

THE MAI TAI....BUT NOT THE
“ORIGINAL” MAI TAI.



The Original Mai Tai Recipe

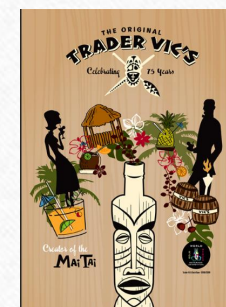
- 2 Ounces 17-year-old J. Wray and Nephew Jamaican Rum
- ½ ounce Holland De Kuyper Orange Curacao
- ½ ounce French Garnier Orgeat
- ¼ ounce Rock Candy Syrup
- Juice from one whole lime



Table of Contents

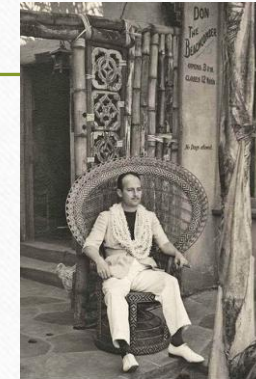
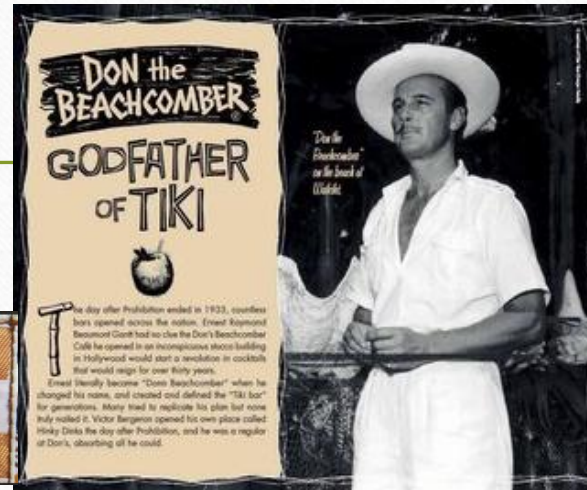


1. Victor Jules Bergeron, aka “Trader Vic”. 1902-1984
2. Trader Vic’s: From Hinky Dinks to Worldwide Franchises.
3. Evolution of the Recipe. 1944-1955. Rum Tum Tum....where’s the Rum?
4. Popularity. From the ‘Chorus Line’ to the ‘Lead’. 1955-Till.
5. Who gets credit for the creation? “Here comes the judge”.
Pigmeat Markham 1970 Mai Tai Trial.
- 6. What went wrong! The demise if Tiki and the Mai Tai.
- 7. The Tiki revival.



BEACHBUM BERRY

The “Godfather” of Tiki, Don Beach... But this story isn’t about him! (1933)



THE HOST (left) gives leis to guests. Lila Leeds came in native clothing and fur jacket, escorted by Stephen Crane.

Waltah Clarke, or Walter Clark, was a Los Angeles native who moved to Hawaii in 1938. He became fascinated with all aspects of Polynesian life and decided to bring Hawaiian designs to the US mainland. He changed the spelling of his name to Waltah to reflect the way it was pronounced by the Hawaiian people. In 1952, he opened his first store in Palm Springs, California, which featured Hawaiian shirts, swimwear and dresses.

Walter married his wife Gretchen in 1954 and she went on to design many of the prints for the store’s fashions. The company stayed in the mainstream by altering traditional Hawaiian styles into fitted cocktail dresses and current fashion silhouettes.

The company eventually had thirty-one stores in Hawaii, California, Arizona, Florida and Chicago. The last store was sold in 2001. Clarke died in 2002 at the age of 89.

Atmosphere: Having set out to open the biggest, most over-the-top example of tiki yet, Crane—who’d lived in Hollywood for years, married (and divorced) Lana Turner and dated starlets like Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner—sampled liberally from those who’d come before him, adding “indoor waterfalls and running streams through the restaurant and actual macaws in cages,” says Cate. “Every inch of the place became a complete, immersive environment.” Steve himself reportedly developed a persona as well; not only did he make a habit of greeting guests in a safari suit, he also took to calling himself the “High Talking Chief Stefooma”—a move that was nothing if not appropriately theatrical.

