

20 JUNE 2019 / SF RESTAURANTS, FOOD & DRINK / ZACK CHEN

The 34 Best Cocktail Bars In SF

San Francisco is known as a breeding ground for country's top mixologists — a term both reviled and proudly worn by those in the industry. Said to both [spend the most on alcohol of any major city](#) and have the [most bars per capita among large US cities](#), San Francisco boasts over a thousand bars within our city limits. Hidden within those ranks are some of the top cocktail establishments in the country. Here we bring you the 34 **best SF bars** in which get a top-notch — oftentimes even award-winning — cocktail. Get your name on SFist's [List of Cocktail Connoisseurs](#) and **win your SFist Cocktail Connoisseur sweatshirt** by visiting every location — [Learn More!](#)

Mourad





Photo via Steph Rossi

Enjoy excellent creations from bar manager JP in this modern and spacious venue just south of Market. Can't-miss options include the Down & Derby for whiskey lovers, or the Eye of the Whale for those looking for a clear base spirit. Don't forget to order a snack from Michelin-starred chef Mourad Lahlou (formerly of Aziza).

[Mourad's Website](#)

140 New Montgomery St #1, San Francisco, CA 94105

Beretta



Photo via Beretta

This mission gem has been putting out quality cocktails and Italian fare for over ten years. Expect long waits on tables during peak hours, but rest assured cocktails can be ordered in the interim and bar seating is first come first served. Give their agave based cocktails a try – the mezcal Penicillin is a crowd-pleaser for those who enjoy a smokey experience. Ask for their ‘secret bird’ menu for additional cocktail options.

[Beretta's Website](#)

1199 Valencia St, San Francisco, CA 94110

Che Fico



Photo via Yue J. [via Yelp](#)

A relative newcomer to the SF restaurant scene, Che Fico's bar program is run by longtime industry star Christopher Longoria (formerly of Aziza and 1760), and his excellent team. The cocktails incorporate unique ingredients including dill, chamomile tea, and celery. This one's a can't miss, as it features one of the most creative menus in the city coupled with excellent pizzas, pastas, and seasonal Italian food.

[Che Fico's Website](#)

838 Divisadero St, San Francisco, CA 94117

Bellota



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Bellota

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A modern, Spanish-themed space with great ambiance and top

notch cocktails, Bellota is the ideal SOMA hang for a few specialty gin & tonics or the Spanish-inspired wine and spirits list. Bar manager Dave Osborne and his team have curated a top-notch cocktail program ranging from innovative offerings like the Cabeza de Chorlito with bourbon, aloe and green chile to their make-your-own gin & tonic list. Be sure to select from their extensive list of locally made gins, which features everything from the Bay's larger producers like St. George's to smaller, craft outfits like Hana Gin.

[Bellota's Website](#)

888 Brannan St, San Francisco, CA 94103

The Peacekeeper





Photo via The Peacekeeper

A retractable roof makes this one of the most unique bar spaces in San Francisco and an excellent hang on a nice evening. Similar to its sister bar, Harper and Rye, Peacekeeper is more high-tempo than a mellow cocktail bar. But don't let the lively crowd fool you as Alec and the joint's other talented bartenders mix up tasty drinks like the Goddaughter, which combines tequila, berry shrub and egg whites.

[The Peacekeeper's Website](#)

925 Bush St, San Francisco, CA 94109

Sugar Lounge





Photo via Angela L. [via Yelp](#)

Don't let the 90's bar décor fool you as owner Mehay ("Mee-hee") and her team of excellent bartenders serve up creative cocktails in this Hayes Valley hang out for the more divey of you to enjoy. Stand outs include the Bacon Ol' Fashioned, made with bacon infused bourbon, and the Hannah Crush, a wonderful medley of cucumber, bubbles and lavender forward gin.

[Sugar Lounge's Website](#)

377 Hayes St, San Francisco, CA 94102

Nopa





Photo via Nopa

One of the city's only great late night food options, Nopa quietly has stellar drink options throughout its cocktail menu. If you're in the mood for something lighter, try the low ABV Poinsettia to whet your pallet. Heavy hitters like the Raven or Black Mamba are not for the faint of heart, but are well balanced, spirit forward expressions. Of course, don't forget to feed yourself at this SF institution.

