

Raising The Bar

Mixology has come to represent the intricate and artisanal labour of bartenders-turned-mixologists who have dedicated themselves to the creation of new drinks

Jean Oh in Seoul
The Korea Herald/ ANN

In a classic watering hole called Coffee Bar K, mixologist Lim Jae-jin incorporates the flavours of Korean bokbunja into a signature drink. He tosses the dark, lush berries—fresh off his family farm in North Jeolla Province's Gochang County—into a tall glass with brown sugar and mint. Lim crushes the ingredients with a pestle, mingling the sweet juices of bokbunja with the fragrance of the mint. Elegant and controlled, he tops his 'Bokbunja Mojito' off with mojito syrup, blackberry syrup, lemon juice and his own homemade bokbunja rum infusion.

One sip unearths the round ripeness of the berry, balanced by tart lemon, refreshing mint notes and a wash of rum laced with the scent of Lim's bokbunja.

Inventive? Yes. Delicious? Absolutely. The 27-year old bartender and his innovative drink represent a growing set of Korean mixologists who are tinkering with infusions, syrups and indigenous ingredients in the quest for a better drink.

For some, better means healthier, for others it means creating a beverage that transcends all pre-existing beverages, and for yet another set, it means riffing off the classics.

Though by no means on par with the wild and wacky experimentations of molecular mixologists like Tony Conigliaro or Eben Klemm, the concoctions of Korean bar chefs are taking Seoul's sipping culture to new heights.

"These days people's tastes have grown fickle," said mixologist Kim Bong-ha. "They want it fresher, tastier and aesthetically pleasing. As a result, mixology is on the rise."

Mixology, a term that once referred to the art of mixing drinks, has come to represent the intricate and artisanal labour of bartenders-turned-mixologists who have dedicated themselves to the creation of new drinks.

This new breed of bartender makes syrups, liquors and infusions (the process of steeping herbs, fruits, etc in vodka and other liquors to extract each element's flavours) from scratch and draws from a diverse array of ingredients to concoct their own unique beverages.

"The difference between a bartender

and a mixologist, in my opinion, lies in the issue of creativity," said Korea All Bartenders Association PR Director Jeon Jae-gu. "If a bartender focuses on making existing cocktails good, then a mixologist takes it a step further and invents new cocktails, or researches existing cocktails to find ways to improve them."

Mixologist Kim Bong-ha, director at the newly-minted bar Lound, ventured into the world of mixology five to six years ago. Finding inspiration from Frances Case's 1,001 Foods You Must Taste Before You Die and a text on Ferran Adria's El Bulli, this maverick bartender draws from a limitless stock of ingredients to create his fantastical potions.

He invents a drink on the spot, combining black garlic extract, vodka, grapefruit juice and serves it in a martini glass with a skewer of garlic cloves.

His elixir hovers somewhere between prune juice and licorice, not bad for a spur-of-the-moment cocktail.



Don't like it? The 29-year-old mixologist whips out another drink, a blend of mango puree, spicy curry powder, lime juice, mandarin vodka and syrup. The turmeric interplays with the mango. An alcoholic lassi with a kick? "Indians put mango in curry and eat it like kimchi," Kim explains.

Fellow mixologist Kwon Hyuck-min



MIXOLOGISTS: (from left) Kim Min-hyung, Kwon Hyuck-min of Seventy Four and Kim Bong-ha of Lound with a Bokbunja Mojito, Sweet Revenge and Rosemary Pear Martini.



exercises more restraint with his inventions, combining fresh grapefruit juice, citrus vodka, syrup, Angostura bitters and rosemary to create a fragrant yet tempered martini.

Behind the bar at Seventy Four, he stands ramrod straight, decked out in a crisp white suit jacket. Off-duty Kwon presents an entirely different persona. A cross between a liquid chef and home

brewer, Kwon creates his own syrups, infusions and makes his own liquor, Korean liquor.

"I use Korean acacia liquor often," said the 29-year-old Seventy Four chief, who also uses Hallabong (a Jeju Island citrus fruit) and Cheon Hae Hyang for his liquors.

Kwon showcases a cinnamon syrup he made, pouring a little dab into a shot glass. Sweet, warm and spiced, his syrup could enhance a number of fruit-based

drinks. Coffee Bar K mixologist Lim tried his hand at an Andong soju cocktail and is currently working with ginseng liquor. While both Korean-style drinks received a warm response from foreign clientele, they did not go over well with domestic customers.

"It does not suit Korean tastes, because Koreans are into sweet and fruity drinks," explained Lim, who wants to create Korean alcohol-based cocktails for Korean palates.

