



CHRISTOPHER B. O'HARA

# HOT TODDIES

MULLED WINE, BUTTERED RUM,  
SPICED CIDER, AND OTHER  
SOUL-WARMING WINTER DRINKS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM A. NASH

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# Introduction

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*It's the most wonderful time of the year.*

—EDDIE POLA AND GEORGE WYLE

Between dinner parties, family get-togethers, and errand-running, wintertime can be a cause for exhaustion rather than celebration. The frenetic pace and expense of modern life can negate feelings of “goodwill towards men” faster than a revolving mall door on December twenty-third. While this book doesn't presume to restore the cold months to their bygone glory, it does contain a distinctive treasure—a wealth of steamy, spicy, luscious holiday drinks that can give the innumerable dinners and parties of the season a festive flavor that's more Tiny Tim than Ebenezer Scrooge.

Taking the time to make an old-fashioned punch, or making eggnog from scratch rather than purchasing it at the supermarket, can bring warmth and fun to a casual get-together or make a holiday party truly special. Great parties are remembered for a long time, and the secret to making them memorable is offering something wonderful to your guests; showing your friends that you care enough to go the extra yard makes your guests feel special. Best of all, most of these drinks are dead easy to make (a lot easier than roasting a turkey).

I hope you will use this guide to both classic and new holiday drinks to bring back a bit of the old-fashioned, homemade feeling of hospitality, and as an invitation to have lots of fun at your next wintertime party.



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# INGREDIENTS *AND* TOOLS





# THE PANTRY

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**Allspice** Allspice is the household name for the berry of the West Indian myrtle tree. Also known as pimento (not to be confused with pimiento, the popular pepper found inside your martini olive), allspice is an essential ingredient in the Tom & Jerry, wassail bowl, and Grandmother punch, to name a few. Used sparingly, allspice imparts a subtle but unique flavor similar to a mixture of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Some of the recipes call for easily available ground allspice, but most call for the whole dried berry. You can find whole allspice in gourmet shops, specialty stores, and online at dozens of sites.

**Brown Sugar** Brown sugar is simply regular white sugar combined with molasses, which gives it a soft texture and richer taste. Dark brown sugar has more molasses than the light brown kind. Brown sugar is a key ingredient in many traditional holiday punches, including mulled wine and the wassail bowl. It's also the perfect sweetener for tea-based punches, and you can't make chocolate eggnog without it. Brown sugar blends perfectly with liquor, mildly sweetening with a taste reminiscent of a freshly baked cake—the ideal flavor association for a holiday drink. To soften not-quite-fresh brown sugar, place a chunk of it on a small dish along with an apple wedge or a slice of soft white bread, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and microwave for 30 seconds. Discard the apple or bread and stir the sugar.

**Cardamom** Unless you mix your own curry blends, make Arabic coffee, or bake a lot of bread, you will seldom have the opportunity to grab cardamom off the lazy Susan. And that's a shame because cardamom is actually a wonderfully versatile spice, adding a unique, pungently sweet flavor to coffee (sprinkle a bit in the grinds before brewing), coffee cake, and apple pie. A member of the ginger family, cardamom is usually sold as small, cranberry-sized pods that contain about 20 seeds, which are more pungent than the pod itself. White cardamom pods are the type most often found in supermarkets, but the green (not the black) pods stocked in Indian groceries may be substituted if you have trouble finding the white pods. For maximum flavor, purchase cardamom whole rather than preground, as the essential oils in ground cardamom dissipate quickly, resulting in less flavor. To make your own freshly ground cardamom, pry open the pods and remove the seeds. Then crush the seeds using a rolling pin or a mortar and pestle. For a milder flavor, add whole seeds to warm punches such as glogg.

**Chocolate** Chocolate, in its many forms, is an essential part of the complete holiday and wintertime bar. Use unsweetened cocoa powder to create chocolate eggnogs and hot chocolate drinks; chocolate syrup for an irresistible mocha latte; and grated semisweet chocolate to garnish an ice-cold chocolate martini.

