

# organic, shaken and stirred

hip highballs,  
modern martinis,  
and other  
totally green  
cocktails

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I'm sure I've forgotten to thank many others. I'd blame cocktails, but the fault is all mine. I owe you a drink.

# Introduction

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Forget painting the town red: Today's smart set is painting the town green. As in organic-cocktail green.

The hottest trend in the bar scene these days is eco-chic cocktails. We're not talking froufrou frappés or the tippler's equivalent of tofu. These are real drinks. Cutting-edge restaurants and bars are concocting healthful libations with fresh produce and unadulterated alcohol. Organic distilleries are popping up. Even prefab cocktail mixers, once the tint and taste of nothing found in nature, are going organic.

People are pouring organic cocktails for many of the same reasons they're choosing organic food—to avoid artificial ingredients, including synthetic pesticides, that are harmful to their bodies as well as to the land and ecosystems, and to help support sustainable farming and environmentally friendly packaging. (Think of it as giving new meaning to the phrase "drinking responsibly.")

The growing awareness of organic foods' benefits to our bodies and our planet is finding expression in a culinary approach to cocktails. "The kitchen is heading to the bar," says Natalie Bovio Nelsen, who teaches The Liquid Muse Sustainable Sips eco-friendly cocktail classes around the nation. "Mixologists, bartenders, and even home cocktailians are discovering that organic ingredients, from fresh fruits to herbs, also make killer cocktails."

Or as Gina Chersevani, bartender at the Washington, D.C., restaurant PS 7's, puts it: "You don't have to sacrifice taste and health just because you're going out nightclubbing." What's more, medical experts say that organic alcohol is lower in methanol—the toxin responsible for hangovers—than the nonorganic variety, which may mean one less reason to regret last night's revelry.

Walk into any halfway hip restaurant or bar, and you'll see that Gina is but one member of a growing movement that is shaking up the world of spirits. Few are as inspired in bringing natural ingredients to the bar as H. Joseph Ehrmann. He's so committed to preparing perfectly organic cocktails that his San Francisco saloon Elixir is officially recognized as one of the city's first green businesses. And if there is such a thing as a healthy cocktail, Trudy Thomas is making them. At the Camelback Inn resort and spa in Scottsdale, Arizona, where she is beverage director, Trudy is working her own artisanal alchemy with original concoctions such as her Detox Margarita and other spainspired delicacies fashioned from all manner of seasonal organic fruit and herb purees.

The recipes in *Organic, Shaken and Stirred* will let you join the fun. The book is a concise yet power-packed organic cocktail how-to, offering everything from tips on where and how to score the best organic herbs, fruits, veggies, and liquors around town—and the planet—to goof-proof instructions for assembling dozens of updated classics and wildly inventive new creations from the food world's superstar mixologists. I've consulted today's best and brightest creators of organic cocktails, and in these pages you'll find dozens of their most popular drinks, plus some of my own variations. Come to think of it, you can be served many of these drinks by their creators, whose bars and restaurants are listed in the Drink Credits section beginning on [\[>\]](#). Finding the right recipe for any mood or occasion is as easy as heading to one of the book's four chapters organized by flavor—Clean and Classic, Lush and Fruity, Fresh and Zesty, and From the Garden—or to the Punch and Pitcher chapter, which features drinks that are perfect to enjoy with friends.

*Organic, Shaken and Stirred* will guide you as you shop, shake, and sip your way to a whole new manner of enjoying what's in your cocktail glass. I'll help you brush up on key mixology skills, get a grip on what bar gear you do (and don't) need, and learn to make the organic cocktail world's most mouthwatering libations.

Let's raise the bar and toast to a fresh new take on the cocktail tradition.



## Stocking the Green Bar

Whether you are a professional bartender or the proud owner of a couple of highball glasses left over from college, there is one simple rule for stocking your organic cocktail bar: No drink ever rises above the quality of its ingredients.

The advantages of avoiding pesticides, fertilizers, or fungicides in your alcohol are manifold. Spirits are distilled, and some distillers believe that organically grown grains, sugarcane, and potatoes have better cell structure than their nonorganic counterparts and that their natural microorganisms encourage the process of fermentation. According to many distillers, allowing natural microorganisms (rather than various so-called enhancers, or enzymes, that speed up and intensify the fermentation process) to encourage fermentation results in a cleaner, purer product and better-tasting spirits.

