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It's that time again, friends. The time of year when we take a look back at all the brilliant bars that have opened across this fine country of ours, so we can celebrate them in all of their boozy glory. With the help of our editors across the country, Liz and I have sampled an eclectic array of everything from boozy gummies above a Mexican restaurant in New Orleans to straight mezcal with tiny sour oranges and chile salt in a room that looked suspiciously like a boat in San Francisco. As always, we will have missed spots, and we expect you will take us to task in the comments. But until then, sit back and relax with something spirituous and strong, and drink in our favorite new bars of 2014:

CHICAGO, IL

ANALOGUE

This is the kind of place where you're likely to find yourself channeling Seinfeld in first class and blurting out "more EVERYTHING!". In this case that might include playful cocktails like the Green River Nogroni (Beefeater Gin, Cocchi Americano, Campari, salted watermelon, egg white, lemon). It could also mean a purl (the dynamic duo of beer & bitters), and it HAS to mean a round of Old Fashioned shots (like a tequila shot except it's Demerara sugar, then bourbon, then an orange slice to finish, and it's genius). Oh, and a fishbowl probably has to happen, too. That's a lot of drinking, but fortunately the Cajun menu has po'boys and jambalaya that ALMOST upstage the libations.

NEW YORK, NY

BLACK CRESCENT

"Quiet, quiet, everyone quiet," shouts Reynolds, the possibly-pirate barman. The room abruptly gets silent, and he speakerphones a group of eight who reserved a table and never came. After playing it intentionally over-professional for a second, he beckons everyone to holler like mad to let the no-shows hear what they're missing. They oblige. Welcome to the party called Black Crescent.

On weeknights, the vaguely nautical Lower East Side bar is the right kind of quiet, the type of place you could read a book in if your hands weren't busy clutching a po'boy. Come Friday, though, the throwdown's on -- but instead of inhabiting your own standard, self-contained pocket of the bar, you're part of a larger partying organism, and damn if that organism isn't fun. So is just about everything else: the not-trying-too-hard cocktails and geek-pleasing beer list, the Shrimp Bang Bang and other seafare from a former John Besh-prentice, the bitters-bottle wallpaper Reynolds and crew hung themselves, label by label, after Angostura sent over giant sheets ("Yeah, they're kinda pissed about this. I didn't tell them it was for the bathroom."). So go ahead and make a reservation -- just don't dare miss it.

PORTLAND, OR**BTU BRASSERIE**

Portland's had some great bar openings this year -- from [Jackknife](#) to [Stammtisch](#) and [Mad Sons](#) -- but BTU takes the cake (or the scallion pancake) for its wholly unique concept of combining a brewpub with high-end Szechuan bites. The seven-barrel system pumps out Chinese-style rice lagers, blondes, and IPAs designed to pair up with spicy takes on classics, including Dan Dan noodles, smoked duck bao, and wok-tossed lamb & leeks. Most Chinese restaurant-bars serve up dripping kung pao along with PBR or, if you're lucky, overpriced Tsingtao. Here, you're getting real-deal Chinese food with craft beers... minus the requisite karaoke and shame. It's a combination that would absolutely scream of Portland twee if it wasn't so bloody fantastic.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

COUP D'ÉTAT

There is a very strong temptation to make jokes about overthrowing back drinks when you enter this Uptown looker and spot the giant mural of Napoleon and other French-ish people I don't recognize. But you'll soon ignore all of that beauty once you realize that Jesse Held (legend of [Marvel Bar](#), [Eat Street Social](#), and many others) is behind the drinks, which are grand interpretations of classics. Our favorite right now is Rosemary's Secret with bourbon, fresh lemon, rosemary, and a maple brown sugar reduction that'll make you want to overthrow back... oh, right.

WASHINGTON, DC

DRAM & GRAIN

At first glance, you kind of want to dislike Dram & Grain. After all, it's reservation-only and in the basement of [Jack Rose](#) past the kitchen and behind a locked door, and you get a reservation off a business card and the cocktails seem precious and you think you've heard that song before. But Trevor Frye and Co. have made the place so damn spectacular (and thrown in a standing bar area for non-reservation drinkers, and people who want to drop by) that it is worth the hoops, especially if you order the Ode to Omaha, which features rum, bitters, and blackberry syrup in an orb, plus hickory smoke, making it look like a much more delicious version of those life-restoring potions from *Legend of Zelda*.