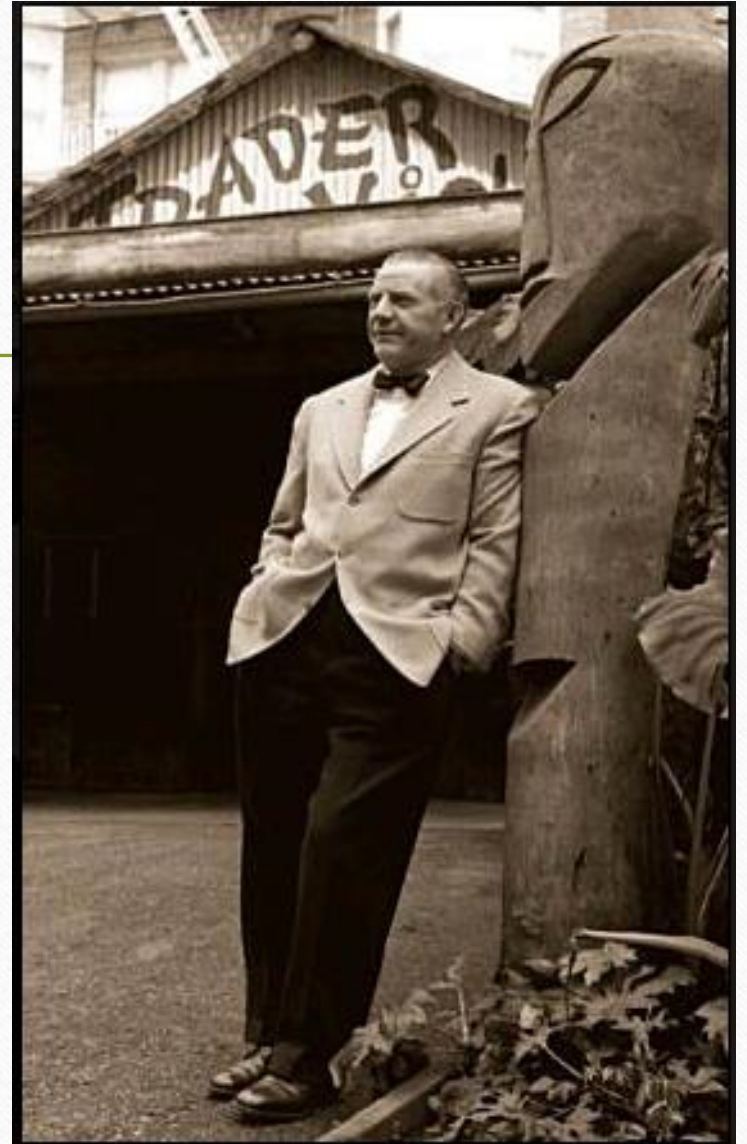
Signature drinks: Luau Grogs, Steve’s Rum Barrel – P



The man,
The legend...

“Trader Vic”

Bergeron



Renaissance Man



"Victor Bergeron is a man who swears in and out, like breathing," journalist Bob MacKenzie once observed. And, even though the Trader's remarks have been bowdlerized for posterity (the strongest word in his autobiography is "damn"), the man's linguistic reputation lives on. As does, of course, his feud with Donn Beach.

Yet the creator of the Mai Tai (at least, the creator of the version we drink today), and father of a bunch of other cocktails too, was a man of many and varied talents. How varied? Obviously, he created dishes, drinks and designs for his operations. He was the world's great expert on, and apostle for, rum.

But on top of that Vic painted in oils, cast bronze sculptures (mainly of naked ladies and wild animals), designed jewellery and collected fossils. He churned out several books on food and drink, including his 1972 *Bartenders Guide*, as well as a memoir, *Frankly Speaking*, and at least one kids' book.

Born to French and American parents in San Francisco on 10 December 1902, Bergeron opened his first little place, Hinky Dink's, in Oakland, California, where he grew up, in 1934. It was a beer and burger joint until, inspired by the success of his great rival, Donn Beach, he turned the place over to Tiki culture and changed the name.

By the time Vic died, a little under 50 years after he opened Hinky Dink's, his empire was worth \$50m and spanned over 20 restaurants. Not bad going for a man with only one leg (he had it amputated when he was six, following an accident with a cable car, but liked to tell people it had been eaten by a shark).