What's more, organic growing methods are healthier for growers, more sustainable, and kinder to the land and water, and result in food that often plain tastes better—a lot better.

Distilleries and others in the cocktail-industrial complex are paying attention to the organic trend. Since organic-spirits pioneer Allison Evanow launched Square One Organic Spirits with vodka made from 100 percent organic American rye several years ago, she has been joined almost monthly by new commercial producers of organic liquors. Even mixers are getting the organic treatment.

Anybody who goes to the trouble of making a certified organic spirit will tout this designation—adorning bottle labels with the word "organic" and proudly displaying official credentials such as the USDA Organic logo. Yet many spirits unable to earn the right to be labeled organic are made with organic ingredients and can be found easily through an Internet search. Better yet, drop by your neighborhood liquor store and seek out the help of the more seasoned employees or managers. Shops that carry fine wines or have staffers with job titles like "senior beverage consultant" or "sommelier" are most likely to offer guidance in finding good organic cocktail ingredients.

What follows is an overview of what's going on in ecologically friendly imbibing. Please check the Online Resources section ([\[>\]](#)) for the websites of the companies discussed if you'd like more information.

## Organic (And Almost Organic) Vodka

Square One Organic Spirits released its first vodka in 2006, making this northern California company a relative old hand at turning out organic spirits. Like many start-ups in the spirits world, Square One does no distilling. Rather, it contracts with an Idaho distillery that uses 100 percent organically grown rye from North Dakota and water from Wyoming's Teton Mountain Range to create certified organic vodka. The result is among the very best organic vodkas. Super supple and clean, with earthy hints of rye, Square One's vodka has a versatility that makes it great in any cocktail—including martinis, which are unforgiving of lesser spirits. Square One vodka is also fine for sipping straight. Square One, headed by Allison Evanow, was among the first to introduce cucumber-flavored vodka; also rye-based, Square One Cucumber has excellent flavor and is (so far) the best in breed.

Square One also aims to be environmentally responsible. Byproducts from the fermentation of the rye used in its products become feed at nearby cattle farms. The company's bottle labels are made

using bamboo pulp, sugarcane, cotton, and soy-based inks. And Square One is exploring the use of recycled glass for its bottles.

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California's Napa Valley is home to hundreds of wineries, including the family-owned Charbay Winery & Distillery, which produces spirits of amazing quality and variety. Most of its vodkas aren't certified organic, though they are made with all-natural ingredients and are of very high quality. Organic fruits are used to make the distillery's excellent blood orange-, pomegranate-, and Meyer lemon-flavored vodkas.

Organic corn grown by a co-op of some 900 Minnesota farmers is transformed by Minneapolis's Phillips Distilling Company into velvety smooth Prairie Organic Vodka. Leftover corncobs and other biomass get recycled as fuel to power the stills.

Also from Minnesota is Crop Harvest Earth Company's trio of organic corn vodkas in straight, tomato, and cucumber flavors. All are excellent—especially the tomato version.

Certified organic and made from American grain, Vodka 14 is, like Square One, distilled in Idaho. But in blending and packaging its product, Vodka 14's maker, Altitude Spirits, goes the proverbial extra mile, opting for more ecologically friendly baked-on ink labels. Bottles are sealed with recyclable synthetic cork closures. Vodka 14 is sold in Colorado and parts of Tennessee, and can also be purchased online.

Launched several years ago in the California kitchen of Melkon Khosrovian and his wife, Litty Mathew, Modern Spirits sells a handful of organic spirits under the TRU label. The company's trio of certified organic vodkas made from American wheat includes straight, lemon, and vanilla flavors (the company also produces an organic gin). Modern Spirits is meticulous in its techniques, such as hand zesting organic California lemons and hand scraping organic bourbon vanilla beans. The results are very fine and smooth vodkas. What's more, TRU's green credentials include using soy-based inks and tree-free paper for labels, and recycled, recyclable, or biodegradable packaging. Plus, the company pledges to plant a tree for every bottle sold.

360 Vodka is good stuff, but it is not organic. However, Missouri-based maker McCormick Distilling is powered by renewable energy and uses environmentally friendly packaging, including bottles made from mostly recycled glass. For every one of the company's swing-top bottle closures you return in a prepaid envelope, the company donates a dollar to environmental groups.

