

Readymade

A new breed of purées, mixers and tonics helps bartenders craft quality cocktails with far less effort.

By Pamela Devi Govinda

A TONIC TO WHAT AILS

A new spate of high-end tonic waters also is bringing innovation to the business and helping operators jazz up even simple drinks like the gin and tonic. Some of the same suppliers also are rolling out other fizzy mixers such as ginger ale and ginger beer.

Gotham Bar and Grill, a modern American restaurant in New York City, uses the London-based Fever Tree mixers. "A gin and tonic with a great gin and Fever Tree tonic water, along with a nice, fresh lime, truly is a little slice of heaven," says beverage director Rick Pitcher.

Pitcher also uses the company's ginger ale. "It is so full of flavor, it is almost like ginger beer," he says. "We are currently doing a Pimm's Cup with it," which he prices at \$13.

Another unique tonic water comes from New York-based Q Tonic. Brahm Callahan, the beverage director at the Rialto, a regional Italian cuisine restaurant in Cambridge, Mass., uses it in several of his drinks. "We're using it across the board, regardless of whether the drink is a specialty cocktail or standard tonic drink like a gin and tonic. It offers better quality and a cleaner flavor. There is a huge difference between Q Tonic and tonic from a soda gun," Callahan points out.

One aspect of the new tonics that makes them a step above the soda gun is their use of single-serving bottles. It's like offering guests their own individual, mini-bottle service, and the mixers are guaranteed carbonated.

"I think there are more products on the market [now] that are designed to meet the needs of mixologists, and at the same time the mixologist's creativity is bringing in new ingredients that may not have been used before," notes H. Joseph Ehrmann, who uses Funkin and Q Tonic as proprietor and mixologist at Elixir in San Francisco.

"Also," he adds, "the improved quality of purées and mixers becomes more enticing as my schedule gets more difficult to make some of these things myself. As an operator, I want to put out the freshest ingredients possible—balanced with the ability to get the drinks out efficiently and profitably." ●