

BRIEF: GO

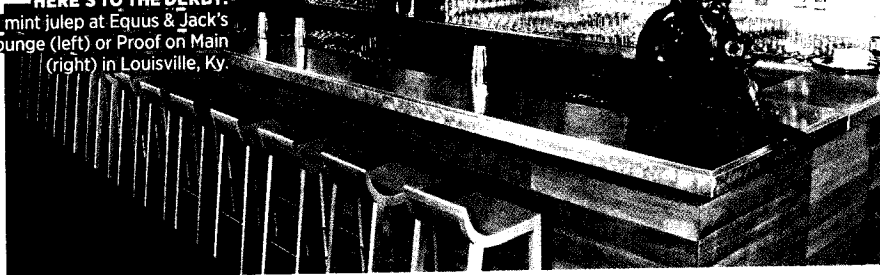
World's Best: Mint Juleps

They're the perfect (and the only real) cocktail to cheer Derby Day with. And as such, it's only fitting that **LOUISVILLE, KY.**, is our pick for the best place to find one.

FEW THINGS ARE AS QUINTESSENTIALLY Kentuckian as a mint julep, the bourbon-based drink that serves as the official cocktail of the Kentucky Derby. So, if you're headed to Louisville for Derby Day on May 7, here are five great spots to try a julep in the birthplace of bourbon.



HERE'S TO THE DERBY: Try a mint julep at Equus & Jack's Lounge (left) or Proof on Main (right) in Louisville, Ky.



The Old Seelbach Bar Located within the historic Seelbach Hotel in downtown Louisville, this dark, genteel bar dates back to the early 1900s and is stocked with a staggering selection of julep-worthy bourbons. 500 S. Fourth St., (502) 585-3200, www.seelbachhilton.com

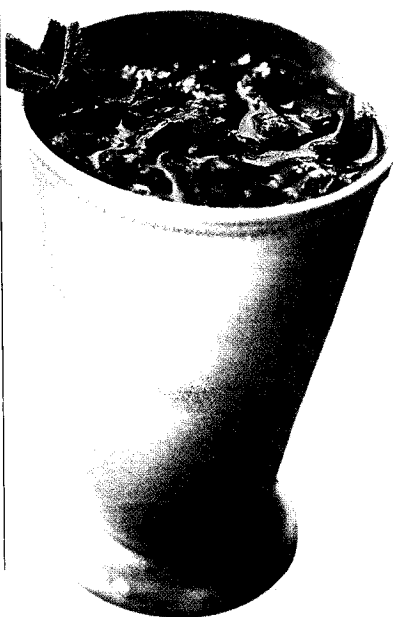
Proof on Main This offbeat Contemporary American bar/restaurant emphasizes local and seasonal ingredients in both its food and its drinks, such as the fruity Julep Down Under (Four Roses Bourbon, mango puree and house-made eucalyptus syrup). 702 W. Main St., (502) 217-6360, www.proofonmain.com

732 Social Look for hipster tattoos and cutting-edge drinks — such as Henri's Julep, made with

Rittenhouse Rye, absinthe, brandy, gomme syrup, mint and a brandied cherry — at this craft cocktail bar. 732 E. Market St., (502) 583-6882, www.732social.com

Equus & Jack's Lounge Ask expert bartender Joy Perrine, who has worked behind the stick for five decades and calls herself “the Bad Girl of Bourbon,” to fix you her special julep drink. 122 Sears Ave., (502) 897-9721, www.equusrestaurant.com

Maker's Mark Distillery Located about an hour outside downtown Louisville, this distillery has a small bar for visitors. The spiritmaker also sells a premixed Mint Julep Bourbon product, made each year just for Derby season. 3350 Burk Spring Road, Loretto, (270) 865-2099, www.makersmark.com



Building the Perfect Julep

Kentucky is said to have perfected the lively libation, made with bourbon, fresh mint, sugar, water, and lots of ice, since 1800. This is how the ultimate drink is made:

The cup. The preferred mint julep vessel is a 10- to 12-ounce or greater julep cup, although tall Collins glasses are also acceptable.

The mixer. Many bartenders prefer soft-drink over peppermint. Some julep aficionados prefer a combination who will not get too “julep-ey” with the soda, while others opt for a more “julep-ey” mixer.

The ice. Get shaved and use one-third of a ball to make your own at home by whisking cubes in a closed blender. Use crushed ice, not a ball of ice, pin or flake ice.

THE MINT JULEP
 1. Add 1 ounce of bourbon, 1/2 ounce of simple syrup, 1/2 ounce of fresh mint leaves, 1/2 ounce of fresh lemon juice, and 1/2 ounce of fresh lime juice to a julep cup.
 2. Add 1/2 ounce of fresh mint leaves and 1/2 ounce of fresh lemon juice and 1/2 ounce of fresh lime juice to the julep cup.
 3. Add 1/2 ounce of fresh mint leaves and 1/2 ounce of fresh lemon juice and 1/2 ounce of fresh lime juice to the julep cup.

Muddle mint leaves, sugar, and water in a chilled julep cup. Add bourbon. Muddle again. Add simple syrup and fresh lemon and lime juice. Fill glass with crushed ice. Pour mixture over ice. Garnish with fresh mint leaves. Sip with a straw.



Though the julep has evolved into a popular bourbon-based cocktail, colonial farmers originally enjoyed the drink with rum. The distinctive silver julep cup also has ties to the Derby — a nod to the early 19th century, when cups were frequently awarded at fairs and races.

