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POINTS NORTH

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PICKS
FOR
Mixology
HOTSPOTS

[WRITTEN BY BRE HUMPHRIES]

Raise YOUR GLASSES, ATLANTA, it's time for a toast. Maybe you're celebrating a special occasion, the coming of spring, St. Patrick's Day or the simple fact that you made it through yet another day at the daily grind. Whatever the case may be, our city and the surrounding suburbs offer plenty of places to energize or unwind over crafty concoctions, and we're not talking about your typical cranberry-and-vodka. Instead, master mixologists are raising the bar at bars across the nation, and Atlanta is no exception.

As our culinary scene continues its commitment to serving up quality cuisine, the standards for a similar caliber in the cocktail culture are on the rise as well. Rather than sticking to standard and expected cocktails, more and more restaurants and bars are experimenting with mixology — focusing on quality

ingredients, thinking in terms of culinary concepts, revitalizing traditional drinks and placing more emphasis on presentation.

"There's theory behind [mixology], there's balance, there's creativity," said Geno Dew, beverage manager and sommelier at Pacci Ristorante and AltoRex Lounge in Atlanta's Hotel Palomar.

"Anything and everything is a possible ingredient," added Steven Kowalczyk, mixologist with Room at TWELVE Centennial Park in Atlanta. "There are absolutely no limitations except for the creative mind and one's own ideas and where they think they can take a cocktail."

Ready to take a sip? Read on for 10 mixology hotspots serving up stylish cocktails in metro Atlanta.



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**EDITOR'S NOTE:
RESTAURANTS
AND BARS
LISTED IN
ALPHABETICAL
ORDER.**



Aqua Blue, Roswell

PHOTO COURTESY OF LAUREN RUBINSTEIN

1

AQUA BLUE, ROSWELL

For unwinding over drinks in the suburbs, you can't beat Aqua Blue, an exotic yet soothing haven on Roswell's hectic Holcomb Bridge Road. Here, a menu of global cuisine ranges from steaks and chops to sushi and seafood, and an equally assorted cocktail menu complements the diverse flavors you'll find when you dine. To achieve this, the signature beverages are reasonably simple so as not to overwhelm the food, and there are several light and fruity libations to balance the spicier dishes. A year-round favorite is the Georgia Peach Iced Tea with Sweet Tea Firefly vodka, Absolut Apeach and a splash of Sprite on the

rocks, but Aqua Blue also mixes up the cocktail menu seasonally to reflect the fresh seasonal ingredients that make up its cuisine. With spring in full swing, expect crisp, effervescent beverages, said bartender/manager Ella deAmicis, like her own signature, Ella's Peachberry Fizz, made with Stoli Blueberry, Peach Schnapps, Triple Sec and a splash of Champagne. You'll also find fruity concoctions like Dragonberry Punch, made with Bacardi Dragonberry rum, pomegranate juice and a splash of Sprite, along with sweet dessert martinis in flavors like caramel apple. www.aquablueatl.com

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DRINKSHOP, W ATLANTA – DOWNTOWN

Created by renowned bar man Sasha Petraske of New York City's famed Milk and Honey, DRINKSHOP blends an old-fashioned approach to drink mixing with sexy, contemporary décor to create the ultimate haute-cocktail experience. Here, seasoned mixologists take a culinary approach to making drinks. The process begins with ice chipped straight from a 300-pound show block behind the counter into one of five signature types created to complement the fresh ingredients and melt slowly so your last sip is as good as the first. DRINKSHOP'S cocktail menu lists a few possible spirits for your sipping pleasure, including Prohibition-era classics like

the Old Fashioned along with creations like the Strawberry Caipiroska with vodka, fresh limes and fresh strawberries. But DRINKSHOP'S bartenders prefer to chat with patrons and tailor drinks to suit each person's taste, recommending a special Champagne cocktail for a special occasion, for instance, or something with their homemade grenadine, made with fresh pomegranate juice, when you've got a sweet tooth. And as spring emerges, you'll find new seasonal offerings featuring rhubarbs, strawberries and thyme, plus Irish whiskey-based cocktails on special as St. Patrick's Day rolls around. www.starwoodhotels.com

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ELEVATION CHOPHOUSE & SKY BAR, KENNESAW

Whether you're in the market for a romantic date night in the dining room or an evening of mixing and mingling at one of the few rooftop bars in the suburbs, Elevation Chophouse can top off your visit with one of the most unique mixology inventions around — the liquid nitrogen cocktail. Available in a variety of margaritas and martinis, these concoctions are created tableside by slowly pouring the -320-degree ingredient into a stainless steel bowl filled with the libation of your choice and mixing until the nitrogen evaporates, leaving an ice cold, sorbet-like treat that you eat with a spoon. Martini

options range from your standard Cosmopolitan to more unique offerings like the Absolut Pearfection with Absolut Pears vodka, Triple Sec and Midori, while margarita flavors include lemon-lime, pomegranate, black raspberry and the ultimate Elevation G5 Margarita, made with Patron Anejo, Grand Marnier, fresh lime juice, fresh orange juice and simple syrup. As if you need another reason to imbibe in these exceptional libations, a percentage of liquid nitrogen sales benefits The Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) adoption center. www.elevationchophouse.com