



Apothecary 330 in Fort Lauderdale.

Photo by Candace West

# The 11 Best Cocktail Bars in Broward and Palm Beach: 2018 Edition

**NICOLE DANNA** | AUGUST 15, 2018 | 9:29AM

Broward and Palm Beach counties have a long, alcohol-fueled history. From Prohibition rum-runners to shots-guzzling spring breakers, and the recent boom of craft-beer nerds, South Florida has definitely earned its reputation for copious consumption of booze in the past century.

What we've historically lacked, however, is a cocktail culture. Lucky for us, a few good ones are all we need to keep things shakin'. From tiki-style drinks by the beach to speakeasy-styled digs, finding a solid martini or creative concoction is on the rise thanks to a number of spots creating intoxicating magic behind the bar.

All that's left to do is raise a glass and toast to the top ten cocktail bars in South Florida:



Sweetwater mixologist and partner Sean Iglehart.

**Photo by Kelly Coulson Photography**

**1. Sweetwater/Saxon.** A half-decade ago, as new-wave cocktail culture swept the nation, South Florida was sorely lacking. While people in cities like Chicago, New York, and San Francisco were already discovering the joy of a well-made Aviation, perfect Manhattan, or a solid Negroni, South Floridians were still making do with remade, neon margarita mix served in plastic cups. And then came Palm Beach County's first true cocktail bar to the rescue, which opened its doors in a clandestine spot off Federal Highway in Boynton Beach. Like a speakeasy of the 1920s, the aptly named Sweetwater – developed by founders Clint Reed and Sean Iglehart – today offers guests a bible-like menu of libations and a staff talented at executing even the most complex request. Armed with an arsenal of bitters, house-made infusions, specialty liqueurs, fresh herbs, fruits, and dozens of specialty, high-end spirits, the barmen here will gladly make you something by request, too. Next-door, the duo's second sister concept, Saxon – a 30-seat bar and lounge accessible through Sweetwater – even offers the county's [first omakase cocktail experience](#). *1507 S. Federal Highway, Boynton Beach; 561-509-9277; [sweetwater33.com](http://sweetwater33.com).*





**Photo courtesy of The Wilder**



**2. The Wilder.** Dubbed a social club for those who appreciate a sophisticated cocktail experience, The Wilder is Fort Lauderdale's answer to the lack of destination imbibing for a sophisticated collection of clientele in Broward County. The concept, which opened in early 2018, is the work of hospitality veteran David Cardaci and his wife, Vanessa, who styled their latest concept from memories of their favorite establishments visited while traveling the globe, giving the place a "Monaco meets Chateau Marmont feel." While David's [Rhythm & Vine](#) offered area residents the first secret garden-inspired concept complete with faux grass lawn where you can sip cocktails from an Airstream bar when it first opened in 2015, today The Wilder follows suit with its secluded charm, topnotch decor, and talented staff. Three spaces offer three unique experiences, each with a distinct personality: a hotel lobby-like front bar that offers up masterfully-executed libations; a European-style outdoor courtyard for sun-soaked revelry; and a dim-lit great room with a second bar that hosts near-nightly events from a burlesque show and live music acts to a popular weekly jazz night performance. From there, all that's left to do is choose from one of several rotating cocktails on a menu that features both classics and seasonal specialties. *701 E. Broward Blvd., Fort Lauderdale; 954-683-9453; [intothewilder.com](http://intothewilder.com).*



Photo by Nicole Danna

**3. Death or Glory.** In April 2017, Death or Glory made its way onto the Palm Beach County imbibing scene when Miami-based Repour's Isaac Grillo and Fort Lauderdale-based Kreepy Tiki Bar & Lounge's Ayme Harrison decided to team up on a concept in downtown Delray Beach. Grillo, named the Ultimate Miami Bartender by Magic City Casino during his time at Haven South Beach, opened his first establishment in 2015 inside the boutique Albion Hotel off Lincoln Road. At the time, the bartender-turned-bar-owner and 12-year industry veteran was best known for creating a popular haunt for the Miami industry clientele. Today, Death or Glory fills that void further north, where two bars offer imbibers an intimate dining experience. Inside, mixologists offer up a rotating list of seasonally-inspired cocktails. Outside, a short bar at the back of the eatery's outdoor patio whisks you away to another world. The bartenders here specialize in crafting tiki-style libations, so you can escape your current paradise and find an entirely new one. *116 NE 6th Ave., Delray Beach; 561-808-8814; [deathorglorybar.com](http://deathorglorybar.com).*



