

PUNCH

The World's Most Iconic Bars

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From the cradle of the Daiquiri to a New Orleans stalwart, these are the 10 historic bars that still inspire modern drink culture.

It was over two weeks ago that PUNCH finalized this list of the world's most iconic bars—those old-school standard-bearers scattered across the globe from London to Los Angeles that still provide daily inspiration to drinkers, bartenders and a thirsty community of passers-through. Around the same time, one-by-one they shut their doors.

During these uncertain times when all of our cherished cocktail bars, taverns and corner taps are denied to us in the name of caution, it's reassuring to remember that such epochal bars have weathered all sorts of adversity over the decades, and that odds are good they will survive this current crisis, too.

These bars share a number of characteristics. Most are small in size and all are cosmopolitan in attitude. They are simultaneously beloved by locals and famed tourist attractions. The bartenders are frequently uniformed to the nines and there's at least one signature drink that ought to be ordered before leaving. Finally, more often than not, they count novelist and infamous cocktailer Ernest Hemingway as a former regular. Above all, they haven't changed much with the times, but are instead honored as timeless, by generation after generation. Now is as good a time as ever to honor that steadfastness.

To assist in our painstaking selection of the most iconic bars across the globe, PUNCH polled a collection of the top drink-world authorities, including historians Jeff “Beachbum” Berry, Philip Greene, François Monti and David Wondrich; journalists M. Carrie Allan, Paul Clarke and Kara Newman; and all-around roving cocktail experts Philip Duff and Angus Winchester.

Napoleon House, New Orleans

Few cities have held on to more great old bars than New Orleans, a city that knows how to live and how to drink. Many of the NOLA old guard could arguably merit a place on this list. But Napoleon House, which has held firm to its corner of the French Quarter for a century, may be the first among equals. The high-ceilinged room breathes age with its romantically distressed walls, hodge-podge collection of pictures and slow-moving ceiling fans. The house drink is the light-bodied Pimm’s Cup, a perfect antidote to the climate (and chosen because owner Peter Impastato preferred drinks that didn’t get people too intoxicated). Sip at a Sazerac and nibble at a muffuletta, and time will stand still for as long as you want it to.