Why You Should be Barrel Aging at Home

Barrel aging at home is fairly simple, not ridiculously expensive and seriously worth doing. The in's and out's of getting started are covered in our Barrel Aged Cocktails page. While simply barrel aging cocktails is reason enough to get started, the real magic occurs when you age something in a barrel previously used for a different cocktail or spirit. For instance, tequila aged in a barrel previously used to age sherry, bourbon, Manhattans and gin. Or White Whiskey aged, first in a new charred barrel, then aged further after Negroni's and a Martini. Each of these take on flavors far beyond those found in a charred barrel alone. Thus, the fun!

Here are some examples of what we've been putting in our barrels.

Negroni Barrel Aged White Whiskey

Boulivardier with Negroni Aged White Whiskey

Barrel Aged Sherry

Manhattan 2.0 with Barrel Aged Sherry

Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon

Manhattan 3.0 with Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon

Whiskey/Negroni Barrel Aged Tequila

Whiskey/Negroni Barrel Aged Tequila Manhattan

Sherry Aged Gin

Sherry Aged Gin Wet Martini

[fruitful_sep]

Hudson White Whiskey

We used Hudson White Whiskey to flavor a new, charred oak

barrel. It went in, first for 1 month, then back into the barrel for 2-3 week stents between Negroni's. A Martini also spent some time in that barrel as well. The Whiskey came out with a nice color. The nose is caramel, vanilla, clove, herbal with a touch of corn whiskey. The flavor is slightly sweet corn whiskey with the oak, caramel, vanilla and herbs. There is a background of gin with a touch of bitterness on the finish. We used it to make an excellent Boulivardier:

Boulivardier with Negroni Aged White Whiskey

- 1 oz. Negroni Aged White Whiskey
- 1 oz. Dolen Sweet Vermouth
- 1 oz. Campari
- Fat orange peel for garnish

1. Chill an old fashioned glass with ice and water
2. Combine all ingredients, except the garnish, in a mixing glass with ice and stir to chill
3. Strain into chilled old fashioned over fresh, large ice
4. Express orange peel over drink and float the peel

Barrel Aged Sherry

We used Lustau East India Solera Sherry to flavor a second new, charred oak barrel. The barrel was then used to age Bourbon Manhattans. These were aged alternating with the Sherry 3 or 4 times. The barrel was then used to age bourbon, a Tequila Manhattan and gin. The sherry revisited the barrel for 2 – 3 weeks between each cocktail or spirit. The sherry has a bit of color added. The nose is sherry with vanilla, clove and a bit of caramel. The flavor is dried fruits: current, apple, apricot and raisin. I have used it in a number of cocktails that call for sherry. It imparts a slightly mellow flavor along with the sherry you'd expect. Here is our Sherry'd Manhattan:

Manhattan 2.0 with Manhattan/Bourbon/Tequila Barrel Aged Sherry

For the the bourbon in this cocktail, we tried Basil Hayden and Belle Mead. Both were excellent. The bourbon brings flavors of maple, tobacco, smoke and vanilla. This blends well with the rich, earthy Carpano Antica's tastes of herbs, spice and slight bitterness. The aged sherry intermingles with the Italian Vermouth, smoothing the bitterness and adding to the richness. Here is the recipe:

Manhattan 2.0

- 1 1/2 oz. Bourbon
- 3/4 oz. Carpano Antica
- 1/4 oz. Manhattan/Bourbon/Tequila Barrel Aged Sherry
- 1/8 tsp. Grand Marnier
- 1 dash Angostura Orange Bitters
- Garnish: Luxardo Maraschino Cherries and an orange peel

1. Chill a cocktail glass with ice and water
2. Add the ingredients, except the garnish, to a mixing glass with ice and stir to chill
3. Strain into the chilled cocktail glass
4. Add the cherries, (or place them on a pick), and express the orange peel over the drink and discard.

Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon

This is one of my favorites. The Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon alone makes barrel aging at home worth while! I used Russel's 10 yr Old Bourbon. For an aged bourbon, Russel's has a lot of spice. Aging in a Sherry Cask which had previously been used to age Manhattans mellowed the spice. There are significant flavors from the charred oak barrel: oak, clove, vanilla, and caramel. You can also taste the sherry along with dried fruit, possibly from the Manhattans.