**‘O ka ho’ohalike ke
‘ano ki’eki’e o ka
ho’omali’i.**

**IMITATION
IS THE
HIGHEST
FORM
OF
FLATTERY.**



TRADER VIC'S



Original Hinky Dinks. 1934-1936

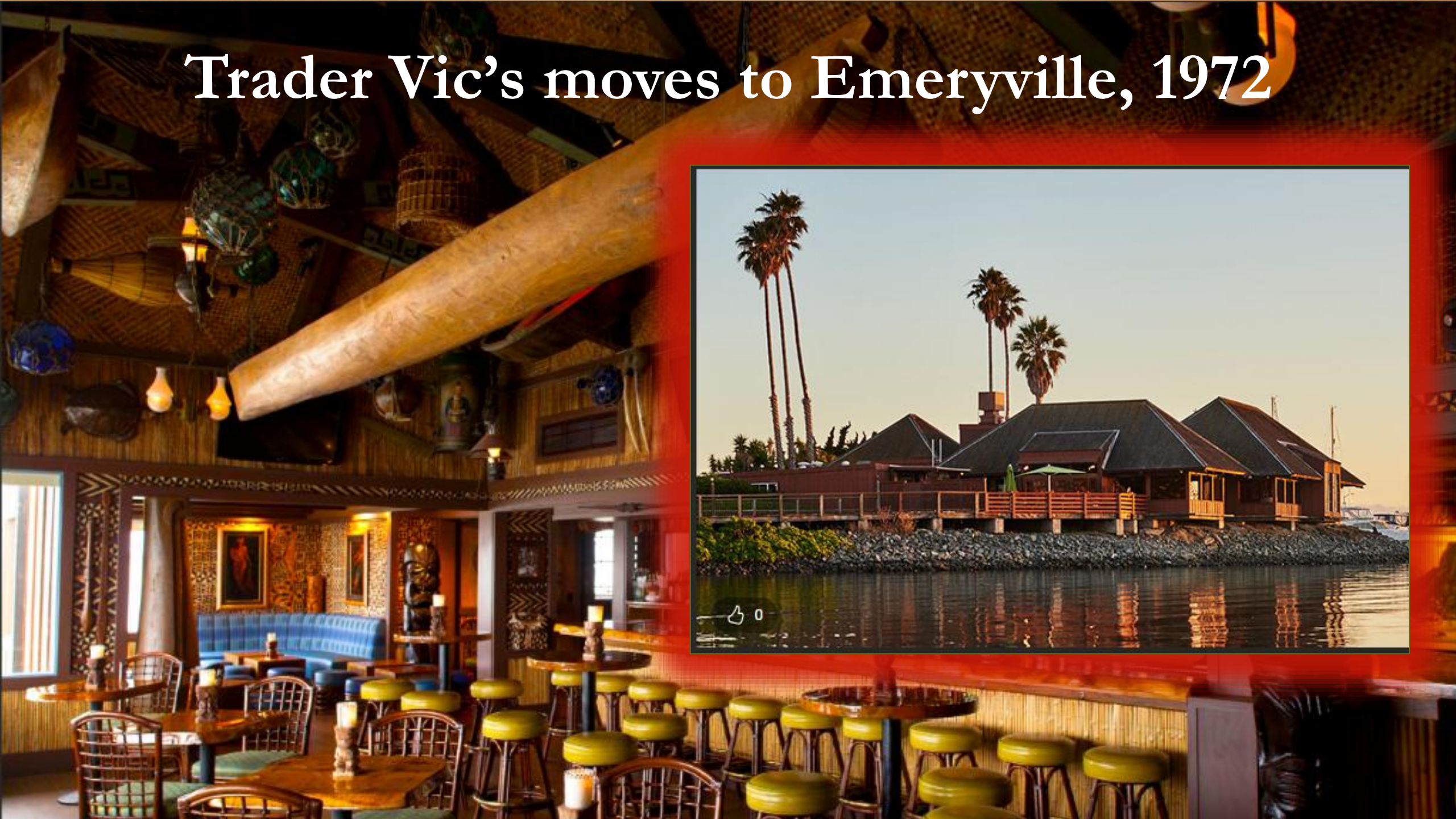
Trader Vic's

Putting the "There" in Oakland, California

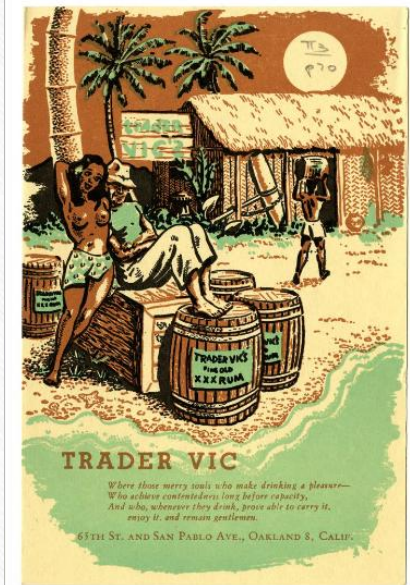
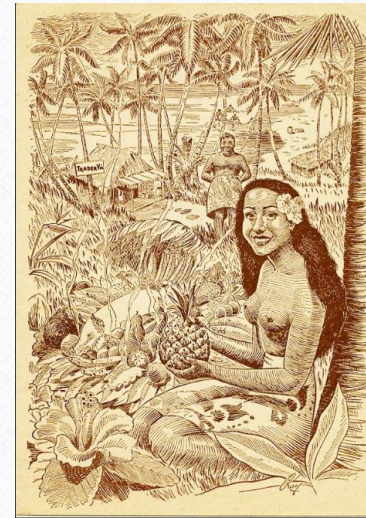
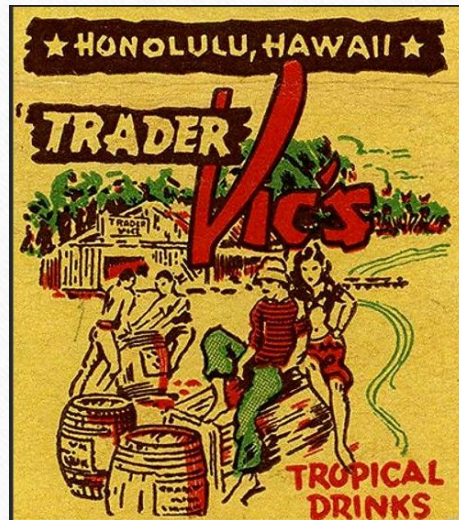
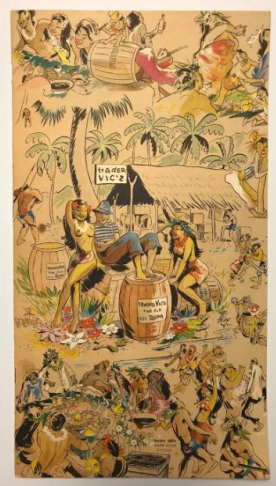