CHARLESTON, SC

EDMUND'S OAST

When all your bartenders on King Street tell you (after furtively checking over their shoulders to confirm their managers are out of earshot) that you should really get a drink at Edmund's Oast, you'd do well to take their advice. This modern warehouse/barnhouse/beer hall hybrid -- tucked inconspicuously amongst Charleston's office parks & empty lots -- is programmed by beverage director Cameron Read, whose expertise at Greenville Beer Exchange & Southend Brewery has given way to a draught list seemingly pulled, verbatim, from a BeerAdvocate forum reader's fever dream. Cult-ish domestic crafts like COAST, Evil Twin, and Prairie Artisan Ales are posted on the big board next to hard-to-find imports (De Struise, Nøgne ø, J.W. Lees...), all available alongside house-made jerky, charcuterie, and other indulgent bar snacks. Did we mention they're brewing their own stuff on-site? Ahem: they're brewing their own stuff on-site.

SAN DIEGO, CA

FAIRWEATHER

What doesn't Anthony Schmidt do well? That was one of those rhetorical questions, because the cocktail genius behind places like [Ironsides](#), [Polite Provisions](#), and other Consortium Holding spots has done it again with Fairweather, their newest, appropriate-for-SD-weather named bar that captures the best parts of the cheesy beach bar, but uses the high-class, quality, house-made ingredients Schmidt's spots are known for, and turns that cheesiness into a sort of neo-cheesiness that's actually pretty damn cool. Do yourself a favor: get the "invincible fleet of spirits" in the Spanish Armada, with sherry, rum, mezcal, and house-made orgeat.

LOS ANGELES, CA

GOOD TIMES AT DAVEY WAYNE'S

Usually a place that would already claim to know what kind of time you're going to have there would be a little too presumptuous for our blood, but not when it's from the dudes behind [La Descarga](#) and [No Vacancy](#). Hitting up DW's is like entering a party from the '70s that only the cool parents could attend, complete with weird fireplaces and those couches that you sink into because they're all old, and feel like they're full of secrets. Oh, and they have boozy sno-cones. And backyard BBQs. And cocktails like the Cisco Kid filled with jalapeño-infused reposado, fresh raspberry, and a touch of absinthe. Now all you have to do is [find the entrance](#).

AUSTIN, TX

HALF STEP

When folks from a fancy cocktail bar in LA came to town, there was cause for suspicion. Austin and LA are not exactly synonymous, after all. But this was no ordinary LA cocktail bar, it was [Varnish, one of our favorite in the country](#), and the Half Step founder Chris Bostick had already worked in Austin before, so he knew exactly what he was doing opening the cozy spot on Rainey Street and equipping it both with a slightly more extensive indoor drink list and an outdoor bar with two cocktails on tap. There's also an icehouse in the back, with a Clinebell machine, which produces huge blocks of ice that they can custom chop into different shapes, plus THE SAME EXACT MACHINE SONIC USES for crushed ice drinks like swizzles.

FLICKR/CHRISTOPHER MICHEL

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

THE INTERVAL

It's in Fort Mason, like, deep Fort Mason, past the parking lot that usually houses Off The Grid, and to the left, amongst those random offices you'd never notice. And, because it doubles as a coffee shop during the day, you'd think that maybe the drinks would be an afterthought, but you would be so, so mistaken. Bartender Jennifer Colliau is a straight-up cocktail geek, and her passion and knowledge bleed through to all the unique elements, including a draught gin & tonic, a sipping mezcal "Mexico City Style" served neat with tiny sour oranges, chile, and salt (off the amazing "Drinking Around The World" section), and our favorite-named drink of the year, the Decanted Mother-in-Law, which features bourbon, curaçao, maraschino, amber, and a couple types of bitters and is served in an apothecary bottle.