Vermont's Green Mountain Distillers produces Sunshine Vodka, made from organic American corn. However, the product has limited distribution, so look for it online.

Even Anheuser-Busch, maker of Budweiser, is getting into the green-spirits game with its Purus brand of organic vodka, which is made in northern Italy from locally harvested organic wheat and alpine water. The labels are made using tree-free paper and soy-based inks.

Spunky Oregon micro-distillery Cascade Peak Spirits joins Square One as a woman-led company producing great vodka made from organic rye. Cascade Peak president and CEO Diane Paulson recently added a gin to the Organic Nation, or O-N, brand, and plans to introduce infused spirits and whiskey. Organic Nation spirits are available at select retailers around the country and online.

Colorado distillery Peak Spirits produces an ambitious—and delicious—array of organic spirits using fruit from its own organic orchards, including CapRock Organic Vodka. Made from organic grapes and mountain spring water, this certified organic vodka has a very nice round, clean taste. As of this writing, it is available only in Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico.

Orange V Vodka is made using 100 percent organic grains, though the citrus juices used to infuse it are not organic. This is one nicely balanced infusion, nonetheless.

Like its name suggests, Utkins UK5 Organic Vodka comes from Britain. Made by Organic Spirit Company with organic rye from Germany, UK5 is credited with being the first certified organic vodka in the world. It's also the only unfiltered vodka, which would matter if there were any impurities to

filter out. As it turns out, this is a very clean and smooth-tasting vodka.

~~Made in Kentucky from organic white corn grown in Illinois, Rain Organics Vodka is very light and mixes well with other ingredients. In addition to a straight vodka, the company also produces certified organic vodkas featuring new flavor combinations, including Cucumber Lime, Honey Mango Melon, Red Grape Hibiscus, and Lavender Lemonade.~~

The Norway-based vodka producer Christiania, which touts its product as "the world's smoothest vodka," gets its name from Norwegian King Christian IV, who in 1602 commissioned the recipe for this spirit. Made from organic Trondelag potatoes, this vodka has a faintly sweet quality.

While not technically organic, Hangar One Vodka is handmade with such love and fresh, high-quality ingredients (nothing artificial, no additives) that it deserves to be listed here. Distilled from pricey Viognier wine and blended with wheat vodka, Hangar One Vodka is wonderfully clean and pure. Craft Distillers, which makes Hangar One, also produces delicious fruit-infused vodkas, including Citron Buddha's Hand, Fraser River Raspberry, Kaffir Lime, and Mandarin Blossom versions.

And from Iceland, the land that gave the world Björk, comes Reyka, a wheat and barley grain vodka that, although not certified organic, may owe much of its super clean taste to the ecologically conscious way it's produced. The company uses geothermal steam to power its distillery and indigenous lava rock to filter the spirit (most vodka is filtered through manmade charcoal).

## Organic Gin

Gin has come a long way from the bathtub and kitchen sink, where Prohibition-era partyers used to cook up batches of it. Inspired by gin's recent renaissance, craft distillers are creating organic gins of high quality and distinct style.

Gin is basically vodka distilled with botanicals. The quality and quantity of botanicals used is crucial to a gin's taste. Construction begins with juniper berries, though any number of other herbs and roots can be included, depending on the taste you're going for.

The production of organic gins is, thankfully, catching up to that of vodka. Among the better brands is Juniper Green Organic Gin, fittingly distilled in central London, the town that made gin infamous in the mid eighteenth century, when gin consumption was rampant and its effects so destructive that gin was nicknamed "mother's ruin." Made with a riot of organic juniper berries, coriander, angelica root, and savory, Juniper Green is a very flavorful gin, but it won't overpower other ingredients in a cocktail.

Philadelphia Distilling, a craft producer of gin in Pennsylvania, is making Bluecoat American Dry Gin, an American-style (read: cleaner) gin made with organic juniper berries, which give it a nice spicy earthiness, along with angelica root and citrus peel. It's currently available in a number of states and online.

Colorado-based Peak Spirits produces a wonderfully balanced and flavorful spirit, CapRock Organic Dry Gin, made with a blend of high-desert fruits, blossoms, and spices, which are infused in an organic apple distillate. At this time, it is available only at retailers and restaurants in Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico.