1937-1972

Trader Vic's moves to Emeryville, 1972



During the Tiki culture fad of the 1950s and 1960s, as many as 25 Trader Vic's restaurants were in operation worldwide. They all featured the popular mix of Polynesian artifacts, unique cocktails, and exotic cuisine. The chain of restaurants grew and is credited as one of the first successful themed chains, a marketing model that many other restaurants followed.



As of 2022, there are three Trader Vic's restaurants in the United States, two in Europe, ten in the Middle East, two in East Asia, and one in Seychelles.

FUN FACT.....TRADER VIC'S IN HAVANA, CUBA.

Located in the [Habana Hilton](#). Opened just before Castro took power in Cuba in 1959. After the hotel was nationalized in 1960 and renamed the [Habana Libre](#), the restaurant was renamed *Polinesio*, and still operates today with the original tiki theme and much of the original Trader Vic's decor. [\[28\]](#)[\[29\]](#)

"TIKI" IN THE MOVIES. WHO CAN YOU NAME?



History of the

Mai Tai

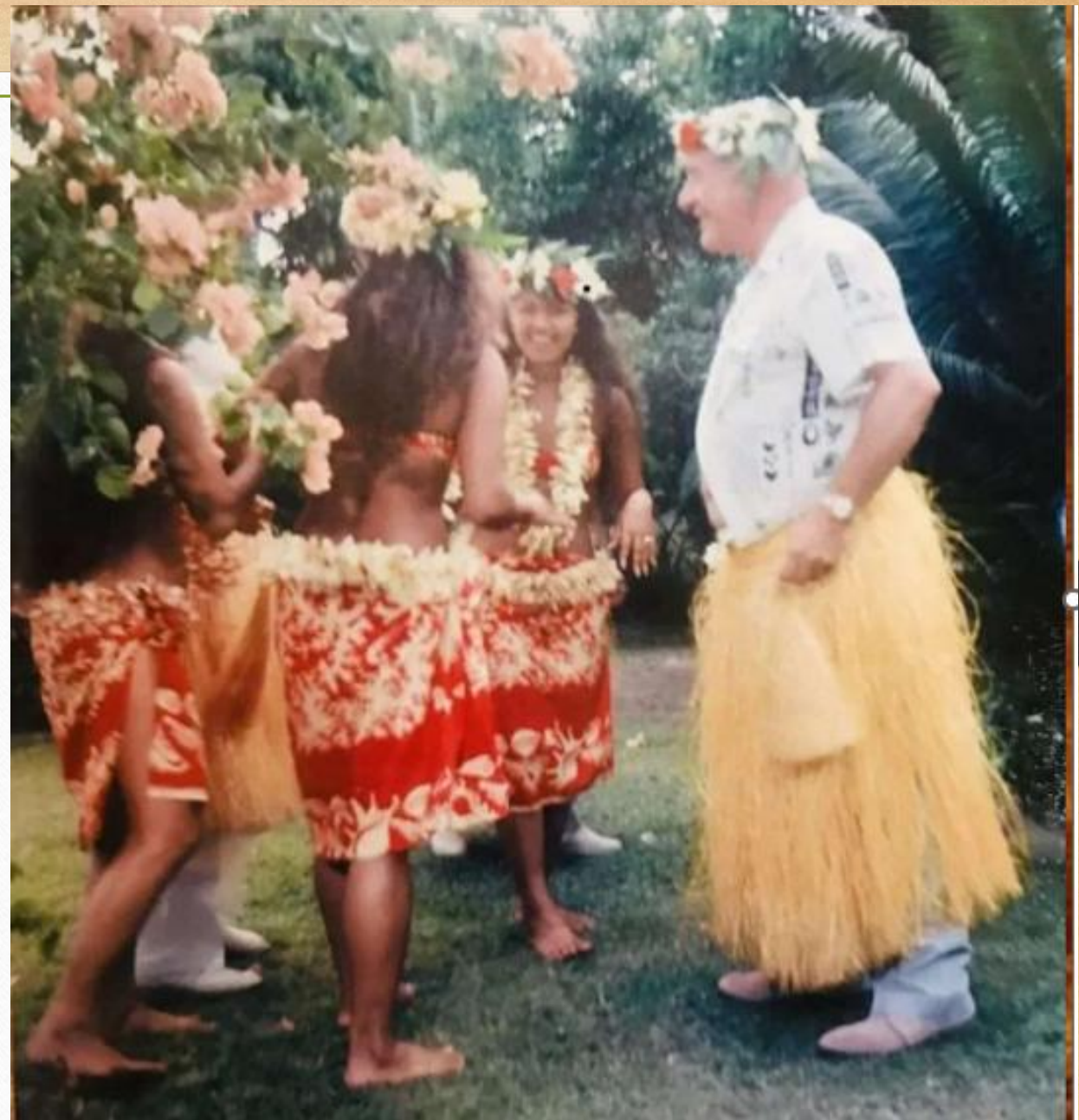
(Not Really)



