

IMBIBE: Highball Summer

The older I get, the shorter summer feels. Therefore, I propose all drinkers take minimal effort this season to maximize lazing in the sun (with sunblock, of course — those fine lines don't come from nothing). My remedy for optimal drinking without wasting time?

All hail the Highball Summer of 2018.

They're long, lean, straightforward (generally) two-part cocktails served over ice. The history, like most of our founding cocktails, stands a bit mixed on exact introduction to the public, but many think it was mid-1890s in New York, where asking for a Scotch & Soda became on-trend.

Follow that with the effervescent and malaria-proofing Gin & Tonic. Or the '60s swinging Presbyterian, and baby, we got ourselves a good time. Besides these gems, you may have seen Japanese Highballs as of late. Yes, with the growing thirst for Japanese whisky comes the cocktail used to greet everyone entering an izakaya.

Here are a few favorite highballs to greet your summer guests, without detracting from your time in the sun.

Japanese Highball

2 oz Japanese whisky (try Toki or Nikka Taketsuru Pure Malt)

4 oz club soda (always go for low or no sodium)

Dash of melon bitters and/or lemon twist

Presbyterian

2 oz rye — (or go use a local whiskey like SoL)

2 oz ginger ale

2 oz club soda

Lemon peel (or a stale cigarette)

Gin & Tonic

2 oz gin

4 oz tonic

Squeeze lime slice

Note: With our market enjoying a flush of gins, experiment with flavors — a strong juniper-forward gin will be classic, whereas a soft floral style or Old Tom gin will taste mild, perhaps a touch sweeter. Also, don't mess around with bad tonic. Get the good stuff. Why ruin your gin?

Agave & Soda

2 oz mezcal or tequila (or 1/1 split)

4 oz club soda

Lime wedge and grapefruit wedge both squeezed into the glass

This is one of my favorites because I get to have tequila and/or mezcal without having to juice lots of citrus and shake. Saves calories and time!

0 proof option: Anjo & Soda

A whole bunch of dashes of angostura bitters
6 oz club soda

Basically, pick your favorite spirit, pour it over ice. Top with club soda or a light fizz of something. Garnish to your heart's desire. And raise a glass to summer.