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Zero Heroes 零的選擇

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Restaurateurs, drinks brands, craft brewers and winemakers are presenting myriad ways to quench the growing thirst for alcohol-free alternatives. 餐廳老闆、飲品品牌、手工啤酒廠和葡萄酒廠紛紛為越來越受歡迎的零酒精佐餐飲品市場加柴添薪，推出各式各樣的飲品代替佐餐美酒。 **By Rachel Duffell**

Alcohol-free offerings
at one-Michelin-star
restaurant Clove Club
米芝蓮一星餐廳Clove Club
供應的無酒精佐餐飲品

Zero Heroes

零的選擇

For a simple langoustine dish with Espelette pepper, the obvious drinks pairing might be a white Burgundy, an Italian vermentino or a California chardonnay. But what about the person who doesn't drink alcohol, or the diner who simply wants to remain clear-headed? The soft drink pairing to accompany this dish at one-Michelin-star restaurant Clove Club in London wasn't quite so straightforward.

Lemons, smoked for a couple of hours were squeezed, and the resulting juice – rich and slightly sour with a smoky depth reminiscent of a peaty whisky – was then made into a cordial and added to a light chamomile tea.

Other dishes suggest similarly imaginative accompaniments, such as carrot juice blended with rooibos tea that's enhanced with pepper when paired with a savoury dish, or can be sweetened when served with dessert.

Clove Club's innovative bar team also makes beetroot molasses, cooking the deep purple vegetables down to one tenth of their original volume so they resemble treacle, then adding them – along with some isolated tannins and apple and grape verjus – to a light, juicy prune tea, homemade with the restaurant's own preserved plums that are rehydrated.

These drinks form part of Clove Club's acclaimed soft pairing menu, which was developed to address the paucity of alcohol-free offerings at fine-dining restaurants.

"We were asking what we could do to create something that's not going to be nine glasses of fruit juice to go with a meal, because that's too much sugar, too much acid; it's not balanced," says Clove Club's head of drinks, Rob Simpson.

簡單的Espelette辣椒大蝦菜式，自然要配搭勃根地白酒、意大利vermentino或加州chardonnay等佳釀，但如果客人不能喝酒或想要保持頭腦清醒怎麼辦？倫敦米芝蓮一星餐廳Clove Club為這道菜式提供的佐餐飲品，卻非如前述般簡單直接。

他們將檸檬煙燻一兩個小時並榨汁，然後用這種味道濃郁而微酸、煙燻味有點像泥煤威士忌的檸檬汁做成甜果汁，再加入清淡的甘菊茶。

其他菜式的搭配飲品也同樣充滿想像力，譬如紅蘿蔔汁混胡椒南非國寶茶，沒加糖就配鹹的菜式，加了糖之後則可配甜點。

Clove Club創意豐沛的酒吧團隊還會將紅菜頭煮到只有原來大小的十分之一，做成紅菜頭糖漿，然後加入被分離出來的單寧及蘋果提子汁，做成清淡的梅乾果汁茶——梅乾由餐廳自己醃製，食用時會重新注入水分。

這些飲品使Clove Club的無酒精佐餐飲品餐單備受讚賞，也因此使一些高級餐廳開始正視以無酒精飲品佐餐的問題。

Clove Club飲品部主管Rob Simpson表示：「我們不希望客人要在一頓飯裡以九杯不同的果汁佐餐，這樣糖分會太高，果酸也太多，餐飲配搭會失衡，因此我們才會想到自創一些飲品佐餐。」





☞ We like to encourage guests to take one of each pairing

我們鼓勵客人每種佐餐飲品都要試 ☞☞

– Rob Simpson, Clove Club

The creation of a non-alcoholic pairing at Clove Club begins with the dish. “I’ll put that mouthful of food into my mouth and think about what my palate is craving next. Have I got fat in my mouth, acidity, sweetness? Do I want something to brighten it, to refresh, to wash it out? What’s going to work flavour-wise? What’s in season? What do we have stored, preserved, fermenting? Then I start to knock a few things together,” says Simpson.

