

SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY

When it comes time to nurse that morning-after pain, don your most ridiculously oversized sunglasses, pop two aspirin and head to these spots. Reviews by **Julian Ajello**

The Bloody Mary is famous for its reputation as a hangover cure, often enjoyed during Sunday brunch by those who made a night of it on Saturday. While there is no scientific cure for a hangover, the Bloody Mary is a fine treatment indeed. There are many variations, but the traditional recipe is a mixture of vodka, tomato juice, lemon juice, pepper, Tabasco, Worcestershire sauce, and sometimes a dash of cayenne. This is then poured over ice in a tall glass with a celery stalk garnish. A proper Mary should have some thickness and consistency to its texture as well as a cloudy red colour and pack some spiciness. The origins of this

blessed elixir are almost as cloudy as the drink itself.

George Jessel, an American comedian and entertainer nicknamed the Toastmaster General of the United States, claimed to have invented the drink in his Palm Beach, Florida home one Sunday morning in 1927 after a long night of drinking. It was a simple concoction of tomato juice and vodka. Ferdinand Peitot, an American bartender, claimed ownership while working at Harry's New York Bar in Paris, France, in 1926. Peitot later brought the drink with him to the King Cole Bar at the St Regis Hotel in New York City where he tinkered with the recipe by adding spices and other ingredients and the

drink evolved into what we enjoy today.

He hinted in one interview that he built on what Jessel created rather than starting from scratch, but Jessel was often doubted as his reputation to spin a yarn was well earned. Both men have long since passed away taking the truth of the origins with them. People will have to gratefully settle for them leaving their legacy behind for us to enjoy.

The drinks in this contest were judged according to seven categories: taste, texture, colour, spice, garnish, presentation, and overall value compared to one another, each on a scale of 1 to 5. Like many Olympic events, this contest's medal winners were separated by the narrowest of margins.

ON THE PODIUM

CLOUD 9

Levels 6 & 7 Hai Nam Bldg., 2bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, Q3
Score: 4.25

Piquant is the word that best describes the Bloody Mary found on one of Saigon's most popular rooftops. Using Belvedere vodka, it offers a bold taste that allows the horseradish and Worcestershire to punch through. It was a bit thin in texture, but it was fairly consistent and the taste was spectacular. Fresh celery and lime is a simple yet perfect garnish, and the tall stemware gave it an elegant presentation. For VND120,000 it offers solid value for your money, especially when you add in the rooftop environment. Well-known throughout the city, Cloud 9 flexed its considerable muscle and didn't disappoint when put to the test.





BOOMARANG

CR-2 3-4, 107 Ton Dat Tien, The Crescent, Q7 (left)

Score: 4.2

Located at The Crescent, this establishment was nudged off the top of the list by the narrowest of margins. Using Russian Standard to fuel their beverage, they were the only bar to use fresh horseradish to spice things up, and spice things up it did! The texture was very consistent, but it could have been just a little thicker. Using the heart of celery for a garnish is that little extra attention to detail, which Bloody Mary devotees will appreciate. Its beautiful colour is on display in a hurricane glass, the Little Black Dress of stemware, making for an attractive presentation. You won't want to stop at one, and at VND120,000 you won't have to. These competitors from Down Under have to be taken seriously as their bar staff has been well-trained and cannot only compete with the best, they can beat them as well.

THE DECK

38 Nguyen U Di, Q2 (right)

Score: 4.1

The Deck surprised the judges with the most original presentation, scoring a perfect 5 in that category. Served in a rocks glass, the unconventional layer of foam that blankets the top of the drink is what will nab your attention. It's a concoction whipped up from fresh green tomatoes and egg yolks. It suspends the spices on top while inviting you to mix it in to thicken the texture and add the spicy black pepper punch. It comes garnished with a lemon wedge and thin cucumber slice, which while not ideal, is satisfactory. Poured with Grey Goose and costing VND140,000, this Bloody Mary was a very tangy entry and was as much fun to drink as it was delicious. Visit for the cocktail, stay for the waterfront brunch.



JUST SHORT OF GLORY

VINO

No. 1, Duong So 2, Q2 (right)

Score: 4.0

A pleasant surprise was the District 2 establishment, Vino. A quiet little nook perfectly suited for a Sunday breakfast, Vino boasted the spiciest Bloody Mary in the field. For those who like it with more zing, you won't be disappointed. They use freshly squeezed tomato juice as well, which lends itself to a more pleasing texture and colour. The cucumber and lime garnish was pleasant, and the cucumber was of sufficient size to snack on when you're done. The lemon juice was a tad on the heavy side, but not upsetting. Using Smirnoff vodka, they charge VND80,000, easily making this the best value we sampled. This Aussie underdog gave the big boys a run for their money.



BACK IN THE PACK

VASCO'S

74/7D Hai Ba Trung, Q1 (left)

Score: 3.4

Leading the rest, Vasco's presented a solid version. With a light, murky colour, this drink exploded with black pepper. It was a sublime sensation that was as consistent as its texture from top to bottom. The crisp, fresh, leafy celery stalk was simple and satisfying. The presentation was solid, but they need to lighten up a bit on the lemon juice. Where they really lost points on the judges' scorecards was in value. Pouring Absolut vodka is acceptable, but at VND160,000 they're overcharging. A more reasonable price, and just a bit of tinkering, would bring them closer to a podium finish.



JASPAS WINE & GRILL

74/7 Hai Ba Trung, Q1 (left)

Score: 3.3

Located next door to Vasco's, Jaspas Wine & Grill served up a decent drink. It offered an acceptable texture, although it could have been more consistent from top to bottom. The spiciness was its highlight. It popped immediately to satisfy that Sunday morning craving for burning lips. The colour should be deeper and the garnish of a lone lime slice will disappoint those who enjoy munching on a celery stalk after emptying the glass. However, using Stolichnaya and charging a mere VND90,000 per drink scores in value. With just a few adjustments to the recipe here and there, and a proper garnish, they'll be ready to light up a Sunday morning.

ALIBI

5A Nguyen Sieu, Q1 (right)

Score: 3.2

Located in District 1, Alibi pours a Bloody Mary that looks wonderful, but needs the inside to catch up with the outside. The texture was smooth and consistent. While the colour was rich and opaque, and the garnish of celery and a large, red chilli served up in a tall glass was visually appealing, the taste fell just a bit short. It was far too mild to satisfy a serious Bloody Mary drinker. Alibi uses Smirnoff vodka and charges VND120,000 which sets it back in value from some of the others as well.



2 LAM SON

2 Lam Son Square Q1 (left)

Score: 3.0

This version was the most vexing of the bunch. The taste was delightful and savoury, sure to put a smile on your face. Fresh celery garnish, decent presentation, and a smooth and consistent texture all gave it the makings of a frontrunner. And while it could use a bit more spice, that alone wasn't enough to relegate it to the bottom of this list. Where this drink got crushed was in value. Even a generous pour of Belvedere vodka does not warrant charging VND240,000.

Have we missed your favourite recovery spot? Let us know in our Inbox. [u](#)