[fruitful_sep]

Manhattan 3.0 with Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon

This cocktail is similar in concept to a barrel aged Manhattan cocktail. However, since the bourbon has taken on flavors from the Sherry barrel while the vermouth was not exposed to the barrel or allowed to oxidize, the flavor is significantly different. As noted above, the Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon brings flavors from the charred oak barrel: oak, clove, vanilla, and caramel with a touch of aged Sherry. The unaged Carpano Antica maintains its rich flavors of fruit and almonds with spice and a slight bitterness on the finish. Together, they create a fabulous cocktail.

- 2 oz. Sherry Cask Aged Bourbon

- 1 1/2 oz. Italian Vermouth (sweet)
- 1 tsp Grand Marnier
- 1 – 2 dashes Angostura Orange Bitters
- Orange peel and Maraschino cherries for garnish

1. Chill a cocktail glass with ice and water.
2. Stir to combine all ingredients, sans cherries, in a mixing glass with ice.
3. Strain into chilled cocktail glass, express the orange peel and garnish with the cherries

Negroni/Whiskey Barrel Aged Tequila

I used Milagro Plata Tequila and aged it for 2 weeks. The barrel was the one described above with Hudson's White Whiskey alternating with Negroni and a one time Gin Martini. With this aging, I had placed the aged White Whiskey in the barrel just prior to the Tequila. I suspect that the flavor profile might be significantly different if the Tequila had followed a Negroni instead. In the 2 week time, the Tequila took on a little color and a lot of flavor. I was aiming for a primary Tequila flavor with background barrel notes. I was not trying to create Repasado from Plata. After the 2 weeks, the flavor

of charred oak was fairly prominent but it was still Tequila and it had picked up vanilla and clove from the oak and spice from the whiskey/Negroni. There was also some dried fruit and herbs from the Negroni. After a few weeks in the bottle, the charred oak flavor diminished some while the rest of the flavors remained.

Whiskey/Negroni Barrel Aged Tequila Manhattan

In our standard Tequila Manhattan, I use Lillet Rouge instead of vermouth. This cocktail calls for a much lighter touch so Dolin Sweet Vermouth fits nicely. Sticking with the Tequila theme, I used Agavero Orange Liqueur as the sweetener. It has a nice orange flavor and is a little sweeter than Grand Marnier. If you need to substitute, use more Grand Marnier or add a dash of simple syrup. I wanted to keep the “Manhattan” flavors as much as possible so I went with Bitter Truth’s Jerry Thomas Own Decanter Bitters. The maraschino cherry brings the last touch of sweetness while the bitters up the complexity.

- 1 1/2 oz. Whiskey/Negroni Barrel Aged Tequila

- 1/2 oz. Dolin Sweet Vermouth
- 1/4 oz. Agavero Orange Liqueur
- 4 drops Bitter Truth’s Jerry Thomas Own Decanter Bitters sub Angostura
- Maraschino cherry

1. Chill a cocktail glass with ice and water
2. Combine all ingedients but the garnish in a mixing glass with ice and stir to chill
3. Strain into chilled cocktail glass and garnish with the cherry.

Sherry Barrel Aged Gin

The most distinctive thing about gin is the fresh, herbal flavor. This is true whether you prefer a heavy juniper London Dry or one of the New American Styles. In my use,

barrel aging any gin cocktail flattens those herbal notes. They are still there, but the bright, fresh aspect is gone. What is added by the barrel aging process depends almost entirely on what was previously in the barrel and how long the gin is aged. The process works very well for a Negroni – not so much for any type of Martini.

I have seen Sherry Aged Gin on the market, so I wanted to try this with my Sherry barrel. I chose Ford's Gin, one of my favorite London Dry's. The barrel had been used to age Sherry, several Manhattans, including a Tequila Manhattan and bourbon. The Sherry went back into the barrel between each Manhattan and before and after the bourbon. So, it had last been used for Sherry just prior to the Gin. Of note, this barrel was reaching the end of its life. Ultimately, you extract all of the flavors – just like a tea bag. After the Gin, I put the Sherry back in the barrel for 4 weeks, then followed it with Bourbon. The Bourbon required 8-10 weeks to achieve the flavors that previously had taken only 4 weeks. After that, the barrel was done!

