

SHAKEN, WITH A HINT OF GOAT CHEESE

WHILE NOT FOR EVERYONE, SAVORY COCKTAILS OFFER DIVERSITY.

Duck cracklin's and mushrooms aren't typically found on the back bar of your neighborhood watering hole. But Gina Chersevani's liquid recipes—if not for everyone—are unquestionably surprising and left-of-center. The innovative concoctions of this mixologist at Arlington, Virginia's gastropub EatBar generate buzz on the area's culinary sites and blogs. Her St. Pete's Denial combines vodka, Godiva white liqueur, Frangelico and an ingredient she wanted to include in a drink—bleu cheese. And the martini-esque Daffney's Fun "Guy" mixes porcini-infused Pernod, gin and duck cracklin's.

Wielding her trusty notebook, Chersevani is prepared when libation inspiration strikes, which can happen while collaborating with chef Nathan Anda or strolling through her local farmer's market. "Fall is a great time to take advantage of seasonal produce," she says. Her new cooler-weather offerings include a

mushroom warmer-upper and a new take on the pumpkin martini, with heirloom pumpkins and goat cheese.

Chersevani is excited about the current trend of widely diverse edible components in cocktails, but is less enthusiastic about what she refers to as high-maintenance cocktails. "The whole point of going out for a drink is to take the work out of it for the guest; they deserve to be pampered."

Often called upon by Anda to create food and drink pairings on the fly, Chersevani revels in the challenge. Thus, she combined Primitivo, Bourbon and white chocolate in a not-overtly-sweet beverage that showcased the chef's unusual brownie tempura. But perhaps the best part of her job is winning over surprised guests. "I love when someone says, 'I have never had anything like this before,' and then orders another one."

—KELLY MAGYARICS

