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Winter Wonders: Citrus-Infused Cocktails

A new crop of citrus for the shaker this season.

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Summer just wouldn't be summer without a tall cold glass of lemonade or a spritzy gin and tonic with a big wedge of lime, but what about winter? With the warmest months of the year behind us, a fresh harvest of citrus is on store shelves and farmers' markets. These fruits showcase citrus on its softer side—sweeter, less acidic and so easy to drink. While gin is a sure bet for mixing up seasonal sips with their juice or zest, other spirits—especially rum, Tequila and bitter aperitifs—work equally well. But don't wait too long to stock up and experiment. This batch of potable-friendly produce will be gone before the last patches of snow melt.

Ruby Red grapefruit



They're tangy, zesty and found everywhere from the breakfast table to the back bar, so it's hard to believe that until the late 19th century, grapefruits were grown solely for ornamental purposes. "Because the Ruby Red grapefruit has a natural sweetness, it can be used as an accent without having to worry about balancing the acidity with sweet ingredients," explains Jim Meehan, mixologist, managing partner of New York City's PDT and author of the upcoming cocktail book, *Please Do Tell*. Fellow PDT bartender David Slape's rum-based Paddington cocktail features grapefruit juice and a generous slice of the peel, which has earthy notes that linger like perfume.

Paddington

Courtesy of David Slape, PDT, New York City

1½ ounces Banks 5 Island Rum

½ ounce Lillet Blanc

½ ounce Ruby Red grapefruit juice

½ ounce lemon juice

1 bar spoon of Bonne Maman orange marmalade

St. George Absinthe Verte, for rinsing glass

Ruby Red grapefruit twist, for garnish

Pour a little absinthe into a chilled coupe glass, swirl around to coat glass and discard excess. Add the first five ingredients to a cocktail shaker. Fill with ice and shake vigorously. Double strain into the prepared chilled coupe glass. Garnish with the grapefruit twist.

Meyer Lemon

U.S. Department of Agriculture employee Frank Meyer traveled to China in 1908 and returned with a fruit: the Meyer lemon. This variety is softer and sweeter than the standard supermarket kind, not to mention gorgeously hued and enticingly aromatic. Freddy Diaz, mixologist and cocktail consultant with AlambiQ Incorporated, notes that Meyer lemons have a "noticeably dark yellow color and smooth skin, along with a slight smell of honey and herbs." The bright and fresh citrus notes in his Citrus Resurrection cocktail work with any spirit, but Diaz prefers the range of botanicals in Plymouth Gin. When working with Meyer lemons in the shaker, keep in mind that you may need to decrease the amount of sweetening agents, like simple syrup or honey, to keep the drink balanced.

Citrus Resurrection

Courtesy of Freddy Diaz, AlembiQ Incorporated



1½ ounces spirit of choice
¾ ounce Clément Creole Shrub Liqueur D'Orange (can substitute Cointreau or Combier)
¾ ounce freshly squeezed Meyer lemon juice
½ ounce lemongrass-infused orange blossom honey (see Note)
½ ounce freshly squeezed orange juice (Diaz uses clementine juice)
1 dash Fee Brothers Grapefruit Bitters
1 ounce club soda
2 mint sprigs, for garnish

Add all but club soda and mint to a cocktail shaker. Add ice, shake vigorously and strain over fresh ice into a Collins glass. Top with 1 ounce club soda and garnish with 2 mint sprigs.

Note: For the lemongrass-infused orange blossom honey:

4 ounces orange blossom honey
4 ounces water
1 stalk of lemongrass, with tough outer leaves and bottom 2 inches of stalk discarded (may use 2 stalks if more

intense flavor is desired)

Slightly smash lemongrass stalk(s) to release oils and cut into ½-inch slices. Heat orange blossom honey and water in a medium saucepan until almost boiling. Remove from heat and add lemongrass. Let steep for 1–2 hours or until desired flavor is achieved. Using a fine mesh strainer, strain to remove the lemongrass slices.

Clementines



Each December, Washington, DC restaurant Jaleo hosts the “Clementina Festival” to celebrate the Christmas orange, as it’s dubbed. It’s only fitting for the tapas hotspot (owned by José Andrés); Spain is the world’s largest clementine producer, in season from November through January. For this year’s featured festival cocktail, “My Darling Clementine,” Jaleo bartenders opt for wine-based Italian aperitif Cocchi Americano and a house-made citrus syrup kicked up with cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and black pepper. “Clementines are great for cocktails because of the sweet orange flavor and lower acidity,” says ThinkFoodGroup Beverage Director Jill Zimorski. Best of all, she says, their lack of seeds is helpful when you are juicing them. Grab a crate of clementines to use behind the bar, but save a few for eating, too.

My Darling Clementine
Courtesy of Jaleo, Washington, DC

1 ounce Plymouth Gin
¾ ounce Perucchi Reserva Sweet Vermouth, or another good quality sweet vermouth

¾ ounce Cocchi Americano (may substitute Lillet Blanc)

½ ounce spiced clementine syrup (see Note)
Dash of The Bitter Truth Orange Bitters
Lemon peel, for garnish

Combine all except garnish in a cocktail shaker. Fill with ice, shake vigorously, and double strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a lemon peel.

Note: For the spiced clementine syrup:

2½ cups clementine juice
1 cup sugar
Peels from clementines that you juiced (with as much pith removed as possible)
5 cardamom pods, cracked open
3 whole cloves
10 cinnamon sticks
1 teaspoon of whole black pepper

In a pot over medium heat, simmer the clementine juice until it reduces by almost half (to about 1½ cups.) Add other ingredients and bring to almost a boil. Lower heat and let simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and cool for an hour. Strain through cheesecloth or coffee filter. Store syrup in the refrigerator in a container with a tightly fitting lid.

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