# ZERO PROOF TO 100% FUN

A guide to some of Reno-Tahoe's best mocktails and NA drinks.

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In the not-too-distant past, folks who opted to forgo alcohol while out on the town had limited choices. Few venues offered much beyond soft drinks, club soda, or the bland virgin versions of classic cocktails.

Recently, however, more and more bar and restaurant owners in Reno-Tahoe are making major efforts to entice non-alcohol-drinking customers.

## A CURIOUS TURN

"I was tired of feeling belittled by bartenders and servers who offered me soda or juice or told me to just order a drink. I wanted to create a brand and community that supports those who choose not to drink," says Sarah Rively, who founded Curious in the City in Reno last January — a month that each year is observed by many as Dry January.

Curious in the City supports inclusive experiences by promoting local sober-friendly establishments, posting tips for living alcohol free, and hosting events such as paint dates or food-and-non-alcoholic-wine pairings. Rively plans more events throughout the year as well as featuring the Curious in the City logo at venues where patrons can enjoy alcohol-free drinks.

## FINESSE AND FLAVOR WITHOUT ALCOHOL

"As drinking habits shift toward moderation, mocktails offer the enjoyment of a crafted drink, without the side effects of alcohol," says Levi Whittaker, general manager of Grafted Whiskey & Wine Bar in South Reno.

Since opening at The Village at Rancharrah in 2021, Grafted Whiskey & Wine Bar always has included a couple of non-alcoholic cocktails, or mocktails, on its extensive drink menu. Bartender Celeste Esquivel explains that the bar staff collaborated to expand the restaurant's mocktail choices, in conjunction with its recent menu revamp, including a carousel tasting option, so everyone at a table may sample all four selections. The resulting libations pair well with the bar's array of charcuterie boards and flatbreads.

Before a backdrop of arched mirrors, the spacious bar is a perfect setting to unwind after a long day with a blood orange spritz, a refreshing blend of blood orange juice, lemon juice, balsamic vinegar, and ginger beer. Night owls may prefer the SMF, prepared with Lyre Zero-Proof American Single Malt and fig and brown sugar syrups while listening to local music on Friday and Saturday nights.

"Reception from the community has been great," says Mike Jordan, assistant manager of 4th Street Brewery/Coffee Bar, which opened in June 2024. As Reno's sole non-alcoholic bar, 4th Street has a wide variety of mocktails, ranging from the blueberry fauxjito, a blend of pink lemonade, club soda, and a shot of blueberry syrup, to savory selections such as bloody lary and the nadamichelada. Jordan notes that the bar's lavender lemonade is the most popular.

The bar has two pool tables, video games, a jukebox, a turntable, and plenty of comfortable couches — all

From left: City of page mocktail at Pignic Pub & Patio. Photo by Josiah Hassler; Bartender Celeste Esquivel prepares two Sandia skies mocktails at Grafted Whiskey & Wine Bar in South Reno. Photos by Donna Victor

Clockwise from far left: A carousel of mocktails at Grafted includes la cantura, Sandia skies, SMF, and blood orange spritz. Photo by Donna Victor; Blythe Dumitru, bartender at Pignic, prepares a city of page mocktail; Exterior of Pignic in Reno. Photos by Josiah Hassler

the elements of a neighborhood bar, but in a safely sober space. A regular paused his game of pool to tell me during my recent visit that he was currently four months clean from Fentanyl. He credited the community at the Fourth Street bar in part for his sobriety.

Pignic Pub & Patio, housed in a historic 1916 Craftsman house in Midtown Reno, is a relaxed, open-feeling space with outside seating, which is ideal, particularly when the weather is nice, for catching up with friends while sipping a city of page mocktail, a piquant blend of Liquid Alchemist passionfruit syrup, Lyre Dark Cane NA Spirit, Lyre Aperitivo Rosso NA Spirit, and lime. For those who prefer a sweeter vibe with a hint of spice, try the how the West was won, prepared with Lyre's NA American Malt Whiskey. Or ask the bartender to craft your favorite cocktail as a mocktail from Pignic's selection of NA spirits and liqueurs.

