

BALLANTYNE[®]



magazine

THE SKINNY:
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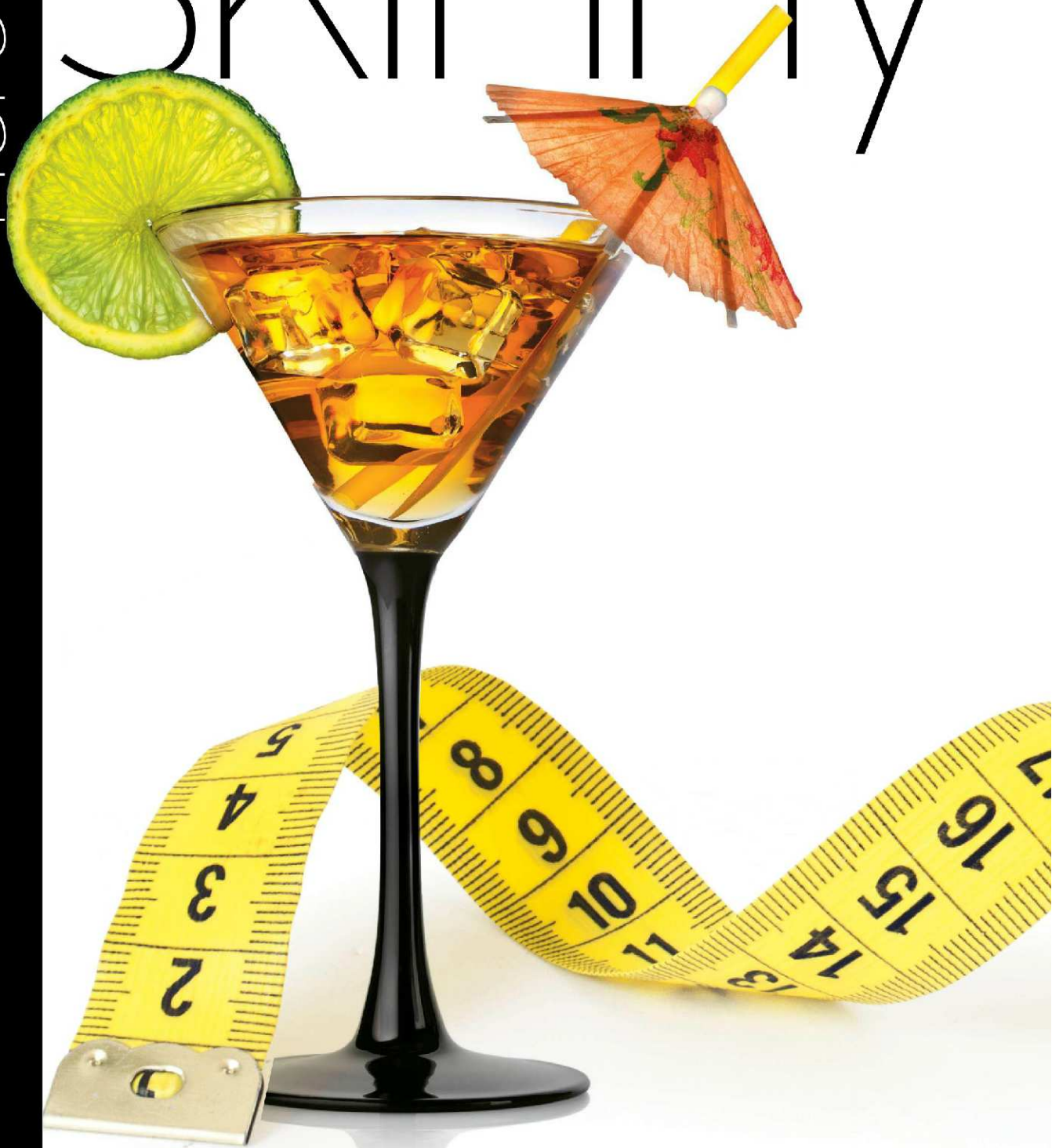


Happy Dance!

Ballantyne
Welcomes MetLife

here's the

skinny



TASTY, GUILT-FREE SUMMER COCKTAILS ABOUND IN BALLANTYNE

By Michael J. Solender

SUMMER IN CHARLOTTE MEANS cruise wear, short shorts, flashy bikinis and swimsuits for weekend trips to the beach or just catching a few rays in the backyard. We all want to look our best and not worry about gaining weight just because we enjoy a warm-weather libation or two.

Savvy cocktail sippers have come to learn that there is no need to sacrifice the satisfaction of a well-mixed cocktail in deference to the diet — just make sure the cocktail you're enjoying is a "skinny."

While margaritas and Long Island Iced Teas maybe on your summer menu, it's an unfortunate fact that these drinks may contain as many as 500 calories or more. It's no wonder "skinny" cocktails, reduced-calorie alcoholic drinks under 200 calories (in some cases as low as 100), are finding their way onto menus throughout Ballantyne and are usually priced

similar to traditional cocktails.