**Cinnamon** If there's a more traditional spice than cinnamon around the holidays, I don't know what it is. Be sure to stock both ground cinnamon and a good supply of whole sticks. You'll use ground cinnamon to flavor hot punches, eggnogs, and coffee drinks, while the sticks look great floating on top of a hot punch, and make an excellent stirrer for mulled wine or a hot chocolate drink. Even though cinnamon is one of the most common spices, many don't realize that it's actually tree bark—specifically, the bark of the tropical cinnamon tree, a small evergreen.

Harvested when moist, the bark curls into the familiar cinnamon-stick shape when dry. Although ~~cinnamon sticks look wonderful, don't discount their power—they can be almost as pungent as the~~ ground spice. One benefit of using the sticks is that they don't add the dark color and somewhat gritty texture of ground cinnamon when you're flavoring a punch or hot drink.

**Cloves** Love them or hate them, cloves are another quintessential holiday spice. The small brown unopened flower buds of a tropical myrtle tree, cloves got their name from the French word for nail, referring to the small spike protruding from each bud. Use cloves to add rich, spicy depth to eggnogs, punches, and hot tea drinks. Insert cloves, spiky end first, into whole oranges or lemon wedges to create festive centerpieces and elegant garnishes.

**Nutmeg** Nutmeg is the brown seed of the *Myristica fragrans* evergreen tree, which also produces the spice mace (the seed's outer membrane). Historically used as an aphrodisiac and stomach-pain remedy, it's the principal spice in eggnog and many other holiday delights. You'll also use nutmeg to create special holiday coffees, teas, and punches. Add ground nutmeg to coffee prior to brewing to give it a tinge of holiday spice, use it to gently powder the froth of a mocha latte, or stir it into mulled wine.

**Vanilla** Next to nutmeg, few ingredients are as essential to preparing holiday cocktails as vanilla. Germany's traditional [Grandmother's Punch](#) uses chopped whole vanilla beans; vanilla-bean ice cream is a key ingredient in [Classic Eggnog](#); and vanilla extract is used in all the eggnogs and many of the hot coffee drinks in this book. Vanilla starts its life as the pods of the tropical *Vanilla planifolia* orchid, which acquire their characteristic aroma only after curing. When the pods are steeped in alcohol, their delicate vanilla flavor is released, creating vanilla extract.

## PERISHABLES

**Butter** Butter is made by churning cream, the fatty part of milk, until it reaches a semisolid state. Butter is sold salted, in which salt is added as a preservative; and “sweet,” meaning that it has no salt. Sweet butter adds richness to just one holiday classic in this book: [Hot Buttered Rum](#).

**Eggs** To make classic eggnogs from scratch, you'll need to break a few eggs. As unappetizing as it might sound, raw eggs are the key to making eggnog and its many variations. All the eggnog recipes require you to first separate the yolks from the whites. Usually, the yolks will be stirred with sugar, cocoa, and vanilla to form a batter—the basis of the classic eggnog. The whites are usually whipped until peaks begin to form, and then folded into fresh whipped cream to thicken the topping. You may opt for prepackaged eggnog mixes for fear that a bad egg will spoil the party—a legitimate concern, to be sure. A popular myth holds that in alcoholic eggnogs, the liquor will “cook” the eggs, offsetting any bacteria that may cause illness. The somewhat overcautious USDA disagrees, recommending against consuming raw eggs in any form whatsoever. If you are unwilling to gamble, buy the pasteurized, prepackaged mix sold in your local supermarket. If you are the sporting type, just make sure the eggs you purchase are kept in constant refrigeration until

use, and purchase the freshest eggs possible.

