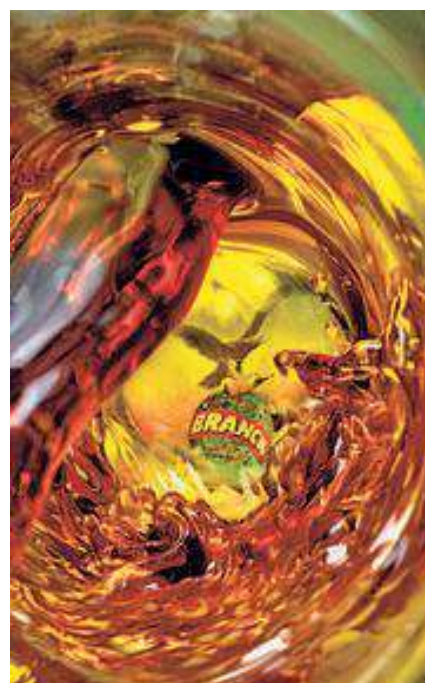


Bitter truth: the story of Amaro

How Campari and Aperol are finding a place in bracing cocktails, thanks to sophisticated bartenders across India and well-travelled clients



Strong appetiser From the easy Spritz to the complex notes of the Fernet, Amaro are finding takers

net. It is an intensely bitter spirit, typically had as a digestif, with a chilled shot of it being a classic way to round off the meal.

In fact, Amaro (or Amari) were traditionally seen as having medicinal or elixir like properties, helping with digestion. Most Amaro are marked by the infusion of several herbs and roots.

What is also helping the growth of Amaro in India is the increasing sophistication of bars and bartenders, with spirits like this being particular favourites due to their complexity and bitterness. Brands are also doing their bit to promote them.

The recently concluded Negroni Week is a promotion run around the world by Campari, with bars across the country participating and creating their own variations of the Negroni. I enjoyed in particular the *desi* twist with jaggery syrup and kokum that I sampled at the launch event at Delhi's Paparazzi.

Bittersweet pick-me-up

The Spritz itself as a drink style dates back possibly to the Austrian occupation of Italy in the 19th century, with the name deriving from the German word "spritzen" or to spray. An anytime drink, the Aperol Spritz in particular works very well as a part of the aperitivo (or aperitif), something to help kick start cocktail hour. In Venice, it is accompanied by *cicchetti*, the ever present savoury snacks.

Fernet Branca is the next Amaro that we can expect to see, and clearly the most bitter of the lot! Fernet is also drunk around the world, enjoyed with cola in Argentina, as a chilled shot in Europe, with ginger ale in the USA or also increasingly as a cocktail ingredient.

Gupta at PDA also wishes to see Branca Menta introduced, a mint driven variant of the original Fernet Branca recipe, which he says should find good traction with us mint-loving Indians.

Drinks like Campari and Fernet require you to "train your palate to like it," as Desai puts it, with possibly a more mature drinker opting for this, while the Aperol Spritz cuts across all age groups and sexes. The drink even inspired a Guinness Record in 2012, with 2,600 people coming together to clink their glasses in the world's largest Aperol Spritz toast.

The writer is the co-founder and CEO of Tulleeha, a drinks training and consulting firm and founder-CEO of Bar X, a bar products retail venture. Follow him at @tulleeha

pari, Cynar and Fernet, enable them to be slotted either before or after a meal. What is common is their taste profile, which (as their category suggests) is a bitter one, with Aperol perhaps being an outlier in that respect with a grapefruit and orange nose and a sweeter taste profile.

Subham Gupta, bartender at Delhi's PDA, an Italian cocktail bar says, "The stereotypical impression of an Indian consumer with a sweeter palate is belied by the receptiveness we are getting for our Campari and Aperol based cocktails." Apart from the Aperol Spritzer, PDA also does the Boulevardier, the Negroni and a neat twist on the latter, which I tasted last month, the Camomile Negroni, which uses Camomile infused gin as the base of this classic Campari cocktail.

