

# Liquid

**Lock, Stock and Can**

Ready-to-Drink Cocktails

**Climate Change**

It Is Not All Bad

**Traditional Drinks**

From Around India

Snap, pop & fizzle – these sounds resonate with the promise of aptly paired mixers for popular spirits, but there is a shift in the content of these cans and crown-corked bottles. Vermouths, aperitifs, liqueurs, cordials, syrups, shrubs – the list goes on when you speak of cocktails. Long gone are the rituals of pouring whisky over ice with water, or a flavored mixer to complement spirits like gin or vodka.

With bars hiring experienced mixologists to serve beautifully balanced classics – the trickle became a wave. Indian drinkers had a desire to do better in their

drinking game. “The pandemic changed how people drank,” says Pooja Vir, a hospitality advisor. “Once the state government allowed home delivery of alcohol, the home bar had a moment that seems to be on the up and up.” India’s early homegrown gin and whisky inspired curiosity around good cocktails and helped strengthen people’s interest in making cocktails at home. Enthusiasts also started sharing recipes on social media, snowballing it into a trend.

It is during these lockdowns that Mrinal and Rincy spotted a market gap and co-founded Mr. Jerry’s,

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which was born with the realization that amazing cocktails could be replicated in a Ready To Drink (RTD) version. One of the first brands in this space, Mr. Jerry’s was launched in December 2020 in Goa with six popular cocktail variants including an Old Fashioned and Midday Negroni ranging from 20-33% ABV.

Canned and bottled RTDs come with the ease of twist, pour and drink, taking away the need to source the

right ingredient. In India, as of three years ago, bottled alcoholic drinks were restricted to Smirnoff Ice and Bacardi Breezer. But today, there is a sudden surge of RTDs such as Obe Cocktails and In a Can, along with a bunch of hard seltzers such as Raya and Barney’s, and canned wines by Fratelli and Sula. Viraj Sawant, co-founder of In a Can, feels the consumer needs to be pushed, and launched canned cocktails with relatable





varieties, but with a twist. "The range we offer makes what people have had many times at bars, accessible at their homes."

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Restaurants aren't far behind – Bombay Canteen bottled their in-house cocktail Perry Road Peru. Other bar-forward restaurants like Masque and Bastian followed suit, adding cocktail mixers to their pandemic delivery menus. We are even seeing the big alcobev companies like Pernod Ricard and Bacardi getting into the RTD cocktail game.

Tim Judge, a hospitality veteran, reminds us that pre-mixed cocktails are not a new concept. Babycham was popular in the '80s. He says, "After Covid, with high inflation and impending recession, people have had to make tough choices about where to spend their money, and drinking at home is cheaper."

Tim believes some top-level bartenders are putting out quality products – it's an exciting extension of their skills – and he curates RTDs on his e-commerce platform, Lassou. One can order cocktails from locally popular bars to enjoy at home.

In the USA, spirit innovators like Tom Macy of The Social Hour Cocktails wondered why such a common cocktail wasn't available as a premix, so he experimented with carbonation and bottling and imagined a premixed bottled Gin & Tonic in 2013. In August 2020, The Social Hour launched three cocktails: Tom's original Gin & Tonic with Perry's Tot Gin, Whiskey Mule with Ragtime Rye, and Pacific Spritz (a tropical spin on Aperol Spritz). However, Tom feels RTDs will never fully replace cocktails made from scratch. "There are some things you just can't do in a can. I love making cocktails, and I'll never stop. No matter how good my canned cocktails are."



Bols realigned their centuries-old on-premise market dominant liqueur offerings to cash in on new drinking trends. They introduced craft solutions to cocktails and moved to smaller sized, premium, sustainable packaging with natural ingredients. Launching multi-serve bottles and the single serve Bols Tubes in the Spring of 2022, their portfolio includes Espresso Martini, Azul Margarita, Red Light Negroni, and The Very Old-fashioned which clocks in at a whopping 30% ABV.

Premixed RTDs are gaining a lot of ground because people like drinking cocktails, but they don't like making them. Indian drinkers have evolved to appreciate the fine art of cocktails – be it at home parties or at watering holes. Pre-mixed cocktails have made it easy for great cocktails to be served at events, parties, festivals and weddings. From straightforward Martinis and Negronis to Salted Caramel Manhattans and Rhubarb Cosmopolitans, bottled cocktails are delicious and adventurous. Convenience is huge and it's surprising that it has taken until now to offer consumers something they so obviously wanted. [YL](#)

Mumbai-born **Nikhil Merchant** is a foodie, restaurateur & writer (Nonchalant Gourmand) who lives in Los Angeles.