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**Fresh Fruit** No matter what cocktail you'll be serving, it's essential to have fresh fruit on your bar —at a minimum, lemons, limes, and oranges. Cut plenty of orange wheels, and lemon and lime wedges. Peach and apple slices are key for many of the punch recipes, as well as oranges and, of course, fresh strawberries. Try marinating fresh peach slices in your favorite liqueur for several days before adding them to your punch; your guests will get an unexpected burst of flavor.



**CITRUS WEDGES** Slice the fruit in half lengthwise, then quarters, then eighths. Cut a slit about one-third of the way from the corner of each wedge so that it can sit easily on the rim of a glass.

**CRANBERRIES** Lush red cranberries are the perfect cold-weather fruit. Not only do they make for a excellent decoration around the home—strung in a garland over the mantel or set into an evergreen wreath—they also make a delightful fresh garnish for punches. Cranberry juice is an essential ingredient for adding a tart-sweet tang to many holiday punches, and is mixed with Champagne in holiday cocktails such as the ever-popular poinsettia and the old favorite, holiday cheer. For a truly special punch, make your own cranberry juice instead of using the bottled variety by boiling fresh cranberries in a small amount of water until they pop, then pressing the cooked berries through a sieve, extracting the fresh juice. Purchase fresh cranberries during fall and winter at most supermarkets.

**LEMON PEELS AND TWISTS** There are three ways to make your basic lemon peel garnish. Use a citrus zester to make delicate wisps of lemon zest. Or, to make thin shavings of lemon peel, use a vegetable peeler or a small paring knife to cut razor-thin, 1/4-inch slices of rind from the lemon, making sure not to cut into the white part of the peel. To make lemon peel twists, slice off the end of a lemon and make a cut lengthwise around the lemon. Using a long-handled spoon, gently pry the skin off by slipping the spoon between the rind and the fruit. Discard the flesh or reserve for another use. Flatten the peel and cut it crosswise into thin strips. The strips should naturally curl into a “twist.”

**Heavy Cream** Many of the hot drinks in this book call for a topping of fresh whipped cream. Although I am a loyal supporter of Reddi-wip, I encourage you to take the extra five minutes to prepare homemade whipped cream for your guests—you can definitely taste the difference. The key to making fresh whipped cream is getting your heavy cream nice and cold. This can be accomplished quickly by placing a small stainless steel mixing bowl of heavy cream into a larger steel bowl filled with ice. Since heavy cream contains about 40 percent milk fat, it is eager to form a solid, so all you have to do is help it along with a whisk. Merely add a small amount of powdered sugar to the cold cream, and make like Michael Jackson (beat it) using a whisk and arm strength—or better yet, use an electric mixer. After several minutes you will have delicious fresh whipped cream that you can use to top off hot chocolates and eggnogs.

**Other Garnishes** Don't forget the Spanish olives (for martinis and Bloodys), cocktail onions (Gibsons), and maraschino cherries (Tom Collinses, Manhattans, and Shirley Temples).

## THE BAR

Obviously, a good host should have a full bar at the ready—not only for alcoholic and nonalcoholic refreshments during cocktail hour, but also a variety of dinner-hour beverages (such as wine and beer), an after-dinner drink selection (which may include special coffees or teas), and perhaps liqueurs. Below is a guide to the items you should regularly stock that are essential to preparing many of the recipes. In general, the wines and liquors used in mixed drinks need not be of the highest caliber, but they always should be of reputable quality.

**Brandy** From the Dutch word *brandewijn*, meaning “burned wine,” brandy can be any liquor

distilled from wine or fruit juice—and there is a wide variety to choose from.

~~There are three types of brandy: grape brandy, made from wine, such as Cognac; pomace brandy, made from pomaceous (pulpy) fruits like apples and pears, such as applejack; and fruit brandy, made from stone fruits and berries such as cherries, blackberries, and currants.~~

What brandy should you use, then, in recipes that call for it? I always opt for Cognac, the brandy made in the Cognac region of France, which is distilled from excellent wine and aged in oak barrels. For mixing, or for hot toddies, regular (non-VSOP) Courvoisier or Hennessy make excellent choices. For sipping, start with Remy VSOP, and work your way up. Great brandy can also be had from Portugal, Spain, and even Chile. Greeks prefer Metaxa, a local brandy made from red grapes and sweetened with herbs. Fruit brandies such as Calvados are generally to be avoided in recipes that call for generic brandy, which refers to the less sweet, Cognac-type liquors. Save the fruit brandies for an after-dinner digestif.