The cocktail menu at PDA is not easy on the pocket, but the high rollers who pop in, before heading up for a meal at Diva,



the Italian restaurant helmed by Ritu Dalmia, don't really mind forking out ₹1,200 for an Aperol Spritz, and this clientele is a well travelled one, already familiar with this drink from bar crawls around the world.

Mumbai's Kode also does a Spanish style G&T (Gin and Tonic), marked by the addition of 10 ml of Aperol to the classic, served Spanish style in a large wine glass.

Himanshu Desai, the beverage innovation head for Massive Restaurants in the West, is taking great pleasure in introducing Aperol and Campari into cocktails, and claims that consumers are definitely taking to it. He says that the complexity and bitterness of these drinks is making guests sit up and take notice.

'Train your palate'

Desai agrees with Gupta that it's the mature, well-travelled Indian who is glad to see these brands on local menus, with a recent Italy-returned consumer at Kode also surprising him by asking for a shot of Fer-

VIKRAM ACHANTA

It's as easy as one-two-three – one part soda, two parts Aperol and three of Prosecco, poured in that sequence over ice in a large wine glass, with a slice of orange added for good measure. A drink known the world over as the Aperol Spritz, and now to be found on menus across India.

Kode in Mumbai's Lower Parel has even begun popularising it as the perfect brunch cocktail, and an alternative for people looking beyond Mimosas or Bloody Marys. At about 11% alcoholic volume, it also makes for a guilt free way to spike your midday.

From Italy, with love

Italy's gift to the world, apart from high fashion and fast cars, are the bitter spirits known as Amaro or Amari, whose wide range of taste profiles, from Aperol to Cam-

THE LUST LIST
Bar candy

Five limited edition bottles that are perfect for the festive season

Special edition bottles are not new, but each festive season the selection does get harder to resist. Manish Malhotra did up two bottles for Chandon Brut before Diwali this year, and for the teetotalers, Evian even teamed up with Chiara Ferragni for a range of bottles featuring her trademark flirting eyelash motif. Clearly, 'tis the season to fill that cup - and here are some options.

Compiled by Elizabeth Mathew

Johnnie Walker Black Label

The Director's Cut - Blade Runner 2049
Thirty-five years after the original Blade Runner, the sci-fi classic returns, as does this whisky collaboration. The Director's Cut is a new scotch whisky created in collaboration with filmmaker Denis Villeneuve. Inspired by Blade Runner 2049, it comes in a limited edition of 39,000 bottles. At ₹5,833. Details: johnniewalker.com



Patrón
Patrón en Liqueur Serie 2
Mexican tequila meets French crystal and the result is the gorgeous limited edition Patrón en Liqueur. This is the second collaboration for the two brands, and there are only 500 of these beauties on sale. The crystal decanter holds a blend of the oldest Patrón tequila, with a nose of agave and oak, and tasting of caramel, honey and vanilla. Each cask comes in a handmade leather case with a leather-bound book and video. At ₹5,00,670 on reservebar.com

Disaronno

Disaronno wears Missoni
This Italian almond liqueur with its amaretto flavour is celebrating the fifth year of its ICON series with Missoni collaboration. The bottles are dressed in colourful versions of the fashion house's signature chevron stripes and are also available in limited editions of mini bottles. At ₹1,295 for 750ml. Details: disaronno.com



Veuve Clicquot

La Grande Dame Charlotte Olympia Edition 2006
Charlotte Olympia's famed leopard print finds its way on to the special edition of La Grande Dame cuvée from French Champagne house, Veuve Clicquot. It comes in a specially-designed gift box inspired by the fashion brand's Vanilla Clutch and pairs well with truffles and caviar. At ₹15,135 on harrods.com



Chivas

Nappa Dori X Chivas
Gifting gets a new avatar this season with Chivas Regal's limited edition festive pack, in collaboration with Nappa Dori. The box features cultural landmarks, illustrated in grey on black, and houses the Chivas 12 Year Old. The design is meant to represent the old and new monuments that identify with the India we know, according to the brands. At ₹3,850 at select stores. Details: nappadori.com



