



Playing the 'Field'

Christened the world's greatest bartender, Colin Peter Field, head bartender, Paris Ritz Hotel shares his insights and experiences with **Liquid**.

After finishing school at the Ferrandi School in Paris, Colin Peter Field, head bartender, Hotel Ritz Paris, has participated in numerous national and international competitions. He is actively involved in training young bartender students pursuing Mention Complémentaire. In 1983, Colin won the silver medal for France at the Martini World Championships.

For an Englishman like Colin, Paris seemed attractive and, after finishing his A levels, he decided to come to Paris. Named as The World's Greatest Bartender by Forbes in 2001, Colin continues to innovate in cocktail making and his experiments in Molecular Mixology provide daily entertainment for his hotel guests.



Above: Colin Peter Field

Facing Page: One of the most popular drinks, the Nautilus.

The Genius talks

"Consumer preferences are influenced by the bartender. It is like performing on stage every evening. The lines must be spontaneous. One can also call it an art of salesmanship," says Colin. His profession is not only about creating cocktails but also interacting with clients and working with them so as to be part of an invisible game where "you enjoy people and make things work between tables and people." But yes, like every artist, at times frustration does set in

as things may not work out, but for Colin and his team there is no looking back. He says, "My team and I take our careers seriously and try to never miss an opportunity to communicate with the public. We believe this is vital for our profession. At home, we are constantly reading about new products and exchange bar magazines from other countries to develop our personal styles."

Like cooking, recipes need to be thought out and prepared with patience

"COCKTAIL MAKING IS LIKE COOKING, IT NEEDS THOUGHT AND SHOULD BE PREPARED WITH PATIENCE AND LOVE."

and love. Colin shares how bartenders in France, Germany, Italy and the US give their recipes serious thought, "They first create the cocktails in their minds and then once they hit the right consistency, they finally prepare the cocktail to prove that the method was correct. I have observed that bartenders, especially in France, read books on Cognacs, calvados, tequila, whiskies and liqueurs. They know what they are talking about. Though most of the bartenders in London are French or Italian, bartending in England is picking up."

Uniqueness is the key

The cocktail menu is so unique that it is constantly used in several hotel schools as an example. It is like a newspaper; stories that are intermingled with cocktails recipes. "There is probably one thing that a client will always pick up and read in a bar, and that is the menu. If it is just a price list then it is a waste of a communication opportunity. You can tell if you have done something unique when people continue to read it even after they have placed an order," explains Colin.

Mixing food and drinks

Cocktail pairing with food is another thing that has taken off well, but as Colin says, "It has taken a great deal of time to bring people to accept the cocktail and tapas experience - the union between elegant French cuisine and cocktails is especially exciting."



“BARTENDERS ARE NOW USING EXOTIC HERBS IN THEIR CREATIONS.”

“The one or two bartending masters that obtain this will be happy, but this is less important, as the bartending diploma from the Asemblée Nationale will be recognised with a ministry of education diploma, a first in the world,” Colin explains.

On a rather emotional note Colin concludes, “This has been my greatest challenge to date, as it has taken me more than seven years to obtain this recognition and acceptance of our profession. Fortunately, the attitude is changing towards this field of work.”

Tip: Take a frozen mixing glass at -18.3°C and a cocktail glass at the same temperature. Pour in 7/10 of the future cocktail with Beefeater 24 Gin and 3/10 Lillet from Bordeaux. Mix and pour.

Now enjoy beautiful goujons of Sole with hot Normandy butter slowly poured over the top.

Future of bartending

The trend seen abroad is that bartenders are following a more professional approach and are working like chefs de cuisine. In France and Moscow, seasonal produce is being increasingly used. “I have seen bartenders working with beautiful herbs that I would love to use at the Ritz as well,” shares Colin.

In March 2010, the first Meilleur Ouvrier de France (MOF) exam for bartenders will take place in Sorbonne. This is a giant step for bartenders in France and in the world. For the first time, a bartender will be able to obtain, if he meets the highest level of perfection, a BAC +2 Level III. This is more or less a degree in bartending.

Colin's Space

Serendipiti – prepared with exclusive French produce

In a tumbler add
 1/10 Calvados
 1 sprig of fresh mint
 1 spoon of sugar
 4/10 clarified apple juice from Normandy
 Lots of ice
 Finish with Champagne and serve.
 Absolutely delicious!
 This cocktail is so successful that Colin was invited to prepare it on September 28 at the Senat.

New Age Caipirinha

Ingredients:
 Juice of two lemons
 2 spoons of sugar
 7cl of Cachaca.
 Method: Blend the ingredients in an electric blender and serve.

Underrated alcohol:

Calvados. It has reached the No 2 position in France after Cognac and has overtaken Armagnac. It's distilled like Cognac and when you smell it or taste it you will say 'apples'. Taste Cognac, for example, and they will never say 'grapes'.

Overrated drink:

The long island iced tea. If a man with a dry martini makes me think of James Bond, I dare not tell you what one might think in this case.

Popular drink:

The Nautilus. Passion fruit with vodka strained after which the shell is floated in the glass with strawberry vodka that we make ourselves at the Hemingway bar. It looks like an Andy Warhol egg.