

Clean labels, natural flavors

nrn.com/naturally-inspiring/clean-labels-natural-flavors

January 23, 2018

FsVoice

brought to you by



iStock

Naturally Inspiring

Bar operators, restaurateurs cater to patrons with beverages that are fresh, real, less processed.

Jan 23, 2018

Sponsored by Monin®

Not so long ago consumers chose beverages solely based on factors like taste, refreshment and price. But today they have more complex criteria for both alcoholic and alcohol-free products.

Increasingly, they look for transparent ingredient statements, clean labels and natural flavors, whether they're ordering a turmeric latte, a pomegranate smoothie or a pineapple mojito.

Less is better

"Almost all consumers are looking for, at least on some level, foods that are fresh, real and less processed," declares Food & Beverage Culture Year in Review 2017 by The Hartman Group, a Seattle-based market research firm.

Those desires are key drivers when operators create cocktail and mocktail recipes and assemble wine and beer lists. They also inform the development of housemade bar goods and the decision to purchase prepared bar products. Among the latter are such ingredients as:

- High quality fresh juices
- Bitters
- Flavored syrups and purees
- Products that are organic, sugar free and calorie free

The right way

“Today, more than ever, organic and natural products are important to our customer base,” says Brandon Wise, vice president of beverage operations at Sage Restaurant Group, a multi-concept operator based in Denver.

Wise says that approach flourished more a decade ago in Portland, Ore., and other forward-thinking West Coast cities. Operators there embraced sustainable and natural wines, beers and spirits, typically locally or regionally produced. The ethos has since spread across the country. “It isn’t done because it is trendy, but because **it is the right way to do things**” says Wise.

Organic on principle

Consumers are not looking for a “less processed” label when they choose a beverage, says The Hartman Group. Rather, they believe that “less processed products are self evident.” In fact, 65 percent of consumers — and 72 percent of millennials — look at a product’s label to determine if it is “minimally processed.”

Wise says many small beverage producers follow organic guidelines on principle, but decline to pay the high administrative cost of obtaining organic certification for their products. “When we consider a liquor, wine, beer or soda, we look at how it’s made — maybe not for the word ‘organic,’” says Wise.

Keeping it local

With consumers regarding products from close to home as natural and sustainable, local and regional beverages are ascendant in restaurants and bars.

For example, Emporium Kitchen and Wine Market, Sage Restaurant Group’s new American brasserie in Fort Collins, Colo., has a beverage list dotted with small-batch spirits from a Colorado family-owned distillery and artisanal Oregon fruit brandies, all made with high quality, natural ingredients.

Other highlights are an all-Colorado craft beer list — including pils and weissbier from a brewer with a tasting room just a couple doors from the restaurant — and brunch cocktails mixed with fresh juice from a local presser.

Gun Smoke, Emporium's best-selling cocktail, features Oregon artisan vermouth infused with cocoa husks from a Fort Collins chocolate shop, mixed with custom-blended bourbon, amaro and housemade bitters. The whole batch is smoked over apple and hickory wood.

"This is an example of taking care with every ingredient that goes into a drink," says Wise.

At Bellemore, Boka Restaurant Group's New American fine-dining spot in Chicago, cocktails showcase one-of-a-kind flavors made with clean, seasonal and often local ingredients and culinary-inspired techniques.

"All of the fruit that we use behind the bar — lemons, oranges, apples — we buy organic from smaller farmers, for the most part," says Boka beverage director Lee Zaremba. He and chef Jimmy Papadopoulos favor clean, natural ingredients and sometimes collaborate on drink creations.

Two of Bellemore's more creative drinks are:

- **Saturn's Return**, Zaremba's riff on the Saturn, a traditional tiki drink. It features artisanal gin, persimmon in place of the typical passionfruit and orgeat syrup made from toasted hazelnuts rather than the customary almonds.

- **Pumpkin Seed Milk Punch**, featuring housemade milk made from pumpkin seeds spiked with bourbon and finished with burnt Ceylon cinnamon and tonka bean.

Personal versus prepared

"Bellemore is a smaller restaurant, with about 130 seats, so I love making almost everything by hand because I want it to be as personal as possible," says Zaremba. However, at Somerset and Devereaux — two higher-volume concepts in the Boka group — using high quality **prepared bar products** saves considerable labor. "We're doing three services a day in each of those properties," says Zaremba. "So I'm not hand-making my orgeat there. I'm buying a very high quality orgeat. There are unquestionably some amazing products out today."

Flavors and styles are fleeting in the beverage world. But the consumer thirst for transparency and clean, natural ingredients promises to have a long-lasting influence on how restaurant and bar operators do business.

TAGS: [Sponsored Content](#)
Related



Sue Pearsall
[Marketing](#)

KFC rolls out Smoky Mountain BBQ chicken

The brand's third sauced item will be available starting Jan. 29

[Bret Thorn](#) | Jan 23, 2018

KFC is introducing its third sauced fried chicken item in two years with the nationwide rollout on Jan. 29 of Smoky Mountain BBQ chicken.

