

Speakeasy does it

Hidden down alleys and behind shop fronts, Prohibition cocktails have arrived in London. By Rebecca Seal

That Prohibition-style drinking should suddenly be popular has a certain economic logic. After the Great Crash, punchy, pared-down drinks were served in small, dimly lit bars. Now, during the Great Crunch, tiny speakeasy bars are opening in London, hidden down alleys and behind shop fronts, mimicking New York bars such as Please Don't Tell, entered via a hot dog stand's phone box.

Milk and Honey, a members' club tucked behind an unmarked Soho doorway, was the first to introduce the Prohibition trend to London. Another Soho members' club, Quo Vadis, employs a classic cocktail expert, Paul Mant, who is never seen without his metal shirt-sleeve armbands. Round the corner at Hix you'll even find English pre-Temperance movement drinks such as Punch à la Regent. For classics like daiquiris or daisies, try bartender Ago Perrone's award-winning mixes at the art deco-inspired Connaught Bar.

Not all of the new speakeasies are a cinch to find. Callooh Callay in Shoreditch is almost invisible from the street and requires its clientele to step through a Narra-esque wardrobe to reach one of its bars.

The chicanery continues with a secret staircase leading to Jub Jub, a new members-only space for which you need a key; while Barts is in a block of flats somewhere in west London (don't ask where).

The addresses may be secret but the ingredients for Prohibition cocktails are easy to find. "Natural daiquiris were first

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made using Bacardi rum," says cocktail expert Simon Difford, "so you should use it now." He notes that vermouth brands such as Noilly Prat, Lillet, Punt e Mes and Martini Rossi are now doing well in the UK.

The most dedicated bars also make their own bitters from infused herbs and spices, instead of relying on Angostura. Other mixers have been relaunched to meet demand – such as Crème Yvette, a berry and violet liqueur that hasn't been made

Classics Bartender
Ago Perrone makes cocktails such as daiquiris and daisies at the Connaught Bar

Shara Henderson

RECIPE

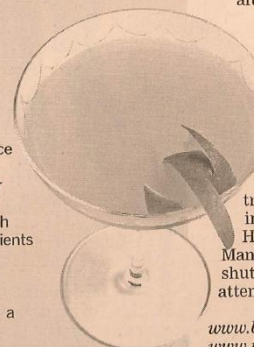
Hemingway daiquiri

Serves 1

Ingredients

45ml Bacardi rum
5ml maraschino liqueur
35ml grapefruit juice
10ml lime juice
¼ tsp caster sugar

● Fill a shaker with ice, add the ingredients and fine-strain into a martini or champagne coupe glass. Garnish with a wedge of lime.



since the 1970s. To prepare the cocktails, most serious bartenders hand-chip their ice from a large block with a small pickaxe, echoing the 1920s, when ice was delivered to bars every day. The Connaught uses beautiful bespoke art deco silverware to mix cocktails, while Paul Mant at Quo Vadis trundles out a martini trolley every afternoon at half-past five.

The drinks themselves are often served in teapots, just as they were in the 1920s and 1930s. "We serve all our shots in teacups," says Charlie Gilkes, owner of Barts, "and lots of drinks in teapots, which can be dangerous, as people tend to drink them rather quickly."

Like the recession, the Prohibition trend isn't limited to London. Bramble in Edinburgh is very good, as are Hausbar in Bristol and the Corridor in Manchester. Don't be put off if they look shut – their low profile is merely an attempt to keep out the hoi polloi.

www.barts-london.com
www.the-connaught.co.uk
www.the-savoy.com