Reselling, the new recycling

No longer considered taboo, shopping at - and selling to - consignment stores is now just good sense

FLIGHT OF FANCY

GAYATRI RANGACHARI SHAH
is a Mumbai-based journalist who writes on the good life



Jackie Kennedy did it. So did Betsy Bloomingdale. Tonnes of Hollywood stars and socialites do it. Reselling your fabulous clothes, shoes and handbags, often worn only once, if at all, used to be the rich woman's dirty secret but is now out in the open. In London last week, my girlfriend, Ms English Jet Setter, told me about Sign of the Times, a beloved Chelsea consignment shop frequented by society lovelies to find bargain Chaneles, Balenciaga, Gucci and other high end fashion brands.

The clothes, sourced discretely by owner Lorraine Fraser, are in top-notch condition, some even have their original price tags, and are offloaded by the original purchasers for a variety of reasons. Some women – especially those photographed on the red carpet – can't be seen wearing the same outfit twice, while others suffer buyers' remorse. And some, of course, just need the cash. "Darling, it's fabulous," said the aforementioned jet setter, as we ambled down Kings Road. "I had this limited edition Louis Vuitton bag that I never used, and someone told me about Sign of the Times. I went in with my bag, and it sold in a day!" It's a win-win proposition – the consigner quotes a price, the store adds a mark up, and if the goods sell, then everyone gets what they want.

Intrigued, I begged my friend to take me there. We found ourselves on Elystan Street, in a well appointed store that looked like any other high end clothing boutique, looking upon rows of designer clothes arranged by colour. Pretty much every brand was on offer. As I lusted over a fabulous Gucci leather jacket, that fell to the knees, (sticker price £425, when the original was probably well over a £1,000), one friend found a lovely winter coat with fur trim, another a smart Valentino jacket and brand new Tom Ford snakeskin boots. This place was high fashion heaven at a fraction of the price! I spoke to Fraser, the owner, who's had her store for 35 years. She doesn't kiss and tell, so I couldn't get the names of any of her more famous consigners, but she did hint that they include aristocrats, visiting overseas royalty, society doyennes and other one percenters. She often goes to their homes, and through their closets, to pick out pieces.

Many moons ago, I had interviewed Cameron Silver, the owner of Decades, the Los Angeles vintage store that is an institution. He's been going strong for, well, decades, and his boutique's Instagram feed is filled with gorgeous Hermes, Oscar de la Renta, Yves Saint Laurent, Givenchy and the like. He was always gung-ho about the opportunity in vintage and "neo-vintage" fashion as he calls it. I must admit, I had been sceptical of the idea in the late 1990s, when Silver and I spoke, but today, I see the appeal. Apparently, so do others, given that in the US, the resale industry has grown 7% in the past two years. Most people selling clothes get anywhere from about 40% to 60% for their items, with the stores getting the rest, according to *Forbes* magazine.

A few days after my exciting excursion to Sign of the Times, I found myself on New Bond Street, at Sotheby's annual Diwali party, which is always a big blow out. On view, apart from miniatures and ancient Indian art, were works from Howard Hodgkins estate. As I air-kissed my way through the throngs, side stepped the *chaat* counter, and admired the works, I wondered which women might be wearing vintage. It was hard to tell since so many were in Indian wear en route to the Hinduja's Diwali party. Ah well, it hardly mattered, because in this era of environmental degradation, recycling beautiful clothes and accessories seem smart for both the planet and for your wallet.



Second chance Stores like Chelsea's Sign of the Times are making pre-loved luxury brands accessible to more

This fortnightly column tracks the indulgent pursuits of the one-percenters.

Art over smart

Audemars Piguet's Southeast Asia CEO, Jonathan King, talks innovative materials, art installations and why the brand is in no hurry to make a smartwatch

BY AATISH NATH

"Often, they are inspired by us and we are inspired by them," says Jonathan King of the relationship that Audemars Piguet has with the artists it supports. The statement can also be a lens through which the brand views its place in the world, from its rapport with its customers to its outlook on innovation.