"The trend towards healthier drinks has evolved over the years," says Catherine Rabb, senior instructor for Charlotte's Johnson & Wales University and a highly regarded wine and spirits expert. "From the light-beer and wine-cooler popularity in the '90s, to the spritzers and ultra-light beers that followed, people have always looked for less calories without giving up on the flavor profile of their favorite beverage. It is no different with cocktails; this is a shift that will undoubtedly continue."

Several Ballantyne-area restaurants and lounges are stepping up their game to feature flavorful summertime concoctions that pair wonderfully with lighter appetizers, salads, pizzas and grilled fare or simply stand up nicely on their own after work or out on the town.

Here are a few of our favorites at Ballantyne Magazine.



"The trend towards healthier drinks has evolved over the years."

— Johnson & Wales Senior Instructor Catherine Rabb



BAD DADDY'S
SKINNY VOLITO



Photos by Ray Sepesy

Bad Daddy's Burger Bar

Just in time for summer, Bad Daddy's rolled out its new drink menu featuring two skinny cocktails that have debuted to amazing feedback.

The Skinny Volito is a fresh and fizzy citrus cooler that has Voli Lyte Vodka, muddled limes, mint, light agave nectar and soda. The Skinny

X-Rita, the restaurant's take on a margarita, features X-Rated Fusion Liqueur, el Jimador Tequila, light agave nectar and a splash of soda.

Amazingly, each drink weighs in at fewer than 100 calories. With drink specials every day of the week, Bad Daddy's is casual, friendly and a place that makes it a neighborhood favorite.

Firebirds Wood Fired Grill

The Firebirds in StoneCrest debuted a wood-fired grill concept that has now grown to 23 restaurants across the country. According to Vice President Gerald Pulsinelli, Firebirds is all about hospitality.

"For us that starts at our bar, where our famous pineapple (the symbol of hospitality), double-diamond martini display is a cornerstone," he says. "Everything in our bar that can be homemade, is — right down to the fresh lemon and lime juice and freshly made sour mix."

Two skinny cocktails reside on the menu, and each is fewer than 180 calories. The signature Skinny Red Head uses Dan Aykroyd's Crystal Head Vodka, fresh lime juice, sugar-free pomegranate and peach juice and is topped with sugar-free Red Bull.

The Skinny Mini takes Sauza Blue Tequila, Cointreau, fresh lemon and lime juice and sugar-free simple syrup to create a tasty version of the classic margarita.

Vine American Kitchen

A relative newcomer on the Ballantyne restaurant scene, Vine is an open and inviting establishment with a comfortable bar and great patio. The bar staff can "skinny up" just about any of the Vine's drinks by swapping out simple syrup or substituting low-calorie mixers.

Two of the most popular skinny selections, according to manager Mark Darvill,

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Photos by Ray Sepeasy

FIREBIRDS WOOD FIRED GRILL
SKINNY REDHEAD

are the Ooh La La (Absolut Vanilla Vodka, raspberry liqueur and fresh pineapple juice) and the Ballantyne Girl (Champagne, peach schnapps and raspberry liqueur).

“Whether it was the ‘Sex and the City’ craze that contributed to the healthier approach to eating and drinking out, or just a greater consciousness

in general, I’m not sure,” Darvill says. “We offer healthful options without sacrificing quality or taste.”

Mellow Mushroom

When Ballantyne’s Mellow Mushroom opened

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VINE AMERICAN KITCHEN
BALLANTYNE GIRL



Photos by Ray Seeger

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in 2011, wait times to get into the restaurant were at times over two hours. Mellow has developed a cult following from its Atlanta base thanks to its signature pizza pies (Kosmic Karma, anyone?), huge beer list and great cocktails.

The restaurant's signature skinny is

named after one of its ubiquitous mascots, The Dude. The Skinny Dude Margarita is enormously popular with both men and women, according to Matt White, bar manager.

The Skinny Dude recipe contains Patron Silver Tequila, agave nectar, fresh orange and lime juice and a splash of Sprite Zero.



Photos by Ray Sepesy

MELLOW MUSHROOM THE DUDE

That's a lot of goodness at under 200 calories. White says the drink pairs nicely with the Funky Q barbecue chicken pizza, providing just the right foil for the slightly spicy, slightly sweet pie.

Cantina 1511

Rounding out our list is StoneCrest stalwart Cantina 1511. Not content with just one skinny offering, this upscale but casual eatery offers several. Two of our favorites are the El Delgado, Cantina's signature skinny margarita with Don Eduardo Blanco Tequila, Cointreau, lime and orange juice; and the Papa Grande with Patron Citronge for a great citrusy kick. Each is under 200 calories. The cocktails pair well with spicy and milder items so you can't really go wrong. The vibe at Cantina 1511 is festive, the food flavorful and scene fun.

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BALLANTYNE | feature

Local humor columnist Tracy Curtis recently summed up her take on skinny cocktails this way: "If it says Skinny, I'm all for it," she says. "After all, whoever sat down and ordered a 'Chubby' Cocktail?"

We couldn't agree more. 



Photos by Rex Sepeky

CANTINA 1511
EL DELGADO

CHECK 'EM OUT

Here are a few of Ballantyne Magazine's favorite spots for skinny cocktails.

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