



BARTALK

Heavy Hitters

The Tipping Brothers Create Cocktails That Sell

BY ALIA AKKAM

These days, without an interesting beverage program, you're at a disadvantage. Enter Tad Carducci and Paul Tanguay, better known as The Tipping Brothers, who jet around the country developing cocktails for bars and restaurants, spirits brands and importers.

THE BEVERAGE NETWORK: When creating distinctive beverage programs what factors do you look for?

TAD CARDUCCI: It all boils down to listening to the client, fully and sincerely. We must glean what the client says they want and weigh that against what their operation is capable of executing. This is where our experience is crucial. In general, we like to start with the chef and get an overall idea of food they'll be featuring, what will be in the walk-in and pantry at all times and if the kitchen will support the bar by helping out with some of the more complicated or time-consuming prep. Then we have to determine skill and dedication levels of the bartenders and managers to gauge how far we can push a bespoke program.

TBN: Let's take one of your clients, Mercadito in New York City, Chicago and Miami, where you developed the "Vato Loco," the "hottest drink on Earth." Tell me a little about that inspiration.

TC: Mercadito is about big, bold, intense flavors. The cocktails, like the food, incorporate various chiles for a bit of heat, but primarily for their diverse flavor profiles. For the "Vato Loco," Paul and I, being chile addicts, wanted to do something really extreme,

where the chiles could be the star of the show. Our guests have really gotten into the 'burn,' so we wanted to offer something for those intrepid souls who truly want to get kicked in the mouth by their cocktail.

TBN: What are some of the other signature creations you're proud of?

TC: There is one drink that comes to mind—it's called the "Booty Collins," and we created it for Apo, a cocktail bar in Philadelphia. It's a mix of tea-infused gin, passionfruit, citrus, Korean ginseng, kava kava, cayenne and a couple of other secret ingredients. It sold so well within the first year, something like 10,000 servings, that the owner had a piece of art commissioned to celebrate.

TBN: Spirits brands, too, are finding it a necessity to be armed with signature cocktails. How does your approach differ with these?

TC: As the cocktails are generally for specific events, markets or marketing campaigns, the creations need to be very focused and ahead of the trends. Brands want cocktails that are innovative and unique, utilizing unusual ingredients and new techniques. The tricky part is that they usually want them to be easily recreated in bars or at home as well.

TBN: What's especially hot right now?

PAUL TANGUAY: Latin spirits—Tequila, mezcal and pisco—are still growing with consumers. The American micro-distilling movement is also burgeoning.

As in the food world, there's a trend towards comfort cocktails and a move away from the cerebral settings of the speakeasy. People want to have fun and sometimes the overly mixology-heavy bar can be stifling.

TBN: What are some problems you are continuing to see at the bar you'd like to see altered?

PT: That bartenders remember they work in the hospitality industry first and foremost. Leave the smug arrogance at the door when you show up to work and give your patrons what they want and an experience they will never forget.

TBN: Are there any mistakes bartenders tend to make when putting together drinks lists?

PT: There are some truly great and innovative cocktail menus. However, we do see ones that are unbalanced, and heavily focused on one type of spirit. A drink menu should have cocktails that appeal to every type of patron that will frequent your bar; it can't only be what you like.

TC: While absolutely wonderful things are happening in the industry nationwide, and the new flock of very talented bartenders ensures we can all get great drinks almost anywhere we go, there are still many people who are over-thinking their lists and using too many funky ingredients. Also, there are still far too many 20-minute cocktails out there; simplify steps and put more drinks over the bar, and, thereby, more money in the till.