
Crafthouse Cocktails are made to captivate

By **Jane Hobson** on | Catering



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Crafthouse Cocktails supplies pre-made bottled cocktails, from classics like the Southside to twists such as the Rum Old Fashioned

As technology continues to improve their experience from gate to gate, passengers are looking for a refined, unique and personalized inflight experience now more than ever. Whether it's the ability to catch up on their favorite show, try a delicious new vegan meal option or relax with their favorite cocktail, an inflight experience with options that match those of life on the ground is exactly what [Crafthouse Cocktails](#) has set out to deliver.

The Chicago-based company specializes in ready-to-serve bottled pre-made cocktails, from classics like the Southside, to more modern options such as the Gold Rush and even twists on classics, with its Rum Old Fashioned.

Crafthouse Cocktails was born out of a vision of industry veterans and longtime friends Matt Lindner and Charles Joly, who began their entry into the bar and restaurant industry in the early 1990s. In 2007, the duo was influencing the revival of classic cocktails with the opening of the award-winning cocktail bar The Drawing Room in Chicago. In 2008, The Drawing Room was named "Best Cocktail Bar" at the annual Tales of the Cocktail Convention, as well as Bar and Nightclub Magazine's "Venue of the Year." When Lindner and Joly discovered that avid cocktail fans wanted to duplicate their cocktails in their own homes – but lacked the expertise and confidence to succeed – they sought to find a solution.

"We worked to overcome all of the traditional challenges of bottled beverages being overly sugary, grain neutral or malt-based with low quality, synthetic ingredients," Crafthouse Cocktails Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Lindner tells *PAX International* in February. Ice dilution and flavor profiles are taken into account to avoid a watered-down taste, and only high-quality, all-natural ingredients are used. Now, the "always consistent and delicious" cocktails are available in a format that is as simple as pouring on ice and serving.

Crafthouse Cocktails' Moscow Mule flew on the North American routes of Chicago-based carrier [United Airlines](#) for two years starting in 2015. When *PAX International* caught up with Lindner at the beginning of the year, the craft beverage supplier was preparing for its launch on [Virgin Voyages](#) cruises in March.



Matt Lindner (left) and Charles Joly, Co-Founders, Crafthouse Cocktails

Having a perfectly balanced and tasteful cocktail has long been desired at sporting and entertainment events, weddings, restaurants, on vacation and during inflight meal and drink service – but it wasn't always as readily available due to venue's lacking fresh ingredients or proper staffing.

"To have all the flavors come through without one overpowering the other is the key to any good cocktail. How often do you see someone making a face because a cocktail is too sweet or too sour? Or they have a hard time drinking it because it is too boozy. There are many people who are turned away from a classic cocktail and we suspect that they have just never really had a good, well-balanced one," Lindner explains.

The typical cocktail does not skew to a particular profile. "We cater to those who will pick their alcoholic beverage of choice based on mood and atmosphere," Lindner adds.

And this is certainly reflected in the choices passengers are now making on board.

“It’s more of a mindset, similar to how people are now more discerning in their choices about what they eat,” Lindner says. “You can see it in applications like the spiked seltzers that have disrupted the entire beer industry as well as the higher quality ready-to-serve cocktails that we supply.”

The beverages are packaged in 200-milliliter aluminum cans that are lightweight and recyclable, a format that is convenient for flight attendants while serving onboard. The passenger just needs a cup of ice and the cocktail. Two-serving bottles are also available at a premium price point, ideal for sharing.

The company recently refreshed its bottle labels to better express the cocktails and ingredients and introduced new recyclable, virtually indestructible bottles. It added three additional cocktails to its offering. Smoky Margarita, Pineapple Daiquiri and Rum Old Fashioned now join its roster that includes Gold Rush, Moscow Mule, Paloma and Southside.

The trend of prepared cocktails is here to stay, according to Lindner.

“When we first launched, we were primarily retail because on-premise venues, such as airlines, still wanted to construct their own cocktails,” he explains. “Now, those same venues are serving pre-made options and seeing the benefit in inventory control, consistency, labor savings and quality.”

In the year ahead, Crafthouse Cocktails plans to attend travel industry events to expose the brand to all sectors. In the meantime, the company will continue seeking travel and transportation partners and preparing for future launches.