Did you know?

In Tahiti, Mai Tai is pronounced “May Tay”.

We’ve been saying it wrong for over 80 years!



Chronology of the Recipe....

- 1934 Q. B. Cooler. Don Beach. Hmm...Maybe Mai Tai Swizzle.
- 1944 Mai Tai. Victor Bergeron. BOOM!!!!
- 1950's Exhausted the worldwide supply of Wray and Nephew 17yo and 15yo Jamaican Rum.
- 1950's started experimenting with mixing rums to emulate the flavor of the original Wray and Nephew 17yo Jamaican Rum. Vague information stated using a combination of an aged Jamaican Rum with a "Martinique" Rum. (debate on if it was Agricole)
- 1970s to 1980s...everything goes to shitake!
- 1990s to Current...Tiki Cocktail Revival lead by Jeff "Beachbum" Berry.



A Mai Tai is basically a Daiquiri based on aged rum with orange curaçao liqueur and orgeat syrup contributing to its flavour and sweetness. The Mai Tai is the king of Tiki cocktails and one of the most enduring of all vintage cocktails, but like most classic drinks there is controversy over its origin while its reputation is tarnished by poor renditions.

THE GREAT RUM DEBATE....





Max from Texas says:

November 4, 2021 at 6:55 pm

Jeff Berry and Ed Hamilton found a man who had some bottles of W&N 17 year Rum, and the man invited them to taste it. Ed and Jeff said they could blend some Rums to taste exactly like W&N 17.

Combine: (Equal Parts)

Rhum Clément VSOP

And

Appleton Estate Extra – 12 yr

Martinique 2023 vs Martinique 1950's

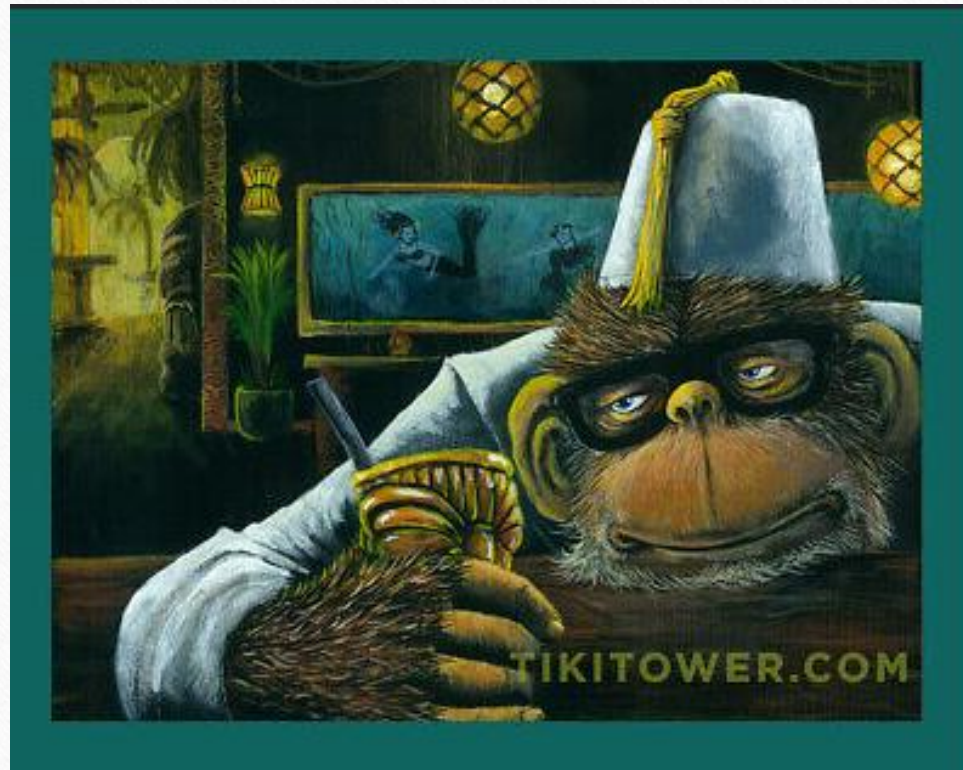
One of the hallmarks of the modern Tiki revival is the obsessive attention paid to recreating the classic recipes of Donn Beach and Trader Vic using the most authentic ingredients one can lay their hands on. But what if I told you that one of those ingredients — Martinique rum — is not at all the same today as it was when Donn Beach called for it in recipes like the Donga Punch, circa 1937?