You'll use brandy in most eggnog recipes, many punch recipes, and—of course—the hot toddy. So getting to know what brandy suits you is important. For punches and nogs, stick with the less expensive Cognacs, since the delicate flavors of the finer ones will be lost. But in the singular case of the hot toddy, where brandy is the principal ingredient, select a quality Cognac or fine Spanish brandy.

**Gin** Before the fall of the czars brought Russian immigrants—and their vodka-drinking customs—to the rest of Europe and beyond, gin was America's favorite clear liquor. Made popular in England (London, specifically), gin is distilled from grains such as corn, rye, or barley. Pungent and tangy, gin gets its unique flavor from the distillation of a variety of herbs and berries (botanicals including juniper berries, coriander, citrus peel, and black pepper).

**Rum** This liquor is the distilled essence of the sugar cane plant, a member of the grass family that originated in New Guinea. Some rums are made with the freshly extracted sugar cane juice, and others are made from molasses, a byproduct of the sugar refining process. Rum gets its distinctive flavor from distillation (the process by which the fermented sugar cane is converted to alcohol) and aging (when the distilled liquor matures in oak barrels that once contained whiskey or bourbon). Any rum aged in an oak cask will eventually mature into "dark" rum as it takes on the flavor embedded in the oak. Rums range in color from clear to golden brown to dark black, depending on how and where they are aged. White (or clear) rums are not usually sipped straight, while the generally more complex darkest rums can be enjoyed as you would a fine Cognac. Rum, like scotch and bourbon, benefits from aging, which results in a smoother, less "alcoholic" liquor.

Rum is an essential ingredient in many of the punch recipes. Unlike some cocktails (planter punch is one example) in which the rum is hidden by lots of sweet fruit flavors, most punches in this book seek to enhance, rather than cover up, the flavor of the rum—so don't skimp. Purchase dark, aged (añejo) rum from Puerto Rico or Jamaica—and don't be afraid to experiment with lesser-known but equally good brands from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and some Central American countries.

**Tequila** Made from the fermented and distilled nectar of the agave plant (a huge, artichoke-like member of the lily family), tequila is a fine substitute for vodka in many Bloody recipes. White or silver (blanco or plata) tequilas are the lightest; reposado ("rested" in Spanish) tequilas are darke



and aged at least six months; and añejo (“aged”) tequilas are the richest and darkest.

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**Vodka** For cocktails, you could probably stock your home bar exclusively with vodka and call it a day. Bloody Marys, vodka tonics, sea breezes, bay breezes, madras cocktails, martinis, and dozens of other highly popular drinks call for vodka. Originating in Poland, vodka was first distilled from potatoes, but now is made from other base ingredients too, including rye, wheat, and corn. Today’s superpremium vodkas are superbly smooth, the result of a long distillation process that siphons off impurities. These boutique vodkas are great for sipping, but for mixed drinks, a moderately priced vodka is just right. To be safe, always keep a minimum of two liters of vodka on hand for a party and keep another bottle behind the bar.

**Whiskey** Whiskeys are made from the fermented mash of grains such as rye, corn, barley, and wheat. There are literally thousands of different types, all varying widely in taste and strength depending on what grain they are produced from, the length of the aging process, and in what type of container they are aged. The three principal types of whiskey to have on hand, in order of importance, are scotch, bourbon, and rye.

**BOURBON** Bourbon has been the preferred American whiskey for more than two hundred years. Made from a mash of grain that contains a minimum of 51 percent corn, bourbon is aged for at least two years in charred barrels. Kentucky is the true heart of bourbon country, although Tennessee whiskeys (the same as bourbon, really) are fiercely competitive.

