

In a Pickle

| By Kelly A. Magyarics | Photography by Powers and Crewe |

The growing season moves quickly, and just as farmers reach for canning jars, crafty cocktailians turn to a classic mixology technique to preserve summer's bounty. *Shrubs* are vinegar-based tipples that offer farm-to-bar flavor. These flourishes may seem better suited to a mesclun salad than a martini glass, but produce reduced with vinegar and sugar lends drinks tartness and layered complexity often unmatched by mere lemon or lime juice. Here are a few of DC's top sips hitting just the right sour notes this season.



Alice and Vincent

THE INSPIRATION: Memories of watching his grandparents pick beets inspired Todd Thrasher's ode to the earthy orb. The vegetables are cooked in sugar, champagne vinegar and pickling spices, rendering a subtly sweet and vibrant liquid.

THE SOUR SECRET: Thrasher adds a touch of the shrub to Clément V.S.O.P., orange juice roasted with honey and Clément Créole Shrub. The purple potion is served in a tall glass with crushed ice, garnished with an orange twist.

WHERE TO FIND IT: *Restaurant Eve, 110 South Pitt St., Alexandria and PX, 728 King St., Alexandria.*



Alchemist

THE INSPIRATION: Kevin Diedrich adopted the West Coast style of cocktailing during his time strolling San Francisco's farmers markets. Once rhubarb hits the stands, he simmers the stalks in a bath of red wine vinegar, sugar and a sachet stuffed with clove, anise, allspice and black peppercorn.

THE SOUR SECRET: Diedrich uses Four Roses Yellow Label bourbon and a whole egg to add weight and texture, balanced by Combier, lemon juice and the rhubarb shrub. Freshly grated nutmeg on top gives a fun little flip.

WHERE TO FIND IT: *Bourbon Steak, 2800 Pennsylvania Ave., NW.*



The Eye Ball Kid

THE INSPIRATION: When Sebastian Zutant seeks libation inspiration, he reaches for the stockpot. His SebastGIN's mix of citrus, juniper, coriander, cinnamon, thyme, rosemary and sage forms the eclectic base of a shrub cocktail, with a title that refers to his least-favorite Tom Waits song.

THE SOUR SECRET: The aromatic booze is tempered by tart apple cider vinegar and rhubarb bitters. A sweet Caribbean syrup called falernum adds ginger and lime notes; juniper and coriander seeds sprinkled on top pay homage to gin's ubiquitous botanical.

WHERE TO FIND IT: *Proof, 775 G St., NW.*

The Farmer's Almanac '09

THE INSPIRATION: Chef collaborator and cocktail expert Gina Chersevani's love for all things fresh behind the bar enticed her to hit a bottle of champagne vinegar, pour it on pints of raspberries, shake daily for ten days and then reduce with sugar. "For centuries farmers have had shrubs. It is a basic way of preserving summer all year long," she says.

THE SOUR SECRET: Chersevani takes a Collins glass with crushed ice, adds Plymouth gin, bruised basil leaves, her shrub and club soda, and adorns it with basil leaves and a fresh berry.

WHERE TO FIND IT: *PS 7's, 777 I St., NW.*

Marion Berry

THE INSPIRATION: Owen Thomson got into shrubs after delving into Eric Felten's book *How's Your Drink?* When he had an extra batch of blackberry-sage syrup—the base for one of his wine coolers—Thomson reduced it with aged white wine vinegar for a cocktail with a noteworthy name.

THE SOUR SECRET: Rittenhouse BIB rye whiskey lends depth and smokiness, and bitter Italian digestivo Amaro Averna foils the shrub's tartness. A bruised sage leaf garnish ties the drink together with aromatic herbaceousness.

WHERE TO FIND IT: *Bourbon, 2321 18th St., NW.*