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CHRISTMAS IS THE TIME TO... **SHAKE IT UP**

Cocktail master Oskar Kinberg gets into the festive spirit by creating a drink specially for Metro readers

WE COULDN'T let the party season begin without a cocktail or two and this year, you can raise a glass Metro style, as cocktail maestro Oskar Kinberg has concocted his own Christmas cocktail, specially for Metro readers.

The result is the outrageously delicious and supremely naughty Metro Christmas Flip.

Kinberg, who runs the eponymous Oskar's Bar beneath London's Dabbous restaurant, said he wanted to create something that tasted like Christmas, but had an exciting new twist, too.

'When I was thinking about making a Christmas cocktail for Metro readers, I wanted to do something that incorporated the traditional flavours of Christmas, because it's a family holiday and I think we all get used to the smells of things such as mince pies from a young age, hence using a mince meat syrup – which, by the way, sounds complicated but is not too technical and very satisfying.

'But I also wanted to give it a bit of a twist that would bring it bang up to date. So, I took a couple of drinks that have had a bit of a renaissance over recent years – sherry, which used to be a real nan thing, but thanks to the popularity of tapas bars has started to become a bit of a trendy drink among young people again and cider, here in the form of cider brandy, basically like an English calvados.'

But that's not all, there's a bit of a

surprise in there, too – the cocktail is topped up with cold lager.

'We tend to think of lager as a drink for a pub garden on a summer's day,' says Oskar, 'but actually there's a long history of putting beer in cocktails and it really works.'

And so, voila, the Metro Christmas Flip.

If all this talk of booze has got you into the cocktail mood, then you may also want to pick up a copy of Oskar's new

book, the *Cocktail Cookbook*, although don't expect anything as banal as a Bloody Mary or to find the recipes grouped by the spirit.

Instead, chapters come with headings such as Cucumber, Apple, Tea and

Coconut. Or, more appropriately for this time of year, Pine, Plum and Sloeberries.

'I make a lot of infusions and syrups, which are based on food, not alcohol and I also think that when people think about wanting a drink, they don't necessarily have an alcohol in mind, they just know that they fancy something citrus-based or banana-based, so that's why I've made them the focus.'

That's not to say he thinks the choice of grog is secondary.

'You need to find a good pairing; certain spirits will work better with certain flavours than others.'

Swede Oskar came to the UK aged 20 and a fascination with booze and a love for the film

Cocktail saw him enrol on a bartender course. The plan was to 'go to university and do something proper', but when he got the opportunity to open his own bar in 2012, he took it.

And he's certainly seen the scene change over the years. 'People say yes to a lot more than they used to when I started out. Ten years ago, people mostly drank vodka; they wouldn't look at gin – they'd say it made them depressed. Now, people are more open to suggestion and experimentation.'

Indeed, those expecting a simple step-by-step guide to Cosmopolitans and Bellinis might be disappointed. Experimentation is the name of the game, with recipes for drinks that involve gin washed with olive oil, kiwi avocado puree and nettle cordial.

But that's not to say you need a huge amount of kit. 'A cooker, a pan, a knife and a cutting board and the usual cocktail kit – a measuring cup, a strainer, a shaker and a bar spoon – is all you really need. All the things are really easy to make.

The meadowsweet syrup, for example, that I use in a cocktail called the Basil Fawley is just meadowsweet, which has a sort of comforting camomile flavour, infused in sugar syrup and strained.'

Pressed for his favourites, Oskar confesses to a sweet tooth.

'My guilty pleasure is something called the Adam & Eve, which is a blend of fig leaves, banana and rum. It's almost a



METRO CHRISTMAS FLIP



SERVE IN A SMALL WINE GLASS

- 25ml Somerset cider brandy, 5 years old
- 25ml Cocchi Di Torino
- 25ml fino sherry
- 5ml Fernet Branca
- 50ml mincemeat syrup
- 1 egg yolk
- 75ml cold lager

1 Put all ingredients except the beer in a shaker and shake hard with cubed ice for 6 seconds.
2 Strain into your serving

glass and top with 75ml of cold lager.
3 Garnish with star anise and freshly grated nutmeg.

FOR THE MINCEMEAT SYRUP:

- 4 Put 200g mincemeat, 100ml fino sherry and 100ml water in a pan and bring to a simmer.
- 5 Simmer for 5 minutes, then pass through a sieve, pressing down on the fruit to extract all liquid.



Tasty combination:

The ingredients for the Metro Christmas Flip coconut taste, kind of like an executive Piña Colada. It's not what I'd order every day, but it's definitely one of the tastiest in the book.

For this time of year, he recommends Flipside – 'egg yolk and tonka beans, which has a comforting, marzipan-like nuttiness to it and is perfect in the cold weather; it's like drinking a boozy custard' – or the very festive Plum-Plum-Plum-Plum – 'this is the way we drink glögg (mulled wine) in Sweden,' he says. 'The plum and fig infusion is made with autumnal fruits and is perfect come Christmas time.'

So, does Oskar have any advice for aspiring Tom Cruises who want to wow guests at their Christmas cocktail party?

'Prep beforehand. In a bar, we have all the things we use most often at our fingertips, ready to go. Every barman's worst nightmare is someone ordering a drink that doesn't get made

that often when the thing they need is at the back of a fridge. So, squeeze your lemons and cut up garnishes beforehand.'

But crucially, consider your ice. 'The biggest mistake people make is not using enough ice – both in the glass when serving and when shaking. Too little ice means it melts too quickly and dilutes the drink; the more ice in a glass, the longer it will stay cool. I prefer square cubes to cylindrical ones – they look better but also don't fit into the glass quite as well, so there's room for the drink around them.'

And for the Metro Christmas Flip? 'Serve it on a festive evening as a little livener to wake people up,' Oskar says. 'You might not need more than one, though; it's almost a meal in itself! Happy Christmas!'

■ *Cocktail Cookbook* by Oskar Kimberg (Frances Lincoln, £18); dabbous.co.uk

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- 5 Pineapple cocktail shaker £34, oliverbonas.com
- 6 Premier Housewares cocktail set £21.78, amazon.co.uk