, 151.

¹²² Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 216.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 295.

The alcoholic offerings in the downtown bars and clubs became increasingly artificial and commercial. Recipes also evolved to accommodate changing palates of consumers. While a frozen daiquiri recipe from the *Times-Picayune* in 1961 called for the standard ingredients of white rum, sugar, and lime juice, by the 1970s and early 1980s, the word “daiquiri” became the description for almost any frozen, high-proof, slushy drink.¹²⁴

While menus in established bars and nightclubs still made classic New Orleans cocktails, they remained on offer alongside more contemporary fruity and dessert beverages intended for quick consumption. Some restaurants continued to invent house specialties, such as the Cajun Martini, a creation of the French Quarter restaurant K-Paul's. The simple but potent drink was made by steeping hot peppers in vodka, and “sold by the pint or quart, but [customers] be forewarned – a quart of this stiff potable would power a pickup truck from here to Mamou with ease.”¹²⁵ Chef Paul Prudhomme's wife created the drink so it was easy to serve, but daunting to order. Though the proprietors wanted their guests to focus on the food rather than getting drunk, the drink became notably popular regardless.¹²⁶

As more and more tourists flocked to the French Quarter, businesses increasingly pandered to the demands of young party-goers. The marketing of cheap, strong booze in disposable containers appealed to the college crowd who could not afford nice restaurants or cover charges for live music. Instead, the party remained on the street, relatively

¹²⁴ The classic daiquiri recipe always included rum, sugar, and lime juice. This recipe from 1961 also added “2 dashes of maraschino cherry juice,” which gives it a pinkish hue. “Easter Feast,” *Time-Picayune*, March 26, 1961.

¹²⁵ Frank Baily, “The Secret That Couldn't Be Kept,” *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, July 4, 1980.

¹²⁶ David Wondrich, “A Spicy Vodka Martini for Non-Vodka Drinkers.” *Daily Beast*, December 4, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/a-spicy-vodka-martini-for-non-vodka-drinkers>.

unchecked until city leaders implemented tactics to regulate and tax nightlife businesses. By taxation through spot-zoning, the installation of street bollards, and with a taskforce that enforced signage regulations, city officials began to control the chaos on Bourbon Street.¹²⁷ With the melee under delicate control, city leaders looked to the future in tourism just as the petroleum and shipping industries began to decline.

In 1984, business owners and city officials organized the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition, an ambitious project intended to bolster the reputation of New Orleans as a progressive and bustling city. “If Walt Disney had copied New Orleans in the 1960’s, New Orleans copied Walt Disney in the 1980s,” and constructed an image resplendent with historically preserved architecture that was balanced with contemporary, forward-looking structures.¹²⁸ In preparation for the six-month-long, 84-acre experience, the city rebuilt sidewalks, improved infrastructure, and built several thematic sections with themes and attractions that juxtaposed international educational experiences “with the frivolity associated with Carnival.”¹²⁹

With nightly fireworks displays, and Mardi Gras themed parades, the fair attempted to attract vacationing families to show a side of the city that was more than drunk nightlife on Bourbon Street. Alcohol sales continued, of course, and the food and drink pavilions offered New Orleans culinary options while vendors hawked cold beer and mixed drinks. Additionally, pavilions focused on international food and beverage and aided the goal for the fair to have cosmopolitan breadth. The Miller Beer Garden offered a “salute to the famous Oktoberfest celebration,” and included beer and Bavarian

¹²⁷ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 225-226.

¹²⁸ Souther, 183.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

food.¹³⁰

From a financial perspective, the six-month event was a failure. The 1984 Fair declared bankruptcy during its run due to poor attendance, though “the main text will tell of its cultural accomplishments and its role in catalyzing the redevelopment of the Warehouse District and diversification of the tourism sector.”¹³¹ Most vendors lost money, but “the owners of Let’s Make a Daiquiri concession found the fair to be a very profitable venture.”¹³² The success of quick-serve frozen drinks at the World’s Fair, and their general affordability, inspired several bar owners to establish permanent outlets.

