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**THE FLOUR FACTORY, PERTH** This coolude venue on Queen Street is arrayed over three floors of a century-old mill, where customers have the option of spinning a raffle wheel to be served the brand of gin (from a dizzying array of labels) indicated by the number where the needle stops. The joint looks a bit like a hipster florist, too, with fake pink, blue and orange fernery on the ceiling, and there are social media nods to "inspiration" cocktails lavishly decorated with blooms. Choose the bar, cosy tables or the rooftop terrace and be served good cheese and charcuterie plates or the likes of jamon serrano croquettes with smoked chilli aioli. To keep things neat and simple, stick with the G&T menu; try The Flour Factory bespoke gin with Fever Tree elderflower tonic, cucumber and orange.

[theflourfactory.com](http://theflourfactory.com)  
SUSAN KUROSAWA

**ASTER BAR, INTERCONTINENTAL SYDNEY**

The drop-dead gorgeous views from the highest floor of this five-star establishment were once available only to hotel loyalty-club members. Following a \$120m top-to-toe renovation, the space has been transformed into a sophisticated bar that's open to all. Blue velvet banquettes, sage-green armchairs, glossy marble tables and dark parquet floors create an art deco vibe in hues that complement panoramas of the harbour and Royal Botanic Garden. On summer nights, the wraparound veranda is the place to be. Aster takes an astronomical approach to mixology, with tipples such as the Eclipse (a reinterpretation of an Old Fashioned), Comet (a spicy martini) and Sol (vermouth, vodka and champers). Wines are mostly Australian with a smattering of French and Italian options, while beers are resoundingly in the craft category. Choose from a selection of small snacks and



# ALL SHOOK UP

Do the rounds of Australia's grooviest bars

share plates, such as cheese churros, prawn cocktail buns, and oysters with yuzu and soy dressing. Bookings essential on weekends.  
[sydney.intercontinental.com](http://sydney.intercontinental.com)  
PENNY HUNTER

**MARY MARY, HOBART** Finding this stylish gal is akin to tracking down an illicit speakeasy. Hidden down a cobblestone alley off Salamanca Place, the city's smartest bar keeps a low profile, tucked behind the thick sandstone walls of the former strongroom of the 1840s St Mary's Hospital (today part of the The Tasman luxury hotel). A blue door opens to reveal a softly lit room of exposed sandstone and gleaming timber panelling with velvet chairs and marble-topped tables set about cosy fireplaces. A rare spirits collection is tucked away in the old coal chute (ask for a peek). Classic cocktails are given an island twist using local beverages and indigenous botanicals; tasty snack plates are supplied by The



Tasman's Peppina restaurant. Mary Mary's "secret" locale didn't remain a secret for long, and bookings are essential. Don't pass up the True Local, a Tassie take on the Boulevardier, using island ingredients of brandy, raspberry aperitif, red vermouth and apple juice.  
[marymarybar.com](http://marymarybar.com)  
CHRISTINE McCABE

**LIVING ROOM BAR, BRISBANE** Behind a fridge door inside a Barcelona pastrami shop is the 2022 winner of the World's 50 Best Bars. Paradiso is known for its mind-bending themes and recently staged a collaboration with the equally inventive Living Room Bar on the first floor of the riverside W Brisbane



Rekodo's 'smooth fare'



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Hobart's Mary Mary, top left; Bar Beirut, Canberra, main; an offering from Rocco, Cairns, above; The Flour Factory, Perth, left; the Sunshine Coast's Wharf Boston Shaker Bar, below left



Hennessy Rooftop Bar, Adelaide, left; Aster Bar, Sydney, below left; the outlook from Rocco, Cairns, above



seating is soft velvet and the groovy soundtrack just on the right side of loud.

[curiousmelbourne.com](http://curiousmelbourne.com)

JEREMY BOURKE

**REKODO, SYDNEY** Taking inspiration from Japanese "listening bars" (Rekodo means "record" in Japanese), is the newish middle-layer bar at Barangaroo House, sandwiched between the House Bar on the ground and Smoke on the roof. Its charm is in its versatility: grab a seat at the bar and you can sling cocktails all night, pull up a pew at the sushi counter for a full omakase experience or slide into a booth to mix up snacks and drinks and groove to the tunes, either selected or spun by a rotating DJ line-up. Drinks-wise, you'll see a lot of shochu, sake and Japanese whisky on the ingredients list, devised by head bartender Paucic Kennedy. For the Eminence Spritz, the team makes wine from the kitchen's mango scraps, vinegar from pineapple, and its own makrut lime soda, then blends with Aperol. Tasty ... and ethical.

[barangarohouse.com.au/rekodo](http://barangarohouse.com.au/rekodo)

ALEXANDRA CARLTON

**ABOVE BOARD, MELBOURNE** Ace mixologist Hayden Scott Lambert has distilled his years of industry experience into this perfect, pared-back bar. Entry to Above Board is via a gritty laneway or an unmarked door at the rear of Beer-mash on Collingwood's Smith Street. Climb the stairs to this zen space anchored by a handsome American walnut bar furnished with just 16 coveted seats (no standing allowed). There is no branding displayed, not even a liquor bottle, just some art and flora to please the eye, smooth tunes to please the ear, and soft lighting to set the mood. The lack of distractions puts the focus firmly on cocktail quality. "It's just about making really nice drinks," says Lambert, who delivers admirably with 11 original creations and a dozen classic cocktails bearing his distinctive touch (such as the classic martini dressed up with a dash of orange bitters). There's always great banter from bar staff, and fun interactions. Try the H.S.L. Special, a sweet-and-sour mix of Amaro, blackberry, absinthe and lime juice.