[Nopa's Website](#)

560 Divisadero St. @ Hayes SF, CA 94117

Blackbird





Photo via Nicole G. [via Yelp](#)

Located at the edge of the Castro neighborhood, this cocktail bar is the right combination of understated yet well appointed. Add in a lively crowd and truly unique, tasty offerings — like the “Year 2000” made with house blended whiskey and banana — and you have the ideal spot in which to enjoy an adult beverage.

[Blackbird's Website](#)

2124 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94114

The Modernist





Photo via Steph Rossi

Offering a truly modern take on some classic Indian dishes, August (1) Five's moniker commemorates India's independence from the British Empire. With equally impressive food, this place has one of San Francisco's most unique bar menus as well. Are you a diva who needs gold flakes in your drink? August (1) Five has you covered. Do you long for the days of s'mores on the campfire? Check out their 'Glamping' cocktail. Just don't be confuse the gimmicky-seeming nature of these drinks, as what lies behind them is definitive creativity and deliciousness.

[August \(1\) Five's Website](#)

524 Van Ness Ave, San Francisco, CA 94102

Pearl 6101





Photo via Pearl 6101

An SF bar hidden in an unlikely place, Pearl has been serving up some of the City's top cocktails for less than two years. Acknowledged for its progressive stance on equal-opportunity bartending ([The Chronicle 2018](#)), Pearl has proven a model that defies a largely male-dominated industry by hiring and mentoring a largely female mixologist team. Be sure to try their Scarlet Columbine, a delicious bourbon-based mixed drink with sage tea, strawberry, and pink peppercorn.

[Pearl 6101's Website](#)

6101 California Street, San Francisco, CA

Absinthe





Photo via Stan L. [via Yelp](#)

One of the first cocktail destinations to make a name for itself in SF — and subsequently a training ground for multiple cocktail wizards including ones who went on to open Comstock Saloon and The Treasury — Absinthe remains an excellent spot for a well-made drink. The inviting front bar is frequently crowded, but for an off-hours meet-up in Hayes Valley, you can't do much better.

[Absinthe's Website](#)

398 Hayes St, San Francisco, CA 94102

Bon Voyage



bonvoyagebar
3,359 followers

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From the team behind Trick Dog comes this still fairly new, Tiki-inspired cocktail hub in the Mission takes "travel" as its theme, with kitschy decor that lends itself to a fun pitstop. Bon Voyage makes better use of the space than either of the recent tenants here (Wo Hing General Store, Urchin), making the low-ceilinged mezzanine into a cozy lounge with a sectional sofa in back. And the drinks are an inspired and eclectic mix of twists on Tiki classics, including four different spins on the Singapore sling, and plenty of gin-, vodka-, whiskey-, and mezcal-based options.

[Bon Voyage's Website](#)

