

Your voting questions answered



Photo Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

The long-awaited general election of November 2020 is fast approaching. According to Assistant Registrar of Voters Scott Konopasek, voters in California have been voting by mail for over 20 years and every elected official in the state has been elected by a majority of mail-in ballots. "If you trusted it last time, you should trust it this time," he advised.

The county is making it even easier to vote this year. Secure locked ballot drop boxes are increasing from 12 to 43. In Lamorinda, these secure ballot boxes are located at the Lafayette School District Office, the Albert Hall Library at Saint Mary's College in Moraga and at Orinda

City Hall. There are many other secure locked ballot boxes throughout the county, including the Contra Costa County Clerk-Recorder-Elections Office at 555 Esco-bar St. in Martinez.

All ballots are collected daily from drop boxes and polling locations. When a ballot is received by Elections, staff will validate the ballot by checking to see that the signature on the outside envelope matches the signature on the voter's registration. If it doesn't, the voter will be notified of the problem and given an opportunity to cure the problem. Konopasek says that half of all rejected ballots are ones where the voter forgot to sign the envelope, or the signature doesn't match.

Voting early will be great for the election, Konopasek said. The more ballots that are received early, the easier counting the ballots will be. Additionally, the more ballots cast early, the less strain and stress there will be at polling places, and that would result in shorter waiting times to vote. The earlier ballots are turned in, the faster they can be counted and the sooner the results of the election will be known, although, as with any election, the results will not be official until certified by the county election official.

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Cocktail competition

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Spector mentioned that the cocktails can also be prepared with non-alcoholic spirits, such as those by Seedlip.

Nomura says that the mixologist award is coveted among bartenders, who advertise that they are award winners. She also said that sponsors have embraced the event, seeing it as a great activity during these difficult times. The process was very long, starting back in July with applications from bartenders. Spector described it as essentially like planning two events.

The 2020 finalists and their cocktails include Hailey Coder of Bar Cava in Martinez, whose cocktail is called Two Faced and offers the best of both worlds – a refreshing fruity concoction with a kick! This drink features El Mayor Tequila, combined with the contrasting flavors of jalapeno and pineapple, cranberry bitters and lime juice, and rimmed with something a little different on each side.

Ben Dimond (from Bardo Lounge in Oakland) features the cocktail Smog in the Noggin, inspired by the bartender's thousands of interactions with strangers passing through who asked him to surprise them with something special. This drink features St. George Terroir Gin, combined with honey syrup, Meyer lemon shrub, and absinthe, topped off with sparkling soda and herbs.

Brian Gamble, an independent mixologist, offers the cock-

tail Fall'ifornia Dreamin' which kicks off the season with an autumn flavor bonanza! This drink features St. George Breaking & Entering American Whiskey, combined with St. George Spiced Pear Liqueur, apple cider, rich chocolate bitters, and cozy spices.

Mike Whipple of Canyon Club Brewery in Moraga concocted the Chipotle Bloody Mary, which breaks with tradition and starts your day off with some heat. This drink features Tahoe Blue Vodka, paired with tangy tomato, bright citrus, and smoky chipotle.

Sadé Stamps of Sobre Mesa in Oakland created her cocktail, Betty's 7pm, which captures the essence of cocktail time at the bartender's family celebrations and the merriment that ensued. This drink features Banks 5 Island Rum, paired with Meyer Lemon shrub, pineapple syrup, two different bitters and a pineapple garnish.

Art of Mixology kits are available for shipping or pickup during designated times at sponsor Orinda Theatre Square in front of Starbucks. Kits and will be available until the end of October. Each kit, which makes from six to 10 drinks, sells for \$50 each or all five kits can be purchased for \$200. Pickup is free; shipping is an option at \$15 per kit. Pickup will be from 5 to 7 p.m. on Thursdays and from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

All details about the event can be found at the Lamorinda Arts Council website: <https://lamorindaarts.org>

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