

TOP STORIES IN LIFE & CULTURE

- 1 of 12 New Twist in Armstrong Saga
- 2 of 12 Would Lance Believe Lance?
- 3 of 12 At Notre Dame, Inspiration Wasn't Real
- Ladies Looking For Laughs

FOOD & DRINK | December 28, 2012, 2:25 p.m. ET  
RECONSIDER: SHRIMP COCKTAIL

## Beyond the Buffet

*A steakhouse standby, long taken for granted, is back on form*

Article

Comments

MORE IN FOOD & DRINK »

Email Print Save

f t + in

A A



Enlarge Image

Mimi Ritzen Crawford for The Wall Street Journal

HOT DISH | Chili sauce, cilantro and lime brighten up a retro appetizer.

**SHRIMP, ACID, SPICE**—it's a time-honored combination. Ancient Romans spruced up their shrimp with vinegar, celery salt and fish sauce; by the early 20th century, a zesty ketchup-based dip had become the de rigueur accompaniment, but it wasn't until the 1920s that the name shrimp cocktail was dreamed up (to appeal to those thirsty for the other kind). When done right, this iconic appetizer is delicious, yet it has acquired an image problem in recent decades through its association with bad buffets and middling steakhouses. "It's one of those simple dishes that can be really good, but can

also be horrendous," said Krystof Zizka, co-owner of the oyster bar Maison Premiere, in Brooklyn, N.Y. "The technique to make it is simple, but it can get lost."

Lately chefs have been banishing memories of rubbery seafood and sickly-sweet sauce with reinterpretations of the shrimp cocktail. Mr. Zizka poaches plump Gulf shrimp in a salty, acidic court-bouillon and pairs them with a house-made cocktail sauce. At the French Laundry in Yountville, Calif., Thomas Keller has served shrimp with gratinéed tomatoes or tomato consommé for years. At Manhattan's John Dory Oyster Bar, April Bloomfield offers tiger prawns with coriander mayonnaise. Outside Boston, at Casa B, a Colombian-style cocktail combines bite-size shrimp with a cilantro rémoulade, served in a hollowed-out baked potato.

More

[View the most-read recipes of 2012](#)

Innovation can only go so far, however; nostalgia is a note that even the most avant-garde iterations aim to hit. "I can make it better, but have it still relate in people's minds," said Joshua Whigham, who helms the kitchen at the Bazaar by José Andrés at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills. "Most important, it must taste like shrimp cocktail." Below, a few examples that strike the right balance between expectation and revelation.

—Pervaiz Shallwani

The new road starts here.

INTRODUCING THE LINCOLN MOTOR COMPANY

THE ALL-NEW 2013 LINCOLN MKZ Expand

WSJ SELECT LUXURY SHOPPING FOR THE SOPHISTICATED READER SHOP NOW

OPERATED INDEPENDENTLY OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL NEWS DEPARTMENT

Available to WSJ.com Subscribers

Weapon Makers See Danger in Cooperating



China Loses Edge as World's Factory Floor



Dimon Takes a 'Whale' of a Pay Cut



Bankers Get IOUs Instead of Bonus Cash

GET 3 MONTHS FOR THE PRICE OF 1 SUBSCRIBE NOW