

Inspiring Craft Cocktails and Spirits Ignite the Senses

By Susie Iventosch



FAIR Spirits Café Liqueur Bread Pudding

Photo Susie Iventosch

The craft cocktail Art of Mixology Contest hosted by the Orinda Arts Council in late October was a big success, according to Kal Deutsch, vice president of communications for the Arts Council.

"The event was great," Deutsch said. "The crowd was approximately 250, who braved a few sprinkles. We also had a blow-up screen to show the World Series."

According to Deutsch, the event had great feedback, so a second annual Craft Cocktail contest is likely!

"We had one request that we do one contest in the spring and one in the fall," Deutsch added.

The overall winner was Joe Cleveland from The Cooperage American Grill in Lafayette. He won first prize for The Perfect Pair, a combination of Rye Bourbon, St George Spicy Pear Liqueur, Tobacco Syrup and lemon Juice, topped with a hot mulled wine espuma (froth or foam). Second place winner, Ashley Myers from Forge Pizza in Danville, pleased the crowd with Fall's First Fire, a blend of Zaya rum, Drambuie, and a dash of cream with a Laphroaig rinse, all garnished with pumpkin spice gelato quenelles.

Third place, audience favorite and top amateur winners were Matty McGee from Flora Restaurant in Oakland, Rachael Kruse of Corners Tavern in Walnut Creek, and Amy Jeter of Moraga. Their creative concoctions were the Vesuvio Swizzle, the Drunk'n Pumpkin and the Call a Cab, respectively.

Myers' recipe is featured on this page, but you can visit the Orinda Arts Council website (see Info Box) and

gnac, France, but imported and distributed locally by Bay Pac Beverages out of Danville. The FAIR Spirits products are stocked at Moraga Wine & Spirits, Whole Foods and Jackson's Wine & Spirits in Lafayette. Currently, the line features Quinoa Vodka, Café Liqueur, and the brand new Belize Rum. The rum is sourced from fair trade sugar cane grown in Belize.

The quinoa for FAIR's vodka is sourced in Bolivia where FAIR works with a fair trade-certified growers' cooperative. The coop is comprised of 1,200 independent farmers. The quinoa is then shipped to France, where it is made through a single distillation process. The product is gluten-free, and was awarded 96 points from the Beverage Tasting Institute and received their Platinum Medal award in 2014.

The Café Liqueur, is made with coffee beans sourced in Vera Cruz,

Mexico and I suggest using it in coffee-flavored desserts, such as my coffee frozen yogurt mud pie, or this bread pudding from Cristian Molina, FAIR's brand ambassador at Bay Pac. (The mud pie recipe will be featured in the next issue!)

"I really am passionate about this

company and our commitment to fair trade," said Quasebarth. "We are so pleased to be bringing sustainable, socially-responsible, fair trade spirits into Northern California."

Please see the FAIR Café Liqueur bread pudding below. It makes a fun and festive holiday dessert!

Orinda Arts Council Mixology Winners:

<http://orindaarts.org/arts-news/art-mixology-winners>

FAIR Spirits: <http://www.fairspirits.com/>

Bay Pac Beverages: <http://www.bay-pac.com/>

Beverage Tasting Institute Award Description: http://www.tastings.com/search_spirits.lasso?se=k&kw=FAIR%20Quinoa%20vodka&sb=All&sf=ScoreForSort

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. **This recipe can be found on our website:** www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Fall's First Fire

Recipe by Ashley Myers of Forge Pizza, Danville

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces Zaya Rum
2 ounces Drambuie
3 drops cherry bark bitters
Laphroaig rinse

DIRECTIONS

Use a small amount of Laphroaig to line the inside of a brandy snifter. Remove any excess scotch. Combine room temperature ingredients in a shaker and stir. Pour gently into rinsed snifter and garnish (on a spoon over the rim of the glass) with a pumpkin gelato quenelle. The relative warmth of the beverage should play nicely against the cold gelato. Sip your cocktail and taste the gelato alternately, letting the fresh pumpkin flavor calm the sweet spices of the cocktail.

Quenelles are beautiful football shaped scoops of any soft dessert item (or any food item for that matter). If this cocktail is served fresh with unlimited resources, a quenelle is its best accompaniment. I tried deep freezing quenelles at home in my conventional freezer to preserve their shape (Forge doesn't have a deep freeze!) and ended up scooping up the gelato with a tasting spoon instead. The flavor effect was the same, so if quenelle making isn't your thing, scoop some ice cream into a bowl and call it a day!

FAIR Spirits Café Liqueur Bread Pudding

INGREDIENTS

6 slices day-old baguette, cut into medium size chunks
2 eggs
¼ cup firmly-packed light brown sugar
2 ounces FAIR Café Liqueur
½ teaspoon cinnamon
Pinch of salt
1 ½ cups milk
½ cup evaporated milk
¼ cup raisins

DIRECTIONS

Lightly butter a 6-inch square baking dish. Spread the bread cubes in it. In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, brown sugar, Café Liqueur, cinnamon and salt until well blended. Pour the milk mixture over the bread cubes. Let stand, pressing down on the bread occasionally, until it is evenly soaked, about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Scatter the raisins evenly over the surface of the soaked bread and press to submerge the fruit. Set the baking dish in a large, shallow roasting pan. Add very hot tap water to the roasting pan to halfway up the sides of the bread pudding dish. Bake for about 20 to 25 minutes, or until a knife inserted comes out clean. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or gelato and top with ½ ounce of Café Liqueur. Susie's notes: I didn't have a 6-inch square baking dish, so I used two smaller dishes, more like 4-inches square. Also, I put the raisins in with the bread before adding the milk mixture and I used a mixture of bakery whole wheat bread and baguette pieces. And, finally, mine baked for closer to 30-25 minutes in the water bath.

The Tiptoes of Happiness

... continued from page B2

Simply entitled, "Leslie," the compilation CD was released in October by San Rafael's Access Music Records (www.accessmusicrecords.com), and features a compelling mix of classics – "Moon River" and "Still Dream," the uplifting spiritual, "I'll Fly Away," and even an operatic duet, "Con Te Partiro." The CD is being sold locally by Orinda Books and Orinda Hardware with individual selections available on iTunes – just in time for the holidays. Up next, O'Brien and Miller will record songs of empowerment to help listeners be their very best selves, and will then release a Christmas CD in two years.

It's an ambitious schedule. The entire process for "Leslie" took about four-and-a-half years, including a six-month break for Miller to tour nationwide with the Zac Brown Band. "It was a steep learning curve combined with a lesson in humility, but the whole thing just worked out really well for this time in my life," explains O'Brien. "I was able to record during the many mornings it took, and then be with my kids when they came home from school. And I was healthy the whole time – probably

because of all of the deep breathing I was doing."

Miller chose many of the songs to showcase O'Brien's unique, pure voice. "Terry has such amazing connections in the music industry. He wanted Tom Scott to play 'Autumn Leaves' and 'In the Wee Small Hours.'" A three-time Grammy Award-winning saxophonist, Scott has backed numerous jazz and popular singers over his long career, including Carole King, Joni Mitchell and Johnny Matthis.

O'Brien also weighed in, too, because she really wanted to share Kander and Ebb's, "A Quiet Thing" with the world. She loves the song's central message, and hopes it will resonate with listeners. "You think you know how your day will turn out, but then life happens. Things change. Then, one day, you look around and realize just how great your life is. Happiness really does come in on tiptoe."

To learn more and to purchase O'Brien's music, visit:

Leslie Darwin: <http://lesliesongs.com/>
iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/leslie/id946938908>

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