What started as a concession stand during the fair became “Tropical Isle,” a Caribbean-themed, tourist-laden, music venue famous for their high-proof frozen drink, the *Hand Grenade*.¹³³ One of the major marketing approaches to attracting tourists with this sweet, melon slushy, is the use of a plastic branded to-go container. Not only could tourists walk around outside with their drink, they could take home the unique, plastic cup as a souvenir. Soon, beverage outlets across the city began branding to-go cups, laying the foundation for ever-increasing sizes and gaudier designs.¹³⁴ The following decades saw the proliferation of giant plastic footballs filled with beer, fishbowls filled with rum punch, and daiquiris out of jester dolls.

Though bar and nightclub owners resorted to increasingly flamboyant methods to

¹³⁰ Bill Cotter, *The 1984 New Orleans World's Fair*, (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 49.

¹³¹ Campanella, *Lost New Orleans*, 131.

¹³² Cotter, 38.

¹³³ Campanella, *Bourbon Street*, 227.

¹³⁴ By 1980, branded plastic go-cups were advertised as “personalized plastic glasses, ideal for parties, conventions, and banquets.” Glasses Galore, Inc., advertisement in “Restaurant Jonathan magazine article,” June 1980, vertical files, Folder – Restaurants (Restaurant Jonathan), Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

attract tourist drinkers to their venues, conventional recipes remained on the menu for the established businesses continuing to serve customers looking for a traditional New Orleans cocktail. The kitschy experience of drinking alcohol with fruity, artificial mixes on the street became a typical practice for tourists, but locals continued to demand their favorite nostalgic cocktails from restaurants and fine hotel lounges.

Conclusion

New Orleans drinking culture began with European social customs and religious ritual. The decades preceding the Volstead Act, when the city thrived as major port for the U.S., showcased New Orleans as a cosmopolitan metropolis, rife with hospitality and talented bar operators. Despite Storyville's closure and pressure from temperance advocates, the city defiantly found loopholes to continue drinking through Prohibition. After Repeal in 1933, the city embraced its old cocktail offerings and celebrated the return of its famous bartenders.

During the Second World War, the whole country slipped reluctantly back towards temperance, with strict rationing and a patriotic work ethic that shied from frivolous indulgence. But the soldiers who frequented the Port of New Orleans, as well as the general public's need to mentally escape the anxiety of war, spawned a new economy ripe for exploitation. Escapist tourism led to a culture of drinking tourism. Alcoholic beverages became cultural artifacts, and bar owners leveraged permitted vice into bait for the domestic vacationer. At the same time preservation efforts kept the city attractively "old-world" in a quickly changing post-war country, technological advancements tempted business owners to modernize their beverage options for the travelling clientele. Bar operators adapted to the needs of tourists, offering outside drinks

quickly, then mechanized mixtures, then cheap, disposable drinking cups. Many business owners, valuing the importance of providing the locals and “old-timers” with traditional drinks, continued to offer cocktails like the Sazerac and Suisse alongside frothy daiquiris. The city catered to two worlds with drink menus that acquiesced to a new economic dependency on tourism, as well as to the nostalgic local or visitor who persistently demanded cocktails from generations past.

As consumers in the United States demanded culinary experiences that harkened back to simpler times, when dishes were made with traditional, natural and “authentic” recipes, those requests arrived at the bar top. A new movement of “craft cocktails” permeated the hospitality industry with bartenders and mixologists showcasing “forgotten” classic drinks. Meanwhile, New Orleans continued to thrive on a tourism market that happily slurped frozen daiquiris and wandered the streets with oversized beers. But in the long-established hotels, restaurants, lounges and in many homes, old drink recipes were not forgotten – simply quietly imbibed. As twenty-first century beverage menus across the country welcome back traditional pre-Prohibition cocktail classics, in New Orleans, they never left.

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