Tucked away in a business park off Longley Lane in South Reno, Underworld Distillery is an unexpected find, particularly for those who don't drink alcohol. Entering the cocktail parlor, with its subdued lighting and spirits lining the shelves, flanked by décor that portrays classic horror tomes, is like stepping into another world. But isn't it in the unexpected where the magic happens? Consider the love & spells, a smooth, NA lemon libation topped with a frothy egg white, or the Apollo's dance, made with Earl Grey tea, a blackberry shrub, and vanilla bean sugar.

General Manager Colleen Hanson notes that preparing mocktails without relying on the familiar flavor of an alcoholic spirit presents its own challenge. Some mocktails, such as the distillery's ode to mintbe, with its crisp blend of lime juice and mint, resemble their spirited brethren. Other mocktails have their own distinct flavor profiles derived from botanicals, vinegars, and teas.

"Everyone deserves to have a great mocktail at a great price," Hanson says.

She explains that all the distillery's syrups, shrubs, and sugars are prepared in house. She includes a mocktail on each season's drink menu and plans to have a new selection of mocktails available for those taking part in Dry January.

"We started [offering mocktails] for Dry January, and they were so popular we kept them on the menu," says Max Oregon, brewer at Black Rabbit Mead Co. in Reno.

Black Rabbit's mocktail offerings include the lasting thyme, a tangy, shaken blend of cherry thyme shrub, elderflower, and lemon. Its cinnamon hibiscus elixir, a refreshing combination of organic hibiscus tea, lime, and house-made cinnamon syrup, is a crowd favorite.

Oregon notes that people often come in for a single drink, order a mocktail to follow, and stay longer. Since many mocktails are infused with fresh juices, they can provide a healthy boost of hydration and antioxidants, allowing revelers to stay later, linger over good conversations, catch the last quarter of a close game, or listen to the final set of an excellent band. Mocktails may even give you that needed edge for your next trivia night.

Rum Sugar Lime is best known for its sophisticated rum cocktails, but the chic bar is gaining attention for its mocktail menu. Currently, there are six mocktails listed, as well as a weekly selection of NA beers. You'll find an espresso martini with cold brew, Lyre's coffee, Lyre's NA amaretti, and demerara, as well as a yuzu refresher with yuzu, lime, demerara, mint, and soda. If you're feeling adventurous, try the Italian job with Lyre's NA Italian spritz, Lyre's NA aperitif rosso, and Lyre's NA dry London spirit or the spray tan with Luxardo cherry juice, lime, pineapple, and Lyre's NA cane spirit.

"There are a million reason why someone may choose not to drink. And there are a million more why it's nobody's business," Rively says.

The good news is that a variety of savvy local venues have made it their business to provide a delicious selection of mocktails. Whether you're searching for a place to gather with friends to watch the game or an intimate spot for date night, you'll have plenty of choices.

## RESOURCES

**4th Street Brewery/Coffee Bar**
1126 E. Fourth St., Reno
775-560-8839 • 4thstbrewery.com

**Black Rabbit Mead Co.**
401 E. Fourth St., Reno
775-410-6198 • Blackrabbitmeads.com

**Blush + Bone**
660 Tahoe St., Reno
775-507-4121 • Blushandbone.com

**Centro Midtown**
236 California Ave., Reno
775-357-8540 • Centroreno.com

**Curious in the City**
Curiousinthecity.com

**Grafted Whiskey & Wine Bar**
7300 Rancharrah Pkwy., Ste. 160, Reno
775-507-2400 • Graftedwhiskeywine.com

**Pignic Pub & Patio**
235 Flint St., Reno
775-376-1948 • Pignicpubandpatio.com

**Rum Sugar Lime**
1039 S. Virginia St., Reno
775-384-1024 • Rumsugarlime.com

**Smith and River**
50 N. Sierra St., Ste. 104, Reno
775-357-8019 • Smithandriver.com

**Underworld Distillery**
5301 Longley Lane, Bldg. F, Ste. 203, Reno
775-357-8595 • Underworlddistillery.com