

Restaurant

B U S I N E S S

Making The Cut

Plenty of new restaurant concepts debuted in the past year. Who are they, and how long will they last?

- 47**
Entertaining prospects
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Spuds are up
- 77**
Like a sturgeon



you name it, they heat it and spike it at Alex's Plaza Restaurant & Bar in Ashland, OR. Traditional tipples like Irish Coffee and Hot Buttered Rum are just the beginning. Business manager Sandra Moyers authored a hot drink menu with a couple dozen specialties, like Smooth Jamaican (Myers's rum, Baileys, and Tia Maria) and Irish Nut (Baileys and Frangelico), Chocolate Monk (Frangelico, brandy, and hot chocolate), Hot Buttered Reggae (Myers's rum, hot buttered rum batter, and hot foamed milk), Hot Southern Nights (brandy, Southern Comfort, spiced cider), and Blueberry Tea (amaretto, Grand Marnier, orange spiced tea). Each is \$3.75-5.75.

"People expect variety," says Moyers. The bar prides itself on using "excellent coffee, high-grade chocolate, and really good ingredients across the board."

The 16-unit, Ferndale, MI-based BD's Mongolian Barbecue chain offers drink specials like Peppermint Patty (hot chocolate and peppermint schnapps) and Rudolph's Red Nose (hot apple cider, Hot Damn schnapps, and Captain Morgan's Spiced Rum). Each is \$4.25.

"Our concept is very American," says director of marketing Heather Eppink. "It's casual dining with an Asian base." Often, customers generate the specialty drink ideas and recipes, she says.

At Don's Fishmarket and Tavern in Skokie, IL, general manager Bob Pasko features Mounds Bar (hot chocolate and Malibu rum), Nutty Irishman (coffee, Jameson's Irish Whiskey, Baileys Irish Cream, and amaretto), Butterfinger (hot chocolate and butterscotch schnapps), and Cloudy Mist (coffee, Baileys, and amaretto). Each is \$4.95. What's more, the bar has liqueurs aplenty for impromptu coffee spiking.

Don's does most of its hot drink business around the holidays, when it's a magnet for shoppers from a nearby outdoor shopping mall. "Hot drinks are part of the season," says Pasko. "Coffee or hot chocolate alone doesn't do it when people spend time outdoors. They want something with a little kick to it." 

DRINKLINE

Election Buzz

IT WASN'T JUST the Florida vote that was too close to call. At the Asian-themed TenPenh restaurant in Washington, D.C., a Presidential election beverage promotion eerily mirrored the national outcome. A week prior to the election, two cocktails were featured. Bush supporters were urged to order the Texas Twister, a margarita made with Sauza Tequila, house-made sour mix, orange liquor, ginger-limeade, and a splash of grenadine for the Republican-red hue. The Democratic drink was the Tennessee Tumbler, made with Jack Daniel's, ginger-limeade, and blue curaçao for color. The drinks sold for \$6.25 each, and were accessorized with elephant or donkey stirrers with which customers could vote. "Our restaurant isn't very political. We just wanted to have some fun with the election," says Vinni Nair, director of beverage operations. "Many times, two friends would come in and order the opposite of each other. And some people would order both," Nair comments. So was the voting clearer at the bar than at the booth? Nair says, "We're demanding a recount." **BY KATHERINE BRYANT**

LOVE THAT SODA POP

PPRIVATE-LABEL, house-brewed soft drinks will replace national soda fountain brands at Lovebirds Cafe & Bakery in Alhambra, CA, says co-owner John Jomehri. He'll switch when his second unit opens early next year. House birch beer, "made from George Washington's own recipe," will feature "a heckuva foam." House lemon-lime soda will sport "real lemon juice, like the old days." House root beer "will give you a foam mustache." Other flavors are orange, ginger beer, cola, cherry cola, and diet cola. He'll make syrup in 5-gal. batches, good for 300-400 sodas.

Customers will belly up to a self-service station with old-fashioned bar-type handles. They'll pay \$1.50 per 16-oz. cup, compared to \$2.25 for competing home-made sodas. Jomehri says he's been wanting to do this since he switched to scratch baking from purchased bread 10 years ago. "This is a return to the old days, when things were homey, they tasted real, and individuals weren't ruled by corporations," he says. **BY JAMES SCARPA**

Stumping For Vino

UNLESS A SERVER is a memory expert, the odds favor the customer in the Stump the Server game at Fleming's Prime Steakhouse and Wine Bar in Boston. Each Friday, guests challenge their servers to recite from memory all 63 of the red wines Fleming's pours by the glass. If the server flunks, the payoff is a free glass of any pouring wine. Occasionally, servers rattle them off correctly, says general manager Chris Gifford.

Actually, the game has a larger purpose. It markets the wine list, breaks the ice at the table, and trains the staff to boot. Guests relax and have a chuckle, a rarity in the all-too-serious business of selling wine. "Actually, I don't mind if the servers lose," Gifford says. Nevertheless, he plans a prize for the server with the fewest losses. Fleming's touts an eclectic, frequently changing list of 100 wines by the glass, many of them boutique offerings, priced \$7-17. **J.S.**