When Clove Club started to develop its soft pairing options a few years ago, it was one of the first restaurants in Britain to offer such a sophisticated alternative to a wine pairing. And they weren’t prepared for the response. “Guests would be ecstatic that they’d been considered and that there was something thoughtful and considerate and planned to go with their meal, rather than just being offered a Coke or a sparkling water,” says Simpson. “And that gave us the energy to keep developing and to keep pushing the pairing,” which is now frequently chosen by both those who do and don’t drink alcohol.

Clove Club introduced its soft pairing first, and later added a separate tea pairing, for which the team tested a wide range of teas, brewing them at different weights, for different lengths of time and at different temperatures.

Today, says Simpson, “We like to encourage guests to take one of each pairing, because for us that’s the best way to enhance the experience of the guests. That’s the way they get more flavours on their table, we can explain more flavours and more ingredients and deliver more experience to our guests.”

Tea is a popular pairing for food. It shares many of the characteristics of wine and is affected by terroir, climate and processing.

“You can have the same kind of experience that you might from wine. A lot of the attributes that you can talk about with wine, you can with tea,” says Charlie Winkworth-Smith who, with his wife Natalie, is behind sparkling-tea brand Saicho.

The couple founded the brand because Natalie, who reacts badly to alcohol, had often felt forgotten at restaurants, where her husband might be enjoying a wine pairing but she was left sipping water and feeling that she wasn’t having the full experience. Alongside that, the couple identified an increased focus on health and wellbeing, with many young people choosing to eschew alcohol.

So far, the couple have developed three sparkling teas. The Jasmine tea is the sweetest in the Saicho line and lends itself to pairing with desserts, offering a creaminess alongside floral notes. The Darjeeling offers a slightly more intense flavour and spicy, gingery notes that make it a good accompaniment to grilled chicken or hearty pasta dishes. And the Hojicha, the most savoury with a strong tea character and smoky, nutty characteristics that go well with a steak or oxtail soup.

“I think tea is particularly good [as a pairing to food], because it has a bit of astringency and it gives you that refreshing palate that’s something you get particularly with red wine. There’s tannins, astringency and bitterness,” says Charlie.

“Different types of tea have different flavour profiles,” adds Natalie. “You get to think about how teas are grown and part of the whole food-pairing experience is getting a bit of knowledge, a bit of background about how somebody pairs a certain tea with a certain food. That’s what I find exciting – that teas can create that experience and it doesn’t need to come from something alcoholic.”

Clove Club的佐餐飲品會根據每道菜式度身調配，Simpson解釋：「我會將食物放進嘴裡品嚐，然後想想自己吃完後想要喝什麼呢？嘴巴裡是油膩還是酸或甜的感覺呢？我想要再吃一些加強這種味道的東西？還是需要一些味道清新的東西清一清味蕾？什麼味道的東西才搭呢？有哪些當季食材？餐廳有哪些存貨？有哪些醱製的或發酵的食材？然後才把幾種食材混在一起。」

Clove Club數年前開始發展其無酒精佐餐飲品，可說是英國第一批提供葡萄酒以外的精緻佐餐飲品的餐廳，客人的反應完全出乎他們預料。Simpson說道：「客人反應非常踴躍，他們感到自己被重視，很欣賞佐餐飲品的心思和考量，那不是一般的可樂或有汽礦泉水可相提並論的。我們因此更有動力發展佐餐飲品，不斷推陳出新。」現時，就連能喝酒的客人也會點無酒精佐餐飲品。

Clove Club在推出無酒精的佐餐飲品後再推出適合佐餐的茶，團隊為此試過許多不同茶葉，並以不同分量、時間和水溫來沖泡。

Simpson表示：「我們鼓勵客人兩種佐餐飲品都要試，因為這樣是提升用餐體驗的最佳辦法，而且可以試到更多各種味道。我們也可跟客人解釋更多不同味道和材料的特點，給他們更多用餐體驗。」

茶是非常受歡迎的餐飲，並且跟酒有很多相似的地方，同樣受土壤、氣候和炮製過程影響。

與太太Natalie一起創辦有汽茶飲品牌Saicho的Charlie Winkworth-Smith也表示：「以茶佐餐的體驗其實跟葡萄酒一樣，許多葡萄酒有的屬性，茶也有。」

二人之所以創立這個品牌是由於Natalie不太能喝酒精飲品，而餐廳往往忽略了這些客人的需要，許多時候當Charlie享用佐餐美酒時，Natalie只能喝水，讓她覺得自己的用餐體驗若有所缺。除此之外，夫婦也感到大家越來越注重健康，許多年輕人都不愛喝酒。

