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HEARD & SCENE

Hotel's Bars Offer a Natural Kick

A biochemist walks into a bar... and the result is a cocktail menu that can wake you up, chill you out and lessen the chances of a brutal hangover.

Alex Ott has muddled a biochemistry degree, an interest in herbology and a barman's charisma into a career as a global drinks consultant. His latest project is his 300th cocktail menu, this time for Refinery Hotel's rooftop bar, its lobby bar Winnie's and its restaurant Parker & Quinn.

"They wanted me to create classic cocktails with a science twist and make them healthy, which is impossible because classic cocktails are not really healthy," said Mr. Ott, libation scientist and mood director for Refinery Hotel in midtown. The result is an all-natural menu that spotlights small-batch spirits with no artificial flavorings, fresh-pressed juices and sprinklings of offbeat flavors like curry and tamarind.

Take the Cloche & Dagger, an orange-hued drink with clementine Svedka vodka, a pinch of curry and fresh mango, lime and pear juices. "It's an appetizer that stimulates your stomach enzymes and increases your saliva," he said. "Curry works on scent, so when you smell curry, you'll be hungry within minutes."

Other unexpected drink mixers include kava kava and passion-flower teas. That combination stars in the Fiorello, a shot-like drink billed as "Xanax in a glass." Mr. Ott warned you should only have one or two Fiorellos or you'll get "loopy."

Mr. Ott, who wrote a healthy



Andrew Kelly for The Wall Street Journal

Alex Ott created an all-natural cocktail menu with offbeat flavors for the bars at Refinery Hotel.

drinks book titled "Dr. Cocktail," preaches all-natural ingredients and says if bars used ingredients from their pantries and kitchens, they could reduce costs significantly.

And those hangovers? It's not just the liquor's fault. Artificial additives contribute to those next-day headaches and pain, he said. "People say, 'I was very good, I drank vodka all night.' Yeah, but you drank

it with Red Bull and peach schnapps," he said.

The Refinery cocktails, which can be enjoyed as mocktails, were mixed with an eye toward masking the alcoholic burn. Some drinks aim to prevent hangovers with vitamin-packed juices. "When people drink eight or nine drinks here, they are intoxicated. But you don't feel the after-effects," Mr. Ott said. "That ensures for a

return customer and creates a very nice cocktail culture that you could call healthy."

—Elva Ramirez

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