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How to Choose a Signature Drink

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Sticking with a singular cocktail can minimize the morning's pain. Master mixologist Alexander Day shares his top tips and recipes.

Friday, December 30, 2011 | Holley Simmons

Aside from making you feel very Don Draper, ordering the same cocktail throughout the night may minimize a hangover — provided it's the right concoction. Stay away from dark and aged liquors, advises Jeffrey Morrison, MD, nutrition expert and Q advisory board member, since they're harder on the system and more likely to haunt you the next day. "By consciously being consistent with your drink choices before you start imbibing, there is less chance of switching to one of the less pure alcohols, which can cause hangovers," he explains.

For tips on finding a drink you can truly commit to this New Year's Eve and beyond, we turned to Alexander Day, former mixology master at NYC's Death + Company lounge and co-owner of cocktail consultancy Proprietors LLC (who's opening a yet-to-be-named Downtown LA lounge next summer). Turns out there's life way beyond the Old-Fashioned. Here, his advice:

Find a bartender you can trust, and have some fun.

Here's a homework assignment: sit down at your favorite watering hole and ask the bartender to serve you a sampling of liquors. As you sip, concentrate on complex flavors that pique your interest. Day swears by gin, what he calls "a miracle liquor," for its ability to blend well with almost everything. Morrison, on the other hand, steers his clients toward high-quality vodka and clear tequila.

Stick to straightforward ingredients.

The whole idea here is to pick a drink you can order no matter where you go. That means the ingredients it's comprised of should be readily available at every bar. Think sodas, bitters and fortified wines like vermouth. Day advises against anything that must be served fresh (like herbs), or seasonal flavors (i.e., pumpkin syrup).

Go for low alcohol and sugar contents.

Stay away from sours, as almost every drink that contains citrus contains equal parts sugar. Besides being healthier, less-is-more drinks will pair much better with meals. Simple cocktails with few ingredients won't overpower your dinner, and a low alcohol content won't numb your taste buds. Try one of Day's personal recipes, below:



1

Tom Collins

2 oz. London dry gin (Beefeater, Plymouth, Tanqueray)
¾ oz. freshly squeezed lemon juice
¾ oz. simple syrup (1 part white sugar to 1 part hot water, stirred until fully dissolved)
Soda water

Method: Shake all ingredients (except soda water) with ice, strain into a tall glass. Top with soda water. Garnish with an orange wedge.



2

Cocchi Americano & Soda

In a tall glass, add ice and 2 oz. of Cocchi Americano. Top with soda water and garnish with a lemon wedge.



3

Americano Cocktail

1 oz. Campari
1 oz. sweet vermouth
Soda water

Method: Combine Campari and sweet vermouth in a tall glass with ice. Top with soda water and garnish with an orange wedge.

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