



Absinthe Service at Sage, ARIA Resort &amp; Casino



# @ SPIRITED adventure

scotch    tequila    absinthe    rum    beer    wine    sake    cocktails

BY LISA PLUMMER

One thing that can make a good time even better is a delicious libation. And with so many spots in Las Vegas offering a plethora of premium drinks, indulging in an adult beverage isn't just enjoyable, it's a hedonistic adventure. Here's the low down from award-winning mixologists and Master Sommeliers on everything from absinthe to wine, as well as specialty drinks and services you won't want to miss.

## Scotch

Robust and flavorful, Scotch is the proper name for whiskey produced in Scotland. Commonly enjoyed before or after a meal, purists often drink it neat (without ice) with a splash of water, while others prefer it on the rocks or in cocktails such as the Rob Roy or Rusty Nail. For newcomers, Scotch might be a little intense, but learning to appreciate it can be a rewarding experience, according to MGM Grand's Master Mixologist Kent Bearden.

"Many of our guests have changed their opinions of Scotch overnight," said Bearden. "Recently it has seen revitalization with new

cocktails such as the Barely Legal at MGM Grand's West Wing Bar, featuring Johnnie Walker Gold Label."

Making Scotch your friend also is easy at Michael Mina's Stripsteak at Mandalay Bay as well as Tom Colicchio's Craftsteak at MGM Grand. At both locations you'll find an extensive selection of Scotch, a knowledgeable staff and a unique beverage service. Instead of on the rocks, Scotch can be enjoyed on the "rock," a large condensed ice cube designed to melt slower than traditional ice so Scotch stays chilled without diluting the flavor.





## Tequila

Made from the fermented juices of the agave plant, this Mexican liquor is not only great for creating refreshing cocktails but also is enjoyable served straight. Like many liquors, tequila has undergone its own top-shelf revolution, with boutique labels that are easy on the palate and smooth enough to sip. “Tequila is very versatile and the perfect spirit for any occasion,” said Arturo Delgadillo, General Manager at Diego at MGM Grand.

For the crème de la crème of high-end tequilas, enthusiasts need look no further than Diego, featuring more than 130 premium labels, a host of tequila-based drinks and tasting flights. Connoisseurs won’t want to miss Diego’s Exclusive Flight, which features three of the restaurant’s best and most unique tequilas: Chinaco Four Year Añejo, Patron Burdeos and El Tesoro Paradiso. For newbies, try a tequila liqueur served on the rocks or the Paloma, a classic cocktail made with Squirt soda. If you’re looking for a party atmosphere and a stunning view of the legendary Strip to accompany your cocktail, Diablo’s Cantina at Monte Carlo offers 75 types of tequila, including the rare and distinguished Reserva Anejo; tasting flights also are available. When you’re here, don’t miss the specialty Platinum Cadillac, made with Grand Marnier 150th Anniversary and Gran Patrón Platinum.

## Absinthe

Once popular with artist and literary communities in the 19th and 20th centuries, this spirit was banned in most Western nations by the 1920s. However, re-legalized absinthe has since experienced a strong revival and is alive and well in Las Vegas. As safe as any high-alcohol liquor, this unique beverage is made from a host of different herbs, including wormwood, fennel and anise, and boasts a strong but appealing flavor.

Part of the fun of absinthe is the ornate preparation featuring special glasses, slotted spoons, sugar cubes and even fire. One such ritual is the tableside absinthe service at Sage inside ARIA Resort & Casino at CityCenter. Featuring one of the largest absinthe selections in the



country, Sage accommodates all palates by offering three ways to savor it: classic style – ice water is poured over a sugar cube and into the absinthe; Russian style – the absinthe is ignited, poured into orange juice and enjoyed as a shot; and Sage style – the absinthe is lit on fire and poured into a root beer glass garnished with Pop Rocks.

According to Sage Assistant General Manager Bryan Lafontaine, absinthe is best enjoyed after a meal. “It is considered a digestive,” said Lafontaine. “The potency helps break down the fats in your stomach, the herbal notes have a medicinal effect and the natural stimulants get your creative side aroused.”

## Rum

For most, the idea of rum conjures visions of tropical islands. Fittingly so, since this sweet-smelling spirit made from fermented or distilled sugarcane is produced primarily in the Caribbean and South America. RHUMBAR at The Mirage combines an invitingly exotic feel with more than 50 top-shelf rums and an elite cocktail program featuring fresh ingredients ranging from cilantro to raw sugarcane sticks.

Not-to-miss cocktails include the Mount Gay XO Piña Colada, Spanish Trampoline made with fresh mint, lime and tangerine puree and the Latin



Manhattan with Cruzan Single Barrel rum. For those who prefer it *au naturel*, RHUMBAR features a wide range of aged rums suitable for sipping.

According to Oliver Nivaud, RHUMBAR general manager, the spirit is complex, liberating and diverse. “Rum is an extension of your mood. It could be considered the chameleon of spirits and is always appropriate, from a poolside or party to an evening discussion about life or lost loves.”

Rock & Rita’s, Circus Circus





Beer

As one of the most widely consumed and oldest alcoholic beverages in the world, beer is ideal for socializing, dining and relaxing; and with so many microbreweries creating an array of ales, lagers and stouts with diverse flavor profiles, sampling beer can be a gourmet adventure.

