

FOOD DRINK SPIRITS

BY KELLY A. MAGYARICS

RAISING THE BAR

The hip entertainer boasts a home bar stocked with bottles both classic and contemporary. But upscale soirées are not just about the booze. Well-thought-out gadgets make cocktailing a joy, not a job, while high-quality mixers and garnishes top off the well-dressed sip. No one knows this better than potent potable pros, so we asked six of DC's hottest mixologists for their must-have, absolutely can't-mix-without essentials, bar none. We leave the shaking and stirring to you! ■

1. THE SWEET SAUCE

THE MIXOLOGIST: Aisling Fitzpatrick of Vermilion (1120 King St., Alexandria, 703.684.9669). **THE MUST-HAVE:** Infused syrups. Herbal elixirs add aroma, sophistication and texture to libations, says Fitzpatrick. Her recipe of one part sugar to two parts water keeps herbs front and center. Vermilion's syrup sensations include the Rosie Grapefruit Martini, with vodka, grapefruit juice and rosemary syrup; and a margarita with cilantro-infused sours. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** Make your own or buy a range of Sonoma Syrups from www.gourmettemptations.com, Dean & DeLuca and Whole Foods.



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4. TOOTY FRUITY

THE MIXOLOGIST: Adam Bernbach of Bar Pilar (1833 14th St., NW, 202.265.1751). **THE MUST-HAVE:** Salt-Preserved Citrus Fruits. This centuries-old staple of North African cuisine sits prominently on Bernbach's bar. When he craves a salty tang for one of his tipples, he reaches for Robert Lambert's cured Meyer lemons and Rangpur limes. These gems in a jar add balance to cocktails like his Trackjacket, where the limes mingle with Manzanilla sherry, ancho chile-infused rum, golden date syrup, lime juice and smoked Maldon sea salt. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** www.robertlambert.com.

5. BETTER BITTERS

THE MIXOLOGIST: John Hogan of Hudson (2030 M St., NW, 202.872.8700). **THE MUST-HAVE:** Bitters. Once indispensable, bitters somehow dropped off the cocktail radar. But the current penchant for aromatic gin over neutral vodka has mix masters hitting the bottle. "Bitters add history, passion and truth to any cocktail," says Hogan, who stocks 12 varieties, some house-made. Traditional bitters (Angostura, Peychaud's and Fee Brothers) now have blood orange and peach counterparts. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** Buy Stirrings bitters at Whole Foods, Sur La Table and at www.stirrings.com.

6. NICE ICE, BABY

THE MIXOLOGIST: Clinton Terry of PX (728 King St., Alexandria, 703.299.8384). **THE MUST-HAVE:** Retro Ice Crusher. Frequently an afterthought for the home bartender, quality ice defines the well-made cocktail. Giant cubes looks gauche, while small ones may melt mid-sip. Taking a cue from PX's mantra, "listen to the ice," Terry relies on this gadget to create ideal ice. Choose between fine and coarse settings to render larger chunks or daiquiri shavings. "It gives you a sense of earning your drink, as you grunt and groan," says Terry. **WHERE TO FIND IT:** www.metrokane.com.