The Gin was aged for 4 weeks. What came out was straw colored. As noted earlier, the Gin looses some of the brightness of the botanicals but gains a touch of charred oak, a bit of bitterness, clove, cinnamon, dried fruit herbs from the vermouth in the Manhattans along with a bit of spice from the Bourbon. There is a definite touch of Sherry. All in all, aging the Ford's Gin in the Sherry/Manhattan/Bourbon Barrel was one of our best outcomes. Definitely worthy of a repeat!

Sherry Barrel Aged Gin Wet Martini

I wanted to enhance all of the flavors of the aged Gin and you'll notice that this goes very light on the sweet vermouth. With so little sweetener, the bitterness of the charred oak comes through. The overall nose is Gin with a touch of oak. Flavors are London Dry Gin with a flattening of the herbal notes and a bittersweet background of Sherry/Charred Oak. The barrels previous Manhattan occupants add some dried fruit, herbs and spice. I tried this with and without expressing a lemon peel, but couldn't decide which I liked better. So, I'll leave the garnish to you!

[fruitful_sep]

- 1 1/2 Sherry Barrel Aged Gin
- 1/4 oz. Dolin Sweet Vermouth
- 4 drops Regan's Orange Bitters
- Lemon peel for garnish – optional

1. Chill a cocktail glass with ice and water
2. Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass with ice and stir to chill
3. Strain into chilled cocktail glass
4. Garnish with the lemon peel if using

Well, these are some of my ideas for barrel aging. In reality, and part of the adventure, is that none of these will be 100% reproducible! I highly recommend that you try this at home. The barrels are not expensive and the outcomes are definitively worth the little effort involved. The process will require you to frequently sample some tasty cocktails and spirits as they age. It's a tough job…

Cheers!

MxMo XCIX – Ice Baby!

MxMo XCIX – Ice Baby!

I though I’d take this opportunity to discuss my favorite toy, er, tool. ***The ice sphere maker.***

Making Clear Ice at Home

Bo
ttMixology Monday
om
li
ne
,
a
lo
t
of
tr
ou
bl
e
fo
r
li

tt
le
re
wa
rd
.
Yo
u
ca
n
ea
si
ly
ma
ke
cl
ea
r
ic
e
in
sm
al
l
qu
an
ti
ti
es
.
Bu
t
fo
r
en
te
rt

ai
ni
ng
,
it
’s
no
t
pr
ac
ti
ca
l.
I
kn
ow
th
at
in
Sa
n
An
to
ni
o,
we
ca
n
pu
rc
ha
se
la
rg
e,
cl
ea

r
ic
e
cu
be
s
fo
r
as
li
tt
le
as
35
¢
ea
ch
.
Ne
ve
rt
he
le
ss
,
if
yo
u
wa
nt
so
me
th
in
g
fo
r

a
sm
al
l,
in
ti
ma
te
oc
ca
si
on
,
he
re
’s
a
fa
ir
ly
si
mp
le
me
th
od
.

Fi
rs
t,
le
t’
s
lo
ok
at

what makes ice opaque. In no particular order:

Other than a few bubbles in the bottom, this is a clear ice sphere.

- Impurities – dirt, etc.
- Dissolved salts and other minerals
- Bubbles
- Compression fractures

To avoid the first two, use filtered water. We use tap water run through a reverse osmosis filter. The last two are harder. To control bubble formation and fractures, you need to control the speed, direction and time of freezing.

Bubbles fo

This cube was frozen in the center of a 6 cube tray. It froze from the side (left), top and bottom. You can see that the fractures and bubbles formed where the ice began to meet.

rm
be
ca
us
e
ai
r
is
fo
rc
ed
ou
t
of
so
lu
ti
on
wh
en
th
e
wa
te
r
fo
rm
s
ic
e
cr
ys
ta
ls
.
As
th

e
wa
te
r
fr
ee
ze
s,
ai
r
wi
ll
co
me
ou
t
of
so
lu
ti
on
an
d
be
co
me
tr
ap
pe
d
in
th
e
ic
e.
Th
e

more slowly the water is forming ice crystals, the less likely air will become tr

apped in the ice.

So for bubbles, speed of freezing is the key. As long as there is

freewaterneXttothefreezingwater,theairwillmoveintothefreewaterandaw

ay from the ice crystals.

