



4 Restaurants Give Low-Proof Cocktails the High-End Treatment

By **Marcia Gagliardi** on August 28, 2014 12:00 PM



Photo via Zagat

No hard liquor license? Most places just default to pouring wine and beer. But there are new kinds of low-proof cocktails being concocted at restaurants around the city, and we're not talking saketinis, people—these are complex drinks using sherries, vermouths, agave

wine, beer, or house-infused sakes to great effect.

The slightly cheaper price point is a score, although the drinks can have even more labor and attention applied to them. They're also more food friendly than high-proof cocktails, and hurt your head less. Is it just Thursday night? Yeah, drink up.

Chubby Noodle Marina

Anyone who's had the "margaritas" at Don Pisto's in North Beach knows they sneakily pack a wallop (they're made with Los Cabos Agave Especial wine, which clocks in at 20 percent, plus lime, sugar, and ice). At the latest Pete Mrabe offshoot, Chubby Noodle Marina, business partner and barman Nick Floulis has created Cold Tea, a blend of nigori sake, Jardesca (a new wine-based California aperitif), ginger and serrano, honey, and jasmine and mint tea, too—it's on tap and served in a teapot. (Anyone who has hit a late-night Korean restaurant and ordered some "cold tea" will get the joke.) *2205 Lombard St. at Steiner.*

Nico

Director of operations Maz Naba has added some stellar low-proof cocktails to the list through formulating his own low-proof sake "spirits" that mimic the flavor profiles of gin, brandy, and rum (Naba sources fresh sugar cane for that one). Don't miss the smooth Negroni, and the gorgeous Between the Fireflies, with egg white, "orange curacao," and nasturtium syrup (it's a brilliant green, the color of wheatgrass). *3228 Sacramento St. at Presidio.*

Stones Throw

The beer and wine list is very tempting at this Russian Hill hangout, but the low-proof cocktails here deserve some special attention. Bartender Tyler Groom is taking his bartending experience from Michael Mina and applying it to new highs, er, low proofs. There's the Soulstice Cup (a spin on a Pimm's Cup, with housemade Pimm's, ginger beer, and plum shrub) and the In Flight features Dolin Blanc, Chokecherry Mead, lemon, and violette, a take on an Aviation. *1896 Hyde St. at Green*

TBD

This SoMa spot calls their low-alcohol drinks "loopholes," and Tim

Zohn and his talented bar team really use bitters and sherry in clever ways. The balanced Negroni is made with Peychaud's bitters, sweet vermouth, and juniper-infused fino sherry, while the My Paloma is cleverly made with smoked agave wine, (plus jalapeño, grapefruit, and celery). They're so confident with their use of ingredients that they're also happy to make low-proof drinks for you on the fly. *1077 Mission St. at 7th St.*

Want to try making some low-alcohol drinks at home? Check out ***The Art of the Shim: Low-Alcohol Cocktails to Keep You Level***, by local author Dinah Sanders, available in hardback or as an e-book.

Marcia Gagliardi is the founder of the weekly tablehopper e-column; subscribe and get more food news and gossip at tablehopper.com. Follow her on Twitter: [@tablehopper](https://twitter.com/tablehopper).

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