[Register to view the full article](#)

Register to view this article

TAGS: [Food Trends](#) [Quick Service](#)
Related

[16 restaurants baking up National Pie Day promos](#)

[Jan 22, 2018](#)

[Must-see videos: Burger King touts Double Quarter Pound King burger](#)

[Jan 22, 2018](#)

[McDonald's promotes Lunar New Year with red envelopes](#)

[Jan 20, 2018](#)

[Panera petitions FDA for clear 'egg' definition](#)

[Jan 20, 2018](#)





Mikael Vojinovic
[Menu](#)>[Chef Insights](#)

Maude transforms with deep dive into regional wine-country

Owner Curtis Stone reworks his tiny Beverly Hills venue

[Lisa Jennings](#) | Jan 23, 2018

After being closed for several months, chef and restaurateur Curtis Stone's restaurant Maude in Beverly Hills, Calif., is scheduled to reopen Tuesday with an entirely new format and a focus on wine regions around the world.

For about four years, the 24-seat restaurant Maude has offered a 10-course tasting menu built around one ingredient each month.

It was an exercise in focus, taking a deep dive into a specific theme — from lime or beets to black truffles or cucumbers — and it had a good run. Stone went on to open the fine-dining restaurant and butcher shop Gwen across town in Los Angeles in 2016, with a broader menu and a focus on premium meats.

With Gwen on stable footing, Stone returned late last year to rethink Maude.

The creative concept was working, said Stone, “But at some point, you’re on that treadmill, and, like anything in life, you get a little lethargic. It felt like work and not something we were loving doing. So we said, ‘Look, let’s stop this.’”

Clay Larsen



Maude owner Curtis Stone, left, and executive chef Justin Hilbert, right

The restaurant closed late last year for a revamp of the menu and a refresh of the interior.

Gone are the monthly tasting menus. Maude will now focus on four menus throughout the year, each inspired by different wine regions across the world.

First up: Spain’s Rioja region.

Stone and his team traveled there in the fall of 2017 for inspiration. It was a reunion of sorts for Maude’s executive chef Justin Hilbert, who staged in Spain at the two-Michelin-star restaurant Mugaritz years ago.

“We drank lots of wine and looked at architecture and heard great music and met a bunch of locals and ate in great restaurants and walked around markets,” Stone said. “If you think about the cuisine as a whole, and who and what it is, it’s a reflection of the culture. It’s a really romantic culture that has a really detailed, romantic cuisine.”

The trip included a visit to the Marqués de Riscal winery, where a hotel designed by architect Frank Gehry evokes a gypsy dancer's skirts. The crew also hunted for mushrooms with chef Francis Paniego of the Michelin-starred restaurant Echaurren in Ezcaray. And the team visited the 120-year-old vines of organic viticulture expert Juan Carlos Sancha, a professor of enology at the University of La Rioja, who wowed the chefs with a bean dish made of pig ears and chorizo that Stone said, "would just blow you away."

At Maude, those experiences translated into dishes like a plating of roasted maitake, yellow foot, hedgehog, trumpet and chanterelle mushrooms, perhaps touched with juniper-wood vinegar and coriander, depending on the mushrooms available.

Mikael Vojinovic



Curtis Stone and his team visited organic viticulture expert Juan Carlos Sancha in Spain's Rioja region.

A variation on Sancha's pork and beans dish uses skull stock, crispy pig bits, chorizo paste and rosemary flower. And steak, or chuletón, served with Spanish tortilla will attempt to recreate a wood-fired ribeye Stone enjoyed at Restaurante Alameda in Fuenmayor.

"The balance of beef and fat was just perfect," Stone said.

There's still no à la carte dining at Maude, where the pricing used to range from about \$90 to \$325, depending on the featured ingredient under the old format.

Photo: Clay Larsen



Maude's Rioja menu is priced at \$125 for 10 courses, and wine pairings are available for an additional \$125, \$250 or \$500. There's no corkage fee for customers who would like to bring their own wine from Rioja, Stone said.

The restaurant uses the Tock ticketing system, and reservations will be released for each season.

Before reopening, in January Stone brought a team of about a dozen staffers from Maude on the next trip for the second-quarter menu, but he's not saying where.

"That will be a surprise," Stone said.

Maude's interior has also been refreshed to reflect the menu change, with new chairs and tables, new carpeting and wall art that will reflect the region represented. The renovation also extended the wine cellar and included upgrades to the kitchen, he said.

Roughly \$200,000 was invested in the space, Stone said. But the key has been to make sure he and his team were eager to get out of bed in the morning and do something new.

“As soon as we don’t like it, we all start doing a bad job of it, and guests start not liking it as well,” he said. “So why not get ahead of it, rather than wait for something to be broken.”

Contact Lisa Jennings at lisa.jennings@KNect365.com

Follow her on Twitter: [@livetodineout](https://twitter.com/livetodineout)

TAGS: [Food Trends](#) [Operations](#)

Related