

VERSATILE INGREDIENT

Bourbon's versatility shines on the menu, in applications.

by **JULIET GREENE,**
MAGGIE HARVEY,
Contributing Editors

IT MAY BE A DARK LIQUOR, but bourbon is the clear leader of the spirit trend, fueled by the renewed interest in authenticity and craft heritage products, innovation from distilleries and elevated cocktail programs. According to the Beverage Information and Insights Group 2018 Liquor Handbook, bourbon and America whiskey are in a modern golden era that is likely to continue through 2023.

Bourbon drinkers are willing to explore their favorite spirit and experience bourbon in new ways¹, and this leads to more inclusion of bourbon on the plate. As bourbon drinkers experience new tastes at the bar and further develop their palate for bourbon, this translates to new ways to discover bourbon in their food choices. According to Datassential, bourbon has increased 154% on menus in the past decade.²

THE SWEET LIFE

Bourbon pairs well with both savory and sweet applications because the vanilla and other nuances from the aged oak barrels come out in bourbon. The flavors are versatile with sweet and nut applications, such as ice creams, custards, pie fillings, poached or

sous-vide fruits, preserves and glazed nuts.

Rebecca Miller, Owner of Peggy Jean's Pies in Columbia, Mo., says her Chocolate Bourbon Pecan Pie is a best-seller. While other flavors track seasonally or are specific to celebrations, Chocolate Bourbon Pecan Pie is always in demand.

"The alcohol bakes out of the pie, making this pie exceptionally popular with people of all ages," says Miller.

Another sweet bourbon pairing is from New York City's Tippy Scoop. While all of its flavors are inspired by favorite cocktails, the company has found that bourbon's vanilla sweetness is perfect for incorporating into ice cream.

"In 2019, we sold more Vanilla Bean Bourbon pints than any other pint flavor," says Rachel Chitwood, director of sales and marketing for Tippy Scoop. "Our seasonal (C)old-Fashioned flavor was originally supposed to run through May, but it was so popular we have kept it on the menu all summer."

THE SAVORY SIDE

For savory applications, chefs find that bourbon makes a great base layer for sauces and marinades across all industry categories, including retail and quick-service restaurants.



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Because bourbon's sweetness pairs perfectly with smoky and spicy notes, it can be used with smoked meats and is very adaptive for BBQ and smoking. When using bourbon in product development, the developer will have to either build on top of the spirit flavor, deglaze to build flavor into the bottom notes or freshen in the end. If too much is used, the item will become top heavy. If using a covered kettle, manufacturers can flash off the alcohol without losing too much of the volatiles and flavor.

Chef Matt Bolus of The 404 Kitchen in Nashville, Tenn., makes a tri-tip with a bourbon brown butter cippolini onion sauce.

"The combination of brown butter, slow-grilled onions and bourbon is so perfect that Greek philosophers should have written about it," says Bolus. "The

THIS BOURBON BACON PEACH SALAD FEATURES BACON THAT IS BOURBON GLAZED. PEACHES WERE GRILLED AND BRUSHED WITH BOURBON REDUCTION.

bourbon ties everything together. You get fattiness to compliment the butter, tannins and wood sugars to go with the onions, and the oaky notes and sweetness enhance the beef."

In Louisville, Ky., the heart of bourbon country, Chef Henry Wesley of 8Up restaurant features bourbon in a bourbon-maple demi-glace found on its Short Rib with Pimento Cheese Polenta and charred broccolini entree. Chef Wesley says bourbon is unique due to its aging process in charred white-oak barrels.

"After the alcohol has been burned off, a diner can really appreciate some of the subtle hints of vanilla and caramel," says Wesley.

CULINARY CREATIONS

PHOTO COURTESY OF: MIZKAN AMERICA (WWW.MIZKAN.COM)



BEYOND TRADITIONAL BOURBON

Denatured bourbon can be a direct replacement for traditional bourbon as long as the 3% salt can be accounted for in the recipe. The alcohol can act as a carrier and

enhancer for the flavors and compounds that are not normally soluble in water.

For manufacturers concerned with those sensitive to alcohol or for those that require alcohol-free formulations for religious or other

TEQUILA POACHED CRAWFISH WITH ANDOUILLE SAUSAGE OVER A BLUE CORN CAKE.

reasons, a bourbon reduction may be appropriate. If using a bourbon reduction, manufacturers should consider that it is not a direct replacement for bourbon, because reducing also removes some other higher alcohols that contribute to flavor.

Even with a reduction, cooking does not remove all of the alcohol. There is always some residual amount that will decrease with cooking time. Manufacturers should consider using a bourbon reduction at a higher level

to account for any flavor loss during alcohol removal.

PARTING SHOTS

Mark Twain famously said that “too much of anything is bad, but too much good whiskey is barely enough” and we agree. Bourbon has created a halo effect for other spirits and we think bourbon and other spirits are here to stay in mouth-watering formulations. **pf**

Article prepared by Mizkan America's Juliet Greene, corporate chef, and Maggie Harvey, senior food scientist. Visit www.mizkan.com for more information.

Notes:

¹ Mintel Dark Spirits, US, November 2018

² Datassential Menu Trends 2019