584 Valencia St, San Francisco, CA 94110

Everdene





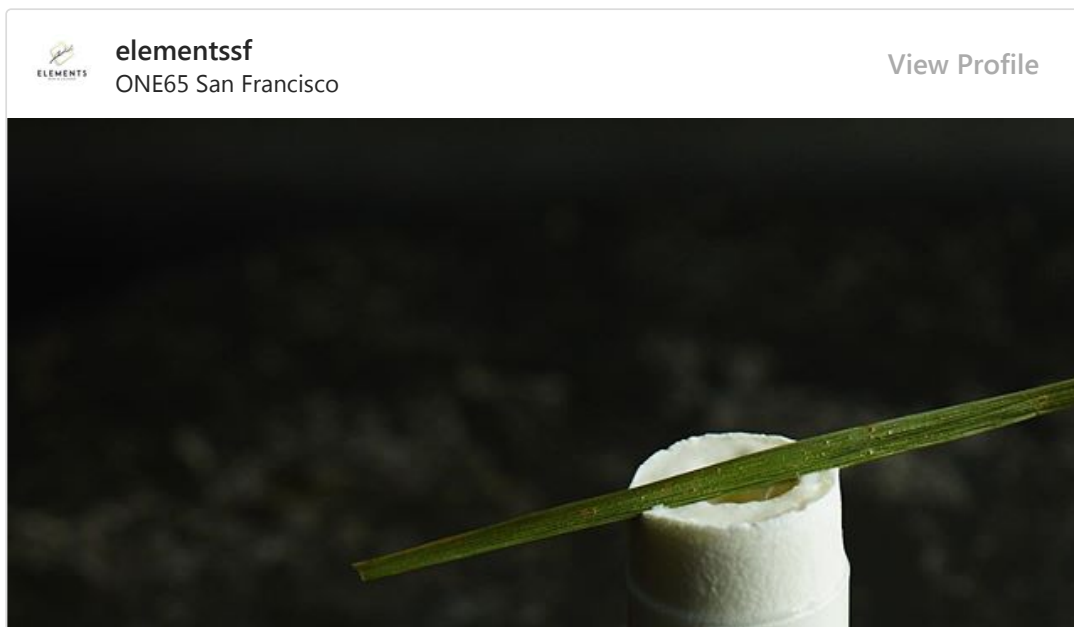
Photo via Everdene

While it's not always rooftop weather in SF, when it is, San Francisco thankfully now has multiple rooftop-imbibing options — with Everdene being the newest and hippest among them. Located atop the new Virgin Hotels San Francisco, the bar takes its name from a character in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, an early example of independent womanhood in English lit. Cocktails include large-format options for groups like the Midsummer Revelry (Macchu pisco, Tempus Fugit creme de noyaux, and Ballard Lane pinot noir). But be prepared to stand in line most days to get to the elevator, no matter the weather or the hour.

[Everdene's Website](#)

250 4th St, San Francisco, CA 94103 (12th Floor)

Elements @ ONE65





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Elements @ ONE65 is a quiet, cloistered, fourth-floor cocktail den tucked down O'Farrell Street across from Macy's — a still not-well-known spot sandwiched between a modern French bistro and a high-end prix-fixe restaurant that's a great escape from the usual madness of Union Square. Individual cocktails range from the high-minded and theatrical (a spin on a Boulevardier called the All Bark and No Bite that's served atop a tree branch) to the simple and fun (the large-format spin on a Paloma called the Bird in the Hand served in an absinthe water decanter).

[Elements @ ONE65's Website](#)

165 O'Farrell St, San Francisco, CA 94102

Moongate Lounge





Photo via Ken K. [via Yelp](#)

The new cocktail lounge upstairs from Mister Jiu's is a destination in its own right, with a fancifully designed, mid-century bar topped with aqua marble, velvet-lined booths, and an oculus skylight hovering overhead. The creative drink menu includes the delicious Vernal Equinox (gin, bitter melon, sweet and sour, and jasmine), and the amusingly named Awakening of Insects (pisco, coffee, grand poppy, mint, and hazelnut milk).

[Moongate's Website](#)

28 Waverly Pl, San Francisco, CA 94108 (Above Mister Jiu's)

Pacific Cocktail Haven



Photo via Facebook

Bar maestro Kevin Diedrich bounced around a bit to some of the city's finest bars before settling at this Union Square-adjacent spot back in 2016. True to form and similar to his work at the Burritt Room and Jasper's, the menu is inspired and original without veering into pretentious territory, with drinks like the Miso Old Fashioned (finished with a PCH-branded ice cube), or the ginger beer-based Monk's Buck made with Cognac and yellow Chartreuse.