**IRISH WHISKEY** More delicate and not as “peaty,” the better Irish whiskeys can match the depth and complexity of fine scotches. The sprouted barley used to make Irish whiskey is dried in a kiln rather than over peat fires, and it’s triple distilled for a lighter taste—perfect for Irish coffee.

**RYE WHISKEY** This whiskey is made according to a process similar to bourbon’s, but it’s made from a mash of grain with 51 percent rye. Nowadays, rye whiskey (also known popularly as Canadian whiskey—think Canadian Club) is more popular with the over-sixty set, and is found most often in drinks like Manhattans and old-fashioned.

**SCOTCH WHISKEY** Scotch whiskey, which many connoisseurs claim is the result of the highest form of whiskey-making art, is available in two varieties: single-malt (or “malt”) whiskey and blended whiskey. Single malts are made exclusively from malt barley that is distilled in old-fashioned pot stills. Sprouted barley is dried over peat fires and made into a malt, which is slowly distilled and aged for a minimum of three years, but often as many as eight years. While not as varied as wine, there are hundreds of regional Scottish malt whiskeys, distinguished by their own unique flavors. Blended scotches are usually less expensive and offer a smooth and consistent flavor.

## Other Essentials

**CRÈME DE CACAO** This liqueur comes in handy for only one cocktail—in this case, the chocolate martini. Creme de cacao is a sweet liqueur imbued with the flavor of cocoa—it is, basically,

alcoholic chocolate. There are two varieties: dark, which looks like liquid dark chocolate, and clear, which is perfect for chocolate martinis.

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**CRÈME DE CASSIS** Used in the kir royale, creme de cassis is a sweet, dark-red liqueur made by infusing and macerating rum with black currants.

**CRÈME DE MENTHE** Yet another item that will gather dust on the bottom shelf of your bar is creme de menthe, the cloyingly sweet mint liqueur that comes both clear and in a bright green color. Inexpensive and noxious beverage on its own, creme de menthe is your secret weapon for creating several unique and flavorful hot drinks. A half-ounce added to strong coffee creates an eye-opening flavor and fresh aroma, and a bit more added to homemade hot chocolate is simply heaven on earth—a liquid peppermint patty with a kick. Opt for the clear version for mixing drinks.

**CRÈME DE NOYEAUX** Creme de noyaux is a white-colored almond-flavored liqueur, used in the novelty holiday drink called the [Candy Cane](#). Purchase it only if you decide to make this cocktail, although some like a shot of it in their coffee.

**MANDARINE NAPOLÉON** This Belgian liqueur made from Sicilian tangerines is one of the few sweet liqueurs that I've enjoyed on its own (Grand Marnier is another, and they are close cousins). If you're making the traditional Italian Riviera cocktail, you'll need at least a small bottle. If you can't find it, substitute Grand Marnier.

**TRIPLE SEC** Given the popularity of the margarita, triple sec is fairly common in the household bar. Although the literal translation of triple sec means "triple-dry," in the case of this orange-flavored liqueur it means "triple-distilled." Generic brands of triple sec aren't nearly as delicious as brand name ones like Cointreau and Grand Marnier. Triple sec is key to making New Year's Eve punch, sangria, the poinsettia, and morning glory cocktails.

**VERMOUTH** Vermouth is a type of sweet fortified wine, infused with sugar and herbs. It can be drunk as an aperitif, but is most commonly used in tiny amounts for mixing martinis and Manhattans. There are two principal types: dry vermouth, which is white and contains 5 percent or less residual sugar; and sweet vermouth, which can be white or red, and contains approximately 10 percent residual sugar.



## WINES

These days, “softer” drinks have become so popular that it’s common to go to a party where only beer, wine, and soda are served. Wine also adds great flavor and depth to many of the winter-themed drinks that follow. Plan on two bottles of wine for every five guests. Double that if you are serving only beer and wine or if you are having a dinner party.