Cascade Peak Spirits' Organic Nation, or O-N, brand gin has a gentle herbaceous quality that makes for a versatile mixer. Organic Nation spirits currently are available only in Oregon.

## Organic Rum

Distilled from fermented sugarcane juice or molasses, rum is one of the most versatile cocktail spirits. Organic versions are just now catching up to the demand. Among the first and best are Papagayo Organic White Rum, Papagayo Organic Fair Trade Golden Rum, and Papagayo Organic Spiced Rum. Made in Paraguay from sugarcane grown on small family farms, these award-winning rums can be tricky to find in the U.S., but the White and Spiced versions are imported here by Maison Jomere. Another organic option is Utkins Fair Trade White Rum, produced by Paraguayan farmers who are guaranteed a fair trade price for their produce.

Distilled from organic sugarcane juice, Rhum Clément Première Canne Premium Rum from Martinique is a wonderfully fruity white rum. Waste cane gets reused as fuel to power the distillery.

A close cousin to rum is cachaça (pronounced ka-SHAH-sa), Brazil's biggest cultural export since the samba and the key ingredient in its national drink, the Caipirinha. Unlike rum, which is made from fermented sugarcane juice and then aged in oak barrels, cachaça is made from fresh sugarcane juice.

Though not yet certified organic, Cuca Fresca's cachaças are distilled slowly and in small batches from organically grown and hand-cut Brazilian sugarcane. Cuca Fresca's premium silver cachaça tastes very fresh and bright. Its Pura Gold gets its honey hues and mellow smoothness from more than three years of aging in oak barrels. Cuca Fresca's interest in environmental responsibility includes fundraising and donating a portion of the company's proceeds to rain forest conservation efforts.

## Organic Tequila

Tequila is already one of the most natural of spirits. To be called tequila, it must be made entirely from natural blue agave plants grown and harvested only in the Mexican states of Guanajuato, Michoacan, Jalisco, Mayarit, or Tamaulipas. The world's first—and so far only—USDA-certified organic tequila, 4 Copas, goes further, eschewing all pesticides and using only organic yeast to kick-start fermentation. Waste is composted and used as fertilizer for the company's agave plants. The methane gas created during production is captured and used to fire 4 Copas's distillery steam engines. The company makes four kinds of tequila—blanco, reposado, añejo, and extra-añejo—all of which are excellent. Blanco, or "white," tequila is bottled immediately after being distilled; reposado, or "rested," tequila has remained in wood casks for a period of more than two months but no longer than twelve; añejo, meaning "vintage," refers to bottles aged for a minimum of one year; and extra-añejo, or "ultra-aged," has been aged for at least three years. In addition, 4 Copas produces special-release tequilas, including an añejo in a bottle festooned with a sea turtle, with all proceeds donated to sea turtle conservation.

## Bourbon, Rye, and Scotch

Only a few organic whiskeys exist, but some are more ecologically friendly—and tastier—than others. Whiskeys include any distilled spirit that's made from grain and aged until it develops the particular taste commonly associated with whiskey. Those most commonly used as cocktail ingredients are the American spirits bourbon and rye whiskey. Bourbons are made mostly of corn; ryes must be made from at least 51 percent rye grain.

For bourbon, I recommend Maker's Mark. It may not be organic, and it is a behemoth brand, but it could teach craft brewers a thing or two about being earth friendly. In fact, the company is a leader in sustainable distilling, with a distillery set on a state-certified nature preserve and a state-of-the-art



recycling and wastewater treatment facility. Maker's Mark recently began using anaerobic digestion, a process that turns waste into bio-gas that is then used as a source of energy, offsetting up to 30 percent of the distillery's natural gas use. And, most importantly, Maker's Mark turns out some very fine bourbon.

Ecologically minded choices are fewer for rye whiskey. For taste, I prefer Russell's Reserve Rye, which, while not organic, is wonderfully spicy and lively and is also widely available.

Scotch whisky ("whisky" is spelled without the "e" if it comes from Scotland) tends to have an assertive personality that doesn't always mix well in cocktails. Still, I'd like to say hic-hic-hooray for a pair of organic Scotch whiskies. Highland Harvest Organic Scotch Whisky, made from a blend of three organic malts and an organic grain, is a fine choice for sipping in a glass with a few drops of water. Benromach Organic Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky is made from organic barley and yeast and is aged at least three years. It's rich and delicious, if pricey.