[Pacific Cocktail Haven's Website](#) ☐

580 Sutter St, San Francisco, CA 94108

Wilson & Wilson - Bourbon + Branch



Photo via Marivic D. [via Yelp](#)

An island of exquisite luxury in an ocean of Tenderloin sketch, the combo arrangement of Bourbon and Branch and “Wilson and Wilson Private Detective Agency” (a.k.a. Wilson Bar) nails its 1920s Prohibition-era speakeasy theme perhaps as well as any vintage motif interior in San Francisco. Hidden passages and secret rooms abound, and the Wilson bar entrance is a legitimate bookshelf hidden door that feels straight out of [stately Wayne Manor](#). But the flights of Scotch whiskey and artisan craft cocktails match the meticulous design. It seems the “password required” rule has been relaxed (I've walked right in recently), but despite the [hundreds of photos posted to Yelp](#) it's still technically a house rule that photography is forbidden on the premises. 🍷 Joe Kukura

[Wilson & Wilson - Bourbon + Branch's Website](#) □

505 Jones St, San Francisco, CA 94102

The Alembic



Photo via Facebook

Now considered one of the OG modern cocktail spots in SF, over a

decade in, this Upper Haight bar-restaurant remains one of the most reliably good cocktail experiences in town, with a rotating selection of classic drinks and idiosyncratic concoctions on a tightly curated menu — as well as bar staff who can make you pretty much anything. It's also a bar that's not afraid to veer into the savory with their "new school" drinks, including one mainstay, the Southern Exposure, made with St. George Terroir gin and celery juice; and the Lone Mango, which is made with mezcal, mango-basil shrub, lemon, lime, and szechuan peppercorn.

[The Alembic's Website](#)

1725 Haight Street at Cole

Bar Agricole



Photo via Amber Fox

Bar star Thad Vogler's temple of elegant rum cocktails — with nods in the direction of gin, whiskey, and more — is aging quite well, eight years into its run. *Esquire* named it as one of the best bars in the country ([back in 2017](#)), and that write-up noted menu mainstay the Ti Punch, made with the bar's namesake spirit, rhum agricole, from Martinique. It's a simple, delicious, vegetal cocktail made with just the rhum, lime, and sugar, and with its scents of fresh cut sugar cane, writer Kevin Sintumuang says, "It is good to be reminded, every once in a while, that booze is an agrarian product."

[Bar Agricole's Website](#)

355 11th Street near Harrison

Benjamin Cooper





Photo via Facebook

Easily one of our top three cocktail destinations in the city, this bar from the original bar team at the short-lived Big, a few blocks away, is a cozy, comfortable, and impressive place. Though it's not a complete secret and can get busy, it's never overwhelming in this tucked-away, second-floor space with no sign, and the folks behind the bar certainly know what they're doing. Don't see anything on the eclectic menu that strikes your fancy? They're well stocked with hard-to-find and sometimes house-made ingredients, and the bartenders are happy to mix you up something with whatever they've got — which could include things like ripe strawberries from the market, or a recently whipped-up habanero tincture. Also, at certain hours, should you require an aphrodisiac, they serve oysters.

[Benjamin Cooper's Website](#)

398 Geary Street, entrance on Mason

Comstock Saloon





Photo via Facebook

At the intersection of North Beach, Chinatown, and the Financial District, drinkers will find Comstock Saloon, a modern San Francisco take on a Barbary Coast saloon. Featuring big post-work happy hour crowds and nightly live-music, Comstock is a worthy stop for drinkers and diners alike. \$8 happy hour drinks are particularly popular here (a choice of a Moscow Mule or a Margarita). Try the \$12 Cherry Bounce, a classic mix of bourbon, cherry brandy, lemon, Champagne, and Angoustura bitters. Comstock's kitchen also serves up a full menu, with an app list that includes garlic-miso tater tots and old cozy school wooden booths. Pro-tip: This is a particularly good rainy night bar, with a touch of the ambiance of the long-gone Washington Square Bar & Grill.

[Comstock Saloon's Website](#)

155 Columbus Avenue

The Beehive



The Beehive SF
about a year ago



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Crème de Cacao

Tangerine Gomme ... [See More](#)

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Opened in 2018 in the Valencia Street space that was the longtime home of Range, this mostly-cocktails spot takes the 1960s as its inspiration, complete with fondue on the menu. Original chef-owner of Range Phil West remains involved, and he teamed with bar manager Emilio Salehi and his partner in The Treasury, Arnold Eric Wong to create this booze-focused lounge. The intriguing cocktail selection veers away from its *Mad Men* roots in many ways, including with a Manhattan variation called The Hounddog, with peanut-washed bourbon and caremlized banana; and the Beauty Mark with gin, tangerine, cacao, lime, cardamom, and egg white.

