

PRESENTED BY **AMERICAN EXPRESS**

C A N A D A ' S
50 BEST BARS



FROM THE EDITORS OF
**CANADA'S
100
BEST**

CANADA'S 50 BEST BARS

For most diners, the true marker of a great evening is an excellent meal. But for others, the experience of going out is made during the more intimate, before-and-after moments of dinner, which are often spent on bar stools or at dimly lit tables enjoying a drink. This book is for the latter camp.

At *Canada's 100 Best*, our idea of a great bar starts with an atmospheric setting and an exceptional beverage program. We think excellent cocktails are just like the best food: they should respect the past but do more than simply repeat it. And we think that any good bartender should be able to pull off that trick with a non-alcoholic mix, too.

Great bars needn't be chic or luxurious, but they must be comfortable retreats. The service should be hospitable; the atmosphere convivial. We are also keen to celebrate excellent wine bars and craft-beer destinations, both of which we believe have only served to elevate bar culture in Canada.

In assembling our inaugural list of Canada's 50 Best Bars, we asked our experienced panel of judges to consider all of this as they scoured the coun-

try for the finest wine, beer and cocktail lounges. But we did have a few restrictions. Mainly, we discouraged judges from voting for restaurants or bar seating therein. Our goal was, and still is, to find the greatest places to meet someone for a drink or two, and nothing more.

As we see it, a bar along one wall of a dining room is not a bar—it's just part of a restaurant. But if a bar is in a separate room, with its own distinct atmosphere, then it qualifies as a stand-alone watering hole.

We have done our very best to adhere to these criteria, proudly bringing you the inaugural ranking of Canada's 50 Best Bars.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

- 1. THE BLIND OWL**, WINDSOR, ONT.
- 2. THE DUKE OF DUCKWORTH**, ST. JOHN'S, N.L.
- 3. BIG BAD JOHN'S**, VICTORIA, B.C.
- 4. FLINT**, SASKATOON, SASK.
- 5. THE ROOST**, WINNIPEG, MAN.

8-25

CANADA'S
BEST BARS

26

BARTENDER
PROFILE

28

VANCOUVER
WINE POP-UP

29

SAKE IN
MONTREAL

30

RECIPE

BAR RAVAL

505 COLLEGE ST., TORONTO, ONT.

“A room with a sense of place, even if that place is across the ocean. Runs like a well-tuned machine, but offers a true sense of welcome. Confident drink-makers, terrific wines, not to mention the food.”

— **JOHN BUNNER**

OPERATIONS MANAGER, ALO

In the approach from the street, Bar Raval appears to be just like any other watering hole—the unremarkable green paint and covered patio give nothing away. But inside, the room inspires a sense of permanence. Before they opened the place in 2015, Grant van Gameren, Robin Goodfellow and Mike Webster had spent a fortune on the exquisite mahogany woodwork alone. Three years later, the Spanish Art Nouveau-inspired interior—reminiscent of Antoni Gaudí’s iconic Casa Batlló building—continues to be a beautiful, lively and convivial spot.

As if that weren’t enough, communal oak-barrel tables encourage chatting with strangers as an inviting playlist of African groove, Latin funk and psychedelic soul enlivens the place. Drinks include refreshing Spanish fizz cocktails made with crystalline, hand-carved brick ice, cava and your choice of vermouth. The skilled bartenders also create original fino sherry libations that sing with addictive saline undercurrents.

The bar’s signature Tinto Fino—a satisfyingly tart emulsion of dry sherry and freshly squeezed lime juice—nearly begs to be paired with the top-quality food.

WHAT TO ORDER:

Tinto Fino

PRICE:

\$\$\$

FOOD:

Yes / No

DRINK:

01



“A Vancouver staple for any cocktail lover. From the apothecary decor to the interesting tinctures in the cocktails, The Keefer is always pushing boundaries.”