KABA's Jeon, who is starting a new association tentatively named the Korean Beverage Culture Research Institute, wants to hold a traditional Korean liquor-based cocktail competition this year.

If grassroots cocktails are stirring things up on the home-front, the creations of mixologist Kim Hyun-jin, captain at Grand InterContinental Seoul's Blush, are garnering international recognition.

The 34-year-old mixologist placed second at the International Bartenders Association's Asia Pacific Bartender of the Year cocktail competition in 2007.

The winning drink, his Blushed Cafe, a velvety brown creamsicle of a cocktail capped with foam and intricate latte art executed with Spanish chocolate and orange syrup, layers muddled anise, vanilla vodka and espresso.

In the pursuit of a new drink, Kim Hyun-jin will be jetting off to France, Great Britain and the Netherlands to study molecular cocktails in May. And he promises to showcase a new and exciting cocktail a month from now.

"It will surpass expectations," he says with a sly smile, leaving behind a solitary hint: seafood.

Seafood? "Incorporating salmon into a drink, does not make it unpalatable," said Mix Lounge manager Yoo Jun-sung.

The 27-year-old mixologist derives inspiration from Italian cuisine and sports a collection of cinnamon, ginger and chili vodka infusions.

"If you get into cooking, then it opens a whole new arena of potential cocktail making ingredients," says Yoo.

For mixologist Mark Kim, cuisine plays an important role in the art of mixology.

"A mixologist works with all beverages," said the 29-year-old beverage culture group Mix It Up Director. A firm believer in melding cuisine with beverages, Mark eventually wants to open a dining bar: "I want to pair drinks with courses."

Yet, the efforts of mixologists like Mark will go unnoticed without an audience. KABA's Jeon believes that Koreans are ready.

"There are a lot of people who want to go to bars that serve good drinks and possess a pleasant ambiance," said Jeon. "The atmosphere is slowly ripening."

Seventy Four chief Kwon, also believes that a cocktail renaissance is underway and attributes it, in part, to the burgeoning spirit market.

"(Spirit brands) educated people on what a mojito is and what a martini series is," said Kwon. "These brands became aware of the great potential of this market."

TV GUIDE

AGT11 on Etv on Etv

ITN

A.M.	03.03	Sinhala Film (Cont'd.)
04.30	04.00	Station Opening
04.35	04.05	Pirith Deshanaya
04.42	04.30	Jayamangala Gatha
04.46	05.00	Darasse Sithunili
05.00	05.03	Thakshilawa
05.00	05.03	ITN Puwath (Cont'd.)
06.15	05.30	Davase Pathihara
06.55	05.45	Jeevithaya Jayaganna
07.00	05.50	Hathveni Peya
08.00	06.00	Peypen Peya Puwath
08.05	06.30	Pahan Dora Magazine
08.30	07.00	Sal Mal Yaya
09.00	07.30	Peypen Peya Puwath
09.05	08.00	Batti
10.00	08.30	Peypen Peya
10.05	09.00	Nimthera
11.00	09.00	Discussion
Noon	09.30	Noon News Bulletin
12.00	09.55	Noon News Bulletin
P.M.	10.00	Morning
12.30	10.10	Sithinayaki Oba
01.00	10.10	Sinhala Film
02.00	12.00	Peypen Peya Puwath
02.03	02.00	Sinhala Film (Cont'd.)
03.00	03.00	Peypen Peya Puwath

CHANNEL EYE

A.M.	06.30	Vidyalal Nokki
06.29	07.00	Station Opening
06.30	07.30	Talk for the Day
P.M.	08.00	Tele Drama
12.00	08.30	Luch Time Music
01.00	09.00	Enthozi En Kathai En Manavi
01.30	09.15	Afternoon News
01.45	09.30	Tamil Feature Film
05.00	10.00	Cartoon Programme
05.30	10.30	Muslim Programme (English)
06.00	11.00	Thirai Swarnagal
		End of Transmission

SWARNAVAHINI

A.M.	03.00	Sathgunakaraya
06.00	04.00	Ehi Passiko
06.30	05.00	Mul Pitlawa
07.00	05.30	Loka Sithiyama
07.30	06.00	Gladiator Academy - Cartoon
08.00	06.30	Hello Sri Lanka - Breakfast Show
10.30	07.30	Channel D
11.00	08.00	Mahajana Sewaya Pinisai
Noon	09.00	Abhimaan
12.00	09.30	Rosa Katu
P.M.	10.30	Live @ 12
12.30	10.30	Rasa Liya
01.00	12.00	Hada Rendri Peya
02.00		Kinduru Kodeewa
		End of Transmission