## Organic Wine and Champagne

Organic spirits may just be taking off, but organic wines—including bubbly—are already well established. And they're becoming more popular all the time.

Labeling on organic wines can be confusing. To be called organic in the United States, a wine must be made from organically grown grapes and produced according to organic manufacturing standards. Sulfites, which are used as preservatives and stabilizers, cannot be added to these wines. However, some wines that are categorized as being made from organic grapes may have sulfites added. The addition of sulfites is debated endlessly, but it's not as consequential as it might sound. Sulfites are a problem primarily for people who have a sensitivity to them or are allergic to sulfites—for them, consumption of sulfites can lead to serious health problems. For most people, a more important consideration is whether a winery makes good wine and does so as a responsible steward of its land.

Terms like "biodynamic" and "sustainable" can add to label confusion. Grapes grown using biodynamic farming methods typically have not been subject to pesticides and other artificial chemicals; this approach also attempts to consider celestial (i.e., astrological) influences on soil and plant development to achieve the best results. Meanwhile, wine producers that tout their sustainable agriculture practices are primarily focused on being able to make their products without causing severe or irreversible damage to the environment. However, there are no set standards for what it means for a wine to be made sustainably, so this designation is all but meaningless unless you're familiar with a winery's practices. In other words, it's more meaningful for a wine label to include the word "organic" than "biodynamic" or "sustainable."

The popularity of organic wines around the globe hasn't yet led to consensus on certification and labeling. Indeed, French wines—including the famed bubbly from France's Champagne region—can be labeled organic without certification. This doesn't mean they aren't organic. Many wineries forego getting their wines certified organic because, with regulations and definitions still being debated, doing so can be a costly hassle. Skeptical consumers may prefer to seek out wines dubbed organic by reputable organizations such as the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements or affiliated groups. Of course, a little research online can help unearth organic impostors. With so many organic wines available, it's hard to single out the best producers, much less individual bottles. Your best bet is to cultivate a relationship with a knowledgeable local wine merchant, who can point you to good organic wines.



## Other Organic Spirits and Liqueurs

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VeeV açai (pronounced ah-SIGH-ee) spirit is not certified organic, but its ingredients include organic American winter wheat and wild açai berries harvested from the Amazon rain forest. Açai is considered the preeminent "superfruit," containing 57 percent more antioxidants than pomegranates or blueberries and 30 times more heart-healthy anthocyanins than red wine. These dark berries also give this exotic spirit a delicate, floral cherry-and-licorice taste. Los Angeles-based VeeV is no slouch in its efforts to be green. A certified carbon neutral company, it uses wind-generated electricity to power its distillery, uses recycled paper packaging and soy-based inks on labels, and donates one dollar for each bottle sold to efforts to preserve the Brazilian rain forest.

Started by Californians Lisa Averbuch and Sabrina Moreno-Dolan in a loft apartment, the aptly named LOFT Organic Liqueurs produces certified organic spirits featuring the flavors of lavender, lemongrass, and spicy ginger. The company is also tinkering with seasonal flavors such as tangerine. Made in a manner similar to the Italian liqueur limoncello, LOFT liqueurs have a nicely balanced sweetness that makes them ideal as mixers or sipped cold and straight. They're currently available only in California, Oregon, and New York, as well as online.

## Organic Mixers, Sweeteners, and Such

Tonic water, sodas, even prefab cocktail mixers traditionally made with corn syrup, dyes, and preservatives are getting the organic treatment. Modmix is one of the first certified organic cocktail mixers on the market, coming in summery flavors such as Citrus Margarita, Pomegranate Cosmopolitan, Wasabi Bloody Mary, Mojito, Lavender Lemon Drop, and French Martini (pineapple, raspberry, and a touch of lemon). All are made from filtered water, organic fruits and herbs, and unrefined cane sugar.

Several of the recipes in this book call for organic lemon or lime sour (also sold as "bar mix"). This currently isn't available commercially; here's a recipe so you can make your own.

