

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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## Good Libations: Sipping by the sea

Laguna Beach has always been a lifestyle town. It's what people from other parts of the world think of when they hear "Orange County": a picturesque beach, pricey homes clinging to hillsides, streets dappled by the shade of palm and eucalyptus trees. Laguna's bars have always played on that image, offering cocktails that captured the gentle, bohemian spirit of the place.

The mixology movement has brought even more invention to the scene. Here are some of my favorite libations from Laguna's bars Sazerac cocktail at Three Seventy Common at Laguna Beach.

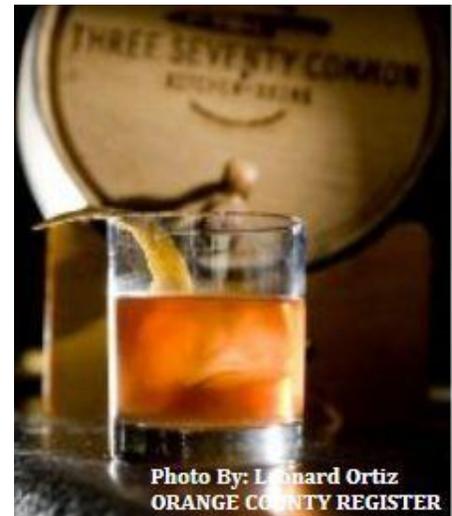


Photo By: Leonard Ortiz  
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### Broadway by Amar Santana

When talented young chef Amar Santana left Charlie Palmer at South Coast Plaza to blaze his own trail, everyone suspected he would come up with something special. Santana didn't disappoint: his smallish downtown restaurant-bar, Broadway, is often the busiest place in a neighborhood full of seductive choices. Traditionalism wrestles with modern mixology's latest wackadoodle trends on the cocktail menu. You can order something from your grandfather's drinking days, such as the Moscow Mule. Broadway's version combines Smirnoff vodka, lime and ginger beer in a frosty copper cup. Or you can dive into something called the Italian Bubblebath - Death's Door Gin, Aperol, Strega, honey, grapefruit and lemon juices, sparkling rosé. Our favorite contains Canada's whiskey of choice, the underrated rye. It's called Bucking the Trend: Templeton Rye, Drambuie, ginger, lemon juice and pale ale. Get there early if you like elbow room. Get there late if you like people-watching. This place offers some of the best in town.

328 Glenneyre St., Laguna Beach. 949-715-8234.

## Lumberyard

You know the mixology movement is here to stay when even stalwarts like Lumberyard have upgraded the bar menu. This place, popular with locals, offers a few smartly composed custom cocktails. Our favorite is the Go Green: Hendricks gin, cucumber, basil and ginger (\$12). It's somewhat sweet but not cloying – as light as summer lemonade but delivering a touch of zing from the ginger. The Hendricks is a lighter-bodied gin that adds herbaceous and floral qualities without getting in the way. Also worth trying, and a bargain, is the well-stocked DIY Bloody Mary bar (\$5-\$8). 384 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach. 949-715-3900.

## Sapphire Laguna

Chef-owner Azmin Ghahreman got his start in bartending. The mixology trend "is music to my ears," he said. Making custom cocktails instead of shooting a well drink from a spigot "is like seeing a chef make his own dressing rather than buying it from Sysco. We've got five bartenders, and all of them are having fun and are encouraged by me to get educated and experiment."

One of the quirkiest yet most enjoyable cocktails I tasted at Sapphire Laguna was the Adult Lemonade: Luksusowa vodka, St. Germain elderflower liqueur and fresh-squeezed lemonade. It's served in a tall tumbler wrapped in a paper bag – don't ask me why.

1200 S. Coast Highway, No. 101, Laguna Beach. 949-715-9888.

## Three Seventy Common

Across the street from Amar Santana's Broadway, the former Sorrento Grille has undergone a hipster transformation. Chef-owner Ryan Adams describes himself as a "Russo-Carpathian German middle child" who was cursed with "picky-eater tendencies." The place reflects his quirky, food-nerdish personality.



There's a bracing purity to the cocktails at Three Seventy Common, many of them classics. This could be the best place in Orange County to order a sazerac, the progenitor of all cocktails. Three Seventy Common's version uses Buffalo Trace bourbon (one of my mid-priced favorites), Peychaud's bitters (an ancient recipe used in New Orleans in the 19th century) and a Herbsaint rinse. (Translation: the martini glasses are rinsed with Herbsaint, a green, anise-flavored liquor made in New Orleans. Many sazerac recipes recommend this step, which infuses the cocktail with a sublimely delicious herbal quality.)

370 Glenneyre St., Laguna Beach. 949-494-8686.