

# MIXING

## ~~TURNING~~ WATER INTO WINE

From Spritzes to Sangria, and from pubs and bars to high-end restaurants, mixing wine is set to be one of this summer's hot trends. **Anne Krebiehl MW** takes a look at some of the options available

Come summer we should definitely get over ourselves. Yes, we should finally accept that it's ok to mix wine with water, fruit, lemonade and all sorts of things.

Countries blessed with an ingrained wine culture have understood this for centuries. For them, it's perfectly natural to use wine as a mixer: it slakes thirst and makes wine less potent. It's the secret behind long summer nights spent partying rather than falling over.

Our continental cousins don't recoil in horror at the non-sophisticated dilution of wine with seemingly lesser ingredients. Granted, it would be wrong to use exquisite bottles for mixing, but there are plenty of wines that make for ready enjoyment and open up new scope for summer drinking, creative mixing, revenue and, above all, fun.

### Sangria

In the right setting, wine mixers come easy. 'Sangrias are selling themselves,' attests Pedro Carvalho, operations director

for Ibérica, which has venues across London and Manchester. He explains that 'Sangrias started life by having fruit added to a poor-quality wine to make it more pleasant, but we only use good-quality wines to ensure the best results.

'By using good-quality ingredients I try to find a good balance of flavours and textures. For red Sangria I use a medium-to full-bodied wine with around 12.5% abv; for white Sangria I use fresh, fruity wines

### WHOEVER IS NOT PUTTING DIFFERENT PROSECCO OR CRÉMANT MIXERS ON THEIR LIST IS MISSING A TRICK

with 12-12.5% and dry white cava.'

But there's more to it than just adding a few strawberries and lemonade. Red Sangrias have nuances of red fruits, rum and cinnamon; white Sangrias of green fruits, herbs and cucumber.

Less well-known than Sangria but worth exploring is Agua de Valencia. It

comes with its own creation myth dating back to 1959, when bartender Constante Gil of Café Madrid in Valencia had to think on his feet for a set of demanding Basque travellers. 'The basic ingredients are cava, orange juice, vodka and gin,' Carvalho says. 'It's normally served in jugs and drunk from cocktail glasses.'

### Weisser G'spritzer

Christian Malnig, managing director at Austrian café Kipferl, is true to his roots. He hails from Austria's arch-wine village Gumpoldskirchen and offers both a white and a red G'spritzer at his Kipferl branches in Islington and Ladbroke Grove. 'The wines must always be dry and the blend is 50/50,' he says. For a *weißer* G'spritzer he normally uses a light, dry Grüner Veltliner or Welschriesling; for his *roter* G'spritzer usually Zweigelt, and he tops these up with sparkling mineral water. That's it. So simple, so thirst-quenching, so Austrian.

In Styria, the favourite G'spritzer wine is a delicately scented Gelber Muskateller, which makes for a fragrant, light summer

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drink. 'But we sell very little G'spritzter here in London,' says Malnig, sadly. 'People don't really relate to it. They view wine with reverence and don't realise how refreshing a G'spritzter really is.'

However, there is another wine mixer that Malnig cannot make enough of: 'The Hugo is a huge hit across German and Austrian bars. It's popular as an aperitif or a cocktail and just sells itself,' he says. 'Served in a slightly larger red wine glass, you start with a shot of elderflower cordial, add some ice cubes, top with 125ml dry white wine and another 130-140ml of sparkling mineral water. Garnish with fresh mint leaves and a slice of lime.'

While the G'spritzter takes a bit of selling, the Hugo, disguised as a cocktail, is flying off the list.

## May Punch

It seems wine mixers are easier to sell on cocktail menus than on wine lists, where people are less bound by tradition, and more open to experimentation.

Chris Lacey, bar manager at an earlier pop-up of Herman Ze German's Ze Basement Bar in Charlotte Street, London, revived a retro German classic in the Maibowle – or May Punch. Its original ingredients are dry white wine, quality dry sekt and a bunch of wilted woodruff *Galium odoratum*, a herb growing wild in Germany's deciduous forests (and easily in English gardens too). It has tiny, white star-shaped flowers that blossom in early May, hence the name.

The active flavour compound in woodruff is coumarin – the very same compound as in bison grass of Zubrowka fame. It is most abundant in woodruff

that is yet to flower and has been wilted or dried a little. Tied into a bunch, just the heads are steeped for an hour in the wine to infuse. This is then chilled and topped before serving with sparkling wine and sometimes soda. Little or no sugar is added, and it is traditionally served in a large punch bowl.

For his updated version, Lacey used

Heymann-Löwenstein's light-footed Riesling Sekt with woodruff syrup he made himself from the dried herb.

Again, the Maibowle appears on a cocktail menu – removing any reservations people might have were it listed on a wine list. And it is popular: 'If people are looking for something light, floral and refreshing, the Maibowle is perfect,' says Lacey.