### Champagne:

**THE ULTIMATE HOLIDAY DRINK** In more civilized times, serving champagne was a prerequisite for entertaining. Guests would be offered a glass of champagne immediately upon arriving, and glasses would be kept filled throughout dinner, ready for toasts. This formal custom has survived, but barely—usually just for weddings and other special events. Try to have at least some bubbly at all of your parties—even if it’s just enough for a single toast.

Only sparkling wine that hails from the Champagne region of France and adheres to the strictly regulated *methode champenoise* may be called Champagne. Champagne can be made from three grape varieties, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay, and is often a mixture of the three. Its sweetness ranges from extra brut (very dry) to doux (very sweet), depending on the amount of sugar added during the second fermentation (the one that produces the bubbles). The most popular variety and the type most suitable to the Champagne drink recipes that follow, is brut. It’s also the style you’re most likely to encounter in your local liquor store.

Depending on your taste and budget, you may opt for vintage Champagne—a wine produced in especially good years. Some phenomenal years for Champagne were 1979, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1995.

Also keep in mind that even if the tried-and-true *methode champenoise* process that Dom Perignon perfected is used in creating the wine, only wines from Champagne may be called such.

That being said, there are many great wines that sparkle besides those produced in Champagne—especially those from Italy and California. Choosing a less expensive sparkling wine from California is the way to go when mixing a large bowl of punch; the subtlety of fine Champagne would be lost in the fruity mix.



**SERVING CHAMPAGNE** Champagne should be served in the proper glass: a long-stemmed flute or tulip-shaped glass, which enhances the flow of bubbles and concentrates the aroma of the wine. Make sure your Champagne is cold, but not too cold: twenty minutes in an ice bucket should get the wine down to about 45 degrees, the temperature at which its flavor and nose are at their best. Open the Champagne quietly and carefully: gently ease the cork out of the bottle, using a cloth napkin to guard against spillage and a flying cork. The cork should gently hiss as it is released—no more than that. Popping the cork is not only dangerous, it wastes the precious bubbles that are the lifeblood of fine Champagne. Pour your Champagne properly by placing your thumb into the punt (indent) at the bottom of the bottle, spreading your fingers around its barrel. Gently pour about a half inch into the glass, allowing the head to dissipate. Top off each glass to the two-thirds mark, which will prevent any wine from frothing over.

**Port** Port is a fortified wine from the remote vineyards in Portugal's Douro Valley. As with Champagne, there are other countries that produce port-like wines, but only a fortified wine from the Douro Valley can be properly referred to as port. Also like Champagne, port is one of the most heavily regulated wines in the world: all the grapes that go into its production must be classified and graded, and only the finest grapes in a single year are made into port.

Of the more than ninety different varieties of grapes grown in the Douro Valley, only five are considered good enough for port production, and the variety called Touriga Nacional is considered the best. Ports can be aged in the bottle or in the cask. Bottle-aged ports are better, since the wine can age for longer periods without losing its richness and fruit. Cask-aged ports lose some of their rich, red color, becoming "tawny."

There are several classifications of port based on quality. Here are the least to most expensive: ruby (an inexpensive port, aged two to three years); tawny (aged several years longer, and

sometimes mixed with white port to create the “tawny” lighter red appearance); aged tawny (high-quality port that can be aged for forty years or more); vintage character (a premium ruby-port’s version of Beaujolais Nouveau); and vintage (the rarest, comprising under 2 percent of a port production—the best of the best, with prices to match). Great vintage port years are few and far between: 1970, 1977, 1985, 1991, 1992, and 1994 are considered the best recent vintages.

Don’t break the bank buying a vintage bottle to make glogg—just purchase a less expensive tawny or vintage character port and stick to familiar brands like Sandeman or Dow’s.