目前，夫婦二人共研發了三款有汽茶飲，當中茉莉花茶最甜，清新的花香和綿滑的口感，適合配甜品。大吉嶺茶味道稍濃並帶點薑的辣味，配烤雞和味道濃郁的意粉最佳。至於茶味最濃並帶有煙燻和果仁味道的焙茶，則是牛扒和牛尾湯的良伴。

Charlie指出：「我覺得以茶佐餐非常棒，因為茶有點澀，像紅酒一樣能清一清味蕾。茶含有單寧，帶點苦澀。」

Natalie補充：「不同茶葉有不同味道特色，你需要考慮茶的種植方式，而認識有關茶葉的知識及其他人如何用茶佐餐的背景資料等，也是整個用餐體驗的一部分。我自己覺得這些知識很有趣，以茶佐餐可以獲得餐酒以外的體驗。」



Opposite page: Clove Club’s head of drinks, Rob Simpson

This page, from top to bottom: One of the Saicho brand’s sparkling teas, Darjeeling; Saicho founders Natalie and Charlie Winkworth-Smith

對頁：Clove Club 餐飲部負責人 Rob Simpson
本頁上至下：Saicho 的有汽大吉嶺茶；Saicho 創辦人 Natalie 和 Charlie Winkworth-Smith

“I felt like I was getting a totally marginalised dining experience, both at home and out in the world”

我都會覺得自己完全被邊緣化，
不管是在家還是外出用餐都一樣

– Bill Shufelt, Athletic Brewing Company

Saicho has proved popular with restaurants, including the Michelin-starred Simpsons in Birmingham and The Cross in Kenilworth, and regularly appears on non-alcoholic pairing menus. “I think restaurants want to give their customers the best experience they can, and if a customer doesn't want to drink for whatever reason, then they're missing out on some of that experience,” says Charlie.

Today there's an expanding range of non-alcoholic drinks to have with a meal, including beer and wine being made without alcohol. Non-alcoholic wines in particular have significantly improved in quality in recent years, and there's been an increase in non-alcoholic beers, with big names such as Asahi, Coors, Heineken and Carlsberg making their own versions alongside smaller independent brewers.

The Connecticut-based Athletic Brewing Company was founded by Bill Shufelt who, on pivoting to a healthier lifestyle, found that a tasty alternative to alcoholic drinks was lacking. Out at a restaurant or with friends and family and not wanting to drink alcohol he says, “I felt like I was getting a totally marginalised dining experience, both at home and out in the world. As a craft-beer lover, I started to look into why there were no good options out there.”

The answer was that to create a non-alcoholic craft beer takes a good deal of investment, and while the big players were already involved, to do it on a small scale was a big undertaking. But it was one that Shufelt was willing to try, so he teamed up with award-winning brewer John Walker to shake up an industry he felt was in dire need of innovation, building a brewery dedicated to non-alcoholic beer.

The Athletic Brewing Company currently produces three styles. “With the Upside Dawn Golden Ale, we wanted something flavourful and approachable. With the Run Wild IPA, we love the malt and hops character. And then the Basic – Cerveza Atletica – came from a desire for a maltier, toastier lager that's really refreshing on a hot summer day,” says Walker.

As a pairing, beer with food has increased in popularity, and non-alcoholic beers pair just as well. “A lot of pairing comes down to the flavour compounds that you experience: the malt character, the hop character, the acidity and salinity, and our beers have that full range of characteristics and pair really well with food – all the while not impairing you,” says Walker.

The Athletic Brewing Company's gamble on zero-alcohol beers appears to have paid off. “We haven't been able to make enough beer to keep up with demand for over a year,” says Shufelt.

The interest in non-alcoholic craft beer also plays to an increased interest in artisanal products. And that's something else that's clear in the successful products in the alcohol-free market. A lot of effort and investment is being put into making high-quality alternatives to alcohol.

