

## Sweet On the Soda Pop

*DC's Buffalo & Bergen marries vintage soda fountains with classic mixology*



Pharmacies first introduced America to soda fountains in the late 1700s, offering effervescent mineral waters meant to improve health, libido, and overall well-being, but it wasn't until Prohibition that these classic machines manifested themselves into popular culture. During that period, socialites still yearned for places to drink and mingle, and with many bartenders taking their talents from the rail to the "jerk," soda counters became the epicenter of social gathering in the absence of bars. But with the invention of bottled soda and Repeal Day reopening bars in 1933, soda fountains began to lose their lure, preventing classic soda jerking techniques and spirits-based mixology from ever overlapping... until now.

At **Buffalo & Bergen**, a retro NYC-style deli, bar, and soda counter in **Washington DC**, owner and highly respected mixologist, **Gina Chersevani**, uses a vintage 1930s Bastian-Blessing soda fountain to mix boozy takes on soda counter classics – egg creams, floats, malts, and natural sodas – and to create inventive cocktails using techniques only possible with a classic soda fountain. "Jerking" allows the bartender to control the pressure and stream of carbonation, opening up endless possibilities of varying texture, mouthfeel, and taste in soda-based cocktails.

## Story Angles



With soda's unhealthy reputation and the recent rise of craft companies remarketing sparkling beverages in a healthy light, it's hard to remember an earlier age when soda was actually widely considered a medicinal product. Explore soda fountain history in popular culture and take a look at Chersevani's soda program at Buffalo & Bergen, which uses artisanal natural syrups and channels this largely forgotten aspect of soda's past.



Pegged for Repeal Day, December 5, explore the history of additives in various soda fountain creations, from narcotics used at pharmacies, to cocaine in Coca Cola and now traditional spirits at Buffalo & Bergen.



With only a handful of vintage soda machines still in use across the country, consider a complete round-up: Buffalo & Bergen in DC and the Pink Squirrel in Chicago are the only two establishments that have ever combined spirits-based mixology with vintage soda machines. Polite Provisions in San Diego focuses on local tonics, elixirs, and cures made with their own vintage machine. Brooklyn Farmacy and Soda Fountain in NYC makes classic egg creams and floats for a full nostalgic approach - their counter men and women even dress the part!

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## Soda Fountain History

*Late 1700s - Soda fountains introduced at pharmacies*

*1798 - Term "soda water" first coined*

*Early 1900s - Soda fountains reportedly serve narcotic-based elixirs*

*1920 - Prohibition causes the popularity of soda fountains to rise*

*1933 - Repeal of the 21<sup>st</sup>*

*1940s - WWII requires all CO<sub>2</sub> machines to be used for production of torpedoes*

*1950s - Aluminum cans introduced*

*1970s - Plastic bottles introduced*

*2012 - Buffalo & Bergen opens in DC*

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*Buffalo & Bergen*

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