**Sherry** Sherry is Spain’s fortified wine, produced in a small area in the southwest corner of the country. The entire universe of sherry centers around three towns; Jerez de la Frontera, being the most widely recognized, is known for producing the richest, darkest sherries. In addition to regional distinctions, there are two basic types of sherry to choose from: fino and oloroso. Matured in barrels, fino sherries grow a coating of yeast known as *flor* on the surface, which reduces oxidation and results in a lighter wine. Tio Pepe is a popular and widely imported fino sherry. Oloroso doesn’t develop *flor* because it is aged in the open air, and the oxidation that occurs results in a much richer, darker wine.

To fully enjoy sherry you need the proper glass. Connoisseurs prefer a tulip-shaped glass that narrows toward the rim, which funnels the sherry’s rich bouquet directly to the nose.

## MIXERS

**Bitters** I’ve probably mixed a few hundred thousand drinks, but used bitters just a few dozen times—mostly to make old-fashioned. Nevertheless, even the casual home barkeeper must have at least a small bottle of bitters on hand, if only to give the appearance of a true mixologist. Developed in 1824 by Dr. Johann Siegert to combat stomach ailments and fever, his “aromatic bitters” quickly found world renown as a beverage additive, rather than a cure. Bitters are, as the name clearly indicates, bitter. Made from a mixture of more than forty herbs and spices (such as saffron and cardamom), bitters add a dry, bittersweet tang to sangria, Champagne cocktails, and punches. Bitters can be purchased at any liquor store; “angostura” is the type you’ll most likely find. Since you use only a few drops at a time, buy the smallest bottle.

**Cider** Apple cider is made from pressed apples, and can be of varying quality. You will usually find the best cider where (no surprise) you find the best apples: farmers’ markets, farm stands, and reliable grocers. Sweet cider is just raw, unfiltered apple juice that, when fermented, becomes hard cider. The recipes in this book that call for apple cider ([Spiced Cider](#); [Wassail Bowl](#); [Dad DeGroff’s Harvest Moon Punch](#); [Cranberry Tea Punch](#)) refer to nonalcoholic (sweet) cider. If you want to create your own hard cider, just ignore the jug of cider in your refrigerator for about a month, and you’ll have some.

**Ginger Ale** In the early nineteenth century, pubs in England used to keep powdered ginger on the bar so patrons could sprinkle some in their drink—a custom that eventually brought us ginger ale. Some of the old-fashioned punch recipes call for a tiny pinch of ginger; others call for ginger ale.

give a tart, sweet sparkle to fruit juices. Ginger ale can be substituted for Champagne in many of the champagne punch recipes when making beverages for children, teetotalers, and designated drivers—just add less sugar. I generally like to serve both punches side by side (and usually put on a small place card indicating which is spiked) so non-imbibers can feel part of the crowd without having to ask the host if the punch has liquor in it.

**Grenadine** Basically pomegranate syrup, red grenadine adds a bit of sweetness—and lots of red color—to punches, fruit-based cocktails, and kid's drinks like the Shirley Temple. A splash of grenadine can also be used in a punch to adjust color or to smooth out excessive acidity. Rose's (the ever-popular lime juice) makes a quality grenadine, which can be purchased at any liquor store and at many grocery stores.

**Juices** A good bar always has some tomato juice in it, usually for the sole purpose of making Bloody Marys. The problem with stocking tomato juice for the home bar is that you invariably wind up with too much of it, and end up having to throw away a whole can in order to make one drink or two. The solution is to buy the eight-packs of small cans that you can find at many supermarkets and beverage distributors. Another option is to stock some resealable plastic bottles of Clamato juice, a blend of tomato, clam juice, and spices. Mix vodka, Clamato, and just a drop of Tabasco sauce to create the perfect Bloody Caesar.

You will probably have a few screwdriver or madras (vodka, cranberry juice, and orange juice) drinkers, or some kids and designated drivers around, so be sure to have plenty of orange juice on hand.

