

ITALIAN SODA ANYONE?



The food and beverage operation of any curling facility in this country has undergone significant changes in the past decade. These changes have been caused by circumstances of two major trends beyond the control of managers and board of directors. Or are they?

The first, of course, is a societal change where drinking and driving is no longer tolerated in our country. The problem for our clubs however, has been devastating financially. In the past, many operations relied heavily on the profits from the bar to break even or even to make a profit and to the point of discounting membership fees or other usage fees because “we’d get the bar”.

The second trend impacting bar sales is found in the choice Canadians are making when it comes to choosing a beverage. As a nation, we have become more health conscious and curling rinks are finding that out that a rye and Pepsi is being replaced by fruit juice and domestic beer often plays second fiddle to carb-free beer or specialty draughts.

Because of these trends, our buildings can no longer count on bar sales to subsidize operations (finding new revenue streams is a story for another day), however it is important that we look at ways to guarantee after-game sales from all of our customers. While volume may be down and sales may never be where they once were, profit is still available while making a very positive impression on your customers!

Let’s look at preparing and serving alcohol-free drinks to our customers and we know they will appreciate the diversity of choice and the special attention paid to them.

I recently found a really neat book titled *The Original Guide to Alcohol-Free Beverages and Drinks* by Robert Plotkin, Copyright 2002 BarMedia (available at [Chapters Indigo](#)). In the introduction, Mr. Plotkin makes three great points and I quote:

- “...who said a cocktail had to have a kick to be something special.”
- “The demographics of alcohol-free drinkers include literally everyone.”
- “Consider also that alcohol-free beverages and drinks are loaded with profit.”

The key message is that your entire membership and user groups are potential alcohol-free drinkers – guaranteeing a post game sale if you offer more than soda pop. Also, just because it is alcohol-free doesn’t mean you have to give it away. Don’t be afraid to make money!

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The book is full of great recipes that can be served and enjoyed by your clientele. Some are more complex and may require bar staff, some may require commercial blenders again for the bigger curling business, but I guarantee there will be something for the small curling club to serve on a regular basis or for special events.

Before I share a few recipes with you, I would also like to suggest that you consider having special drinks for your bantams and juniors. We want to ensure they enjoy their curling experience at your place and what better way than serving a smoothie, or a root beer float or even using a piece of licorice as a straw! Better than what they might get at the hockey rink!

Also, look into serving great coffee and great tea. Most clubs serve lousy coffee - Tim Hortons were not! Spend some time looking into how you can improve your coffee (and selection of teas) including mugs and spoons rather than the ubiquitous Styrofoam container and wooden stir stick.

Here are a few recipes to make your mouth water.....

This one you will probably know as it was invented in Canada – the Virgin Caesar!! Now you might be saying we already offer them just without the vodka however, we'd like to challenge you to make the **Ultimate Virgin Caesar**.

Salt the rim with celery salt. Serve in a tall, good looking glass (12 – 16 oz) over ice (glass half full of ice). Add Tabasco®, Worcestershire, salt & pepper to taste. Fill with good clamato juice (shake well before serving). Garnish with a lemon wheel and a stalk of celery. Other options: garnish with a cucumber wheel; substitute asparagus for celery or even a pepperette! Note: [Mott's Clamato](#) is a popular choice of clamato juices in Canada.



There is a popular syrup company called [Torani](#) in Canada. They have over 100 different flavours and you can find their products in large grocery stores or specialty food places. A 750ml bottle is about \$10 and you would get about 25 drinks from it as most recipes call for 1 ounce. Cost is \$0.40 per drink. Here are some fun ways you can turn 'boring' drinks into tasty alcohol-free concoctions with cute names and minimal fuss.

Holy Fuzzy Navel

Tall highball glass half filled with ice. Add one (1) ounce of Torani Peach syrup. Nearly fill with orange juice. Add a splash of club soda (or soda water) and garnish with an orange wheel garnish and a straw!

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Red Velvet Sparkler

Tall highball glass half filled with ice
 Four (4) ounces of cranberry cocktail
 Two (2) ounces of Torani Pink Grapefruit syrup
 Fill with club soda (or soda water)
 Something green for garnish and a straw!

Italian Cream Soda

Tall highball glass half filled with ice
 Nearly fill with club soda (or soda water)
 Add $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of Torani Passion Fruit Syrup
 Add $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of Torani Watermelon Syrup
 Float one (1) ounce of half & half cream
 Garnish with a strawberry, add a straw and stir when ready to drink!

Classic Mint Coffee

Coffee mug or coffee glass. Add one (1) ounce of Torani Chocolate Mint Syrup and nearly fill with fresh, hot coffee.
 Add whipped cream, powdered cocoa as garnish and coffee spoon



Coffée Chocolatté

Coffee mug or coffee glass. Add three (3) ounces of milk; add one (1) ounce of chocolate syrup; add one (1) ounce of coffee syrup.
 Nearly fill with cold coffee and add whipped cream, powdered chocolate as garnish and coffee spoon.

These coffee recipes are likely a simple variation of what you are selling now except here's an opportunity to up-sell by making the famous hot chocolate more than a Styrofoam cup with a hot liquid. Same as the coffee drinks above, use a mug and fill 4/5ths with hot chocolate. Garnish with whipped cream and shaved chocolate (or cherry) and drop a coffee spoon in and voila! A nice, warm after curling drink. (I realize this is about alcohol-free drinks, but this version of the hot chocolate can be made into a real *Winter Warmer* by adding $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of Amaretto.)

Enjoy!