

grape, meet grain: New Takes on the Wine Cocktail

Patrons torn between Malbec and a martini, or Syrah and a Sazerac, may no longer be forced to make that oh-so-difficult wine-or-cocktail decision. Innovative mixologists are using wine in creative ways that lend drinks an enticing, yet entirely approachable complexity.

Todd Thrasher of Society Fair in Alexandria, Virginia, headed to the wine rack to create the seven cocktails on his “Tails from the Vine” menu.

“Wine has a base of all these amazing flavors built right in,” he says. For his savory I Want To Eat An Onion Tart, Thrasher sautés onions with Riesling and thyme, and then allows the infusion to steep for a day. He adds a dose of the mixture to a combination of Dolin Blanc Vermouth, Flor de Caña 4 Year Extra Dry Rum and lemon bitters, and garnishes the drink with a bacon cracker.

The base for his Whiskey And Wine drink is Sauternes simmered with cardamom, star anise, clove, orange peel and honey. The finished sip adds Forty Creek Barrel Select Whiskey, Four Roses Yellow Bourbon and orange bitters.

“Wine has a lot of definitions, so it really adds a whole new palette of flavors to paint with,” says Ravi DeRossi, owner of New York City’s Bourgeois Pig, which boasts 18 cellar-inspired libations on its menu.

For the Stiff Upper Lip, fresh rosemary steeps in already-fragrant Muscat, giving the wine a heady boost. It’s then mixed with muddled Fuji apple, orange cordial and pomegranate molasses. The staff’s latest technique is carbonating wine tipples with a soda charger, which adds zippy effervescence without dilution.

Wine can replace the base spirit in a cocktail, which adds layered flavor while tempering the alcohol content. However, Colin Shearn, the general manager and head bartender at Franklin Mortgage and Investment Company in Philadelphia, prefers to employ it in smaller doses.

“I like to think of it more as an accent that can be the bridge to other ingredients,” says Shearn.

Wine is used sparingly in drinks like The Phantom Passage, with El Dorado 5 Year Old Cask Aged Rum, lemon, orange blossom syrup, Angostura Bitters, egg white and half an ounce of Chilean Carmenère.

Shearn is constantly tinkering to find the best combinations, but has discovered that big, bold reds can stand in for Carpana Antica Vermouth, and acidic, mineral-driven whites for fino Sherry.

“People know wine or think they do. It’s something familiar,” he says.

—KELLY MAGYARICS

The Phantom Passage



PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUG KEITH

KARA'S *pick*

Spirits Editor Kara Newman reveals her spirits selection each month.

Here’s a sweet little something for your Halloween party cocktails:



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Dancing Pines Chai (USA; Dancing Pines Distillery, Loveland, CO). Although this new producer makes several excellent liqueurs, in flavors including a luscious crème brûlée and an *amaro*-like black walnut, its chai liqueur is the must-have for fall-inspired cocktails. Black tea flavors meld with vivid notes of orange peel, cinnamon and clove. —K.N.

abv: 30%

Price: \$36

Visit the Ratings page on winemag.com or turn to page 141 of this issue for more spirit reviews.



plantation original dark overproof rum

The new darling of the tiki bar comes in the form of a 73% alcohol overproof rum that’s unexpectedly smooth and soft. Complex and rich, Plantation Original Dark Overproof Rum is produced by Cognac Ferrand. It stands apart from other Plantation offerings in that it’s not double aged or finished in Cognac casks—with such a high proof, the delicate nuances of the process would be lost on this potent variation. Instead, the rum is aged from

six months to two years in young Bourbon casks. The end result leads with notes of caramel, cinnamon and raisin, with a sultry finish. Bartender and tiki devotee Brian Miller of Lani Kai in Manhattan is smitten with the 146-proof rum for drinks like his oft-requested Bring Me The Horizon cocktail. “I use [it] to give this drink a bit of a hiccup and to boost the flavors of the other ingredients,” says Miller. “I also like it for its ability to act as a drying agent for balancing sweeter cocktails.”



—GEORGETTE MOGER

For the Bring Me The Horizon cocktail recipe, visit winemag.com/plantationrum