

Trend

Bitter Deluge

Sorting through the new cocktail bitters

BY WAYNE CURTIS

THE NUMBER OF AROMATIC cocktail bitters available today boggles the mind. In a decade flat, it's gone from that lonely bottle of Angostura to shelves groaning with hundreds of bitters options.

For the unindoctrinated, the bitters boom has been both boon and bane. On the plus side – *so much choice!* On the downside – *so much choice!* The options can seem like a confusing kaleidoscope of wild flavors and concepts. What should we make of charred pineapple bitters and bacon peppercorn bitters? It's hard to sort out which newcomers result from inspired experimentations and which are regrettable train wrecks arising from late-night brainstorming best suppressed.

Where to start? We tried a few dozen newly released bitters in search of greatness – sniffing, sampling, testing them out in various cocktails – and found four that strike us as well worth seeking out and introducing to *your* favorite cocktail. (Rejoice: Unlike liquor, which is hobbled by varying state laws, bitters are widely available by mail.)

BITTER BITS

- Bitters enhance by staying in the background. You shouldn't actually taste them in a drink, no more than you should taste salt in your dinner.
- Remember, they're dispensed by the dash, which means the bitters you buy today may well last long enough to become your heirs' property.

THE BITTER TRUTH

Nut Drops and Dashes

To herald its 10th anniversary, this German-based producer – one of the earliest innovators in the modern bitters revival – released a series of four new bitters. These include Blossom, Nut, Roots, and Wood. Our pick: Nut, which offers cocktails a rich, earthy ballast. It plays well with bourbon or rye drinks; try giving a new twist to your Old-Fashioned. \$20/100 mL; the-bitter-truth.com

