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SHOPPING AROUND | *Premium Mixers*

Drink Makers Create a Stir

Premium-liquor drinkers now have premium mixing options as drink makers are targeting upscale imbibers who don't care for standard mixers from the local supermarket.

Instead of high-fructose corn syrup and artificial flavoring, drink makers are using cane sugar and natural flavors as they roll out the next generation of tonics, cocktail sodas and mixers. Still, the premium mixers we tried had the same problem as regular mixers: They were no substitute for cocktails made from scratch. We found the tonics and cocktail sodas to be the best options overall.

■ **Mixerz Mango All Natural Cocktail Mix**

Price: \$10.99 for a 750ml bottle

Availability: www.mixerz.com

Comment: We mixed two parts of this mango mixer with one part vodka and had a decent and quick cocktail. We found the mixer to be very sweet. If you don't like your drinks overly sweet, cut back on the mixer for a more subdued flavor. The mango flavor was rich, but the purée gave our cocktail a consistency too thick for our liking.

■ **Q Tonic**

Price: \$9.99 for a four-pack of 6.3 ounce bottles

Availability: www.qtonic.com

Comment: This fancy tonic water replaces high-fructose corn syrup with organic agave. It was noticeably less sweet than the tonic we are accustomed to drinking. Depending on what you like, that could be a good or a bad thing. We tried Q tonic with vodka and found it to be a good match for those who find regular vodka tonics too sweet but don't want the bitterness of a vodka soda.

■ **Fever-Tree Premium Bitter Lemon**

Price: \$5.99 for a four-pack of 6.8-ounce bottles

Availability: www.fever-tree.com

Comment: Fever-Tree Premium Bitter Lemon was bracingly refreshing and, when mixed with gin or vodka, produced a simple sparkling summer cocktail that demanded a second round. Even better, the mixer went down well on its own as a nonalcoholic cooler.

■ **Stirrings Simple Mojito**

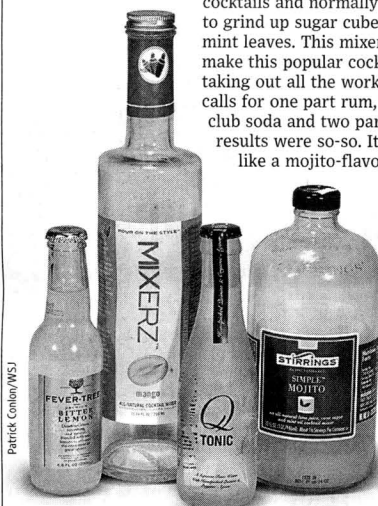
Price: \$13.29 for a 32-ounce bottle

Availability: www.stirrings.com

Comment: Mojitos are some of the most labor-intensive cocktails and normally require you to grind up sugar cubes and fresh mint leaves. This mixer tries to make this popular cocktail simple by taking out all the work. The recipe calls for one part rum, two parts club soda and two parts mixer. The results were so-so. It tasted more like a mojito-flavored cocktail

rather than an actual mojito. You won't fool anyone into thinking that you made a mojito from scratch if you serve this at a party.

—Joseph De Avila



Patrick Conley/WSJ