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## Food

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# French Brandies Step Up to the Bar

By ROBERT SIMONSON

France has done well by the American cocktail revival. French liqueurs, bitters and aperitifs that were gathering dust on the shelf (like Lillet and Benedictine) or weren't available in the United States (like Suze) now

A few bars and restaurants, however, haven't given up the fight. Xavier Herit, the head bartender at the Greenwich Village restaurant and bar Wallflower, has two Cognac-based cocktails on his current menu. Mr. Herit, who was born in Paris, also slips Calvados, the ancient apple brandy from Normandy, into a popular gin concoction called the Betty Draper.

fight. Xavier Herit, the bartender at the Greenwich restaurant and bar has two Cognac-based on his current menu who was born in Paris Calvados, the ancient dy from Normandy, ular gin concoction Betty Draper.

At Bacchanal, a re the Bowery, the ba Naren Young, deploy both the Aztec Sazeri marries with rye) a chard Pear Julep, which includes poire Williams and pear purée. Armagnac, the aromatic, single-distilled, lesser-known cousin of Cognac, is the base of the Pistachio Sour.

"We could have used a bourbon base or a rum base," Mr. Young said. "But I thought, why not use an Armagnac? We never see that in cocktails. And it's worked beautifully."

But there is perhaps no greater

brandy evangelist among America's bartenders than Thad Vogler. At Bar Agricole and his other San Francisco restaurant and bar, Trou Normand (which opened early this year, named after the Norman tradition of taking a shot of Calvados between

it is hard to escape the irts of France's vine-orchards.

ways been interested in t have an appellation,"

said, "where every as-duction from the agri-omponent to the bot-onent has been consid-

nd of attention and ften means prohibitive

Young said, "In the t a brandy cocktail on and have it be profit-ave to charge \$18."

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Cognac. It is so affordable," said

Some producers have tried to compensate by creating less expensive brandies geared toward mixing, like Pierre Ferrand's 1840 Cognac. "It is so affordable," said Mr. Herit, who has made it Wallflower's house brandy. "That's one of the reasons I use it."

sell for \$12 to \$14.

Less concerned with price is Dirty French, the new Lower East Side restaurant, where Thomas Waugh, the director of bar operations for Major Food Group, is trying to bring back the faded tradition of an after-dinner glass of brandy. So far, he offers seven Cognacs, 11 Armagnacs and two types of Calvados by the glass. Prices range from \$16 to \$73, and customers are responding well, he said.

Still, before you can sell it, you have to explain it. The first question you get when trying to pitch an Armagnac, Mr. Waugh said, is, "What kind of Cognac is that?"

Mr. Vogler has had less trouble putting his brandy-heavy menu across. He credits the cocktail renaissance.

"One thing it's accomplished is, in metropolitan areas, the consuming public is up for what's on the menu," he said. "I've been amazed at how much brandy is selling. And how little resistance there is."



Xavier Herit - Wallflower NYC

