

CULTURE

On Tasting and Tolerance (Plus 3 Cocktail Recipes)

By ALEKSANDRA CRAPANZANO

October 19, 2016



Somehow in my decade of food writing, I've not yet acquired the necessarily large alcohol tolerance that so many of my colleagues take utterly for granted. Sadly for my waistline, I can most always make room for dessert, petit fours, and chocolates. Not to mention cheese. But cocktail testing and tasting do me in with embarrassing speed. This is not to say I don't like them. I do. Very much. Too much, on occasion. And I love wine. As I write this, it is unseasonably warm, and I really, really wish I had a glass of perfectly chilled Chateau Haut Brion at my desk. Or a Montrachet. Or a Pouilly-Fuissé. My three favorite whites.

When I started researching *The London Cookbook*, I immediately realized I needed a chapter devoted to cocktails. The menus I was studying included the most incredible creations. I'd stay up late into the night reading cocktail lists the way I once read poetry as a young, idealistic literature student in college. Full of romantic zeal and literary hunger. Ready to experience. And so it was when I embarked on *The London Cookbook* that I thought I'd be able to taste three cocktails every evening of every night of every research trip. Work. You must have pity. I had a long list, and I needed to curate, choosing the best among the very great. After day one, I quickly realized I was not up to the task. You see, I could taste, but I couldn't finish, and I risked offending prideful mixologists. Never wise.

I began inviting friends to cocktails, something I never have time to do in real life, that is to say, at home. We'd order five or six and assess. I'd discreetly take notes, and someone else would finish them off, leaving the barman happy and my work complete. But what quickly became apparent is that I could write an entire second volume to *The London Cookbook* called *The London Cocktail*, and I do think I might. Brits, for the most part, love to drink, and the cocktails I had in London were the very best I'd had in any city. When it came time to narrow down to a dozen recipes, I was bereft. So many favorites had to go the way of the cutting room floor. And so it is that I'm here including a few that are, to my mind, sensational, but which I could not, despite numerous efforts, find room to include in my book. I hope you enjoy them, and then I hope you buy *The London Cookbook* not only for the others, but because – doctor's orders – good food is essential to good drinking.

City Boy, from Merchant's Tavern

An intriguing aperitivo

30 ml Vodka

15 ml Cocchi Americano

20 ml Cocchi Barolo Chinato

Dash of orange bitters

Pour into a chilled cocktail shaker filled with ice and shake twenty seconds. Strain into a chilled glass of your choice.