[The Beehive's Website](#)

842 Valencia St, San Francisco, CA 94110

Hideout at Dalva



Photo via Dalva

The local pioneer of the bar-within-a-bar concept, Dalva's Hideout, which keeps different hours and serves different drinks than the main bar, is a great, dimly lit date spot tucked behind the popular 16th Street bar. Originally conceived by a Bourbon & Branch alum, the Hideout isn't exactly a secret, and with just one person typically behind the bar with a somewhat complicated menu of drinks, you can find yourself waiting 15 minutes for a drink when the place is slammed. But get there at an off-hour, or right when they open at 7, and it's a great, quiet place to unwind.

[Hideout at Dalva's Website](#)

3121 16th Street between Guerrero and Valencia

Louis's Gon Gon Room

LOUIE'S GEN GEN ROOM



Photo via Louie's Gen Gen Room

Louie's Gen Gen Room is the semi-secret, basement bar below Liholiho Yacht Club, which has its own reservation system, drink menu, and food menu. Without a full kitchen or range-hood, the food selection keeps things simple with crudos and savory waffles. Besides great wines, the drinks include fun concoctions like the Stardust (cognac, ginger, pineapple, and lemon), and the Negroni

Stardust (armagnac, ginger, pineapple, and lemon), and the NEGRO variation called Step Into Liquid (pineapple rum, Punt e Mes, and Campari).

[Louies Gen Gen Room's Website](#) ☐

871 Sutter St, San Francisco, CA 94109 (Below Liholiho)

The Interval



Photo via The Interval

Tucked in a 1930s-era building toward the back of Fort Mason, The Interval is basically where the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen would hang out were they called to present-day San Francisco. Chock full of wacky mechanical marvels, books, and art, you might brush The Interval off as a steampunk Ruby Tuesday's, but you'd be doing yourself a disservice, as its pursuit of the esoteric arts is appealingly earnest. It doubles as the home of the [Long Now Foundation](#), so you might also get to hear some smarty-pants

seminar as you down one of their "earliest cocktails ever made" or "time-shifted concoctions that take hours to make but are ready

time spent concocting that take hours to make but are ready whenever you arrive." But unlike a lot of places that take pride in their cocktail program, The Interval also keeps non-drinkers in mind, with a great list of booze-free drinks and Sightglass coffee. 📌
Eve Batey

[The Interval's Website](#) ☐

2 Marina Blvd Bldg A, Fort Mason Center

Linden Room



Photo via Nightbird

This tiny cocktail bar attached to Nightbird in Hayes Valley is focused on creative seasonal cocktails, sometime taking inspiration

from what's coming out of the restaurant kitchen. The current menu features a drink made with bourbon, cherry falernum, gentian, and hibiscus called the Bing Crosby, and they currently serve a spring-y seasonal drink called the Rye Berry, with rye, genever, strawberry, rose geranium, and lemon.

[Linden Room's Website](#)

330 Gough Street, entrance on Linden

Maven



Photo via Facebook

The only craft cocktail spot in the Lower Haight until very recently (Black Sands Brewery also makes a fine drink), Maven continues to be very popular for its food (that burger!) and its booze. The cocktail

menu rotates on the regular but always aims at originality, with current selections including the Puebla Punch (gin, ancho, lemon, cucumber, and tepache), and The Oxford Comma (tequila, ginger, bonal, turmeric, and lime). And the bar with its vertical garden backdrop is a pleasant place to sit, day or night.

[Maven's Website](#)

598 Haight Street at Steiner

Oddjob / SRO



Photo via Oddjob

When the team behind Big parted ways, a couple of the bar guys started Benjamin Cooper, and a couple of the owners opened this place in SoMa. The front bar is more bustling with a solid craft cocktail selection, and in back is the one-man show known as SRO (Standing Room Only) where the staff slings bespoke cocktails to a

small, waiting audience. Like Benjamin Cooper, there's a lot of homemade stuff going on here, from bitters to infusions to tinctures, and the real art gets made when the audience is open to anything. The bar-within-a-bar only has room for about six people to sit around it, and each drink takes a minute or two, so if you're in a rush, head up front.

