

CITY OF OAKLAND



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RE: The Mai Tai Cocktail, Invented in Oakland!

October 1, 2024

Dear Colleagues of the Oakland City Council, The Office of the Mayor, The City of Oakland Department Staff, and members of the public:

The Mai Tai cocktail has fascinated the world of spirits and cocktails since it was first created at the original Trader Vic's in Oakland, California. This tropical concoction, featuring a balance of bitter and sweet flavors with a base of rum, played a key role in popularizing Tiki drinks in the 1950s and 60s. At its peak, the demand for Tiki drinks led to a significant demand of the world's rum supply. The Mai Tai was invented by Victor J. Bergeron, a restaurateur, and it became the signature drink at his restaurant Trader Vic's. Today, Trader Vic's is a well-known name with locations worldwide, and it is closely associated with Tiki Bar culture. It is the intent of this resolution, to designate the Mai Tai as the cocktail of Oakland.

In 1934, with an investment of \$500, Victor J. Bergeron opened a small restaurant on 65th Avenue and San Pablo, serving comfort foods for lunch and dinner, as well as beers and whiskeys. As Bergeron's clientele grew, so did his restaurant, expanding both in space and menu options. Famed San Francisco Chronicle columnist Herb Caen, after visiting Bergeron's restaurant, proclaimed that the "best restaurant in San Francisco is in Oakland."

Bergeron, always the innovator, traveled the nation seeking ways to better operate his restaurant. After visiting Don the Beachcomber's in southern California, he was inspired to experiment with tropical ingredients, setting the stage for the creation of Trader Vic's and the Mai Tai.

In August 1944, while experimenting with tropical flavors, Bergeron developed the concoction we know today as the Mai Tai. It received its name from a friend of Bergeron who, after trying the experimental cocktail, shouted, "Mai Tai Roa Ac," Tahitian for "out of this world the best."

As the Mai Tai's reputation grew, clientele from throughout the world sought Trader Vic's innovative tropical cocktails, renowned rendition of Polynesian food, and kitschy South Pacific theme.

The Mai Tai has become a staple in bars around the world. Trader Vic's original location launched the Trader Vic's brand, which to this day is a thriving family-run business with over 25 locations around the world, including locations in Munich, Tokyo, and Dubai. Soon, Trader Vic's plans to return to Oakland as the company prepares to open a location at the Airport.

Oakland is a thriving, diverse, and creative community that deserves recognition as the Birthplace of the Mai Tai. As the Oakland City Council Member At-large, I wish to honor its creation, and the history of innovation and hospitality in Oakland, and designate it the cocktail of the City of Oakland.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Kaplan
City of Oakland, Council Member At-Large