At The Pub at Monte Carlo, you'll find a whopping 93 beers on tap, including some of the finest craft beers in the world. This upbeat spot presents several highlights for beer epicures, including four local specialty beers: Hop Ride IPA, Desert Dawn Barley Wine, Alpine Wit and Joe's Root Beer. Guests also can choose the Beer Sampler, which lets you select five tasting portions of microbrews. The Draft Master Table, equipped with self-service taps of Guinness and Harp Lager, is a great option for groups of up to eight ready to watch the game or listen to live music. Just purchase a pour card and you're free to pour, drink and pour

again. But make sure to reserve it in advance, as the Draft Master is always in demand! Also be sure to check out the Draft Master Table and at Nine Fine Irishmen at New York-New York.

Todd English P.U.B. at Crystals retail & entertainment district at CityCenter, reminiscent of traditional English pubs, also offers an impressive number of draft brews by the pint, yard or pitcher including crisp and clean lagers, hearty ales and rich red, black and brown brews. If you're looking to learn a bit about American beers, take a seat at the bar at Pour 24 at New York-New York, which features the very best all-malt American craft beers.

Wine

From Merlot to Zinfandel, Chardonnay to Pinot Grigio, wine is diverse, complex, aromatic and perfect for any occasion, whether paired with a meal or on its own. According to Jason Smith, award-winning Master Sommelier and Director of Wine at Bellagio, "You can drink wine just about any time! Certain wines, such as German Riesling, are low in alcohol and are an excellent introduction for newcomers."

If a transcendent wine-drinking experience is on your to-do list, set your sights on Bellagio, where the award-winning wine program boasts one of the most extensive collections in the country, with approximately 60,000 bottles. Bellagio also is home to the largest number of Master Sommeliers in the world, with four of its 17 sommeliers ranked Master level. With so many resident experts ready and willing to offer personalized wine service, finding that perfect bottle is sure to be an enlightening experience. And, according to Smith, both novices and connoisseurs alike will get more out of



Pour 24, New York-New York

their experience by adopting an adventurous spirit; trying new varietals enables drinkers to fully appreciate wine's tremendous diversity.

Another outstanding place to explore the subtleties of wine is Aureole at Mandalay Bay. With the help of the sommelier you can choose your perfect bottle from the four-story wine tower, which holds 9,685 bottles at the ideal 55°, and watch as "wine angels" retrieve your selection from the architecturally stunning tower. Enjoy wine by the glass, tasting flights and artisan meats and cheeses at the Italian-inspired Onda Wine Lounge at The Mirage. It's also an opportunity to try something new. Stop in Fridays 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. for Rush Hour, a complimentary wine tasting event. If you find something you love, you can have a case shipped to you.

Sake

Used for centuries in Japanese religious ceremonies and festivities, sake is made from fermented rice and occupies its own unique category of alcohol. With its array of subtle flavors and styles, premium sake begs to be savored. Luckily, you no longer have to travel to the Far East to enjoy an authentic sake experience. Shibuya at MGM Grand offers 130 imported and rare sakes, including three exclusive handcrafted sakes: Shibuya Shizuoka – bold and rich with a creamy texture and caramel and banana flavors; Shibuya Neotokyo, Yamagata – balanced and luscious with a dry finish and aromas of pears and apples; and Shibuya Hachiko, Niigata – light with subtle fruit aromas. By offering flights, small glasses, carafes and bottles as well as 11 sake sommeliers and a knowledgeable staff to assist you, you're guaranteed an informative and memorable experience.

According to General Manager Dieter Xiao, Shibuya also offers plenty of selections to introduce beginners to the wonderful world of sake. "Start with more delicate, fruity floral sakes," advised Xiao. "Sake cocktails are another option as well." Other stops to consider when you are exploring the world of sake are Bar Masa at ARIA and Social House at Crystals, which offer a creative sake list as well as a full complement of specialty drinks.

Cocktails

There's more to creating delicious drinks than throwing liquor and mixers into a shaker. "Mixology" is an art form, according to Jeffrey Yedlin, director of food and beverage at Mandalay Bay, and creating innovative and pleasing concoctions is serious business. "Every venue offers a signature drink so guests find something they can't get anywhere else at each spot," said Yedlin. "For example, Stripsteak does a home-made Rock and Rye and eyecandy sound lounge & bar makes a signature infusion recipe. For special gatherings, we create custom drinks such as a seasonal Blood Orange Margarita."

For a seamless blend of mixology *and* showmanship, discover flair bartending, which elevates the act of mixing a drink to pure entertainment. According to World Champion "flairtender" Danilo Oribe, "The art lies in flipping the liquor, ingredients and tools with precision to deliver the highest level of enjoyment." At Rock & Rita's at Circus Circus, Oribe mixes signature cocktails such as the Pain Killer – made with Angostura 1919, coconut cream, pineapple and orange juice – and the Road Runner, featuring rum and tropical juices – with astounding skill, ensuring you'll be in awe long before the first sip. 🍷

“THE #1 SHOW IN VEGAS!”

–Las Vegas Review-Journal, March 2010



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