— KAITLYN STEWART

DIAGEO WORLD CLASS
BARTENDER OF THE YEAR

02

THE KEEFER BAR

135 KEEFER ST., VANCOUVER, B.C.

Nestled in the heart of Chinatown, The Keefer Bar is illuminated by glowing rectangles of red and gold LED lights, which dot the bar and ceiling. A sign above the bar reads “Medical Centre.” The apothecary-themed menu, which is labelled as a list of “Remedies and Cures,” offers herb-infused cocktails inspired by traditional Chinese medicine. Meanwhile, an outdoor patio with a blazing fire pit provides the perfect spot for a nightcap.

WHAT TO ORDER:

Opium Sour

PRICE:

\$\$\$

FOOD:

Yes / No

DRINK:



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COLDROOM

SAINT VINCENT ST., MONTREAL, QUE.

Bartenders Daniel Boulianne and Pierre-Hughes Marois create simple yet compelling original libations inside this intimate, 65-seat cocktail lounge, hidden underground in a former industrial cold room. Decor is minimal, yet the room's original steel beams and brick walls—dating back to 1877—provide inimitable character and charm.

WHAT TO ORDER:

Montreal Cocktail

PRICE:

\$\$\$

FOOD:

Yes / No

DRINK:

03



“Ring the doorbell and within a minute you are greeted by a member of the world-class staff who escorts you downstairs into a dimly lit bar, decorated to perfection. No glitz and glamour, no ostentatious garnishes. Simply some of the best cocktails in Canada.”

— SPENCER GOODERHAM

CANADIAN WHISKY
AMBASSADOR

PROOF

1302 1 ST. SW, CALGARY, ALTA.

With more than 300 bottles of premium bourbon, whisky, gin and vodka, the sprawling booze collection at Proof could be described as an expansive liquor library. But fortunately, the research materials are for final sale, not lending. Bartenders climb a sturdy wooden ladder to access many of the bar's most exclusive spirits, stirring craft and classic cocktails of undeniable quality. Luxurious leather sofas and vintage Hudson's Bay Company blankets add to the bar's charming, antique ambiance.

WHAT TO ORDER:

El Santo

PRICE:

\$\$\$

FOOD:

Yes / No

DRINK:

04

“The funky atmosphere at Proof is a go-to when seeking a spot to sink down into some comfortable couches and enjoy professionally made cocktails.”

— **BRITTANY HOUSTON**

SALES REPRESENTATIVE,

PHILLIPS BREWING & MALTING



Photo courtesy of Proof



“With its robust cocktail program, welcoming atmosphere and dedication to excellence, the Bar at Alo has an identity entirely its own.”

— CALUM MARSH
NATIONAL POST

05

THE BAR AT ALO

163 SPADINA AVE., TORONTO, ONT.

A destination for refined cocktails and wines, The Bar at Alo offers a sublime drinking experience that is separate from the award-winning French restaurant. The Armagnac Old Fashioned, built in the glass with a dash of absinthe, nearly overflows with complex, herbaceous flavours. At sunset, the light refracts off the bottles to fill the barroom with a whimsical array of colours—and the effect is glamorous.

WHAT TO ORDER:

Armagnac Old Fashioned

PRICE:

\$\$\$

FOOD:

Yes / No

DRINK:



LOT SIX BAR & RESTAURANT

1685 ARGYLE ST., HALIFAX, N.S.

Situated within the historic Carleton Hotel building in downtown Halifax, the two-storey Lot Six Bar is an oasis of craft cocktails and Canadian wines. Head bartender Shane Beehan showcases premium local spirits on his cocktail menu, giving each libation a distinct sense of place. Meanwhile, a vaulted glass ceiling and glowing twinkle lights provide a welcoming and outdoorsy ambiance.

WHAT TO ORDER: Fresh to Death

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



BAR VON DER FELS

1005A 1 ST. SW, CALGARY, ALTA.

“I’ve discovered so many new producers from the personalized service here. The wines by the glass can change by the hour, and I always leave having discovered new gems.”

— JASON YAMASAKI, SOMMELIER, JOEY RESTAURANTS

Since opening in September, 2016, Bar Von Der Fels has established itself as one of the best wine bars in Calgary, if not all of Canada. Outside, a sign on the door reads “No Malbec! No Minors!” And yet, countless other wine offerings provide something for everyone—from a \$10 glass of muscadet to a \$30 glass of Chassagne-Montrachet. Past the bar, a pocket-sized kitchen prepares unfussy small plates conceived to perfectly accompany the full, ever-evolving range of wines.

