



Kitchen Ingredient Cocktails

Chefs, be forewarned. Your resident mixologists may well be raiding the walk-in searching for fresh ingredients to incorporate into their cocktails. High on their hit lists are cucumbers, chopped cilantro and basil, green pepper and jalapeños, tarragon and lemon verbena, and fruit of every type and description. They know that creamy sweet drinks are falling out of fashion losing ground to cocktails with exuberant, garden fresh flavors herbal and spicy profiles.

One of the leading advocates of the fresh movement is Adam Seger, general manager, sommelier and world-class bar chef at downtown Chicago's *Nacional 27*.

"When you break down the barriers between your bar and kitchen, good things happen. The best cocktails are crafted using the freshest ingredients, so open up the kitchen prep coolers to your mixologists. Not only will your bar begin serving more vital and flavorful drinks, but you'll also consolidate

prep labor costs, increase produce turnover, and create exciting food and cocktail flavor bridges."

Two recent Seger creations prove his point. The **Balsamic Strawberry Mojito** is a savory masterpiece prepared by muddling in an empty mixing glass a small handful of fresh mint leaves, strawberries, brown sugar and lime wedges, after which he stirs in a jigger of 10 Cane Rum, adds ice, a healthy dose of sparkling water, and a 1/2-teaspoon drizzle of aged balsamic vinegar. The bestselling cocktail is delicious and delightfully aromatic.

Seger's altogether savory **Garden Fresh Mojitonic** features muddled cucumbers, green tomatoes and fresh herbs, Plymouth Gin, tonic water and a lime wedge garnish. The ingredients meld seamlessly into a delightfully spry cocktail. Says Seger, "Even people who say that they don't usually care for gin really like this drink."

Another who specializes in concocting fresh, savory cocktails is Jim Meehan, noted author and

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master mixologist currently in residence at the *Gramercy Tavern* in New York City. He contends that herbal, or spicy cocktails are more in step with contemporary tastes than is sweet.

“In New York City, we get great local produce from June to September, and it would be a waste to not to use as much of it as possible when making drinks. The herbaceous flavors of gin and tequila work especially well with herbs, fruits, and vegetables,” says Meehan.

As evidence he points to the **Jimador’s Harvest**, a refreshing and vibrant cocktail constructed by muddling together Thai basil leaves, cucumber slices, and a half shot of St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur. After the ingredients are muddled, Meehan adds Jose Cuervo Platino Tequila and ruby red grapefruit juice, shakes the drink with ice, and then double strains it into a chilled coupe glass.

Kumo Restaurant is a chic Japanese restaurant in West Hollywood. There bar chef James Bobby creates specialty cocktails that complement the European-influenced Japanese cuisine utilizing a variety of ingredients not often found in cocktails including black vinegar, dill and ginger, teamed with unique herb garnishes such as lavender salt rims and red shiso leaves.

His latest tour de force is the **Black Margarita**, an attractive, exuberant cocktail made with Patrón Silver Tequila, Patrón Citrónge, fresh lime juice, simple syrup, and a measure of black vinegar. The drink is shaken and served over ice in a glass with a lavender salt rim.

Mekong Martini, a signature at *Bong Su*, a contemporary Vietnamese restaurant in San Francisco’s urbane South of Market district. The Martini is prepared with gin, chopped cilantro, two slices of jalapeño and fresh lemon sour mix. The ingredients are hand shaken vigorously, poured through a fine mesh strainer and served in a chilled cocktail glass. The production value alone makes it a work of art.

Like comfort foods, these savory drinks made with kitchen-fresh ingredients stimulate a broad swath of the palate, and play directly to the pleasure center in our brains. Perhaps more important, they’re cocktails that people can easily sip on throughout an evening without the drinks losing their appeal.

Balsamic Strawberry Mojito

Pint glass, chilled

Pour ingredients into an empty mixing glass

16 mint leaves

1/2 lime, quartered

3 fresh strawberries

1 tbsp. brown sugar

Muddle contents, stir, and add ice

1 1/2 oz. 10 Cane Rum

Near fill with sparkling water

Garnish with mint sprig and a strawberry on the rim

Garden Fresh Mojitonic

Pint glass, chilled

Pour ingredients into an empty mixing glass

Cucumber, 3” slice, rough chopped

3 lime wedges

Pinch cracked black pepper

Pinch kosher salt

1/4 fresh green tomato, rough chopped

Handful fresh herbs (assortment of basil, thyme, mint, tarragon, cilantro, dill, oregano, and rosemary)

Muddle contents and add ice

1 1/2 oz. Plymouth Gin

Near fill with tonic water

Garnish with lime wedge

Jimador Harvest

Coupette glass, chilled

Pour ingredients into an empty mixing glass

1/2 oz. St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur

3 Thai basil leaves

2 cucumber slices

Muddle contents and add ice

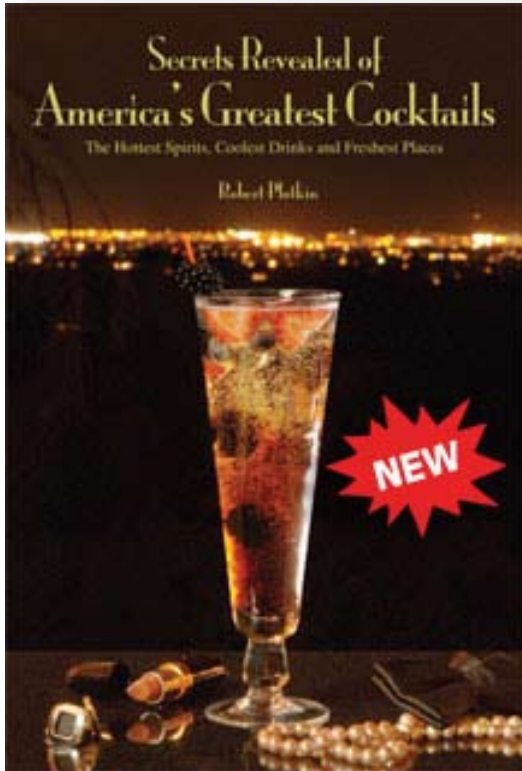
1 1/2 oz. Jose Cuervo Platino Tequila

3/4 oz. ruby red grapefruit juice

Shake ingredients and double strain

Garnish with cucumber wheel on the rim

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