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### Lemon or Lime Sour

MAKES 2 CUPS

- 8 ounces Organic Simple Syrup ([\[>\]](#))
- 8 ounces freshly squeezed organic lemon or lime juice

Stir the simple syrup and citrus juice together until well combined. The mixture will keep, in an airtight container, in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

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Many grocery stores carry organic sodas. Blue Sky Beverage Company makes a good organic ginger ale and lemon-lime soda, as does Santa Cruz Organic. The best organic sodas I've tried are Britain's Fever-Tree ginger ale, bitter lemon, and lemonade sodas.

I also like Fever-Tree's tonic and soda waters. Sweetened with cane sugar and flavored with Sicilian lemons, African marigolds, and hand-pressed Tanzanian orange oil, Fever-Tree's Indian Ton

Water has a wonderfully clean and lively taste.

Unlike most tonic waters, which are sweetened with high fructose corn syrup, Brooklyn-based Q Tonic gets its crisp and clean taste from a touch of organic agave nectar, real quinine from South American trees (many tonic waters contain synthetic quinine), and lemon juice. And Q Tonic has less than half the calories of most nonorganic tonic waters.

Sadly, if you want to enjoy organic maraschino cherries, you'll have to patronize cutting-edge bars and restaurants that make their own. Still, you don't have to settle for Day-Glo orbs packed with artificial flavors and colors. All-natural marasca cherries are a wonderful alternative. Luxardo, the same company that makes maraschino liqueur, also produces marasca cherries in syrup—or maraschino al frutto—made without preservatives or thickening agents. Harder to find, but worth the effort, are imported wild amarena cherries in syrup made by the Italian companies Fabbri and Toschi. These exquisite, tart fruits, grown around Bologna, Italy, are also great on ice cream.

For sweeteners, look for organic sugar and organic agave nectar (derived from the same plant used to make tequila). Organic sugar is more widely available, though honey-like agave nectar is catching up in popularity as a healthier alternative to sugar because of its lower glycemic index—which is especially attractive to those who must monitor their blood glucose levels. A number of brands are popping up. Organic tequila maker 4 Copas produces bottled organic agave nectar. You'll find organic agave nectar and sugar in most specialty-foods stores, as well as health-conscious chains such as Whole Foods Market or online.

Organic honey may sound like a good idea, but because of how bees make honey, it's almost impossible in the developed world to guarantee that any honey is organic. Honeybees typically forage within a 2- to 2½-mile radius of their colonies and can pick up any number of environmental contaminants during their travels. In addition, the USDA has no standards for certifying any honey as organic. Nevertheless, many honey producers label their honey as organic, and "organic honey" is widely available in specialty food stores and grocery chains. Your best bet for finding the highest-quality honey is to buy it from a farmers' market, where you can talk with the person who raised the bees and bottled the honey.

Most folks know how aloe vera soothes sunburned skin, but many may be unfamiliar with the health benefits of drinking it. Some alternative medicine experts claim that aloe vera juice's rich cocktail of minerals and vitamins helps the body in a number of ways, such as improving circulation, regulating blood pressure, strengthening the immune system, defending the body against bacteria, regulating blood sugar, and ridding the body of toxins. In cocktails, organic aloe vera can serve as a sweetener, with a more herbaceous taste than sugar or agave nectar.

The most common way to sweeten a cocktail is to add what is known as simple syrup. It's easy to make, so here is a recipe for an organic version. Prepare a batch and keep it on hand in the fridge.

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## Organic Simple Syrup

MAKES 2 CUPS

1 cup organic granulated sugar  
8 ounces water

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and

stir until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature. The syrup can be stored, in an airtight container, in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

### **Organic Brown Sugar Simple Syrup**

Substitute 1 cup firmly packed organic brown sugar for the granulated sugar.

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## Shopping Organic

Fresh organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs are no longer confined to big cities or specialty grocery stores. Many supermarket chains routinely carry organic produce. Farmers' markets and community-owned farm co-ops are also excellent sources. Organic herbs and spices are not yet as ubiquitous, though you'll find them in chains such as Whole Foods Market or online.

Many of the recipes in this book call for organic fruit juices. You can buy "freshly squeezed" organic juices of all kinds at your grocery store. But true fresh squeezed from your own kitchen is worlds better. Not only is the juice as fresh as you can get it, flavor-rich oils from the skin of the fruit are also released, imparting wonderfully nuanced flavors to your cocktails.

