

NEW YORK

NYC RESTAURANT NEWS

# New York Poised to Bring Back Takeout Cocktails, With a Twist

In the latest version of the program, restaurants won't be able to sell bottles of wine or liquor

by Erika Adams | Apr 7, 2022, 10:37am EDT



To-go cocktails are nearing a comeback in New York. | Artur Widak/NurPhoto via Getty Images

To-go cocktails could be making a (curtailed) return in NYC. Gothamist reports that New York lawmakers are getting close to hammering out an agreement that would temporarily re-authorize the sale of to-go cocktails for the next three years, following months-long campaigning by local legislators and restaurateurs to bring back the popular provision.

If it passes, the proposed program includes at least one familiar old rule: Customers have to order food alongside their drinks. (Hochul hot dogs, anyone?) An additional amendment this time around will ban restaurants from selling full bottles of wine and liquor to take home. That particular allowance — a financial boon to some restaurants during the pandemic — has been hotly contested by the state’s liquor store lobbyists.

Multiple New York lawmakers confirmed earlier this week that a to-go cocktail deal was “close” to being finalized, according to Gothamist, although an exact timeline wasn’t disclosed. The measure is set to be included in the state’s annual budget, which was originally due to pass on April 1. However, it has been delayed in the approval process as legislators continue to negotiate a number of other items within the budget.

Gov. Kathy Hochul has been vocal about her support for bringing back to-go cocktails, which she originally wanted to make permanent. In its current form, the program would be up for debate again in three years.

New York first instituted to-go cocktails in March 2020 through an emergency order enacted as a measure of financial support for restaurants that were limited to outdoor dining and takeout and delivery sales during the pandemic. The wildly popular program came to an abrupt end in June 2021 as pandemic dining restrictions eased. Many in the industry have been fighting to bring it back ever since.

“Alcohol-to-go boosted sales during the pandemic and gained strong public support,” New York State Restaurant Association president and CEO Melissa Fleischut said in a statement of support on the program earlier this year. “It is a simple policy change that provides a battered industry with a reliable revenue stream to keep their doors open.”

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