Photo by Nicole Danna

**4. Hullabaloo.** If you're in the mood for a handcrafted cocktail, head to Hullabaloo in West Palm Beach. This Rodney Mayo establishment recently made the year's "best of" list for new restaurants in 2013, churning out gastropub-style Italian with precision and creativity. Likewise, the bar makes one hell of a drink. Here, everything behind the bar is the real deal. How real? You won't find a single bottle of simple syrup in stock. Instead, it's all about doing things from scratch, deployed with high-end spirits and house-made liqueurs to serve flavorful, intense drinks with no artificial ingredients. The current roster – with each cocktail named for late musicians – includes the Rick James, a blend of Jameson, Temontis Mirto, Foro Amaro, orange bitters, and fresh oregano. Or try the Peter Tosh, a taste of spiced rum blended with pineapple, egg white, lime juice, cardamom, and Garam Masala. *517 Clematis St., West Palm Beach. Call 561-833-1033, or visit [sub-culture.org/hullabaloo](http://sub-culture.org/hullabaloo).*





Photo courtesy of Voltaire

**5. Voltaire.** Like any good cocktail bar, this stylish venue – located above the new Lost Weekend on Clematis Street in West Palm Beach – has a strong speakeasy vibe. Luckily, Voltaire is worth the quick hunt, offering up a touch of hidden charm as one of the city's most eclectic spots to enjoy good music, food, and – of course – a few drinks. Named after and inspired by the 18th century writer and philosopher of the same name, the place is an ode to those who advocate freedom of expression. Here, feel free to do just that with a drink or two. The unique, multi-dimensional concept features a library of libations and spirits, including a varied selection of absinthe, in case you're looking to become truly inspired. And, in true Sub Culture establishment fashion, inspiration comes in all forms here, from weekly shows performed by indie touring bands to cabaret and house night on Saturday, and live jazz on Sunday. Hungry after all that creative loafing? In-house Yellow Jack Sushi provides some truly beautiful, art-like sushi offerings (and a ton of sake) for all your late-night noshing needs. *526 Clematis St., West Palm*

*Beach; 561-408-5603; [sub-culture.org/voltaire](http://sub-culture.org/voltaire).*



Photo courtesy of CWS

**6. CWS.** In May 2016, Lake Worth welcomed its first craft cocktail bar with C.W.S. Craft Bar + Kitchen, a concept from the duo best best known for their Broward-based concepts including Revolution Live, America's Backyard, and Stache 1920's Whiskey Den + Coffee Bar. In a similar vein to Stache, considered one of Fort Lauderdale's first craft cocktail bars when it opened in 2013, C.W.S.'s inside bar showcases a wide array of spirits with an emphasis on bourbons, whiskeys, and ryes. A section dubbed "Nothing but the Classics" gives patrons the opportunity to sample classic cocktails like the French 75, Negroni, Manhattan, Sazerac, or Sidecar using the bar's wide array of spirits sourced from three distributors (drinks can even be "upgraded" to draw from C.W.S.'s extensive spirit portfolio offering more than 300 whiskeys as well as dozens of vodkas, tequila, Scotch, and gin). On the outdoor patio, which seats 80, guests can enjoy the ambiance of a classic beer garden, complete with a tented bar featuring 28 local and imported craft beers; tables designed for a communal dining and imbibing, and a gaming area. *522 Lucerne Ave., Lake Worth; 561-318-5637; [cwslw.com](http://cwslw.com).*



**Photo by Nicole Danna**



**7. Tiki-Ono.** If you like your tiki cocktails on the beach, look no further than the pier in Lake Worth, where a permanent pop-up tiki bar dubbed Tiki-Ono has set up shop at the entrance to Benny's on the Beach. Here you can order a number of potent, tiki-styled libations and mixed drinks – some served from fresh, shaved coconuts – nearly every day of the week from noon to 7 p.m. (weather permitting). The men behind Tiki-Ono are local bartenders Rob Husted and Josh Gates, who developed the beach-side concept several years ago. No need to get fancy, either: the majority of clientele keep it casual, ordering in bathing suits and bikinis from a chalkboard menu that presents a short list of classic and rotating drinks. That includes the signature Lota Colada, a basil-infused piña colada that uses real cream of coconut and is served in a logo-stamped, fresh-shaved coconut. Or try one of several new seasonal concoctions like the Tiki Libre, a play on a Cuba Libre-meets-piña Colada and made with a blend of local Black Coral white rum and Jamaican Blackwell rum. Prefer something a bit more classic? Starting in September, a new menu will feature a list of classic tiki drinks alongside a specialty rotating list offering several takes on both the piña colada and daiquiri. There's even a secret menu – visit the website and see if you can find it. *10 S. Ocean Blvd., Lake Worth; 561-315-7963; [tiki-ono.com](http://tiki-ono.com).*



