

A SPIRITED HISTORY
of a CLASSIC CURE~ALL

WITH

COCKTAILS, RECIPES
& FORMULAS

BITTERS

BRAD THOMAS PARSONS



Channel. Sourcing as many local products as possible and taking a seasonal approach to flavors, Smeby maintains a rotation of twenty different bitters, including Highland Heather (smoky and floral, with a base of single-malt scotch), Hibiscus Rose, Buddha's Hand Lemon-Kaffir Lime, Apple Cinnamon with Molasses, Lemon Verbena, Nasturtium-Cumin, Spice Cranberry, Clementine-Jasmine, Black and White (which tastes like the classic New York cookie of the same name), and a spicy Chai & Rye.

Scrappy's Bitters (Seattle, Washington)

Seattle bartender Miles "Scrappy" Thomas came out of the gate swinging in 2009 with his namesake bitters, which are made with many locally sourced ingredients. As soon as they were released they quickly found their way from Seattle's Tavern Law to New York's Death & Co. Scrappy's distinctive hand-numbered labels really stand out among the bitters bottles on the bar. His signature bitters is an aromatic lavender, but the cardamom remains a best seller that's hard to keep in stock. Other single-flavor products include celery, chocolate, orange, grapefruit, and lime, and there are also limited-release seasonal batches such as tangerine and apricot.

The Bitter Cube (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

Nicholas Kosevich, an award-winning bartender, and Ira Koplowitz, who worked at Chicago's Violet Hour, are the two men behind The Bitter Cube. They use the Milwaukee restaurant Bacchus as their laboratory, turning out orange, cherry bark-vanilla, blackstrap, and Bolivar bitters (the last with floral notes sweetened with dried fruits and spiced with cinnamon), as well as two versions of Jamaican Bitters (one floral and fruity, the other warm and spicy). They also develop custom bitters blends for clients.

The Bitter End (Santa Fe, New Mexico)

Bill York rolled out his line of distinctly spicy Bitter End Bitters in 2010 with the goal of "giving standard bitters a radical twist." At times the heat in these threaten to overpower any cocktail they're added to. Their fun blends include Memphis (a smoky coffee-chipotle blend), Moroccan ("like a tagine in your cocktail glass"), Mexican Mole, Jamaican Jerk, and Thai.

Brooklyn Hemispherical Bitters (Brooklyn, New York)

In late 2010, Mark Buettler, the former head bartender at Dressler in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, teamed up with cocktail writer Jason Rowan to



found Brooklyn Hemispherical Bitters. Their signature Sriracha Bitters is a spicy bitters made with Dressler's homemade version of the popular hot sauce. Other seasonal flavors in rotation include strawberry, peach, Meyer lemon, blueberry, and black mission fig.

Bob's Bitters (London, England)

These single-flavor bitters, created by the mysterious "Bob" at The Bar at the Dorchester in London, come in flavors like cardamom, chocolate, ginger, grapefruit, lavender, licorice, peppermint, and vanilla.

Bar Keep Bitters (Monrovia, California)

At the 2009 Tales of the Cocktail in New Orleans, Tru Organic Spirits hosted a Barmade Bitters Challenge, looking for the best homemade bitters in three categories: fruit, herb, and spice. The winning certified all-organic bitters—Adam Seger's Swedish Herb, John Hogan and Tobin Ellis's Lavender Spice, and Marshall Altier's Baked Apple—are now available nationally through the Greenbar Collective under the name Bar Keep Bitters.

Urban Moonshine (Burlington, Vermont)

Launched in 2009 by herbalist Jovial King, Urban Moonshine is a small family business that focuses on bitters and tonics intended to supplement healthy, organic living but which also work wonders in a cocktail. Using organic grape alcohol and spring water, their original, citrus, and maple bitters come in 2-ounce dropper bottles, an 8.4-ounce flask, and a 10-milliliter spray bottle.