HOUSTON, TX

JULEP

Leave it to Alba Huerta, the bar manager/genius behind [Anvil](#) and a partner at [Pastry War](#), to create a bar that'd make Deep South-dwellers reconsider [their thoughts on the Lone Star State](#). If the Barefoot Contessa was shaking cocktails instead of using 2lbs of butter in every dish, Julep would be her TV set: bright, light, and airy, with a copper awning over the copper-topped bar, lace curtains, and bourbon-laden white cabinets. The space is kind of hard to look away from. But you absolutely should, because why would you sit at that gorgeous bar when you can sit out on the backporch next to a fire pit and start tackling the julep section of the Southern drink lineup: go for the Spiced Julep, which contains no bourbon at all, but *does* have apple brandy, rum, bitters, clove, allspice, cinnamon, and the requisite mint and sugar. There's also a 30-strong lineup of classics, like a Pimm's Cup and a Milk Punch. Oh, and Adam Garcia, former Pass & Provisions chef, is in the kitchen. What I'm saying is that I would be content to never, ever leave my porch seat here.

LOUISVILLE, KY**META**

Even with its hand-painted wallpaper and intense penny-tiled floor, Louisville could have assumed last December that the new bar opening next door to The Body Shop strip club wouldn't take itself too seriously. And thankfully, it doesn't: Meta takes the will-it-never-stop craft cocktail craze and makes it, well, meta. Co-owners and industry vets Jeremy Johnson (Blind Pig) and Hannah Kandle (Barbette) laid out a map of a menu with each of the house drinks tracing its roots back through 'tail history. So, do like the bar's name begs and get all self-referential with your drinking; order the Show 'N Tell (gin, chartreuse, lime, pie syrup & Peychaud's), then take a step back to the classic base, a Sidecar. And maybe do it on their weekly Wu Tang Wednesday, and ask the bartender about the time Meta [turned Pappy into Jell-O shots](#).

NEW YORK, NY

THE NOMAD BAR

Daniel Humm and Will Guidara's NoMad restaurant and its bar were already a formidable destination, named [68th best restaurant in the world](#) and [Best American Restaurant Bar](#) this year. But that was all before the incredibly sexy, bi-level NoMad Bar opened, giving its award-winning cocktails their own dimly-lit space, complete with a mirrored, back-lit bar and, of course, fireplaces. The extensive cocktail menu is divided into classics, dark, light, reserve (rare booze), and explosions (for six to eight, or you on a long night). Get the jalapeño tequila, mezcal, and Chartreuse Loisaida Avenue, order the foie gras and truffle pot pie, and get all kinds of comfortable on one of the deep, black-leather booths for the night. You'll be staying all night.

DALLAS, TX

PARLIAMENT

Dallas drinkers might recognize Eddie “Lucky” Campbell’s signature fedora behind a bar just as easily as they would one of the impressive cocktails from the mixologist who’s shaken behind the bar at spots like The Mansion and Abicus. Now, teamed up with partner Andrew Brimecome, the drinks may be harder to recognize, because Lucky’s put together a bound book of 125 that you’ll never drink your way through. But you should certainly take a seat in the bordello-style, red-lit downtown den and start trying. Killin’ Thyme – his signature concoction of gin, cucumber, lemon, thyme, and watermelon ice – is a great place to start.

ST. LOUIS, MO

PLANTER'S HOUSE

Quick history lesson: back in the mid-19th century, the Planter's House Hotel was famous. And at a certain time during its reign as the place to be seen wearing expensive hats in the Gateway to the West, a certain bartender by the name of Professor Jerry Thomas ran its bar. And then Jerry went on to write the first cocktail book ever. And now, at this non-hotel version celebrating Planter's hospitality with its own version, you can get old-school moves like their Slings, Collins, Sours, and Fizzes that Professor Jerry would've approved of, plus a Whiskey Punch and Overall Julep, both done up "St Louis Style" by Tom Bullock, and a duck burger with a fried farm egg, which Jerry would've probably written another book about had he gotten the chance.

