

Written by Nadine Toren

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[Television personality](#) and AZfoothills.com columnist [Nadine Toren](#) is scouring the area, finding savvy Valley features, bringing readers “on the scene.” Every day she'll introduce you to [celebrities](#), [athletes](#), and give you an inside look into local events and hot spots. She'll touch on topical issues, and keep AZ fans posted on all the big talkers [around town](#).



Get creative in the kitchen shakin' up sippers for Santa! Here's the scoop on the tastiest holiday cocktails you'll surely want to taste-test.

Forget Eggnog or fruity mixed drinks—'tis the season to savor creative sippers. Yes, it's time for a little Christmas Cocktail 101, a lesson in mastering festive mixology. Because we're entering holiday party time, I thought it would be a good idea to consult a beverage connoisseur, my friend Anthony Georgoulis. He's the Area Manager of the Valley's Salty Seniorita restaurants.

According to Georgoulis, it's easy to create holiday sippers; just think the season.

“Winter reminds me of snow, peppermint, being cozy, warm, Santa, etc; all you have to do is take that theme to the cocktail shaker. My favorite seasonal drink is *Reindeer Fuel*, inspired by what would get Rudolph's crew around the world in good spirits,” said Georgoulis.

Evidently, Georgoulis' reindeers prefer tequila, crème de menthe, triple sec, milk, and peppermint ice cream—the components of that special drink.

He says you should spend December experimenting with new ingredients; in fact, he's seeing savvy trends sweeping the sipper market. Georgoulis' rule of thumb is to take the advice once given to him from a bartending mentor: nothing terrible will happen if it does not go perfect. So here are Georgoulis' top tips of exploratory spirits and ideas for Christmas 2011.

First, pickle juice. It's a hot pick on the coasts, slowly making its way to AZ. The tangy, salty flare surely adds kick.

Next, Irish whiskey, what Georgoulis says is one of the fastest growing spirits on the market. It adds a delightfully warm pop to each sip.

Third, go savory over sweet. Raid your spice cabinet...don't be scared to add basil, mint, thyme, and other herbs to festive drinks.

And here's one special to Salty Seniorita's menu: agave nectar. The sweet addition is sweeter than sugar, showcasing a caramel-like flavor.

Another idea, make the freezer your BFF. Yep, Georgoulis says popsicle drinks are pretty popular.

According to our mixologist pro, preparing festive drinks is an art anyone can pursue, even if you don't live in wintery conditions. (Like us Valley guys and gals.) He says AZ can feel as much like the holidays as Times Square—the key is to embrace the desert. Serving food and drinks with a sprinkle of Southwest flare integrates the holidays with our environment. Go for some tequila, agave nectar, and mint ice cream—consider it a snowy Christmas sipper infused with Southwest charm.

And if you just can't survive the season without your beloved Eggnog, Georgoulis challenges you to spice it up.

“I like adding a little Almendrado (Almond liqueur).”

To taste-test Georgoulis' cocktail creations, check out the below recipes. You can also salud to the holidays at Salty Seniorita: [www.saltyseniorita.com](http://www.saltyseniorita.com).

**Reindeer Fuel:** 1oz Tequila, Crème de Menthe, Triple Sec, Milk, Peppermint ice cream, blend, shake & garnish

## Drink and be Merry: Holiday Cocktails 101

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with candy cane.

**Clarence and Bailey:** Bailey's Irish Cream, your favorite tequila, cinnamon schnapps, garnish with marshmallows, serve over ice.

**Tijuana Tickler:** Classic margarita, topped with champagne and a splash of peach liqueur.



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