This isn't the first time that Tiki's deep thinkers have raised this question. Martin Cate gets all due credit for noting that Trader Vic's rum lists of the era strongly suggest that the "Martinique rum" Trader Vic referenced in his recipes was likely not rhum agricole. And it was also Cate who suggested that Denizen Rum use a bit of Martinique molasses rum in its [Merchant's Reserve](#) blend. (Merchant's Reserve *raison d'être* is to replicate the flavors of the rums Vic used in his Mai Tai after his bars exhausted the available supplies of Wray & Nephew 17- and 15-year, which they had previously used.)

Fun Fact....Did you know? Hogo or Funk....

Hogo is a term used in the 18th- and 19th-century rum trade to describe the sulfurous odors that happen naturally when raw sugar cane juice is distilled ¹. The term is Creole slang for the French term haut gout ("high taste"), which was specifically used to describe the mature decay of wild game meat that had been hung to age ¹. Hogo is also known locally in Jamaica as 'funk' ². A rum with hogo is like that old Supreme Court obscenity litmus test: You'll know it when you see it (or in this case, taste it) ³.

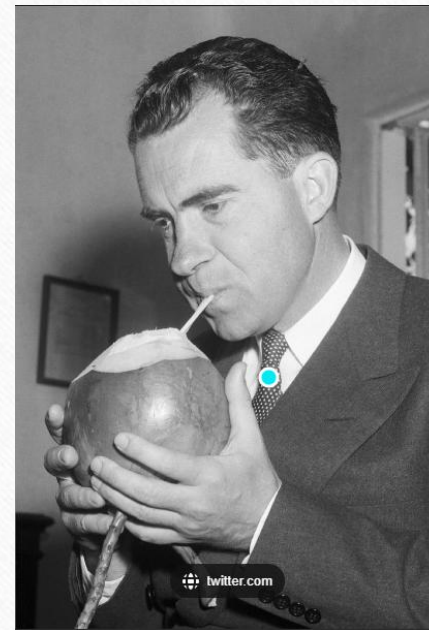
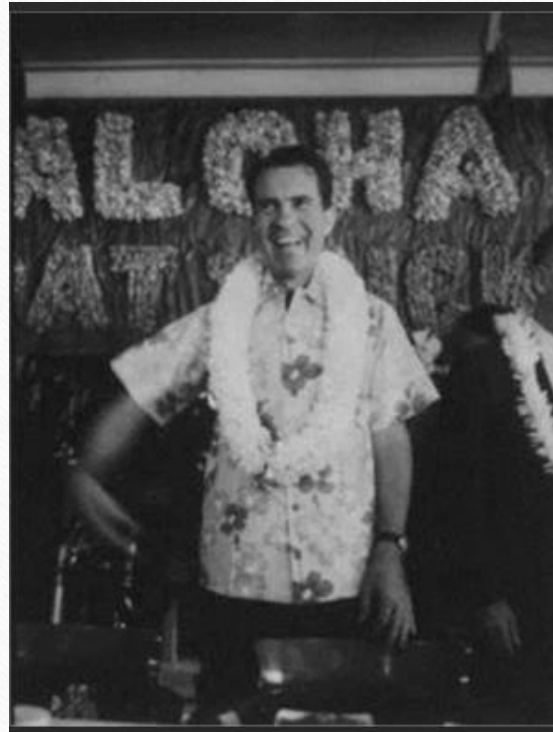
And then there is...
"Getting Mai Tai'd"



And the winner is....



SO, WHEN DID THE MAI TAI ENTER THE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS?