It's difficult to know what the luxury watchmaker is better known for – its iconic Gerald Genta design Royal Oak, or the fact that rappers from Jay-Z to Lil Wayne have all name checked the storied watchmaker, bringing a street cred and cultural cachet that can be hard to manufacture.

The former is firmly on the mind of King, the Chief Executive Officer for South East Asia, Audemars Piguet (pronounced Awe-DEH-mahr PEE-gay), who recently concluded a whirlwind two-day trip to the country from his base in Singapore. Prior to his most recent appointment, King was CEO and Regional Director for Japan and Korea, and has previously worked with companies as varied as Van Cleef and Arpels, Harrods and the Four Seasons Hotel Group.

Art and horology

King is an imposing yet assured interviewee, and is obviously familiar with the brand's history and ethos. With a 47mm Millenary on his wrist, he draws parallels between the brand's handmade watches, and the artists that the company has supported at big international fairs like Art Basel.

Elaborating on the symbiotic relationship that the two share, King says, "Sometimes, in the art installations, you'll find something that really relates to our craftsmanship, the amazing elements of our creations. To us that's a never-ending, beautiful journey."

The most recent edition of Art Basel Hong Kong saw the unveiling of a video installation by Chinese artist Cheng Ran, which was shot

in the Jura Valley, home to Audemars Piguet. Similarly, this past July, the watchmaker teamed up with Times Square Arts agency to present a video work by Sun Xun, on the iconic billboards of the New York square.

Material matters

Getting to the interdependent relationship between the company and the customer, King says, "Our customers love innovation and the fact that we do things differently, so we will continue to mirror them in these coming decades."

He does, however, concede that when it comes to spearheading the use of new materials, the advancement is so rapid, that often it would be something many customers wouldn't have heard of. "We did titanium at a very early stage, we did certain elements of ceramic too, like the bezel. We did a number of special materials. On the original Royal Oak Concept in 2002, it was made of alacrite (a family of cobalt-based alloys) – this is an incredibly hard, expensive, difficult to mill aerospace material," he elaborates.

Sticking to basics

This is the reason he gives for not venturing into smartwatches, even though other Swiss manufacturers like Tag Heuer are tentatively dipping their toes into the market. "I got to tell you, I'd be surprised if any of our customers said, 'Oh no, we don't own any of those,'" says King, referring to smartwatches, but he also takes the long view, comparing the advent of the smartphone with the rise of the quartz watch industry of 'the 1970s and 80s.

For King, a word that keeps coming up, is 'scale' – when talking about the artworks that the company has supported, to the difficulty of working on mechanical watches by hand. In his enunciated lilt, his smartwatch explanation also gives the impression that the company looks at a different time-scale when focussing on its product development than most.

This ties in with his views of the Indian market. "We want to develop [the market] very organically and qualitatively," he says, while acknowledging that India is "very much on our radar, as one of the very, very important countries of the world." For King, and for Audemars Piguet, they're keen to let the country develop on its own time, allowing for the symbiosis and scale that have characterised the company so far.



FROSTED GOLD

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Royal Oak for women, Audemars Piguet introduced the Royal Oak Frosted Gold this year. The watch makes use of Florentine technique to bring a distinctive shimmer its bezel and strap. A collaboration with jewellery designer Carolina Bucci, the timepiece gets its distinctive shimmer from an ancient hammering technique that sees the gold being beaten with a diamond tipped tool. This leaves the watch with a strap that is tactile, and that glimmers as it catches the light, but still true to the iconic original design. The watch comes in three sizes (33mm, 37mm and 41mm), and brings subtle Italian handicraft to the storied Swiss watchmaker.



1. Royal Oak Offshore Chronograph with classic "Méga Tapisserie" dial
2. Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar
3. Royal Oak Offshore Chronograph 44 mm
4. Royal Oak Frosted Gold
5. Royal Oak Extra-thin 39 mm
6. Royal Oak Chronograph In stainless steel

Splurge files

Objects that should be on your radar

LV RUN AWAY SNEAKER

Couture kicks

When everything you own is luxury-labelled, why should your workout gear be any different? Meet the Run Away Sneaker from French fashion house Louis Vuitton, whose contemporary take on the running shoe comes with calf leather trim, and features the brand's trademark Damier-patterned checks on the body. The LV plaque at the back and the shape-memory insole together make this hand-finished piece almost too good to use on the track. Available at approximately ₹53,357 at louisvuitton.com.



ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM VIII

More than just a car

Torsten Müller-Ötvös, CEO of Rolls-Royce, calls the eighth generation Phantom the "pinnacle" of the iconic brand. While its power comes from a twin-turbocharged 6.75-litre V12 engine, the motor car has an all-aluminium structure that's lighter and stiffer than before. Expect a panoramic camera system, night vision, adaptive cruise control, collision, cross-traffic and pedestrian warnings, lane departure and lane change warnings, as well as a high-definition head-up display for ease of driving. The opulent interiors also feature The Gallery, a fully bespoke art fixture that runs the width of the front dashboard. Priced at approximately ₹3,41,14,248, it goes on sale next year.



CHLOÉ

Bohemian rhapsody

The Pixie bag has been all over Instagram since it debuted on the runway at the Fall 2017 shows. Created by designer Clare Waight Keller, for her final collaboration with the French brand, the circular style is made from textured leather and spliced with half-moon suede panels and bracelet-inspired top handles. Choose from claret (seen here), dark green, grey, light brown and black suede. Priced at approximately ₹87,000 on net-a-porter.com.

TWILLY D'HERMÈS

Scent of a girl

Hermès' newest scent, Twilly d'Hermès, is meant for the young woman of today, with notes of ginger and tuberose. Floral, spicy and exotic is how the brand describes it, and the packaging reflects the description with a lid shaped like a bowler hat and a colourful ribbon around the neck, reminiscent of French girl chic. "Free, bold, connected, mischievous and irreverent" is how Christine Nagel, the brand's first female perfumer, describes the story behind this scent. Priced at ₹7,423 for 85 ml at hermes.com



Interflora blooms in India

The UK-based luxury flower delivery service starts off with Mumbai and aims to expand soon

BY ELIZABETH MATHEW



Petal power Neil Whittaker, head florist, Interflora India (top right); one of his creations (above)

India has long had a tradition of using flowers in day-to-day life – think garlands, flower petals strewn around places of worship, and even marigolds floating in a bowl. But the concept of flower arrangements is newer, and inspired by the West. Entering this relatively nascent luxury market is the global brand Interflora, bringing with them over 100 floral arrangements and top-quality blooms.

Having launched in Mumbai this month, the brand hopes to spread to other cities in the coming months, says Tarun Joshi, President & CEO, Interflora India. Unlike in foreign countries, where high-quality flowers are available at local grocers or florists, in India, the brand has had to go right to the growers, and set up an infrastructure of cold chain storage. "It is quite exciting because India is such an underdeveloped market for the way flowers are consumed, but there is a strong inclination towards them," adds Joshi.

Since about 90% of the best quality flowers in the country are exported, Interflora reached out to growers to ensure their stringent technical parameters – about how long each stem must be, the circumference of the bud, and exactly how much it has bloomed – were met. Cold vans were set up to transport the buds to storage, without letting them suffer from shock from sudden changes in temperature.

The result is floral arrangements that keep the local market in mind, while bringing in that luxury feel, says Neil Whittaker, Interflora's head florist in India. "While you can go to your local markets and find arrangements, our focus is to show something that is very unique and showcases the quality of the blooms," explains Whittaker. "We want to teach the Indian consumer that if they buy Interflora products, they are guaranteed to last for seven days, and if they follow instructions – like use the specialised flower food and trim the flowers every third day – they could increase the vase life from seven to 14 days."

The originally Manchester-based Whittaker, considered UK's top florist, says he loves the tropical abundance of Indian flowers, especially the heliconias. He recalls asking for marigolds for an arrangement on his first trip here, only to be informed that the heads are cut off here and the blossoms used in garlands.

Prices start from ₹1,500 at interflora.in