[Oddjob-SRO's Website](#)

1337 Mission Street between 9th and 10th

Smuggler's Cove



Photo via Matthew A. [via Yelp](#)

The over-the-top Tiki madness of Smuggler's Cove gets a lot of press

and is typically packed, but barman Martin Cate's ode to kitsch and tropicalia is more than meets the eye when it comes to sophistication and sheer dedication to its theme. Drinks are served unusually strong and some of them are even served on fire, and the place has a library of some 700 rums — the most aged of which, you'll find, taste like fine bourbon. Whether one finds Tiki to be tacky or just unpretentious is in the eye(patch) of the beholder, but the rum cocktails of Smuggler's Cove are one of the town's top “party in your glass” options and do not skimp on the cocktail umbrellas, real flowers, and culturally appropriating cocktail stirrers.

[Smuggler's Cove's Website](#)

670 Gough Street at McAlister Street

Third Rail





Photo via Facebook

This welcoming five-year-old cocktail spot in Dogpatch grew out of Range (RIP) in the Mission, and a partnership between the restaurant's chef-owner Phil West and longtime bar manager Jeff Lyon. Lyon became well known for his culinary twists and seasonal creations behind the bar, and he continues, along with his staff, to bring playfulness and imagination to the menu here. The drinks are divided into "refreshing" and "boozy" categories, with the former including things like the Hoopsnake (rum, kumquat, lime, elderflower, absinthe), and the latter including the Rhinoceros (rye, bonal, ginger liqueur, bitters). And food-wise they keep things simple: All that's served is [beef and mushroom jerky](#), by the half ounce, chicharrones, and pork sticks.

[Third Rail's Website](#)

628 20th Street, at Third Street

Tosca Cafe





Photo via Kimberly H. [via Yelp](#)

This North Beach institution that was [nearly evicted by its shady strip club landlord](#) in 2012, was [bailed out by Sean Penn](#), and [reopened in 2013 as luxury restaurant](#), has evolved into a neighborhood mainstay with reliably great pasta and focaccia, and top-notch drinks. While the place is now better known for its [celebrity chef cuisine](#), old-school North Beach inebriates still love the place for its red leather booths, impressive wine list, and old-school Martinis.

[Tosca Cafe's Website](#)

242 Columbus Avenue at Broadway

Trick Dog



Photo via Facebook

Nestled in between Salumeria, a kung-fu place, and a very sleek Sightglass Coffee lives Trick Dog, a wildly popular cocktail spot on the Mission's burgeoning 20th Street. Run by the folks from Bon Vivants, Trick Dog is one of the places that is [so cool](#) there's no business sign posted outside. They also have stuck to a program in which the entire drink menu changes twice a year ([see the latest version here](#)). Hungry drinkers (and non-drinkers) *must* note that Trick Dog serves a full food menu and their Trick Dog Dog is basically a Big Man (an elongated burger) on an artisan hot-dog bun. It is spectacular. 🍷 Beth Spotswood

[Trick Dog's Website](#) ☐

3010 20th Street

Whitechapel



Photo via Facebook

Leave it to the man who built the city's finest temple of rum and Tiki to build the most elaborate temple of gin. Smuggler's Cove guy Martin Cate debuted this gorgeous bar in 2015, drawing inspiration from London for the design, specifically a kind of steampunk, movie-set version of an abandoned Tube station. Like Smuggler's has for rum, the menu is an encyclopedia of 115 mostly gin-based drinks, and the bar reportedly has over 400 hundred gins and genevers to try, meaning you could go back to this place every day for a year and (assuming you only had one drink each time) never have the same gin twice. There's also a food menu (the bitterballen are pretty great), and it's a swell place in which to impress a date or just chill in a booth with friends.

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That Will Of Course Also
Make You Cry**

Action figures into the positive remarks
about the pacing of "Toy Story 4," but get

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Zack is a San Francisco Native who has been roaming the streets of SF for the better part of three decades. Zack is also a Forbes contributor and one of the owners of SFist.

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