

how to do things

IDEAS, DIYS &
REALLY GOOD TIPS

DRINKING WITH JENNA

WHAT TO DRINK WHEN YOU'RE NOT DRINKING

If you're laying off the booze but find it a bit, er, dry to sip seltzer all night, these new nonalcoholic cans and bottles have you covered.

BY JENNA HELWIG



IT USED TO BE that if you wanted a nonalcoholic drink that still felt like a cocktail, your options were limited. Not so today. A huge selection of booze-free wine, beer, spirits, and pre-mixed drinks has entered the chat, and consumers are here for it: Retail sales leaped more than 20 percent last year, to almost \$400 million. That may be a drop in the ice bucket compared with total alcohol sales, but it's a stunning jump for a category that was almost nonexistent a few years ago. Back in 2021, Emily Heintz noticed the growing interest in drinking less and opened Sèchey, a retail store in Charleston, South Carolina, that sells an expansive selection of low- and no-alcohol drinks. "With so many new sophisticated, flavorful nonalcoholic options available—often in fun, swanky packaging—you don't have to feel left out if you choose to abstain for the evening, month, or foreseeable future," she says. Many of the new drinks are made from botanicals (as are traditional spirits). Some are fermented; others, truthfully, aren't that different from sodas. What they all have in common is an elevated, grown-up vibe. Among the myriad choices, there are hits and misses, so I went to Heintz's second spot, in New York City, to find the best. (You can shop them at sechey.com.) And I was still bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in the morning. Sip, sip, hooray!



GHIA LE SPRITZ GINGER

Canned and ready to drink, this refreshing replacement for a predinner cocktail has a gentle ginger flavor and a touch of bitterness to balance out the juice-based beverage's sweetness. Other ingredients include elderflower, orange peel extract, and fig concentrate, for a drink that tastes like you're at an Italian café. \$6 for an 8-oz. can; drinkghia.com for stores

CURIOS Elixirs CURIOUS NO. 7

This lightly carbonated mocktail is an easy-drinking riff on the French 77, a fresh and floral tippie made with Champagne, elderflower liqueur, and lemon. With juice from the chardonnay grape (just like some Champagne) and lemon, this fizzy sip gets additional depth from lavender, juniper, and green tea with jasmine. \$40 for 4 (12-oz.) cans; curiouselixirs.com

RITUAL ZERO PROOF TEQUILA ALTERNATIVE

This is Heintz's best-selling bottle at her Charleston outpost. Peppery, grassy, and smoky like mezcal, it's a 1-to-1 replacement for tequila. Mix it into a mocktail (it makes for a great faux margarita!), or sip it on the rocks with a twist of lime. \$30 for a 750-ml bottle; ritualzeroproof.com

AMETHYST BOTANICAL SPIRIT LEMON CUCUMBER SERRANO

Incredibly aromatic, this stuff is lemon-and-cucumber forward; the serrano is more of a background player. Pair it with tonic water for a fresh take on a G&T, or treat it as a stand-in for vodka in your favorite drink. \$30 for a 750-ml bottle; amethystspirits.com

ST. AGRESTIS PHONY NEGRONI

As an avid negroni consumer, I can attest that this bottled beverage has a remarkably similar feel to the classic Campari, gin, and sweet vermouth cocktail. It's a little sweeter than the traditional, but it still has that delicious bitter bite. Serve it over ice with an orange twist and it'll feel like the real deal. \$60 for 12 (6.7-oz.) bottles; stagrestis.com

STUDIO NULL SPARKLING VERDEJO

Unlike many zero-proof drinks, this is an honest-to-goodness sparkling wine that's had the alcohol distilled out. It's a teensy bit sweet, with a dry finish—a balanced, toasty drink that just might fool your cava-loving friends into thinking they're enjoying a traditional bubbly. \$36 for a 750-ml bottle; nullwines.com ■

About Jenna

REAL SIMPLE's food director and the author of five cookbooks, Jenna is an enthusiastic eater, drinker, and home cook. Her go-to cocktail is a negroni, and her wine of choice is anything bubbly. Cheers!

