

# The Genius of the Freeze-Ahead Cocktail

The practice of pre-batching and freezing entire drinks is popping up at bars from London to New York. Chloe Frechette on why you should be bottling and freezing your next Martini.

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There are countless applications for freezing in the world of cocktails. Perhaps unsurprising at a bar that staffs two full-time “ice chefs,” [The Aviary](#) in Chicago has tried just about every one of them, from freezing entire cocktails to injecting hollow spheres of ice with an Old-Fashioned. Beyond the realm of molecular mixology, however, the practice of freezing pre-batched cocktails has practical uses for both professional and home bartenders.

Frozen spirits offer a rounder texture and reduce the “burn” of alcohol explains Jamie Boudreau of Seattle’s Canon. “For things like Fernet, it mutes the flavors,” he says, “making it a little easier to get down, especially for the uninitiated.”

This is no doubt the reasoning behind the sub-zero temperature of the [Dukes’ Martini](#)—perhaps the most famous proponent of this technique and one of the few drinks whose temperature is an integral component of its formula. Consisting of a staggering six and a half ounces of booze and just a splash of vermouth, freezing the bottle of vodka ahead makes the mixture “sit like milk,” according to [Giuseppe Gonzalez](#), who has a downsized version of the drink on his menu at Suffolk Arms. Altering the texture through freezing is the key to making the mixture palatable.

Beyond freezing a single cocktail component, the practice of pre-batching and freezing entire drinks is popping up at bars from London to New York for the simple fact that it provides a thick, velvety texture while offering a solution to the issue of volume demands.

At Amor y Amargo, where all ten menu items are batched or prepared, Sother Teague explains that not only does this technique ensure consistency (“you’re getting soup from the same pot”) it enables a higher level of precision in a single drink. A minuscule amount of one ingredient, such as Japanese chili and lime bitters, diffused into a 750ml bottle, as in the slightly spicy Martini riff, the [River Tam](#), creates an effect impossible to recreate in a single pour: “There’s a lot of micro-space inside of cocktails that you could never achieve while making a single drink,” explains Teague, “I wouldn’t be able to drop that little of it into a cocktail, but it makes a difference.”

At Sauvage, in Brooklyn, bar director Will Elliott adopts a similar mindset by bottling and freezing a roster of classics in their entirety, deliberately stripping the theatrics and showmanship from the process. “It sort of takes the surface level intrigue out of watching a bartender work” explains Elliott, “and reassigns it...to just tasting what’s in the glass.” The experience of ordering one of these menu items and having it arrive directly from a bottle pulled straight from the freezer, turns three well-known and widely enjoyed stirred drinks—the Martini, Negroni and Stinger—on their side, altering texture and mouthfeel for something that’s at once familiar and new.

Efficient and unexpected, pouring pre-frozen cocktails from a bottle is a technique that can readily be applied to entertaining on a smaller scale, too. Spirit-forward cocktails work best for this practice, which also offers room for creativity with infusions. At [Bar Termini](#) in London, for example, Tony Conigliaro ages one of his house cocktails, the Rosato Negroni, in-bottle with rose petals. “It gives a more integrated taste and longer finish than what you would get with a Negroni mixed fresh,” he says.

The bottom line for both home bartenders and professionals is, in Elliott’s words, “more time to spend with guests, less self-importance of the bartender.”

## HOW TO BATCH

### What to Batch

Any cocktail without perishable ingredients can be batched, from built drinks to stirred.

### How to Dilute

Both Elliott and Teague add varying quantities of water to their batched drinks for dilution. Per [Dave Arnold](#) in [Liquid Intelligence](#), built drinks, like the Old-Fashioned, require less dilution than stirred.

Elliott dilutes his Martini and Stinger with 11/4 ounces of filtered water per serving, but his Negroni with just 3/4 ounce. Arnold suggests that the latter drink—which is lower in alcohol—is more tolerant of varying levels of dilution. In addition, he writes, the spiritous Manhattan can take between 11/4 ounces and 11/2 ounces of dilution.

### When to Freeze

Elliott recommends freezing botanical-based cocktails with gin or herbal liqueurs. Their cooling flavor profiles, he says, play well against the sub-zero temps.