ETV

A.M.	08.01	Online
06.00	08.01	Prime Time
	08.30	That 70's Show
	08.30	3rd Rock
06.45	08.55	Channel News
	08.55	Lanka Business
	09.01	Telemarketing
	09.01	News - Tamil
	09.01	News - Sinhala
	09.45	Debrief
	09.55	Lanka Business
	10.01	VH1
	10.01	Idol Gossip
	10.30	Channel News
	10.30	Asia
	10.30	Telemarketing
	10.55	As Told by Ginger
	10.55	Lanka Business
	11.01	Channel News
	11.01	VH1
	12.00	Debrief
	12.00	Lanka Business
	12.00	End of Transmission

MTV

A.M.	05.55	Station Opening
06.00	06.00	Voice of America
06.30	06.30	News First
07.00	07.00	Good Morning Sri Lanka
08.00	08.00	Fox News
10.30	10.30	VOA
11.30	11.30	Fox News
12.30	12.30	News
12.45	12.45	VOA
01.15	01.15	Fly Tales and Untalkative Bunny Fillers
		End of Transmission

DERANA

A.M.	04.00	Dragon Tales
05.55	04.30	Station Opening
06.00	05.30	Cartoon
07.00	06.00	Derana Aruna
08.00	07.00	Suba Dawasak
08.30	07.30	Eka Dawasak Ude
10.00	08.00	Teledrama
11.00	08.30	Sithi Gilman Hala
P.M.	09.00	Ada Derana
12.00	09.30	Ada Derana
12.15	10.00	Sinhala Songs
12.30	10.30	Sathuthu Wila
01.30	11.00	Mix Songs

SIRASA TV

A.M.	04.30	English Lesson
04.00	05.00	Pirith & Jayamangala Gatha
04.30	06.00	Mahamaluwa
05.00	06.30	Bana
05.30	07.00	Cartoon
06.00	07.30	English Lesson
06.30	08.00	News First
07.00	08.30	Inspector Gadget
07.30	09.00	Sonic
08.00	09.30	Jeevithayala Eda Demna
10.30	10.00	Game Show
11.00	10.30	Diganthaya
12.00	10.45	Lunch Time News
P.M.	11.15	Lunch Time TV
12.15	12.00	Lunch Time TV
01.00	12.00	Nonawaruni
01.30	12.00	Movie
04.00	01.00	Cartoon

RUPAVAHINI

A.M.	04.00	News
04.48	04.05	Cartoon
04.50	04.30	Homage to the Triple Gem & Karaniya Metta Sutta
09.00	05.00	News
09.05	06.00	Nuga Sevana - Cont'd.
11.00	06.30	Nuga Sevana - Cont'd.
11.05	06.58	Aluth Sri Lankawak
12.00	08.00	News
P.M.	08.30	Bala Binduma
12.30	08.35	News
01.00	09.05	Hiru Vyana
02.00	10.00	News
02.05	10.05	Tele Drama
02.30	10.10	A Documentary
03.00	10.27	News
03.05	10.30	A Documentary
03.30	12.00	Tele Drama
		End of Transmission



Hollywood on Etv

ART TV

A.M.	05.00	CNN Today
08.30	05.30	Talk Asia
09.00	05.57	International Correspondents
09.30	06.00	Inside Middle East
09.57	06.30	State of Business (3 min)
10.00	06.57	Telescreen Marketing
10.30	07.00	CNN Today
10.57	07.45	State of Business (3 min)
11.00	08.15	Telescreen Marketing
11.30	08.30	CNN Today
11.57	08.57	State of Business (3 min)
Noon	09.00	Telescreen Marketing
12.00	09.57	State of Business (3 min)
P.M.	10.00	CNN Today
12.30	11.00	CNN Today
12.57	11.30	State of Business (3 min)
01.00	12.00	World Sport
01.30	12.00	CNN Today
01.57	12.30	State of Business (3 min)
02.00	12.30	World Business
02.30	01.30	World News
03.00	03.00	World Report
03.30	03.00	Larry King Live
04.30	03.30	3 Friends & Jerry
04.57	05.30	State of Business (3 min)

SHAKTHI TV

A.M.	04.00	Breakfast News
06.15	05.00	Filler
06.30	05.30	Good Morning Sri Lanka
08.30	06.30	Caller Galatta
09.00	07.00	Priyamana Thozhi
10.00	07.30	Vsantham
10.30	08.00	Sivashakthi
11.00	08.30	Anandam
11.30	09.00	Kasturi
Noon	09.30	Penmanikkaga
P.M.	10.30	Penngal Neram
01.00	11.30	Madiya Seithigal
01.15	12.00	Thirai Koodam
		End of Transmission