Take Taboocha, a craft kombucha brewing company based in Hong Kong. It's found on the non-alcoholic drinks lists in a number of Hong Kong restaurants, particularly dim sum spots, such as Duddell's, and Cantonese-inspired restaurants such as Roots Eatery. Lead brewer Lisa Lam, who co-founded Taboocha with her sister Patricia, uses local ingredients such as roselle, goji berries and ginger in her creations, which pair well with Cantonese flavours, and there's a strong focus on high-quality ingredients, too, as those increasingly looking to non-alcohol alternatives are often doing so in a quest for wellness.

Duffell: Zero Heroes ????



Athletic Brewing Company's Cerveza Atletica craft beer paired with a grilled steak salad with chimichurri sauce
Athletic Brewing Company的Cerveza Atletica精釀啤酒配阿根廷青醬烤牛扒

Saicho's product is popular with restaurants, including the Michelin-starred Simpsons in Birmingham and The Cross in Kenilworth, and regularly appears on non-alcoholic pairing menus. “I think restaurants want to give their customers the best experience they can, and if a customer doesn't want to drink for whatever reason, then they're missing out on some of that experience,” says Charlie.

現時，無酒精佐餐飲品的範圍越來越廣，包括有無酒精啤酒和葡萄酒。近年，無酒精葡萄酒的品質更顯著提升。無酒精啤酒的選擇也越來越多，不僅是小型釀酒廠，就連許多知名品牌如朝日、Coors、喜力和嘉士伯等，也紛紛推出零酒精啤酒。

康涅狄格州無酒精啤酒釀酒廠The Athletic Brewing Company的創辦人Bill Shufelt追求比較健康生活方式，但卻找不到可以代替酒類飲品的無酒精佳釀。每當外出用膳或是跟親友相聚而又不想喝酒時，「我都會覺得自己完全被邊緣化，不管是在家還是外出用餐都一樣。作為手工啤酒迷，我於是開始研究為什麼市面上沒有美味的零酒精啤酒。」

開設釀酒廠生產零酒精啤酒是非常龐大的投資，加上大牌釀酒廠已加入戰場，要少量生產無酒精啤酒其實相當冒險，但Shufelt願意冒這樣的險。於是，他找來得獎釀酒師John Walker一起顛覆這個他認為需要革新的行業，建立一間專門釀造無酒精啤酒的酒廠。

Walker表示，The Athletic Brewing Company目前只生產三款啤酒，「味道豐富而容易入口的Upside Dawn Golden Ale、麥芽和啤酒花味道怡人的Run Wild IPA，以及麥芽味和焦香味濃郁、夏天飲用分外提神的Basic – Cerveza Atletica。」

以啤酒佐餐越來越受歡迎，無酒精啤酒也一樣。Walker說：「選擇佐餐飲品大多時候都以考慮味道組合為主：麥芽味、啤酒花味、酸度、鹹度等。我們的啤酒齊集各種味道特色，十分適合搭配食物，但卻不會削弱你的判斷力。」

The Athletic Brewing Company冒險投身釀製無酒精啤酒的決定獲得良好回報，Shufelt說：「我們的產品過去一年多都供不應求。」

無酒精手工啤酒興起亦令大家對手工飲品越來越感興趣，手工生產的飲品在無酒精酒市場的成績斐然，使大家對釀製優質無酒精飲品也投入更多心力和資金。

香港發酵茶公司「大杯茶」就是好例子，他們的產品躋身香港許多餐廳的無酒精飲品餐單，特別是供應點心的地方，如都爹利會館和糅合廣東菜元素的法式小酒館Roots。大杯茶由Lisa Lam與姐姐Patricia創辦，同時擔任主要泡茶師的Lisa Lam喜歡用本土食材如洛神花、枸杞和薑等來釀製發酵茶，產品味道跟粵菜非常搭。她亦非常注重食材的品質，因為選擇無酒精飲品的人通常比較注重健康。



Connecticut-based Athletic Brewing Company co-founder John Walker and founder Bill Shufelt
康涅狄格州Athletic Brewing Company的創辦人John Walker和Bill Shufelt

This page, clockwise from left:
Tea brewing; Taboocha's goji
berry ginger tea, a bold blend of
ingredients

Opposite page, clockwise
from bottom left: Taboocha
founders and sisters, Lisa
and Patricia Lam; SCOBY
(Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria
and Yeast), some of the
ingredients in making the
brand's Kombucha

本頁左圖起順時針方向：泡茶；大
杯茶食材搭配別具特色的枸杞薑茶
對頁左下圖起順時針方向：大杯
茶創辦人Lisa和Patricia Lam
姐妹；大杯茶用來製作紅茶菌的
SCOBY（細菌和酵母菌的共生菌）



Taboocha came about from Lisa's own search for a healthier lifestyle. Lisa started the business as she was struggling with digestive issues. Discovering in 2013 that kombucha – which was then little-known in Hong Kong – helped to improve her gut health, she wanted to share the drink with others. Taboocha was established the following year.

