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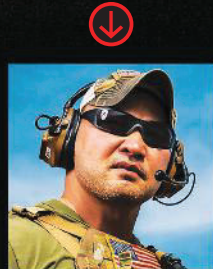
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HOW TO MAKE A CLASSIC COCKTAIL NAMED AFTER A FAMOUS FRENCH ARTILLERY PIECE

BY T. LOGAN METESH



Famed bartender Harry MacElhone of Harry's New York Bar in Paris is often credited with creating the French 75 cocktail.



Did you know that the cocktail known as the French 75 is named after an artillery piece from World War I that could fire up to 15 rounds per minute? We'll get to that in a minute, but the drink gained popularity during the height of Prohibition and has been featured in films alongside silver screen legends Humphrey Bogart and John Wayne. Let's take a look at the history of the artillery and the alcohol, then mix up a cocktail at the end.

THE ARTILLERY

The 75mm field artillery piece known colloquially as the "French 75" was invented in

1897 by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph-Albert Deport and adopted by the French military in 1898. Its design was revolutionary, taking advantage of recent advancements in weapons technology. The gun was the first to be equipped on a large scale with a hydro-pneumatic recoil mechanism that kept the gun's wheels and carriage stationary while the main gun tube moved to absorb the resulting recoil, eliminating the need to sight in after each shot. This meant that it could fire much more rapidly than its predecessors—up to 15 rounds per minute.

Lobbing shells that weighed between 12 and 16 pounds, the 75mm field

artillery piece had an effective range of 8,500 to 11,000 meters depending on the type of shell.

When World War I began in 1914, France had 4,000 of these 75mm artillery pieces. By the time the war ended in 1918, it had 21,000. In fact, it was such an effective weapon in the field that the American Expeditionary Forces even used it during the war.

But by World War II, the French 75 was obsolete. Nonetheless, it continued to serve in a variety of defensive capacities in France and even saw service with British, German, Polish, Hungarian and Romanian forces.

Today, the 75mm artillery piece still serves a role in France, albeit a much more peaceful one: It is used as a saluting cannon during official state ceremonies.



“THE FRENCH 75 COCKTAIL HAS VARIED OVER THE YEARS, BUT TODAY’S MOST COMMON RECIPE HOLDS THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE ONLY ONE BORN IN AMERICA DURING PROHIBITION.”



THE ALCOHOL

The French 75 cocktail has varied over the years, but today’s most common recipe holds the distinction of being the only one born in America during Prohibition. When, exactly, the drink was created has been a subject of conjecture for more than 100 years. In fact, exactly who made it first is uncertain as well. Some say soldiers came up with it in the trenches during WWI. Others claim a bartender in London created it by modifying a Tom Collins.

We may never know when or by whom the drink was created, but common mixology lore says Harry MacElhone of Harry’s New York Bar in Paris, France, created the drink.

Harry may have been making a variation of it as early as 1915. He was certainly making it not long after the war ended in 1918. MacElhone’s version of the cocktail was known simply as “The 75,”

since its locale was obvious to those living and drinking at his Parisian bar.

The cocktail as we know it today first emerged in 1927, but it wasn’t until 1930 when it was printed in the *Savoy Cocktail Book* in the United States that the ingredients had standardized and the modern “French 75” had truly arrived.

The drink’s popularity grew, and Hollywood embraced the drink over the coming decades. Inclusion in *Casablanca* (1942) and two John Wayne films—*A Man Betrayed* (1941) and *Jet Pilot* (1957)—put the cocktail in front of millions of movie-going Americans. By the 1960s, the French 75 was here to stay.

MIXING IT UP

Like all cocktails, everyone has their own specific way of making it. The recipe listed here comes from David Wondrich, an internationally

recognized expert on cocktails and their history who has perfected the drink to his exacting standards.

Some people add lemon peel for garnish. Some use cognac or brandy instead of gin. Others, still, serve it neat in a champagne flute. Regardless of how you choose to make it, one thing is for certain—the drink packs a punch.

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ ounce lemon juice
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 2 ounces London dry gin or cognac
- cracked ice
- champagne, chilled
- Collins glass

Add the lemon juice and sugar to a shaker, and stir them to combine. Then add the gin and fill the shaker with ice. Shake and strain the mixture into a Tom Collins glass filled with cracked ice, then slowly fill the glass with champagne. *Voilà!* 🍸