Determining whether something is truly organic can be confusing. For example, take eggs. Shopping for them never used to be so complicated. These days you're faced with eggs that are "certified humane" or "American humane certified," omega-3 fortified, cage free, free range, or any number of designations awarded by a constellation of federal and state agencies.

Here's all you need to remember: Pick eggs that are Grade AA (best quality) and have the USDA organic emblem, which means they meet the standards of the U.S. agriculture department's National Organic Program. This means that, among other things, the birds are kept cage free and with access to the outdoors, they are not given antibiotics (even if sick), and their food is free of animal byproducts and made from crops grown without the application of pesticides, fertilizers, and/or raw sewage and that haven't been irradiated or genetically engineered.

Eggs can still be organic if deemed so by an independent or state-run program, but verifying this can be more trouble than it's worth. The same goes for eggs bought at farmers' markets.

As with alcohol, a USDA organic label is the most reliable way to authenticate if produce is truly organic. Note: Make sure you wash any fruit or veggies before you use them in your cocktails. Organic doesn't mean germ free. And even organic fruits such as lemons and limes can get a spraying of wax at the store to add luster. If you're not sure if something's clean, wash it just in case.

## Kitting Out the Green Bar

You'll be able to make any of the cocktails in this book (or most any drink, for that matter) with only a few basic tools and a small selection of glasses.

### Tools

No offense to James Bond fans, but shaking isn't always the best way to mix a drink. Not every drink should be shaken. A good guideline is that if a cocktail is supposed to look clear (like a martini), you

should stir it. Otherwise, shake it. Shaking adds tiny bubbles to a drink, giving it a cloudy appearance.

For **cocktail shakers**, there are two basic options. One is a cobbler shaker, which often resembles a rocket ship from a 1950s comic book. Usually made of stainless steel, it consists of a bottom receptacle and top cap that fits (or should fit) snugly to minimize spillage. This top piece typically comes with a built-in strainer. Cobbler shakers look nice on a shelf, but I prefer the Boston shaker, which works better and is easier to clean. It consists of a pint-size beer glass and a slightly larger stainless-steel cup that fits tightly over its top.



Wielding a Boston shaker can feel awkward at first. The first couple of times you use it, you may be afraid the two pieces will separate or that the whole contraption will slip from your wet hands and go flying across your kitchen. Take a breath. Just give the stainless-steel top a good smack to form a seal and hold both ends when you're ready to shake. Every cocktailian has his or her own shaking stance and rhythm. I like to hold the shaker head high, as if shaking a piggy bank. With a little practice you'll become a pro at it.

You'll also need a **strainer**. The easiest to use are those that fit atop a Boston shaker's stainless-steel top cup. These are known as Hawthorn strainers.

**Muddlers** are nothing more than specially made sticks—usually wood or plastic—used to mash

bruise, or otherwise squish ("muddle") an ingredient to release its flavor. About 6 inches long, a muddler looks like a miniature billy club.

A **zester** is a nice tool to have on hand. It's used to scrape flavorful strips of citrus peel from the fruit and works far better (and is much safer to wield) than a knife.

For extracting juices, you can make do with the dish-like kind of **reamer**, which works great for citrus fruits. But you'll be far happier getting a handheld **squeezer** with two levers, which does a good job of straining out seeds and pulp. Of course, if you happen to have a **pull-down** or **electric juicer**, that'll work fine, too.

A **small measuring cup**—with gradations as small as 1/8 ounce—is essential. Glass measuring cups work fine, but I'm partial to OXO's plastic Good Grips Mini Angled Measuring Cups because you can easily see from above how much liquid is in them.

Other essentials include a **bar spoon**, though any long-handled, thin spoon will work, and a **paring knife** (basically a small, sharp knife for slicing lemons and other fruits and veggies). You'll also need a **small cutting board**, but chances are you already have one.

## Glassware

The right glass does two things—it helps a drink taste and look its best. You can put a lot of effort in finding the perfect glass for every kind of tipple. But for most purposes, you really only need a few types of glasses.

- **Martini glass.** This V-shaped glass is also known by the more generic name "cocktail glass." Resist the temptation to get any of the cartoonishly big martini glasses that so many restaurants have been using since the late 1980s. Martini glasses are meant to hold 4 to 5 ounces. If you want more than that, make another drink.
- **6- to 8-ounce rocks glass.** This is also known as an old-fashioned glass.
- **8- to 12-ounce Collins or highball glass.** (The highball glass is a little shorter and squatter than a Collins glass.)
- **Large wine glasses** for punches and sangrias.