[aboveboardbar.com](http://aboveboardbar.com)

KENDALL HILL

**BAR BEIRUT, CANBERRA** Odds are it won't be the candy-pink bazaar decor that grabs when you step through the door at Bar Beirut, or the savoury aromas of charred octopus or smoky baba ganoush. That's all there, but the first thing likely to hit your senses is the wide grin and warm welcome of co-owner Soumi Tannous, who's the sort of host who elevates a bar from a simple place to sink a drink to somewhere that makes you feel immediately at home. He and his staff really know their cocktails, too; ask for a martini made "as the lord intended" and they'll do so without missing a beat (dry, vodka, with an olive, of course) or be led around the world with a creative list that includes a boozed-up bubble tea and vodka-infused lass. Try the Beirut Express, a twist on a margarita made

with tequila and green chartreuse, and a fiery chili-salt rim.

[barbeirut.com.au](http://barbeirut.com.au)

ALEXANDRA CARLTON

**ROCCO, CAIRNS** The mood is a happy mix of Mediterranean and Coral seas, and with the focus on Morocco it's a case of Cairns-cum-Casablanca. But unlike the seedy Rick's Cafe of movie fame, "of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world", Rocco has a splendid terrace view of pellucid blue waters and Cairns, gateway to the Great Barrier Reef. The cocktail bar and restaurant sits atop a 12-storey glass tower, part of Crystalbrook Riley hotel on the Esplanade. There's a mix of high tables, dining settings and comfortable low lounges and a menu of shared plates that favour fresh seafood such as grilled tiger prawns in chermoula (a Moroccan marinade). Save space for the house-made labneh cheese on rye sourdough and go tropical with a Smoked Pineapple Old Fashioned, featuring Plantation Pineapple Rum, black walnut bitters and vanilla syrup stirred in a cloud of smoke.

[crystalbrookcollection.com](http://crystalbrookcollection.com)

GRAHAM ERBACHER

**CURIOS, MELBOURNE** It feels a bit furtive accessing this sleek bar, part of the funky W Hotel in the CBD, where a chap at a nondescript door on the street checks you in for a descent into a wondrous space. Enclosed by strip-lit Jenga-style ceiling and with walls at odd angles and a bar that sparkles, Curious was proclaimed best-designed drinks spot in the world at the 2022 Restaurant and Bar Design Awards. Head barman Stephen Zappelli has created a list around three pillars of Melbourne life: fashion, art and coffee. There's Trenchcoat, combining brandy, apple cider vinegar and spices; Everyone's A Critic, based on hemp, quandong and Kakadu plum spirit; or Counter-Coffee-Culture, starring cherry and java-infused rye. Small plates such as miso eggplant tacos and tempura bugs are worthy accompaniments. Service is slick, the

**HENNESSY ROOFTOP BAR, MAYFAIR HOTEL, ADELAIDE** Rooftop bars always feel like little nests of decadence, hidden high in the sky. The Hennessy is perched on the 13th floor of a former art deco office block, the Colonial Mutual Life building, where hat-wearing executives once plied their trade. Now it's the Mayfair Hotel, deco-infused five-star accommodation in the heart of Adelaide's CBD. Glass ceilings, walls, and an al fresco terrace with original design details such as 1930s gargoyles, give great views of the city and its surrounding straw-coloured hillsides, bringing an airiness to sophisticated interiors of leather club chairs and chandeliers. Apart from an ever-changing menu of Insta-worthy, frothy creations such as Cherry Bomb, the Honeytrap Cocktail is the bar's eternal signature. This caipiroska-style vodka-based concoction adds ginger and spices plus honey produced by the hotel's rooftop hive as a distinctive twist.

[mayfairhotel.com.au](http://mayfairhotel.com.au)

CLEO GLYDE

**BOSTON SHAKER BAR, QLD SUNSHINE COAST** This venue in the newly renovated Wharf Mooloolaba precinct draws its inspiration (and name) from American speak-easies in the 1920s era of Prohibition. Crimson velvet booths, softly lit chandeliers, art deco-style posters and mixologists in dapper outfits create the intimate flashback atmosphere. A classic list of cocktails features a wide range, from a Charlie Chaplin and a Prohibition Sour to a signature Old Fashioned mix that trails aromas of applewood and hickory smoke. Owner Livi Robins says the most popular on her list by far is the Pornstar Martini, which combines vanilla vodka, passionfruit liqueur, sugar syrup, fresh passionfruit pulp and just-squeezed lime juice. To cut through the sweetness, a shot of dry Prosecco is served on the side. Try the summery Young and Beautiful, which blends gin, rosé wine, rose and watermelon syrup and lemon juice.

[bostonshakerbar.com.au](http://bostonshakerbar.com.au)

DENISE CULLEN

hotel. Spanish-inspired cocktails, a mocktail and space-themed mixes were offered in this loungey space, including a gravity-defying Plump for The Cloud contrivance featuring a coffee cloud suspended over a potent mix of mezcal, tequila and sherry. Things have come back down to earth but the fun continues with a Takin' It New School list of eight concoctions that includes Now You See Me, Now You Don't and Who Did It Better. Expect infusions of cherry, chilli and chimichurri and similarly quirky ingredients. Also on offer is the chocolate-coconut Toowoomba cocktail, a nod to the story that the lamington was reputedly invented in the Darling Downs city.

[wbrisbanedining.com](http://wbrisbanedining.com)

KATRINA LOBLEY

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