

Summer cocktails take on Asian airs

BY JUDY CREIGHTON

From mojitos to Thai breakers, people stepping up to the bar are sipping Asian-inspired cocktails made with fresh ingredients and premium spirits as well as nonalcoholic versions.

"Ready-mixed drinks such as cocktails and martinis have been replaced with fresh juice and freshly squeezed fruits and premium spirits," says Nathan Cameron, bar specialist for Prime Restaurants of Canada. The company represents five restaurant-bar properties including Casey's Bar & Grill, Fionn MacCool's Irish Pub, Bier Markt, Pat and Mario's and Eastside Mario's.

Cameron says there is not as much call for ready-mixed drinks as there once was.

"A lot of times when you make daiquiris (a cocktail consisting of rum, lime juice and sugar) they have a lot of strawberry sugary mixes and concentrates," says the 29-year-old who has worked in many bars and restaurants in Canada.

"It's better to use real strawberries and a little bit of simple sugar so you can actually see and taste the fresh fruit in your drink. It really comes through in the flavour profile as well."

Cameron is very excited about the company's new nonalcoholic cocktail, the Matcha Smoothie, which is made from Japanese green tea containing



PHOTOS BY THE CANADIAN PRESS

Nathan Cameron likes to use fresh fruit in his creations.

eight different vitamins and 70 times the antioxidants of an orange. It is blended with concentrated fruit purées such as blueberry and raspberry and low-fat vanilla yogurt.

"For some people, matcha is replacing coffee as an even better caffeine to boost energy," Cameron notes.

"It has a natural caffeine that when released into your system takes about three to six hours and gives you a very perky and constant boost. With coffee, the caffeine goes into the system and gives an immediate boost, but there is a

big drop at the end."

He says the smoothies are particularly favoured over the lunch period at the bar restaurant for people looking for a healthy nonalcoholic beverage.

"They are going back to work and the matcha will keep them going all day."

Another popular summertime cooler is the mojito, made with lime juice, sugar, mint leaves and rum.

Cameron adds fresh mandarin oranges to the mix and "muddles" it all in a tall glass, then garnishes it with fresh mint. In cocktail slang, muddling



Cocktails: Matcha Smoothie, Lychee Berry, Thai Breaker, Mandarin Mojito.

means to mash or crush ingredients with a spoon or a muddler (a rod with a flattened end).

"We also add a little bit of ice, some passion fruit juice and soda water," he says, remarking that he is a big fan of mojitos.

Cameron advises having all the ingredients ready when making them at home.

At right is his recipe for a Mandarin Mojito.

Mandarin Mojito

Makes 1 serving

- 6 mandarin orange wedges
- 6 to 8 mint leaves, plus extra for garnish
- 1½ oz (45 mL) white rum
- 3 lime wedges
- 1½ oz (15 mL) cane syrup
- Ice cubes
- 1/3 cup (80 mL) passionfruit juice
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) soda water

Place mandarin oranges, mint, rum, lime and syrup into a smoothie glass and muddle very well. Add ice, filling the glass, then topping with passion fruit juice and soda water. Garnish with mint. Stir well and serve with a straw.

Approximate nutrition per serving: 250 calories, 0 g fat, 1 g protein, 40 g carbohydrates, 2 g fibre

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Cheers!
Here's
to cherries

BY SHELLEY BOETTCHER

Pick up a basket of cherries — they're an ultimate taste treat that's good for you, too. Cherries are loaded with powerful antioxidants known as anthocyanins (which provide that rich dark colour).

Researchers at the University of Texas think cherries may have anti-inflammatory benefits that are especially helpful for joint pain. Cherries may also increase melatonin levels in blood (therefore improving sleep).

Other studies have linked cherries with lowering cholesterol and reducing the risk of prediabetes.

Cherries can be enjoyed fresh, dried or as juice. Substitute dried cherries wherever you would use dried cranberries or raisins.

A smoothie is a delicious way to start the day in the summer. This recipe is from the Cherry Marketing Institute.

Can't find cherry juice concentrate? Check European food importers or substitute a shot of Pom's cherry-pomegranate juice instead. Or use plain cherry juice. And when they're in season, you can substitute fresh cherries for frozen — both in the drink and as a garnish. (Just don't forget to remove the pits.)

Cherry Berry Smoothie

Makes 2 servings

- 1/2 cup (125 mL) frozen cherries, pitted
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) low fat milk
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) plain low fat yogurt
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) fresh blueberries
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) cherry juice concentrate
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) honey
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) pure vanilla extract
- Sprinkle of cinnamon (optional)
- Ice cubes
- Sliced almonds AND dried OR frozen tart cherries for garnish (optional)

Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Pour into two chilled glasses. Garnish with almond slivers and dried cherries. Serve immediately.

Approximate nutrition per serving: 110 calories, 1 g fat, 5 g protein, 23 g carbohydrates, 1 g fibre

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