WHAT TO ORDER: A glass of Cornas reserve

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



06



07

PRETTYUGLY

1237 QUEEN ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

Two bars in one, the front room of PrettyUgly boasts a miniature, rainbow-hued mezcal stand where you can taste your way through tequila's smokier, more festive cousin. Past this, a quirky main bar with leather-topped stools and taxidermy birds could be the setting for a scene out of a Quentin Tarantino movie. While the bar's focus remains on mezcal, the well-considered cocktail list also prominently features seasonal, house-made liqueurs and infusions. Friendly bartenders work hard to ensure that everyone feels welcome, stirring an array of non-alcoholic placebo cocktails that far surpass the standard cranberry and soda.

WHAT TO ORDER: Supwitdat

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



CLEMENTINE

11957 JASPER AVE., EDMONTON, ALTA.

"I cannot say enough good things about Clementine. The pro bartenders use a wide array of absinthe that will make you want to stay until closing!" — AIMEE NORMORE, FRONT-OF-HOUSE MANAGER, PATOIS

Inspired by the romantic, early-20th-century French Art Nouveau—and with an expansive absinthe menu—Clementine has quickly become Edmonton's foremost cocktail destination. Bartenders mix intricate libations that highlight lesser-known ingredients such as quinquina and g n p y. Beer glasses are rinsed with absinthe, transforming regular pints into minty and intriguing elixirs.

WHAT TO ORDER: Doctor

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



08



09



10

THE WOODCUTTER'S BLANKET

112 STRICKLAND ST., WHITEHORSE, YUKON

"I always have a great time at The Woodcutter's Blanket sipping on a whisky cocktail and enjoying some oysters."

— DAVE MITTON, CANADIAN WHISKY AMBASSADOR

Housed in a refurbished log cabin built in 1938, The Woodcutter's Blanket exudes old-world charm in the heart of downtown Whitehorse. Bartenders focus on seasonal ingredients, infusing Negronis with fresh strawberry juice in the summer and muddling tequila with blood orange in the winter. On chilly nights, attentive bar staff provide warm blankets.

WHAT TO ORDER: Lady Grey

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



11

GIFT SHOP AT OSSINGTON

89-B OSSINGTON AVE., TORONTO, ONT.

Buried at the back of a non-descript barbershop, Gift Shop offers an unforgettable cocktail experience in the heart of downtown Toronto. The modest, 18-seat bar occupies a former art studio—with raw walls and scuffed paint to prove it. At its helm, a barman known only as "H" stirs mouthwatering original cocktails like the seasonal "Roasting Those Canadian Chestnuts!" But it's H's classic Beefeater gin martini—served at precisely -4.5°C —that puts up a fight as being the best martini in Canada.

WHAT TO ORDER: H's classic Beefeater gin martini with a lemon twist

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



ATWATER COCKTAIL CLUB

512 ATWATER AVE., MONTREAL, QUE.

Filled with sleek 1950s decor, raucous energy and boozy custom libations, this back-alley cocktail bar in the heart of Montreal's Saint-Henri neighbourhood has something for everyone. Forget traditional stemware; the bar's most celebrated drinks come in unconventional containers. The famous Kung-Fu Panda is presented in a playful black-and-white, panda-shaped cocktail mug. There is also a tantalizing selection of sharing plates to nibble at, including the bar's signature black truffle pasta, which is prepared by sister restaurant Foiegwa.

WHAT TO ORDER: Kung-Fu Panda

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



PROHIBITION

801 W. GEORGIA ST., VANCOUVER, B.C.

This underground hotel bar opened just three years ago, but with much of the vintage charm and character intact from its earlier incarnation as the glamorous Chameleon Bar, which opened in 1927. Now—like then—the room is a known gathering spot for Hollywood royalty, visiting dignitaries and the city's cultural elite. Head bartender Robyn Gray creates cocktails based on moods, from festive to opulent to eccentric. Meanwhile, the signature absinthe tasting features quality absinthe from France, California and the Okanagan Valley.

