



→ NEAL McLENNAN

A Norse to Be Reckoned With

Long beloved of the Scandinavians who invented it, akvavit is now finding favour beyond its homeland

→ “AS FAR AS WE’RE CONCERNED, it’s a real damned disaster.”

So fretted Jorgen Lyth, then-president of Vancouver’s Danish House Society, about the great Christmas akvavit shortage of 2006. During that dark season, the wizards at the province’s Liquor Distribution Branch underestimated the public’s—by which I mean solely ex-pat Scandinavians’—desire for the caraway-infused alcohol. The result was that the holiday traditions of many a Dane, Swede, and

Norwegian were ruined.

We have no such worries this year—partly because the LDB has added one paltry label to its shelves, and also because it’s still almost exclusively the purview of Laplanders and their ilk. But mostly it’s because craft distillers have hopped onto all things Nordic and taken an interest in the spirit as an alternative to all the gin they’ve been producing. Unlike juniper-driven gin, akvavit (or aquavit, if you prefer) gets

THE BOTTLES

• BORNHOLMER AKVAVIT (\$31)

Made in the classic Swedish/Danish manner, with strong caraway and dill notes and no oak aging. It burns on the way down, but only for the first three shots

• LONG TABLE LÅNGBORD AKVAVIT (\$47)

Bartenders love the unique orange notes. A major step up from the Bornholmer, viscous and rich in the mouth

• AQUAVITUS (\$35)

From Kelowna’s Okanagan Spirits Craft Distillery.

Quite soft, it delivers its caraway notes with almost no boozy harshness. An amazing deal, too

its digestive-aid component from caraway—and, to a lesser extent, dill, fennel, and other infusions. You’ll be thankful for any help with digestion after you’ve put away a pound of gravlax and three plates of turkey with lingonberry stuffing.

Tradition dictates that you down an ice-cold shot with a hearty “Skål!” (You’re actually supposed to drink them in twos—one for each leg, as the Danes say.) But our local bartenders have glommed on to akvavit’s uniquely savoury and complex flavour profile, and they’ve created a raft of cocktails that pair beautifully with food. **VM**



Thor Paulson, The Diamond



Den Kloster

From Thor Paulson, *The Diamond*, 6 Powell St., 604-568-8272

1.5 oz Long Table Långbord Akvavit

$\frac{2}{3}$ oz yellow Chartreuse

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz freshly squeezed grapefruit juice

$\frac{1}{6}$ oz freshly squeezed lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ oz honey water (made by mixing equal parts honey and hot water, and allowing to cool)

Grapefruit peel

→ Combine all ingredients, except the grapefruit peel, in a cocktail shaker. Shake with ice and fine-strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Express the oils from the grapefruit peel into the drink and discard the peel.