FROM "ALSO RAN" TO EXOTIC COCKTAILS "TRIPLE CROWN" WINNER



If the Mai Tai was such an instant hit, why was it buried in the middle of the cocktail menu of The Outrigger, a Trader Vic's spinoff in Seattle, on a menu dated in 1952?



THE SPARK THAT LIT THE FIRE.....

In 1949, Western Hotels executive [Edward Carlson](#) convinced Bergeron to open his first franchised location in the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Seattle.^[5] Originally a small bar named *The Outrigger*, it was expanded into a full restaurant in 1954 and renamed *Trader Vic's* in 1960.^[6] Due to the restaurant's success, Bergeron worked with Western Hotels to open *Trader Vic's* locations in a number of their hotels. In 1950, Bergeron opened a *Trader Vic's* location in [Hawaii](#)^[5] and in 1951 at 20 Cosmo Place in San Francisco.^[4]

Because Bergeron lacked the capital to expand, he partnered with [Hilton Hotels](#). Conrad Hilton opened his first *Trader Vic's* in [The Beverly Hilton](#) in 1955. Two years later, Hilton opened another *Trader Vic's* in [The Palmer House](#) in Chicago, and then licensed the *Trader Vic's* brand for use throughout his chain for \$2,000,000, retaining Bergeron to oversee the decoration, staffing and operation of the restaurants for an annual salary of \$65,000.^[7] Hilton soon estimated the popular *Trader Vic's* establishments were earning his hotel chain \$5 million a year. [Sheraton Hotels](#) quickly opened competing chains of tiki restaurants in their hotels, known as *Ports O' Call* and *Kon-Tiki*.^[7]

During the [Tiki culture](#) fad of the 1950s and 1960s, as many as 25 *Trader Vic's* restaurants were in operation worldwide. They all featured the popular mix of [Polynesian](#) artifacts, unique cocktails, and exotic cuisine. The chain of restaurants grew and is credited as one of the first successful [themed chains](#), a marketing model that many other restaurants followed.

75 YEARS AFTER
ITS CREATION...
THE MAI TAI IS
NOW FRONT AND
CENTER!



IT'S OFFICIAL

In 2009, a proclamation was made naming August 30th the official Mai Tai Day in the city of its birth, Oakland California.



CITY OF OAKLAND

City Council Proclamation



PROCLAMATION TO HONORING THE CREATION OF THE MAI TAI IN THE CITY OF OAKLAND

WHEREAS, in August 1944 the original Mai Tai recipe was created by legendary restaurateur Victor J. "Trader Vic" Bergeron at the original Trader Vic's on San Pablo Avenue and 65th Street in the City of Oakland, not Hawaii, not Tahiti, not Manhattan; and

WHEREAS, the original Trader Vic's is one of the most popular establishments in Northern California's Bay Area because of its tropical cocktail concoctions, delicious Polynesian food and intriguing South Pacific theme, about which writer Herb Caen wrote that the "best restaurant in San Francisco is in Oakland;" and

WHEREAS, the Mai Tai, Tahitian for "the very best," is known worldwide as the quintessential tropical cocktail; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bergeron created an experimental cocktail, and after being served it, his Tahitian guests exclaimed "Mai Tai - Roa Ae", which in Tahitian means "Out of This World - The Best;" and

WHEREAS, Oakland is a thriving, diverse and creative community which deserves its recognition as the Birthplace of the Mai Tai; and

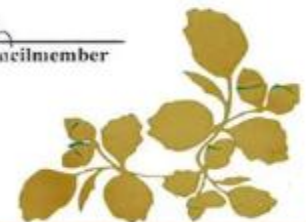
WHEREAS, the Mai Tai "conjures universally positive images of retro-relaxation, portable Polynesia, a liberal lifestyle, multicultural mixology, exotic diversity, delicious creativity and the friendly spirit of Aloha — just like Oakland itself, the perfectly blended urban cocktail" said Will Viharo in an Oakland Tribune article recognizing the Mai Tai; and

WHEREAS, Oakland continues to be a destination for world class entertainment, food and drink, and the home of an innovative and flourishing nightlife;

Now therefore I, Rebecca Kaplan, At-Large Council Member of the City of Oakland proclaim, on this thirtieth day of August two thousand and nine, Mai Tai Day in the City of Oakland.




Rebecca Kaplan, At-Large Councilmember



CONTROVERSY AND THE COURTS

Will the real creator of the
original Mai Tai please stand up!



VICTOR J. BERGERON and MRS. CARRIE GUILD WRIGHT 1970

The verdict & conclusion

Such was the success of the Mai Tai in Vic's growing chain of restaurants that he started marketing a bottled Mai Tai mix. In 1970, he sued Don for releasing a rival Don The Beachcomber's Mai Tai Mix with a label claiming to be the drink's originator.

