

Bindu Gopal Rao

Gen Z isn't just toppling governments these days; they're also rewriting the rules of what lands in your glass. And their latest conquest? Bangalore's bar counters, from Indiranagar to Koramangala.

Fuelled by an appetite for experimentation, a devil-may-care approach to old-school mixology and a proud pledge for sustainability, this young brigade is shaking up the city's tastes — and honestly, no one at Toit, Bob's Bar or The Reservoir is complaining.

Over the past few years, Bengaluru's cocktail culture has gone from stiff, international-style classics to a swaggering, homegrown craft identity. The city's new tribe of cocktail aficionados now hunts for technique-driven, artisanal pours that can hold their own against anything served in New York or Tokyo.

It's the thrill of new flavours, wild fusions and inventive concoctions that pulls them out of their homes and straight into buzzing haunts like Bricklane, Sly Granny or Sarjapur Social. The old-school staples have quietly stepped aside as a new wave of bold, expressive cocktails takes over menus. And true to form, the city has embraced the shake-up with open arms.

"We are fast minded people who love exploring, having fun experiences and love change. And that is what current bars are giving us in terms of cocktail menus that keep changing every six months," said Anish D'Souza, Influencer and Media Executive.

Rohan Surti, Public Relations Account Manager, feels the brewery boom is slowly giving way to a full-fledged cocktail wave. "Initially, people were complaining about cocktails being priced at around Rs 1,000, but now they're warming up to it. Gen Z is also more exploratory in terms of food and beverage, which allows us to try new stuff," he said.

Rohan notes that his generation places strong value on novelty, and is naturally drawn to new methods, new ideas. "Anything that promises a fresh experience," he added.

Adding another dimension to this shift, many say this neo-cocktail craze isn't confined to bars and diners alone. Mouli Bose, client servicing manager, says that house parties are increasingly turning into cocktail-centric gatherings, where people try their hand at crafting their own mixes.

"Even brands are pushing boundaries by working with their own ingredients and creating fresh, innovative cocktail expressions," she said, adding that cocktail choices in the city still show clear gender patterns, with women typically leaning toward lighter mixes while men tend to prefer stronger pours.

Adventure over routine

"Gen Zs have played a huge part in this shift. They like change, they enjoy creativity, and they don't mind experimenting. This keeps bartenders and mixologists on their toes. Their curiosity and love for something 'new' has naturally pushed the demand for better-quality, more interesting cocktails in the city," said Chef Balaji Balachandrar, Director & Founder, SALT.

This young cohort has become the chief architect of the city's tilt toward quality. Their global exposure, through travel and digital platforms, has fuelled a large, unmistakable appetite for world-class experiences right here at home.

"They are no longer satisfied with the standard menu; they want adventure. They are actively seeking unexpected flavour profiles. They drive us to ensure cocktails are not just 'boozy' but thoughtful, catering to a sophisticated palate that values the craft behind the drink as much as the buzz," says Sundheep Reddy, co-founder of Mirth.

Expectations have turned dynamic, trends flip fast, and consumption habits have evolved. It's no longer just about getting a buzz; it's about the story behind the drink. New-age



guests want their senses teased before the first sip. They're gravitating toward menus built around flavour journeys, regional inspirations, and immersive experiences. From molecular-style showpieces to classic cocktails executed with sharp modern finesse, everything is under the spotlight.

Personal interaction with bartenders and concept-led menus also remain a major draw. Deepak Sharma, Beverage Director and Head Mixologist at Gladia Brewery and Kitchen, sums it up, saying Gen Z curiosity has popularised everything from clarified Piña Colodas and smoked classics to molecular cocktails using foams, spheres, gels, and nitro techniques. "Instagram aesthetics strongly influence cocktail design. Bars curate bold colours, unique glassware, edible mists, smoke, and molecular-style theatrics, resulting in cocktails crafted for both flavour and virality," he said.

Evolving with time

Bangalore's top bars have levelled up, embracing clarified techniques, ferments, fat-washes, Asian accents and ingredient-forward recipes that now mirror the world's hottest cocktail hubs. "With a thriving community of skilled bartenders, international bar takeovers, and a culture that celebrates creativity over convention, Bangalore now stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Mumbai and Delhi as one of India's most progressive cocktail destinations," says Akash Singh, Corporate Beverage Manager, Pebble Street Hospitality.

Platforms like India Cocktail Week (ICW) are raising the bar as well, pushing the city's cocktail culture forward by uniting global and homegrown talent under one dynamic platform.

"Each edition is designed to deepen the connection between brands, mixologists, and consumers, showcasing the scale, creativity, and collaborative spirit driving India's evolving cocktail and nightlife landscape. Each year, our goal is to make the festival more experiential and accessible to a broader audience and drive innovation across brands for their consumers," say Akshat Kumar & Sharan Behl, co-founders of WMS Entertainment and ICW.

The shift is evident across the city. "The cocktail culture in Bangalore has drastically evolved from sugary syrups to infusions, fermentation, and pre-batching, among other innovations. It has also attracted the best talents from Goa, Singapore, and Bangkok. Additionally, there have been numerous bar takeovers by top 50 mixologists who fly in from around the world," says Prajwal Lokesh, co-founder of Chin Lung.

The Gen Z's genuine push towards sustainability is also contributing to this shift. Thanks to their love for local ingredients and an inherent environment-conscious approach towards what's being poured into their glasses, Bangalore's mixologists are championing regional ingredients — kokum, nannari, jaggery, curry leaf, native citrus, tamarind and chilli ferments — while sustainability moves from trend to norm.

Conscious cocktail-making has become a core philosophy. "At Maize & Malt, we integrate conscious techniques into our bar operations, focusing on zero-waste garnishes and smart ingredient utilisation. We partner with local Karnataka farmers for sourcing and craft our own ferments, shrubs, and syrups to maximise flavour efficiency. Batching and draft cocktails help reduce waste while ensuring consistency and quality," says Keshavan V. S., General Manager.

It's a more thoughtful, ingredient-led approach, one that backs craft, community and the environment, while giving patrons a richer, more refined drinking experience.

Gen Z's cocktail coup

A globally exposed Gen Z transforms city nightlife, chasing world-class cocktails, boundary-pushing menus and immersive drinking experiences



WHAT GEN Z IS DRINKING NOW

- Clarified Piña Colodas
- Smoked Old Fashioneds
- Kaffir lime highballs
- Fermented citrus sours
- Fat-washed whisky cocktails
- Zero-waste seasonal specials

TRENDING INGREDIENTS IN CITY COCKTAILS

- Kokum
- Nannari
- Jaggery
- Native citrus
- Tamarind
- Curry leaf
- Chilli ferments

WHAT GEN Z WANTS IN A DRINK

- Adventure over routine
- Unexpected flavour combos
- Drinks with a story
- Photo-friendly aesthetics
- Sustainable ingredients
- Interaction with bartenders

