

Fired up!

Turn up the heat with these spicy cocktails.

by CATHERINE CALDWELL



FROM TOP: A splash of Campari liqueur boots redolence (courtesy Campari); For a sweet-spicy blend, pour in Luxardo cherry (courtesy Anchor Distilling Company); Crater Lake vodka kicks things up with fresh peppers (courtesy Joseph Eastburn Photography). LEFT: Seductive martini rimmed with hot Hawaiian chili pepper salt (courtesy Sea Salts of Hawai'i).



A GLOWING AMBER SUN DIPS BELOW THE PACIFIC LIGHTING THE SKY ABLAZE IN BURNT CORAL, CITRINE AND crimson. Stars twinkle and romance kindles. Rather than requesting a standard nightcap *en couple*, turn up the heat with the spicy personalities blazing their way through the island bar scene.

Sriracha, jalapeño, chili pepper, Serrano and other vehement characters are peppering in a wave of libations that bite. Flaring up on stock shelves are pre-scorched varieties from household names like Hangar 1, Tanteo and Crater Lake in tongue-tingling chipotle, pepper and jalapeño form.

Spanning mild to wild, drink aficionados are exploring various culinary methods to add piquant flavors to industry classics. From sultry selections to sweet mixers that sizzle, local watering hole maestros are playing on the spicier side of the spirits spectrum. Popular approaches for *gusto* include *sous vide* and custom infusing.

"There's never a bad time for spicy spirits," says Dave Brown, food and beverage director at Outrigger Canoe Club, who, along with Joey Gottesman of Young's Market Company Hawaii, heralds *sous vide*-style cocktails on O'ahu.

According to Brown, this method infuses spirits with spices "sous vide" (French for "under vacuum") by cooking liquor with fresh ingredients and spices in an airtight vacuum bag in a temperature-controlled steamer.

"You're basically taking a brand you're familiar with and love the flavor of and enhancing it," Brown shares, detailing the contents of his *sous vide* Sazerac. "I take lemon and orange peels, fresh cloves, char a little bit of kiawe wood and guava, and throw in a little sugar, a cinnamon stick and vanilla bean. Cook

it; ice it down; then serve." *Santé* indeed.

Outrigger Canoe Club's sizzling *sous vides* include a heated Bacon Chili Bloody Mary:

BACON CHILI BLOODY MARY

(Classic Mary + Tito's vodka + applewood hickory smoked bacon + roasted Serrano chili peppers + lime)

Brown's muddled Mary, a jazzed-up version of the house favorite, marries juicy bacon with Southwestern chilies and a splash of lime for zest. "Any time you have that sweet, you need to have a hot to offset it," Brown says. "You can't go wrong with experimenting to find the flavor combination you like." Stir the Mary with flavored *sous vide* vodka and get a brunch that's hot. Add the flavored vodka to your bloody standard and garnish with bacon. Bonus: Add a stack of flapjacks or salty pork belly. Who's hungry?

Circling from Waikiki to Kaimuki, Mike Hall, bar manager at 12th Ave Grill, also plays with fire, creating custom mixers with spices. Hall's wizardry is all about experimentation and a hands-on approach to curating fresh ingredients: friends' trees and a little old lady who sells spices down the street, respectively.

Of note in 12th Ave's seasonal roulette is a boiling scarlet temptress brightening up the menu, Oaxaca Cherry:





OAXACA CHERRY

(Del Maguey 'Vida' mezcal + Luxardo bing cherry syrup + Campari + lime + jalapeño)

This naughty cherry is both fragrant and visually alluring. "Mezcal could be considered a cousin of tequila," Hall shares. "It's like a Scotch drinkers' tequila, so it lends smokiness in the drink." The Oaxaca loops Luxardo cherry liqueur and a little lemon zest through boil and simmer cycles, then introduces smoked jalapeños. "The spikiness with the smokiness lends a little bit of sweetness with the cherry, which balances out the spices." Sprinkle in a bit of bitter and a touch of Campari. The punch? Strained jalapeño seeds for a little spice, but if you desire to turn up the heat, don't hesitate. "It's all about balance. You don't want it to be overpowering—unless you tell me to knock your socks off, which I [and you!] can do." Pair with a refreshing raw salad or chips and salsa? Check mate.

If you favor more brine, a salty-sweet, fortuitous Lucky Devil may be more your speed:

LUCKY DEVIL

(Cazadores tequila + jabong and maraschino liqueurs + Thai basil + Hawaiian chili-spiced sugar-salt rim)

"Lucky" for the yellow fruit's surmised good fortune in Chinese culture, "devil" for spice—this trademark kicker could not be more grassroots. Like a mad scientist, Hall muddles Thai basil and teeny Hawaiian chili peppers with infused batches of enormous jabong plucked from friends' trees. To make the jabong liqueur, Hall skins two jabong with a zester, places the skins into a jar, tops with vodka and then steeps the fiendish beverage. The exotic jabong softens the sugar levels. "I use a salt and sugar blend that's about 50-50: Take Hawaiian chili peppers, chop them up, and then mix with the sugar and let them sit for a day or two, so it soaks up some of that spiciness."

FROM TOP: Radiant rouge Oaxaca Cherry; 12th Ave Grill drinks magus Mike Hall works his magic (both courtesy Nick Tomasello/Nicasello Photography); Del Maguey's rich, smoky flavor is rooted in Mexico's organic processes and varying micro-climates (courtesy Del Maguey Single Village Mezcal).

Hall suggests paring this sweet-salty Satan with fried foods. 12th Ave's Crispy Beer Battered Local Avocado, exemplary.

Whether you seek smoky infusions, DIY sous vide sirens or to stick with a pre-seasoned version of a classic standby—this fall, experiment with peppy personalities that burn. ■

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