Kombucha is fermented tea made using a SCOBY or Symbiotic Culture Of Bacteria and Yeast. Taboocha offers a range of 10 kombucha flavours, and makes use of different tea bases, including jasmine green tea, oolong and black tea, for the different infusions, while also creating exclusive examples in collaborations or for individual clients.

"When we infuse our kombucha with fruits or spices or juices, we use the actual ingredients. We're very adamant about sourcing the real thing, so we're not using flavouring or extracts," says Patricia. "We've also modified our recipe so it's not so carbonated that you feel you're drinking soda. It's softer bubbles, so you can feel the balance of the tea."



"We're a very craft-based product. We're focused on the craft and the flavour," says Lisa. She used to eat at fine-dining restaurants frequently, which she says inspired in her a love of flavours and food. However, turning vegan around the same time as founding Taboocha and forced to cook more at home, she developed a knack for coming up with innovative flavour combinations.

While kombucha is often chosen as an alcohol-free – or low-alcohol, as fermentation means kombucha can be up to 0.5 percent ABV – alternative, it's also revered for its purported health benefits not only due to its tea base, but also its natural probiotics.

As more people look to alcohol-free alternatives, whatever their reasons, the available choices are becoming increasingly appealing and look likely to only enhance the enjoyment of a culinary experience.

"For us, food and drink are inseparable. I don't want one without the other," says Simpson. "At Clove Club, we're trying to give people the most enriched dining experience that they can have, and if someone is unable to have a pairing, then they're not really getting what we consider to be a full dining experience."

“When we infuse our kombucha with fruits or spices or juices, we use the actual ingredients

我們只會採用真正的食材來為紅茶菌茶添加水果、香料或果汁等味道”

Lisa Lam因飽受腸道消化問題困擾而開始追求健康的生活方式，因此而創辦大杯茶。2013年，當紅茶菌在香港還鮮為人知時，她已發現這種東西能改善她的腸道健康，於是她想跟大家分享這種健康飲品。翌年，她創立了大杯茶。

紅茶菌是由SCOBY（細菌和酵母菌的共生菌）發酵而成，大杯茶共有十款不同味道的茶菌，分別用不同的茶葉炮製，包括有茉莉綠茶、烏龍茶和黑茶等，並加入不同食材的味道。此外，他們亦會為個別客人提供獨家樣品。

Patricia表示：「我們只會採用真正的食材來為紅茶菌茶添加水果、香料或果汁等味道。我們非常堅持使用真正的食材，絕對不會用調味劑或萃取物等。我們亦會改良配方，減少碳酸含量，以免大家像喝氣水一樣。我們產品的氣泡比較溫和，與茶味平衡得當。」

Lisa Lam補充：「我們的產品主要以人手製作，我們非常注重手藝和味道。」她以前經常到高級餐廳用膳，因此培養出對味道和食物的熱愛。不過，自從創辦大杯茶開始，Lisa Lam已改為吃純素，更多時候需自己在家裡做飯，並因此培養出一種本能，讓她不斷想到創新的味道組合。

紅茶菌是發酵物，因此可含有最高0.5%酒精，通常被視為無酒精或酒精含量極低的酒類替代品。紅茶菌也因其健康益處備受推崇，它不只是茶，也是益生菌。

隨著越來越多人為了各種原因改以無酒精飲品佐餐，市面上的無酒精飲品選擇也越來越可觀，這毫無疑問對提升用餐體驗大有幫助。

Simpson表示：「對我們來說，飲、食是不可分割的，是缺一不可的。在Clove Club，我們希望客人能獲得最豐富的用餐體驗。如果客人在店內找不到合適的佐餐飲品，就不能獲得我們眼中的圓滿用餐體驗。」