AUSTIN, TX

PLEASANT STORAGE ROOM

Do you like rum punch bowls? And ceviche bars that also have coconut guacamole? Well, you are going to want to buy a bumper sticker for Alfonso Hernandez and Paul Hargrove's PSR, which has all of those things, plus a vibe that feels like a whimsical Cuba no one alive today can remember. If you're drinking alone (awww), we like the Millionaire, with Smith & Cross N.S rum, apricot liqueur, sloe gin, and lime. If you're drinking with friends, well... do you like rum punch bowls?

CHICAGO, IL

SLIPPERY SLOPE

First off, it's a damn fine name for a bar, but a name only gets you so far. The disparate parts of Slippery Slope could seem thrown together at first, but, in reality, it's a well-oiled machine of good times brought to you by the folks behind [nationally-renowned cocktail bar Scofflaw](#). A handful of Skee-Ball machines up front give way to a dimly red-lit bar specializing in bottled cocktails (they're small but potent), which means you won't spill your Painkiller when you head back to the DJ-fueled dance floor and PYT comes on, or when you're cramming people into the photo booth to commemorate the evening.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

THIRD RAIL

They have a jerky bar. I'll say it again: the folks behind this spot -- both formerly of Range -- have a jerky bar, from which they produce house-made meats. When they first opened, I sat at the bar and dutifully tried each one BECAUSE I AM A JOURNALIST, including a vegetarian jerky that blew my mind and made me look at carrots with a lot more respect. But on top of that, super-respected bar manager Jeff Lyon separates drinks into four categories (Aperitif, Seasonal, Citrus, and Spiritous), our favorite of which is the Cloven Hoof, with rum, Armagnac, Madeira, seven spices, clove bitters, and -- wait -- did we already mention they have a jerky bar?!?

NEW ORLEANS, LA

TIKI TOLTECA

If someone in New York said their local Mexican fast-casual chain had a weird attic bar above it that they were closing and re-vamping into a full-blown Tiki bar with carved mermaid statues and plates of cocktail-infused gummy wonders, I'd have rolled my eyes. But, obviously, in New Orleans, it works. The current space rolled out in July with flaming bowls of booze, like the mezcal and tequila Escorpion Punch and the Zombie Punch that comes with a giant, rum-filled gummy brain (don't worry, the straws have spoons on the end so you can eat every bit). Pro tip: before you start talking to the mermaids in the corner, consider ordering queso and tacos from Felipe's downstairs. It'll probably be around the time you and your booth finish your third Tiki bowl and start treating the cocktail gummies like real food because you really do need to try all the Hurricane, the Mai Tai, *and* the Zombie options. For research.

NASHVILLE, TN**TWO BITS**

It certainly doesn't look like anything else on Demonbreun. And with its amazing lineup of strange/delicious bar eats (Yazoo mussels with crabby fries, lamb neck tacos, beer cheese croquettes), nearly all local beers on draft (fine, there is one from Atlanta, okay?!), and innovative cocktails (try the Old Man Bishop), it doesn't act like anything else here either. And that's before you get to the fact that they've got a badass collection of free-play vintage arcade games. Let's just say you haven't lived until you've played *Extreme Hunting* while eating lamb neck tacos, friends.

BOSTON, MA

WINK & NOD

Its lounge area looks like the den of your wealthy, weird, and eclectic aunt, and that's not a bad thing -- Aunt Lorraine was pretty sweet. The food comes courtesy of Bread & Salt, and features serious moves like Chatham mussels with lemongrass curry broth and a charred beef tartare with tomalley aioli. But you'll want to dance longest with the drinks (everything from the juices to cordials and infusions are made fresh in-house, daily), which they separate into "Up", "Down", "Long", and "Tiki", including a (limited to one per guest!) upscale version of a Long Island, which doesn't taste anything like the ones I remember drinking in Hyannis at Mary Anne's when I was in college.

***Kevin Alexander** is the Food/Drink executive editor and bought at least seven bowls of booze that were on fire while working on this piece. Follow him to important research: [@KAlexander03](#).*

***Liz Childers** is the Food/Drink associate editor and wants everyone to know that Tiki Tolteca's gummy Tiki cocktails REALLY DO HAVE FULL COCKTAILS IN THEM. It's not a joke. Follow her to better menu trust: [@lizchilders1](#).*