You should have at least a half-gallon of grapefruit, cranberry, and pineapple juices—or even as much as a gallon of cranberry and grapefruit juices—for making drinks such as bay and sarsaparilla breezes or sparkling vodka drinks that take a splash of juice.

A small bottle of Rose's lime juice should suffice for the odd gimlet request. For cocktails that call for lemon juice, keep a few fresh lemons and a small hand juicer ready.

**Lemonade** If you're making a punch that calls for lemonade, make it from scratch rather than using a prepared or frozen variety. There's nothing better than the tart, natural sweetness of fresh lemon juice to perk up a punch. And there is nothing easier than making fresh lemonade: combine 4 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice, 1 teaspoon of superfine sugar, and 1 cup of water (increase all ingredients proportionally for larger quantities). Use fresh lemonade to adjust the acidity in any fruit-based punch.

**Simple Syrup** An essential part of the professional mixologist's armory is simple syrup—a mixture of water and sugar that dissolves easily into cocktails, sweetening without the grittiness of sugar granules. Also known as sugar syrup or *sirop de gomme*, simple syrup is made by combining equal parts of sugar and water and simply boiling the mixture until clear. You'll need it to prepare Champagne cocktails and sangria, and it's handy, too, for a whiskey sour, Tom Collins, or margarita.

**Sodas** For every ten guests, plan on stocking these mixers: four liters of cola, diet cola, lemon lime soda, and club soda; two liters of ginger ale, seltzer, and tonic water.

# TOOLS

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**Cocktail Shaker** James Bond's unorthodox preference for martinis—shaken, not stirred—created a resurgence for the drink in the 1960s that has lasted to this day. Part of the allure of the martini is the almost scientific attention to detail involved and, of course, the use of cool bar equipment like the cocktail shaker.

Back in the late nineteenth century, shakers were simple affairs—usually just two glasses of slightly different size whose mouths fit tightly together. During the twenties, the golden age of the cocktail, they became more elaborate, and strainers were added.

Stainless steel is the bartenders' material of choice since it chills beverages quickly. Be sure to have a long-handled spoon to go along with your shaker.

**Gelatin Ring Mold** A gelatin mold is perfect for making ice rings. Ice rings—frozen circles made from the ingredients in the punch itself—are simple to prepare and keep the punch cold while adding a touch of glamour. Since your punch will likely spend a few hours sitting on a table, keeping it cold with ice cubes would only water the punch down—effectively killing it.

Choose your ice ring ingredients carefully to complement, but not overpower, your punch. For example, if the punch recipe calls for orange juice, make your ice ring into half orange juice and half water, adding some orange slices.

**Grater** A multipurpose grater with small and large holes comes in handy for grating fresh nutmeg and shaving chocolate to garnish hot coffee drinks and cocktails like the chocolate eggnog and chocolate martini.

**Punch Bowls** Nothing can spoil all the hard work of a special punch faster than not having the proper bowl or a large enough ladle. Even the largest salad bowls aren't really big enough to hold the amount of punch necessary to serve even a small crowd. If you don't happen to have a punch bowl or another vessel of such titanic proportions, visit a kitchen- or houseware store or check with your local caterers: they often sell or rent them for a reasonable price. Make sure to get some ladles while you're at it, preferably those big enough for the task at hand—dispensing cup-sized portions of liquid.

**Whisk** For preparing a traditional eggnog, you'll need a good wire whisk to beat the egg yolk batter and to whip the egg whites for the topping.

**Other Equipment** Last, but not least, don't forget the cocktail napkins, plastic stirrers, and toothpicks (for spearing garnishes). Make sure to have a half-pound of ice for each guest—it's surprising how quickly ice disappears at parties. And put out a large, ice-filled container: it's essential for keeping your wine and beer cold but not hidden away in the fridge. Ice the bottles down about a half-hour before your guests arrive, being sure not to overfill the container with ice at first (you'll need to continually add ice throughout the party).

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NOGS,  
*AND* CIDERS,  
TODDIES



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