The case went to court where Vic was forced to reveal his then top-secret recipe, which he published in a seven-page press release titled "Let's Get the Record Straight on the Mai Tai." This included an affidavit by Carrie Guild confirming the story set out by Vic above, that he created the drink in 1944 and that she had named it. Vic went on to win the lawsuit.

In Vic's 1976 *Helluva Man's Cookbook* he says, "We originated this drink; we made the first Mai Tai: we named the drink. A lot of bastards all over the country have copied it and copyrighted it and claimed it for their own. I hope they get the pox. They're a bunch of lousy bastards for copying my drink."

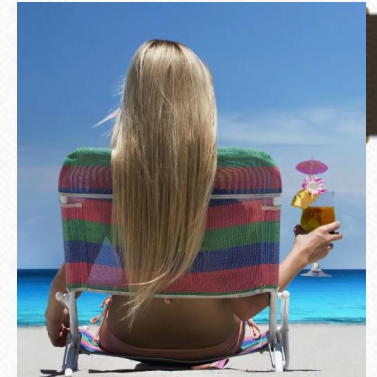
EVERYTHING GOES TO SHITAKE!...1970-1990



Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Waikiki



When did things go wrong....Disco killed Tiki!



Mai Tai singing "History"



The Birth.....

The Slow Death...

And Rebirth of Tiki!

But then tiki's flaring star went dark and cold. Tiki faded in the 1970s, relegated to strip-mall establishments, which used tiny umbrellas to distract patrons from the overly sweet, wholly undrinkable abominations. These drinks were essentially photocopies of photocopies of the original drinks.

The death knell? In 1989, Donald Trump closed Trader Vic's at his Plaza Hotel in New York, declaring that it had "gotten tacky."

Tiki hung on in a few feral establishments—notably the Mai Kai in Fort Lauderdale—and then came the rediscovery. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, tiki's roots were sought by a cadre of "urban archeologists," mostly based in California. They turned up kava bowls and tiki-head ceramic mugs at thrift shops, and sought to piece together the culture that spawned them. Muumuu-styling, flaming pineapples, and slide guitar tropical ballads suitable for a luau returned, although often swaddled in a thick layer of kitsch.

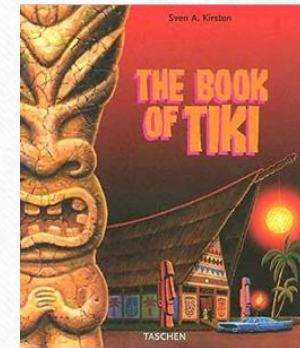
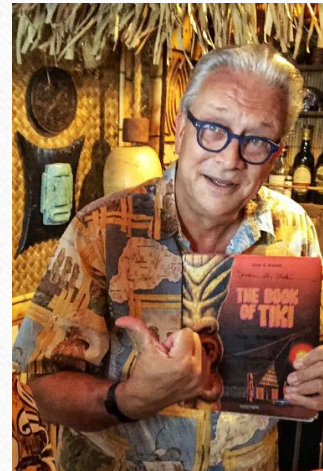
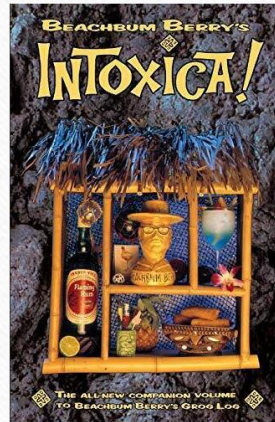
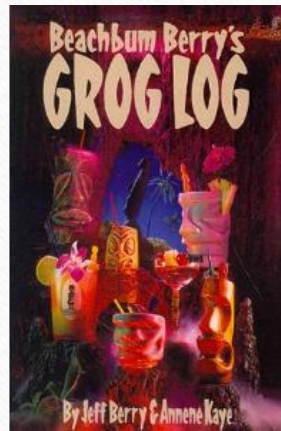
And then came the serious tiki drink scholarship.

The lead professor in the tiki drinks revival was Jeff "Beachbum" Berry, a Los Angeles-based screenwriter who assiduously tracked down original recipes, which he published in a half-dozen volumes. Craft cocktail bars began to serve credible recreations of the classics based on his research, and a new generation of tiki-inspired bars opened up, including Smuggler's Cove in San Francisco, Three Dots and a Dash in Chicago, and Beachbum Berry's own Latitude 29 in New Orleans.

Tiki Revival... Hallelujah!

Jeff Beachbum Berry: Grog Log, 1998, Intoxica, 2003

Sven Kristin: The Book of Tiki, 2000





Mahalo Nui Loa!



Thank
You!



I hope
you
enjoyed
my Mai
Tai's...