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## Pour Me

By A.K. Carroll



A traditional Bloody Mary. Photos A.K. Carroll

There is perhaps no one more deserving of an all-day celebration than the woman who bore you, burped you and brought you up. As a child, you could get away with a handmade card and breakfast in bed, but now that you're full-grown it's time to kick it up and brunch like an adult. Start with a decadent eggs benedict or Mom's favorite whole-grain muffin, and be sure to make a toast with one of America's favorite brunchtime beverages: the Bloody Mary.

Like many cocktail classics, the origin of the Bloody Mary is much-debated, and has been for decades. Most barmen (and women) agree that the vodka-tomato concoction was first served to alcohol-deprived Americans in Paris, sometime around the 1920s by a bartender called Fernand "Pete" Petiot. A talented staple of the infamous Harry's New York Bar (which was located in Paris, confusingly enough), Petiot spent Prohibition in a city where serving up spirits was still legal. He later migrated to the King Cole Bar of the St. Regis Hotel in New York, where Petiot served a drink called The Red Snapper, which was a cocktail comprised of vodka, tomato juice, citrus and spices. Sound familiar? I think so.

Comedian George Jessel deemed himself as the originator of the Bloody Mary in a 1956 issue of Collier's and was credited with the initial idea by Petiot himself in

a 1964 New Yorker article, but it was Petiot who added the salt and pepper, Worcestershire, cayenne and lemon that made the drink what it is today.

Many believe that the drink was named for Mary the First of England, who earned her notorious nickname for slaughtering Protestants in an attempt to reestablish the Catholic Church. Others claim actress Mary Pickford or socialite Mary Brown Warburton, a contemporary and acquaintance of Jessel. It has also been said that Petiot named the drink for a woman who sat at his bar waiting for a suitor who never showed, which is the favored origin story of Brian Bartels, whose newly released book, "The Bloody Mary," hit the bookshelves in March.

In the 80-plus years since its inception, the Bloody Mary has developed a reputation as a "hair of the dog" day-after cocktail, which is in large part why we've come to associate it with brunch. It's one of few common cocktails that can hold its own even without alcohol, and is (in this writer's opinion) one of your best in-flight options. The modern Bloody Mary is practically a meal unto itself, with many bartenders adding olives, pickled vegetables, strips of bacon, and skewers of shrimp to the classic mixture of vodka and seasoned tomato juice. Bloodys are savory, often spicy, and easy to alter for particular palates. While the classic Bloody mix is made with tomato juice, lemon juice, cayenne, Worcestershire, salt and pepper, many add Tabasco sauce, horseradish, and celery salt, among other seasonings.

If you're looking for an easy option, go for a premade mix (Pacific Pickle Works makes some of the best I've ever had) and a mid-range vodka. Top shelf spirits are pretty much wasted on a drink that wasn't made to showcase the spirit, though you can switch it up with mezcal or tequila. Still, fresh is best if you have time to make a mix of your own. Or better yet, let someone else do it for you. Below are just a few local haunts where you can get a good Bloody. (Make sure to bring mom with you).

Rustic Tavern - Starting with a house-made mix that features fresh horseradish, salt, pepper, the Bacon Bloody Mary, is mixed with well vodka, and garnished with olive, cocktail onion, lemon, lime, a salted rim, and a strip of smoked applewood bacon. (\$10)

3576 Mount Diablo Blvd, Lafayette, CA 94549, (925) 385-0559

Sideboard - Weekends only, Sideboard blends tomato juice with horseradish, tobacco, lime, and Worcestershire, then adds sake instead of vodka, and garnishes with celery, bacon and olive. (\$9.75)

3535 Plaza Way, Lafayette, CA 94549, (925) 310-4773

Yankee Pier - House-made mix is combined with well vodka (or vodka of choice) and garnished with celery and cold shrimp. (\$9.50)

3593 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette, CA 94549, (925) 283-4100

Casa Orinda - Bloodys here are built as you go (so no two are exactly the same). Bartenders spice up tomato juice and vodka with steak sauce, Tabasco, salt and pepper, served in a 16 oz. bucket glass and garnished with celery and squeeze of lime (\$9).

20 Bryant Way, Orinda, CA 94563, (925) 254-2981

Make your own Bloody Mary:

1 1/2-2 ounces vodka

1/2 cup tomato juice

2 teaspoons of fresh lemon juice

1-3 dashes Tabasco sauce

4-6 dashes Worcestershire sauce

pinch of salt and pepper

1 tsp celery salt

1 celery stick

1 lemon wedge

Add all ingredients to cocktail shaker. Mix by pouring liquid back and forth between the shaker's two halves. Pour into glass over ice. Garnish at will.



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