Compression fractures are caused by ice expanding as it freezes. If the water is freezing from one direction, it will remain clear. When the freezing ice meets the bottom of the container, or ice freezing from another direction, it will fracture.

So to make clear ice:

- Use filtered water – removes impurities and dissolved minerals
- Freeze it from one direction – prevents fracturing
- Avoid freezing it quickly – reduces bubbles
- Stop it before it freezes to the bottom of the container – reduces bubbles and fractures

These 3 pieces of ice are sitting top down. All used filtered water. Left: there

was a small amount of unfrozen water in the bottom. Fractures and bubbles had started to form. There is plenty of usable clear ice in this piece. Center: the ice has frozen to the bottom. Fractures take up half of the ice. Right: this piece froze from all directions and is heavily fractured.

To freeze from one direction, put the water in an insulated container without a lid into your freezer. The closer the temperature of your freezer is to 32⁰F (0⁰C), the slower your ice will freeze. And the faster your food will spoil. Since we also like to eat, and I don’t feel like having a dedicated freezer to make clear ice, I just pressed on at -6⁰F.

Here is how I solved the insulated

The 1/2 Gal. Cooler and the Cup/Foam/Foil assembly that fits inside

co
nt
ai
ne
r.
On
th
e
in
te
rn
et
,
yo
u
ca
n
fi
nd
in
st
ru
ct
io
ns
fo
r
us
in
g
sp
ra
y
fo
am
in
su

la
ti
on
on
a
cu
p
to
ma
ke
a
cu
p
si
ze
d
pi
ec
e
of
cl
ea
r
ic
e.
Th
e
pr
ob
le
m
I
ha
ve
wi
th
th

is
is
th
at
th
e
fo
am
in
su
la
ti
on
is
no
t
fo
od
sa
fe
an
d
gi
ve
s
of
f
no
xi
ou
s
fu
me
s.
So
,
I

limited its use. Instead, I purchased an Igloo ½ Gal. cooler with a screw on lid

and some Hefty disposable clear 24 oz. cups. The disposable cup did not quite

fi
t
sn
ug
ly
in
to
th
e
bo
tt
om
of
th
e
co
ol
er
.
Th
is
me
an
t
th
at
co
ld
ai
r
wo
ul
d
su
rr
ou
nd

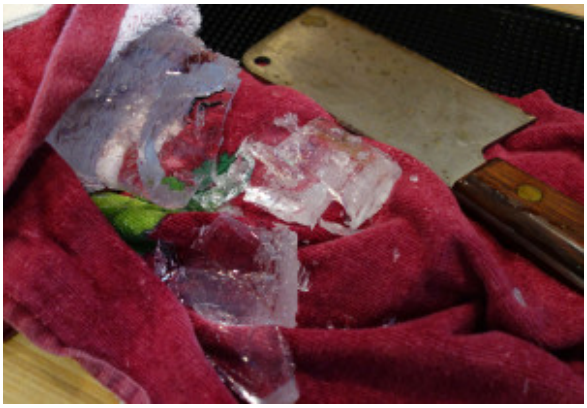
th
e
cu
p
al
lo
wi
ng
th
e
ic
e
to
fr
ee
ze
fr
om
mu
lt
ip
le
di
re
ct
io
ns
.

Here you can see through the plastic that the foam is now near the top of the cup.

To prevent this, I lined the bottom of the cooler with aluminum foil, (plastic wrap would be better, but I couldn’t get it to stay down in the bottom). I then put about 3 inches of spray foam insulation into the bottom of the foil lined cooler and shoved 1 Hefty cup down into the foam. Looking through the clear plastic, I could see gaps in the foam near the top of the cup. I carefully removed the foil, foam and cup and gently squirted additional foam between the foil and the plastic. I then put it all back into the cooler. This was allowed to dry for 24 hours. I again pulled out the foil, cup and insulation and trimmed the excess foil and insulation from the top of the cup. The plastic cup now fit snugly into the cooler and my contraption was ready for use.