WHAT TO ORDER: Prohibition

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



12



13





14

SOIF BAR À VIN

88 MONTCALM ST., GATINEAU, QUE.

Soif means thirst, and thirsty is how you should arrive at this elegant wine bar, but never how you leave. The rich, Eurocentric wine list is curated by owner and celebrated sommelier Véronique Rivest, who has won the title of Canada's Best Sommelier twice and once placed second in the World's Best Sommelier battle in Tokyo. Rivest's signature Spotlight on Women wine flight highlights female winemakers from Alsace to Sicily. A charming backyard patio provides the perfect destination to linger over a wine flight on a balmy summer afternoon.

WHAT TO ORDER: The German-influence flight

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Minors are allowed on the patio until 8 p.m.



15

COLD TEA

60 KENSINGTON AVE., TORONTO, ONT.

At Cold Tea, prismatic LED lights play off gleaming white tiles, the hip-hop is just loud enough, and patrons are made to feel at home whether their preferred tippie is a Rob Roy or a Rolling Rock. The bar is named after the infamous after-last-call tradition in Toronto's Chinatown, wherein an order of "cold tea" is known to get you a teapot filled with beer. While the bar does not serve beer teapots, they do serve a perfect margarita, finished with a sprinkle of sea salt deposited directly inside the glass.

WHAT TO ORDER: Classic margarita

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

The bar is hidden inside a Kensington Market mall. Enter through the door marked with a gleaming red light.

16. THE MOONROOM

442 PRESTON ST., OTTAWA, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: La Rosa Negroni

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



THE DIAMOND

6 POWELL ST., VANCOUVER, B.C.

WHAT TO ORDER: Japanese Whisky
Old Fashioned

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



18. ARCHIVE 909

909 DUNDAS ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Phaunus Pet Nat

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



19

COCKTAIL BAR

923 DUNDAS ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Manhattan

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



20. GRAPES & SODA

1541 W. 6TH AVE., VANCOUVER, B.C.

WHAT TO ORDER: A glass of Fabien Jouvès
You Fuck My Wine?!

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

The bar is located directly beside celebrated farm-to-table restaurant Farmer's Apprentice.



17

21. BAIJIU BAR

10359 104 ST. NW, EDMONTON, ALTA.

WHAT TO ORDER: Miss Americano

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



22. UVA WINE & COCKTAIL BAR

900 SEYMOUR ST., VANCOUVER, B.C.

WHAT TO ORDER: Baker Street

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



BIRRERIA VOLO

612 COLLEGE ST., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: A pint of Left Field Go Ahead Gose

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



23

24. LITTLE OAK

1475 LOWER WATER ST., BISHOP'S LANDING, HALIFAX, N.S.

WHAT TO ORDER: A glass of Benjamin Bridge Pinot Meunier

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



MAISON CLOAKROOM

2175 MOUNTAIN ST., MONTREAL, QUE.

WHAT TO ORDER: Specify personal preference for a one-of-a-kind custom libation

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



25



26. THE SHAMEFUL TIKI ROOM

4362 MAIN ST., VANCOUVER, B.C.

WHAT TO ORDER: Navy Grog

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



27. CÔTE DE BOEUF

130 OSSINGTON AVE., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: A glass of unfiltered Côtes du Rhône

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



RUSH LANE & CO

563 QUEEN ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: That Drink in a Man's Glass

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



28

29. LITTLE JUMBO

506 FORT ST., DOWN THE HALL, VICTORIA, B.C.

WHAT TO ORDER: Long Night

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

"Little Jumbo" is a tribute to the famous Little Jumbo Saloon in New York, owned by legendary mixologist Harry Johnson.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

878 BLOOR ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Specify personal preference for a one-of-a-kind libation

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



30



31. BURDOCK

1184 BLOOR ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Vermont Blonde Ale

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



32. UNION LOCAL 613

315 SOMERSET ST. W., OTTAWA, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Paper Tiger

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No

DRINK:



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Access the hidden bar by pushing open the fake bookshelf at the back of Union Local 613.

