

Summer Sips in the Big Easy: New Orleans Hosts Tales of the Cocktail

By Kayleigh Kulp - July 21, 2014



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Spirits enthusiasts, journalists, bartenders and brands descended on New Orleans on July 16 for the 12th **Tales of the Cocktail**, the **world's premier and most popular cocktail and spirits festival**. And this time, the five day event seemed to have more parties, seminars, special events, and tasting rooms than ever before.

Working across the city, Tales hosted "spirited dinners" plus a cocktail-themed restaurant week with hot spots and mainstays like Cane & Table, Green Goddess, Tujagues, and Sobou hosting specially priced lunch and dinner menus. Meanwhile on-site, brands pulled out all the stops to stand out (Lucid Absinthe tattooed guests in its tasting room and Galliano kicked off the event with a 70s funk themed flash mob in the front of the festival's Hotel Monteleone headquarters on Royal Street, pictured above).

If it involved whiskey, or tasting lots of craft spirits at once, it drew a crowd at this Tales, like the Craft Distillers' Happy Hour, which featured brands like Koval, St. George Spirits, Dulce Vida Tequila, and William Wolf Pecan Bourbon; the Drinking in the DMV tasting room, which allowed guests to taste D.C. area standouts Lyon Distilling Co., Don Ciccio & Figli, Catoctin Creek, A. Smith Bowman, and Green Hat Gin; or the Drink Up New York! event, at which Black Dirty Distillery, Brooklyn Gin, Owney's Rum, and Greenhook Ginsmiths represented, among others.

Rum made a particularly strong showing this year, with an emphasis on its history. Take "Hurricanes, Hand Grenades, Shark Attacks," which explored the history of Bourbon Street and three drinks behind it, or "Which Rum, Which Cocktail and Why?", which covered history of rum in cocktails and how their various flavors affect the drinks.

There were abundant opportunities to taste new products paired with treat (think El Dorado dark rum over mango sorbet, or New Orleans Roman Candy taffy with its matching rum cocktails). Cognac Ferrand launched its new Plantation pineapple rum, Stiggins' Fancy, in collaboration with spirits historian David Wondrich this year, too. Tippling Tales goes also enjoyed popular events of previous years, such as the Angostura bitters pool party and Absolut Bloody Mary bar at the Monteleone, while giving new ones, such as field trip to the Old New Orleans Rum Distillery, and a Bacardi pop-up raw juice bar equal love.

Surprisingly, the festival was light on agave spirit events overall, but the Jalisco-hailing tequila got its rightful recognition at Saturday's Spirited Awards when San Francisco's Julio Bermejo was given the Helen David Lifetime Achievement Award for his work promoting tequila around the world. The beverage manager of Tommy's Mexican Restaurant, Barmejo made Tommy's the first U.S. restaurant to use a 100 percent agave tequila in the well and has one of the largest collections of tequila outside of Mexico.