Photo courtesy of The Rebel House

**8. The Rebel House.** At the Rebel House in Boca Raton, you're encouraged to "imbibe, ingest, and indulge." And we strongly encourage you to focus on the "imbibe" part. Owners Mike Saperstein and Evan David, the duo behind Charm City Burgers and El Jefe Luchador, debuted this casual, chef-driven restaurant several years ago and have become a smash hit for their distinctive American-style tapas paired with some equally fresh and flavorful cocktails. At the bar, whiskey and bourbon are the main focus with creative concoctions that highlight fresh flavors full of fresh herbs, vegetables, and fruit infusions. Perhaps the best time to go would be during the restaurant's "Wake and Bake" Sunday brunch, where you can get bottomless watermelon-basil or cucumber-mint mimosas alongside a fresh Roma tomato-based bloody mary or maple-syrup-infused bourbon cocktail. *297 E. Palmetto Park Road, Boca Raton. Call 561-353-5888, or visit [lifetastesbetter.com](http://lifetastesbetter.com).*



Photo courtesy of HMF

**9. HMF.** HMF, which opened in 2012, is Palm Beach's first dedicated craft cocktail bar. Located at the Breakers lobby, the Florentine Room is where the glitterati drank and dined for decades. The cocktail bar is named for the hotel's founder, Henry Morrison Flagler, the railroad magnate who helped to pioneer the development of South Florida. Today, the space has been reinvented as a sophisticated lounge for South Florida's Jet Set, and to keep with tradition, is truly a feast for all senses. A collection of classic cocktails pay loving tribute to the originals, a full menu of signature, handcrafted drinks ranging from the traditional concoctions to the experimental with innovative twists that include all the usual trends like freshly made ingredients, elixirs, and sodas. An acclaimed wine list offers more than 2,000 unique selections, and there's a cigarette girl inspired by the social cocktail clubs of the '50s and '60s. Think of her as a sort of high-end server offering various tastings of specialty items, be it an aperitif, specialty dessert sample, or anything to enhance the cocktail party experience. *1 S. County Road, Palm Beach; 855-237-3452; [hmfpalmbeach.com](http://hmfpalmbeach.com).*





Photo courtesy of Apothecary

**10. Apothecary 330.** Accessible via side entryway from Himmarshee Village's Pizzacraft, Apothecary 330 is a crafty answer to the area's imbibing scene. Here, a short copper bar with seating for up to 15 is mirrored by a cozy lounge area with bottle service on weekends. The cavernous interior includes a T-shaped custom-built red leather couch and walls adorned with turn-of-the-century knickknacks like old sewing machines and decades-old apothecary jars the owners sourced from nearby vintage dealers. Behind the bar, guests can find an assortment of rare and specialty liquors (about 250 bottles) with a focus on bourbon and whiskey. The collection includes a number of imported picks you might not find locally. Apothecary's interpretation of classic cocktails will provide the foundation of the menu, with modern takes on old-world favorites like the Sazerac, Hemingway daiquiri, NY sour, a gin fizz, a margarita, and – of course – the old-fashioned. Or go the route of an ever-revolving list of one-off's and seasonal specialties designed by the Apothecary staff, each made using small-batch and high-end spirits and an arsenal of homemade bitters, barrel-aged liquors and infusions, syrups, and foams. *330 SE Second Ave., Fort Lauderdale; 954-616-8028; [jeygroup.com](http://jeygroup.com).*

Photo by [Kelly Coulson Photography](#)

**11. Kapow! Noodle Bar.** Kapow! isn't just a noodle bar – it's also one of the area's best craft cocktail bars. With two locations in Boca Raton and West Palm Beach, imbibers can indulge in a colorful drink selection drafted seasonally by mixologist Angela Dugan and bar manager Brett Robertson, who each take great pride in sourcing fresh herbs from the bar's own Boca Raton-based organic garden and specialty spices and liquors to concoct some pretty intense pairings. Out of more than a dozen cocktails, you can even find several "low impact" drinks – those with fewer calories and less alcohol – to help keep indulging in check. This season, look for new combinations as well as the signature favorite known as the Spicy Lover, which combines fresh muddled cucumber and cilantro with agave, a dash of hot sauce, and a shot of good tequila. *431 Plaza Real, Boca Raton. Call 561-347-7322, or visit [kapownoodlebar.com](http://kapownoodlebar.com).*



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