## THE NEXT APEROL?

While the world still glows orange with Aperol, pros predict a resurgence of the home-grown as a Spritz ingredient.

Ivan Ramos at Bedford & Strand thinks that the trend will go towards unusual, artisanal liqueurs and spirits. He cites

Kamm & Sons, based on botanicals such as ginseng, hibiscus, manuka honey, elderflower and grapefruit, as an example.

Polpo's Tom Ross agrees: 'Producers such as Joe Stella, with its fantastic grapefruit liqueur and amaro, are ready to take

bitters and liqueurs in a new direction. It's great to have these UK-based producers around.'

Chris Lacey, meanwhile, thinks the future belongs to the diverse world of 'vermouth with slightly less sweet and more sophisticated flavours'.

## The Spritz

Italians never had any hang-ups when it comes to mixing wine. Italy is, after all, the land of the Spritz. Polpo, which has Venetian-style baccaros across London, was instrumental in popularising this northern Italian classic when it first opened in Soho's Beak Street in 2009.

Tom Ross, bars manager for Polpo, says: 'We've always had an excellent reaction from customers. We pour thousands of Spritzes a week and were once the biggest sellers of Campari in the UK.'

A Spritz is a mix of dry, unoaked white wine, a green olive, a splash of soda and either mild Aperol or far more adult Campari. Ross also observes that 'our customers now embrace wine in a very different way. I believe the way we drink, treat and talk wine has certainly relaxed in the past 10 years, and bartenders now find it more acceptable to mix with wine.'

He outlines the potential: 'For me, mixing with wines opens up a huge flavour range from, say, a sweet, botrytised Tokaji to a spiced fortified or aromatised amaro. Amari and bitter Italian liqueurs

Bellini and Aperol Spritz, the menu changes all the time. The Rhubarb Bellini, with rhubarb purée and Chase Rhubarb Vodka, became an instant bestseller.

Whoever is not putting different prosecco or crémant mixers on their list is missing a trick – and revenue. The possibilities are endless: Bellini Melba with peach, raspberry and some vanilla; Sgroppino with lemon ice cream (never sorbet) and a dash of vodka, or Sorrento Sparkle with limoncello. Concoctions with spice and apple, plum and damson, marmalade, pumpkin or maple syrup extend the ultra-seasonality of this idea.

## Champagne Cocktails

Almost every self-respecting list in the UK has a champagne cocktail of some sort.

To overcome any remaining hesitations of using champagne as a mixer, two houses are fully on trend, as Rhian Phillips, head of marketing for Searcys, a nationwide chain of champagne bars, says: 'Veuve Clicquot Rich and Lanson White Label are champagnes with an increased dosage specifically designed with mixology in

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are central to lots of the drinks we create, particularly for aperitivo.'

## Fizzes

Ivan Ramos, bar manager at Covent Garden stalwart Bedford & Strand also lists his wine-based mixed drinks on the cocktail list. However, he emphasises that punters often order wine spritzers – wine mixed with ice, soda or lemonade.

This, of course, works exactly along the lines of the G'spritzer, but perhaps asking for it is more acceptable in the realm of the pub than the wine bar. Under the heading of 'Fizzes' he strays into familiar territory: the sparkling wine-based cocktail. His autumnal 'Hedgerow Fizz' is sloe gin mixed with crémant rosé.

Ramos' wine-based fizzes are very seasonal – apart from the ever-popular

mind. The sweetness allows them to work well with other cocktail ingredients or they can simply be served over ice.'

While Veuve Clicquot suggests that Rich be paired with ice and just one cocktail ingredient, namely cucumber, pineapple, celery, peppers or loose leaf tea, others have taken the idea much further: whole teapots of cocktails based on Rich are served as a twist on afternoon tea at Mr Fogg's in Mayfair.

General manager Danilo Tersigni says: 'When mixed with white and black teas, Veuve Clicquot Rich gives a unique taste. Customers love the sweetness and the floral aspect.'

You see, champagne even works in a teapot. Wine's versatility, it seems, is infinitely enhanced when used creatively. So get over yourself, and get mixing! 🍷



## PEDRINO – MAKING PX THE USP

Intrepid bartenders have long embraced fortified wines as cocktail ingredients.

Pedrino, a 'premium alcoholic tonic' that was launched last summer, was created using a base of Pedro Ximénez, quinine and citrus and was designed as a stand-alone drink and mixer.

Founder Sam Showering says: 'The time was right for a sherry-inspired mixer; it's all part of sherry's transformation in Britain.'

Why did he base it on Pedro Ximénez? 'Because it delivers a complex sweetness that is familiar to British palates. Its dark, raisiny notes are exactly what we needed to give Pedrino its natural sweetness to balance out the sharpness of our all-natural quinine.'