33. MIDFIELD WINE BAR & TAVERN

1434 DUNDAS ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: A glass of the Greek wine Thymiopoulos Xinomavro

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



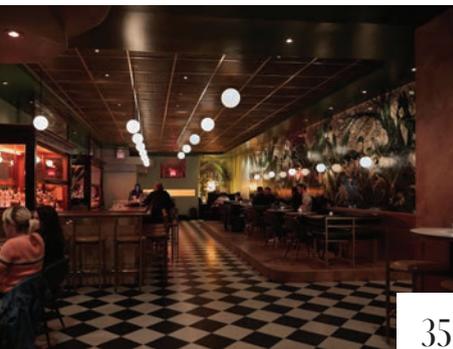
34. RICARDO'S HIDEAWAY

1530 5 ST. SW, CALGARY, ALTA.

WHAT TO ORDER: Razerac

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



35

35. MAHJONG BAR

1276 DUNDAS ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Hard Feelings

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Enter the bar through the all-pink storefront.

d | BAR

60 YORKVILLE AVE., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Yorkville Affair

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



36



37. BIG IN JAPAN

4175 ST. LAWRENCE BLVD., MONTREAL, QUE.

WHAT TO ORDER: Tokyo Mule

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Use Google Maps to find your way inside, as the bar is located behind an unmarked black door on St. Lawrence.

38. MILOS' CRAFT BEER EMPORIUM

420 TALBOT ST., LONDON, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Beer on tap

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No





40

BARCHEF

472 QUEEN ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Vanilla and hickory-smoked Manhattan served in a glass cloche

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



40. GOKUDO

630 CATHCART ST., MONTREAL, QUE.

WHAT TO ORDER: Saigo Takamori

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



41. THE DRAKE

1150 QUEEN ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Brown Butter Maple Old Fashioned

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Take the stairs up to the rooftop Sky Yard patio for views of Toronto's trendy West Queen West neighbourhood.

42. ROUGE GORGE BAR À VIN

1234 MOUNT ROYAL AVE. E., MONTREAL, QUE.

WHAT TO ORDER: Wine recommended by the hospitable sommelier team

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



43

NOBLE

1563 BARRINGTON ST., HALIFAX, N.S.

WHAT TO ORDER: A classic old-fashioned

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Entry is by password only, with a new password given to subscribers of the Middle Spoon's digital newsletter every Thursday.

44. BAR LAUREL

1087 WELLINGTON ST. W., OTTAWA, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Sheri's Cobbler

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



45. MILK TIGER LOUNGE

1410 4 ST. SW, CALGARY, ALTA.

WHAT TO ORDER: The 1850 Manhattan

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



46. ARABELLA PARK BEER BAR

1P2, 740 BELMONT AVE. W., KITCHENER, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: A pint of Cascade Brewery barrel-aged triple ale with marionberries and Meyer lemon

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



47

PARIS PARIS

1161 DUNDAS ST. W., TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: Wine recommended by sommelier Krysta Oben

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



48. BELMONT

1169 BANK ST., OTTAWA, ONT.

WHAT TO ORDER: NewKidOnTheBlock

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Half-priced dim sum and \$8 cocktails are offered on Sundays between 5 and 10 p.m.



49

NWT BREWING CO.

3905 FRANKLIN AVE., YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

WHAT TO ORDER: A pint of the award-winning KickSled Cream Ale

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



50. THE EMERALD

5295 PARK AVE., MONTREAL, QUE.

WHAT TO ORDER: A classic dark and stormy

PRICE: \$\$\$

FOOD: Yes / No



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Referred to by Mile End residents as “*le bar sans nom*” (the bar with no name).

CANADA'S 100 BEST

CANADAS100BEST.COM

is your go-to guide when dining out. Not just the definitive list of Canada's best restaurants, but also Canada's best bars. Plus the latest from the movers & shakers of the Canadian food scene: chefs, bartenders, recipes, how-to videos, food trends and more.

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