Chilling a glass is as simple as it sounds. Fill a glass with ice—crushed is best because it will come in contact with more of the surface of the glass. When you're ready to use the glass, dump out the ice. Or instead of filling the glass with ice, you can pop the glass in the freezer for 5 to 10 minutes.

This may sound heretical to some, but I'm not a big fan of salted or sugared rims on drinks. Chances are, not everyone to whom you serve drinks is either. That's why I suggest you salt or sugar half the rim of a glass. This way, you get the cool visual effect and your guests can enjoy their drinks however they prefer.

To sugar or salt a rim, pour a thin layer of sugar or kosher salt (don't use iodized salt for this) onto a flat plate. Slice a lemon, lime, or other citrus fruit in half and rub a piece of it around the rim of the glass just enough to moisten it. Upright the glass, dip the rim into the sugar or salt, lift up the glass, and you're ready to add your cocktail and serve.

## Ice 101

Cocktails wouldn't exist if not for ice, and good ice makes all the difference in the world. To me, there

is no such thing as being too finicky about the ice you use in your cocktails. Using the right ice is critical to cocktail success. ~~Make sure you use the type of ice specified in each drink recipe; use shaved ice in a recipe that calls for crushed, and you've got cold slop.~~

Your refrigerator's icemaker may crank out ice in the shape of half moons. Tip your drink back and those half moons suddenly become curved skis rushing down the slope of your glass only to smack into your front teeth or lips and cause your drink to run down the front of your shirt. To avoid this, invest in either a machine that produces real cubes—the bigger the cubes, the better—or go old school and make your ice with stackable ice trays. If your parents could be bothered to take the 10 seconds required to fill a tray with water, so can you.

Silicone ice cube trays work better than the more rigid plastic or metal ones. Use distilled, or at least filtered, water for ice-making. Not only will you ingest fewer impurities, you'll produce clearer ice cubes—which make for a prettier drink.

For drinks calling for cracked ice, simply wrap up some ice cubes in a kitchen towel and give the bundle several smart whacks with your muddler or a small hammer.

Chances are you don't have a freezer devoted only to ice, so your ice will be sharing space with all manner of frozen foods. Nothing kills the taste of a great organic cocktail quite like chicken-flavored ice cubes. Keep this from happening by covering your trays of water tightly with plastic wrap before putting them in the freezer.

A perfectly good alternative to making ice at home is to pick up a bag of ice cubes from your grocery store. Or, if money is no object, you could plunk down several thousand dollars to buy a Kold Draft ice machine. The ice-making equivalent of a SubZero refrigerator, these machines do produce perfect ice cubes—big, hard blocks that rattle satisfyingly in a glass. And because they're colder and bigger than typical cubes, they don't melt as quickly—a quality that helps keep your drink from getting too diluted.

One last note: **Unless otherwise indicated, all of the recipes in this book make one drink.** There are a few exceptions in some chapters, and all of the drinks in the Punch and Pitcher chapter yield more than one serving. In these instances, the serving size is noted at the beginning of the recipe.  
Cheers!

## FRESH AND ZESTY

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Stimulate your taste buds with flavor combinations as vibrant as they are unexpected with these delightfully bright libations.

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# Mysterious Stranger

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The sweet-and-sour flavor of tamarind is nicely softened by the smooth sweetness of Brazilian cachaça, but it's the rosemary, with its intriguing hint of pine and lemon, that really brings this drink together in a, well, mysteriously delicious way. You'll find tamarind concentrate in most specialty grocery stores and shops carrying Indian foods, though you may have to head to the Internet for organic versions.

**2**        **ounces cachaça**  
**1**        **ounce organic tamarind concentrate**  
**½**        **ounce freshly squeezed organic lemon juice**  
**10**  
**to**        **organic rosemary leaves**  
**15**  
**1½**      **ounces organic ginger beer or ginger ale**  
**1**        **sprig organic rosemary**

Add the cachaça, tamarind concentrate, lemon juice, and rosemary leaves to an ice cube-filled cocktail shaker. Shake vigorously, then strain the mixture into a rocks glass. Top off with the ginger beer and garnish with the rosemary sprig.



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