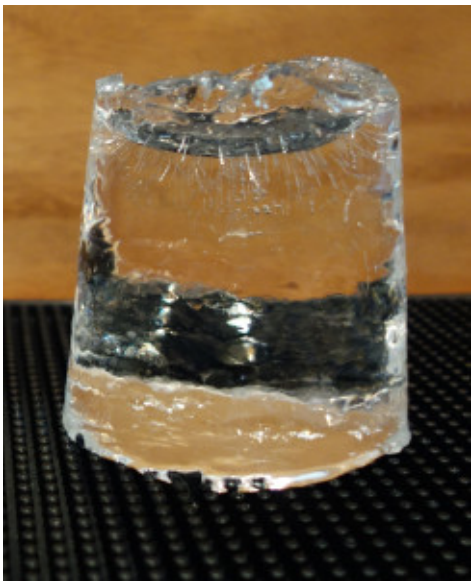
A clear ice plug next to its Hefty cup. It is sitting top down. You can see the freeze line in the center. The bottom and lower sides of the cup had begun to freeze.

Since I refuse to raise the temperature of our freezer, I found that the ice still froze to the bottom of the container too quickly. It was not frozen enough overnight, but was frozen to the bottom before I got home from work. My solution was to first pour very hot water into the cooler and let it sit for 5 minutes. I then drained and dried the cooler and pushed my cup/foil/insulation assembly into the bottom. Next, a single clean Hefty cup was filled with filtered water and set down into the cup/foil/insulation assembly in the bottom of the warm cooler.



To remove the partially frozen bottom, hold the ice with a towel and tap it with a heavy knife.

This set up froze the water nearly to the bottom in 22 hours. I broke the bottom of the ice to remove a small amount of water, and then saved the ice in the freezer in a plastic bag. This ice “plug” can be used to make an ice sphere or a large ice cube. Of course, as you can see in the above video, the ice plug can shatter even if you allow it to temper before shaping.



Clear ice plug ready to shape. Always allow the ice to ‘temper’ – let the surface warm to room temperature. The ice will then appear clear rather than frosty. Otherwise, it is more likely to fracture when you shape it.

Clear ice sphere that shattered in the ice sphere maker, even though it was tempered. These fracture lines are on the surface and disappear quickly in the drink.

Cheers!

Nitrogen Cavitation

This really works, or at least usually! I can't explain why sometimes it does not work. I made a really good raspberry liqueur with vodka and simple syrup, but then tried to make a raspberry infused tequila which failed completely. I have found that, just as infusions require different times for different agents, nitrogen cavitation will bring out some flavors better than others. When it works, you have instant gratification. When it doesn't, nothing is lost. Just dump

the ingredients into a mason jar and let it infuse for a few days.

iSi Whipper on Amazon

You are going to put your ingredients in an iSi Whipper, charge it with nitrous oxide and then release the pressure. The concept is based on physical chemistry. In the lab, reactants are combined in a chamber filled with nitrogen. A vacuum is drawn in the chamber which causes the nitrogen to cavitate or bubble. This speeds up the reaction. With this technique, nitrogen in the form of nitrous oxide is pumped under pressure into the chamber, (the iSi Whipper). When the pressure is released, the liquid cavitates.

Your concoction will get better, and stronger, the longer you wait after bottling. If you don't have an iSi Whipper or some other brand of nitrous powered whip cream maker, see note below.

- 0.6 oz. (18 gm. or 1 1/2 Tbls) Dry spice or 1/3 cup fruit
- 8 oz. liquid

1. Add all ingredients to iSi Whipper.
2. Seal the whipper, as you would if making whipped cream.

3. Charge the whipper with one N_2O cartridge.
4. Gently swirl the contents of the iSi whipper for 1 minute.
5. Let the whipper stand for 30 seconds.
6. Hold the whipper upright and gently vent the gas. You want to release the gas as quickly as possible to create cavitation. If you get some liquid spewed out at this point, you are releasing the pressure too quickly. You might want to hold your hand over the whipper to avoid spraying the ceiling. Warning – the hissing noise will scare your cat!
7. Open the iSi whipper and allow the mixture to stand until it stops fizzing – about 5 minutes
8. Strain the contents through a cheese cloth or paper towel lining a mesh strainer.
9. Decant into an attractive bottle.

Note: You can obtain similar results by combining your ingredients in a lidded glass jar, such as a mason jar, and letting it set for a day or two. Shake the jar daily and taste the liquid. When it is as strong as you want, strain off the solids and bottle your concoction.