

Something Vintage

By Jenny Adams

I am as big a fan as any when it comes to a Saturday afternoon spent flipping through miss-matched coat hangers at the Salvation Army or quaint second-hand shop. I often find myself plotting warm weather cocktail parties, decorated by my friends in floppy hats or wildly printed dresses. But, while these are usually trapped in the realm of mere daydreams, I do find myself out with my companions quite often wearing my latest second-hand find. This past weekend, I began considering what I sip in these moments of fashion tribute to decades past. A cultivator of vintage couture, could I also cultivate nostalgia in a glass? This month's Hip to Sip is a homage to the cocktails of old. There is no better way to spend a weekend than shopping for and then sipping on "Something Vintage."



The Sazerac

The Carousel Bar at Hotel Monteleone

Few places can honorably claim to be a favorite among both locals and tourists as much as The Carousel Bar at the Hotel Monteleone. When out for a night of vintage cocktails, it is an institute of higher learning for the city's most signature drink — The Sazerac. Sitting, spinning and chatting with mixologist in residence, Marvin Allen, is a great way to get your cocktail history.

The likes of Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote and Etta James have all raised their glasses and spirits here — in more than one sense of the word. Whether they were sipping a Sazerac at the time remains unknown. But it is likely, since this cocktail symbolically sends the city to bed each night and wakes her again in the morning.

"I think the Sazerac is one of these "old" New Orleans cocktails making a big strong comeback, because the drinkers today are drinking better," says Allen. "It is, I believe, one of the original cocktails."

Local apothecary Antoine Peychaud gave the city her first scents and sips of Sazerac back in the evenings of the 1830s.

"What we do here," Allen says taking us back to present, "is we coat the glass with Herbsaint. We make a classic Sazerac with Sazerac Rye Whiskey, a splash of simple syrup and three to four drops of Peychaud's bitters. Then, we shake it till it is chilled well, strain into the Herbsaint-coated glass and serve it with lemon twist."

Corpse Reviver II

Café Adelaide and the Swizzle Stick Bar

While you have most likely come in contact with the previous two, I wanted to share a third, slightly more esoteric vintage suggestion. Based on the name alone, one might assume that the Corpse Reviver II is a native drink of this voodoo-steeped city, but it originated in the late 1800s in Europe, and evolved into two recipes over the years. While it was first published in 1895, famed cocktail author Harry Craddock wrote of the Corpse Reviver II sometime in the 1930s, "four of these taken in swift succession will unrevive the corpse again." A great quote for a great cocktail, the Corpse Reviver II is a wonderful starting point for those who have not yet found themselves fond of gin.

Lu Brow of Café Adelaide says she found the recipe and history of this drink in the book "Vintage Spirits & Forgotten Cocktails" published by Ted Haigh, a.k.a. "Dr. Cocktail." — a veritable historian on the art of vintage cocktails.

Brow mixes a fabulous Corpse Reviver II, and it should here be reiterated — for those that haven't gotten my subtle hints yet — that when drinking vintage creations, you want to have a bartender worth his or her salt since the drinks often require diligence of craft.

With the taste similar to lemonade with an adult kick, The Corpse Reviver II has a thick layer of crushed ice floating on the top and is refreshingly cool. The soft pale yellow coloring makes this cocktail worthy for all seasons and a nice ordering choice on Café Adelaide's menu of classic cocktails.

If only Adelaide Brennan were still around to come out sipping with us. Her memory stands out to many as a classic New Orleans dame, flamboyant in fashion and ostentatiously present at parties, and it is only right that her attributes (and mischievousness) live on in the form of a lounge with such great cocktail offerings.



Drink of the Month

Corpse Reviver II

- 1 ounce gin
- 1 ounce Cointreau (no, triple sec will not do)
- 1 ounce Lillet Blanc
- 1 ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 drop of Herbsaint

Shake well in an iced cocktail shaker and strain into a chilled Martini glass. Drop a stemless cherry into the bottom of the glass.



Mint Julep

Library Lounge at the Ritz-Carlton

With his baritone voice and hearty laugh, mixologist Chris McMillian is one of the best reasons to stop in The Library Lounge and inquire about vintage in a glass. A studied and accomplished cocktail creator, he is just the man you want when drinking on a historical note.

When we asked him for one vintage creation he felt was standout, a list of sentences such as "a Collins is very good this time of year," and "I love a Ramos Gin Fizz," abounded. But it was the Mint Julep that won out. Amongst the lounge's russet and toffee tones, high-backed chairs and chess sets, a Mint Julep is the chalice of sophisticated hospitality and vintage galore, and you need to snag one of the four barstools to do it up right.

"I serve them in silver Julep cups," explains McMillian. "It is really the only proper service."

McMillian provides his own authentic Julep cups, so he prefers to keep them at the bar. An advocator of correct cocktail preparation, he instructed us on the use of silver instead of glass.

"Metal is a conductor, whereas glass is an insulator," he explained. "You want to use metal because the coldness of a Julep is one of its main appeals."

At The Library Lounge, McMillian uses premium bourbon and a peach syrup to add flavoring in subtle layers to the bourbon. It is served on crushed, hand-beaten ice and garnished with a sprig of mint drenched in caster sugar.

"Cocktails like the Julep and Collins," McMillian says, "are foundations as far as the classics. They are what contemporary drinks are built on."



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