



The best cocktail bars in Kansas City

By [Lysa Allman-Baldwin](#) May 13, 2016

[Our Places](#)

Barbecue, fountains, baseball and jazz. All of these are touchstones that people associate with [Kansas City](#). But there's another that serves as a bridge between the city's historic past, present, and future: cocktails.

Kansas City is, after all, the city where Tom Pendergast, the infamous political mob boss, used his nefarious connections to spit in the eye of the U.S. government by defying the laws of Prohibition - which banned the manufacture, transportation



and sale of alcohol from 1920 to 1933 – brashly declaring his beloved city “wide open” to imbibe, dance and enjoy all forms of illicit indulgences without fear of prosecution.



The best cocktail bars in Kansas City
© Neil Burger

Fast-forward to the present day and Kansas City is leading the renaissance of a decidedly sophisticated yet unpretentious cocktail landscape in The Heartland. Here you will find a wealth of incredible bars and restaurants mixing up cocktail history, creativity, passion and distinctive elements that speak volumes well beyond the last drop. Here are a few of our

favourite cocktail bars in Kansas City to try next time you're in town.

Kansas City's cocktail landscape

Several noteworthy bars can be found in the city's [Crossroads Art District](#). Set in an intimate, 48-seat, subterranean locale, [Manifesto](#) is a throwback to the popular Prohibition-era speakeasies, with a focus on classically inspired cocktails using fresh, homemade ingredients. Just above it (literally) is [The Rieger Hotel Grill & Exchange](#).

At both – owned and co-owned respectively by Ryan Maybee, cocktail master and Bartender of the Year in 2013 by *Imbibe* magazine – you will find classic spirits like Citadelle Gin, St. George Absinthe, Ron Zacapa Rum, Tequila Ocho, and Dark Horse Reunion Rye, just to name a few, as the base elements for their multidimensional cocktails.



J. Rieger & Co. Kansas City Whiskey is an area favourite © Megan Swann

Extra Virgin, owned by nationally renowned and James Beard Award winning chef Michael Smith, is not only known for its excellent handcrafted cocktails, but also for pairing them with a full tapas menu highlighting the aromas and flavours of the Mediterranean.

The **Westport** neighbourhood has grown immensely over the years from student scene into a mature, refined food and drink neighbourhood with great cross-generational and cultural appeal. Here you will find some of the best bars in Kansas City, like **Harry's Bar & Tables** which serves drinks like the *Ginger Oaxaca* - Del

Maguey Vida Mezcal, Canton, lemon juice, and topped with soda.



Extra Virgin is one of the many popular dining and cocktail establishments in Kansas City ©Neil Burger

Julep features five different kinds of Julep cocktails, including *The Deep*, *Deep South* made with Novo Fogo Barrel Aged Cachaça, Kansas City Canning Co. Blood Orange and ginger shrub, plus an array of whisky flights, while noteworthy selections of straight and small-batch bourbons and ryes, wheated, Tennessee, single-barrel and flavoured whiskys, and what they call *Coupe Cocktails* are the rage at the **Char Bar**.

If tequila is your spirit of choice, then head on over to [El Patron Cocina & Bar](#) in the [Westside/Southwest Blvd](#) neighbourhood, where you'll find close to 60 kinds of tequila and a few specialty cocktails like *Estela's Favorite Gala Cocktail* - Stoli Gala Apple vodka, sweet and sour, and a splash of sprite.



In addition to an entire wall full of spirits options, Julep also features an array of delicious whiskey flights © VisitKC

At the [Wunderbar](#), the *Klarer Glühwein* with Grüner Veltliner, cucumber liqueur, sparkling water, lemon and cucumber wheels is the perfect accompaniment to the authentic Viennese Gasthaus fare served in its home restaurant, The

Grünauer.

Friendly, knowledgeable bartenders serving everything from one shot throw backs to sophisticated, multi-layered cocktails and spirits in a relaxed ambiance is what sets [Harry's Country Club](#) apart. Located in the [River Market](#), they offer hundreds of Blanco-Silver and Reposado tequilas; Highland, Island, Isley, Speyside, Lowland, and Cambeltown scotch, and Canadian, specialty and artisan, rye, and Irish whiskey selections, just to name a few.



A competing bartender during the Multi-City Cocktail Smackdown © Jason Domingues

At [Voltaire](#) in the [West Bottoms](#), try their *Kansas City Sour* – Evan Williams bonded bourbon, smoked lemon, Demerara and red wine – or the *Yeeeah Rye't*, a combination of Rittenhouse bonded rye, coffee, sherry syrup, Aztec chocolate bitters and cream.

POP Fest

To experience the best cocktail bars in Kansas City at the same time, visit during the annual [Paris of the Plains Cocktail Festival \(POP Fest\)](#), held each summer.

POP Fest, which was co-founded by Ryan Maybee, Doug Frost, and Brandon Cummins, is a delightfully intoxicating, multi-day celebration of the art of the cocktail, food and music history and culture.



Mixing a drink during the Paris of the Plains Bartending Competition © Jason Domingues

Here, everyone from passing sippers to staunch imbibers with refined tastes can mix and mingle alongside Kansas City's best bartenders, as well as distinguished food and beverage writers, cocktail connoisseurs, chefs, and others from across the country.

The festival takes place at a number of cocktail bars in Kansas City, as well as restaurants, distilleries and microbreweries, each offering unique food and drink experiences through exciting spirits tastings, educational seminars, and cocktail and music parties.

The crowning POP Fest event is the Paris of the Plains Bartending Competition; a head-to-head cocktail creation and industry knowledge quiz performed before the public, the winner chosen by votes from a panel of judges.



The Beefeater MixLDN Bartending Competition – National Finals uses a London Dry Gin as a basis for the cocktail creations. After winning, this bartender went on to compete in the finals in London © Jason Domingues

With such an eclectic and exceptional cocktail scene to discover, it's no wonder Kansas City was named "America's Next Great Cocktail City" by *Saveur* magazine.

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Have you visited any of these fantastic cocktail bars in Kansas City? Which were your favourites? Let us know in the comments section below.



About Lysa Allman-Baldwin

For almost 20 years, Lysa has fed her wanderlust for "everything the world has to offer" by writing passionately about travel, cuisine, historic sites and attractions, cultural events, spas, festivals and other subjects for numerous print and online publications. She is also

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