

RECIPES By the time you're reading this, many of the cocktails I described will be long gone. Still, it's enough to see what the fall bounty has inspired. Be sure to check out some of the great Sacramento, Yolo, and Placer county bars to find what's local in your martini glass.



THE PERFECT PEAR

by Chris Trotter (Hawks)

Serves 1

1 1/2 ounces brandy or Cognac

3/4 ounce Mathilde Liqueur Piores

1/2 ounce pureed pear

Large squeeze of clove/anise simple syrup

Combine all of the ingredients in an ice-filled shaker. Shake well, strain into a chilled martini/cocktail glass, and serve.

MEYER LEMON VODKA INFUSION

(Paul Martin's American Bistro)

Serves 1

12 ounces Meyer Lemon Essence (recipe below)

1 (750-milliliter) bottle Smirnoff vodka

Mix all of the ingredients well. Cover, label, and date. Use in lemon drops or other cocktails.

Meyer Lemon Essence

Makes 12 ounces

2 pounds Meyer lemons

1/4 cup sugar

2 1/2 ounces water

Wash the lemons and juice them, saving the juiced shells (peels). Reserve the juice for another use.

In a metal bowl, toss the shells with the sugar and the water. Set the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and cook for 1 hour.

Strain through double layer cheesecloth. Refrigerate until needed.

AUTUMN DELIGHT

by Erick Castro (Lounge on 20)

Serves 1

1 1/2 ounces gin

1/2 ounce Cointreau or triple sec

1/2 ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 ounce Spiced Fig Simple Syrup (recipe below)

Combine all of the ingredients in an ice filled shaker. Shake vigorously for 20 seconds, then strain into a chilled martini glass. Garnish with freshly grated cinnamon.

Spiced Fig Simple Syrup

Makes X

2 figs, thinly sliced

1/2 cinnamon stick

1 anise star

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

2 1/2 cups water

2 cups sugar

Combine all of the ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring continuously until the sugar dissolves. Continue to simmer for 25 to 30 minutes.

Remove from heat and let cool. Strain and store in a bottle for up to 2 weeks.



Another popular pairing is his watermelon jalapeño margarita; spicy and sweet, it's an intriguing drink with a delightfully slow burn.

"We're really working one on one with the small growers in the area. They're bringing us ingredients that no one else is using." And with these hard-to-find ingredients, the bartenders are developing new drinks on a weekly basis.

The only downside is once a customer seems to find a drink they enjoy, it may be out of season. Still, Hawks is more than ready to turn you on to its next, in-season mixological phenomenon.

Paul Martin's American Bistro

Paul Martin's owes its cocktail menu greatness and creativity to not one single person but rather a collaboration of owners, farmers, and mixologists.

When I walked in, manager Stewart Ollikkala introduced me to Karen McGillivray, a striking farmer and viticulturist who runs Dono dal Cielo winery.

While Karen was delivering some of her wine, she mentioned how well her Meyer lemons were doing. This got Stewart's attention as well as the attention of bartenders Joe Cole and Kristin Hock. Along with manager Erica Tranchina, they decided to make their own infusions using some vodka and the Meyers.

Infusing their own vodkas is one of the things that set Paul Martin's apart from other restaurants and bars. From that noble citrus start, they've begun curing red pear vodkas, blackberry vodkas, and even a vanilla bean-coconut rum.

Karen noted, "The Foothill farming community is still very young, but there is a lot of talent out there." As such, Paul Martin's tries its best to ensure that everything comes from the surrounding Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo counties.

As Kristin shook up a drink for me--a delicious Champagne Lemonade (with fresh basil)--she explained that the local patrons were still warming up to these new cocktail trends.

As with most cocktail lovers, people are wary to stray from their tried-and-true favorites, "But with a bit of persuasion," smiled Kristin, "they're more than willing to try them, and end up loving the fresh flavors of our drinks."

As she pushed the lightly bubbly, slightly savory, fresh lemonade my way, I was bemused by her comments. How could anyone shy away from something like this?

As Stewart and Karen had explained, as Chris had professed, and as Erick had proselytized, people are accustomed to their cocktails laden with sweet and sour mix, cherry flavored vodkas, and plastic jug tequilas. Did our younger years really train us to enjoy these golden arches equivalents of spirits?

It seems that a voluntary shift is necessary in order for more bars to make the move to utilizing the season's bounties in our drinks. And so I encourage you; have a drink for God's sake. You already eat local, you should drink local too.



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