



## Introduction

Food historians love to quibble about a drink's origins, but most have accepted the Bacardi distillery's position: "The mojito either came from the Spanish word *mojar*, which means to wet, or the African word *mojo*, which means to cast a spell. Anybody who's ever tasted one will agree that it's thirst quenching and spellbinding in equal measures."

A precursor to the mojito may have been El Draque, a potent pour developed in the 1500s and named after Sir Francis Drake. The drink, more medicinal than the modern mojito, consisted of a primitive form of rum that likely had a moonshine kick and that was somewhat tempered by sugarcane juice, fresh lime juice, and mint.

Havana, Cuba, is the modern mojito's birthplace. The Bacardi company thrived there before political unrest led the family to flee to Puerto Rico. While Bacardi dominates the bar scene there, locals largely prefer their cocktails made with Don Q rum.

The mojito has several potent cousins. The caipirinha, Brazil's national cocktail, is made with cachaça, a sugarcane-based distilled spirit, sugar, and fresh lime. Planter's punch, a Jamaican beverage that evolved into a Carolina mainstay, includes rum, lime juice, sugar, and citrus juices (pineapple, orange, and grape-

fruit). And then there is the mint julep—the southern libation most often associated with the Kentucky Derby—which consists of bourbon, sugar, water, crushed or shaved ice, and fresh mint served in a silver cup or highball glass.

But the ingredients for a mojito are simple: top-notch rum, juicy lime wedges, fragrant mint leaves, extra-fine sugar, and a burst of effervescence from club soda. The variations bring complexity into play. Seasonal fruits and herbs, different rums, and creative ways to achieve the refreshing, bubbly finish are just a few of the ways this tropical treat has no bounds.

In addition, the mojito elements lend themselves to more than a bar menu. Sweet and savory dishes are enlivened by this easygoing combination of taste and textures. From glazes to marinades and ice cream to cakes, the mojito has made its mark on the culinary scene.

Cheers to the mojito, a time-honored beverage with a versatile flavor profile!