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The Winter 75 With Love from Chicago

Virtual Shake-Along at 4:15pm, 12/4/2021

Grocery List

Cognac--You're in good company if you're not a cognac expert! We will discuss during class how this became the least-popular base spirit in the States. Okay--Crash course in cognac! At its most basic level, cognac is a grape-based spirit which is then aged in French oak. It tends to have the juicy, round profile that many of us seek in the colder months. Cognac can be confusing to buy because there are a number of age-statements that divide the categories of production-style. So, I'll shoot you straight: my two recommended bottles for cocktailing are Hardy VSOP & Pierre Ferrand Ambre. I like the Hardy: it has a rich & buttery mouthfeel and it's not too *hot* to sip on it's own by the fire. The Pierre Ferrand (make sure it's the Ambre as they also make a lot of top-tier cognacs) is a bit more lucious and fruit-forward than Hardy. And a little pricier. All I ask is that you refrain from choosing the \$18 cognac that's all dusty on the bottom shelf. There's a difference and--truly--your cocktail will be only as good as its worst ingredient. Lastly, cognac is pretty singular in it's flavor profile so I don't recommend substituting. The French 75 (which I am basing this cocktail on) is known to frequently use gin as a base, and that move will work but will create a thinner, more summery version of this drink. Other brown spirits like bourbon might be a better choice, if you're in a pinch.

Lemon--Usually one lemon will give you one ounce of juice, which is enough for one drink. You won't need any fancy tools. A hand-juicer is a dream, but a fork, or a strong squeeze will also do the trick. Keep an eye out for the seeds, and remove. I also like to strain through fine-mesh to eliminate the chunks of pulp.



Apologue Aronia--Apologue is a fantastic brand to represent the ingenuity that's happening in our very own Chicago bar scene. I'm genuinely a big fan & use their products often. Since their birth in 2018, they have expanded their distribution immensely. So, they are available in huge swaths of the US, not only in Chicago. Try to search early and obtain a bottle for your home bar. I'm glad to recommend future uses beyond this workshop, as well. If you absolutely cannot find the Aronia expression, a cassis & currant liqueur called Chambord is my recommended substitute. I would stay away from any deep berry liqueurs which do not carry one of these brand names. There is a very steep drop-off in this category from the "main" producer to the look-alikes. They quickly get syrup-y and

uber-sweet. For this cocktail, that kind of sugary sweetness will make our maple syrup obsolete, which will make me very sad. It's never good to have a sad bartender. ;)

Maple Syrup--I love the addition of deep, dark, *true* maple syrup for balancing this cocktail. Grade B is best (the first tap of the maple tree), but simple syrup can be used with any sugar of your choice. If you've never made simple, it's the easiest. Equal parts sugar (any kind you choose, brown sugar or raw cane would be a nice approximation to the maple flavor) and warm water. Shake or stir until the granules of sugar dissolve and store in the fridge for a week or three. You can also warm this over the stovetop and it takes less than 5 minutes and only one dish needs to be cleaned. Easypeasy.

Sour Cherry Bitters by BitterEx--For anyone who is not familiar with bitters, they are a fascinating detail in the cocktail world. Bitters are high-alcohol tinctures that tend to be intensely aromatic. They draw flavor from dozens of fruits, peels, barks, herbs and seeds. The sour cherry flavor from this company uses a signature recipe that I have not seen done quite as well with any other producer. *And*, [BitterEx](#) hails from right here in Chicago, with an intregous owner & a comical origin story. They can be purchased and shipped (for free!) online and make excellent Christmas gifts or exploratory home bar ingredients.

Bubbles--The French 75 cocktail has a curious make-up in that it brings wine-based spirit and wine-wine together. You can use what we call splits (baby bottles) or a few ounces from a full-sized bottle for this drink. I don't think you need direction for how to make use of the rest of that bottle! I recommend a cava (sparkling wine from Spain) or prosecco (sparkling wine from Italy) style, as they tend to be drier and more fruit-forward than a true champagne from Champagne. Look for the label Extra-Brut, which is the driest style. Cocktails do not need any extra sugar from the wine, since we are adding it ourselves during the build. [Portell](#), [Minionetto](#), and [Grut](#) are all good brand choices and will float around the same ticket price.

Spirit-Free--We also want to offer a crafted approach for a spirit-free beverage. In addition to your lemon, maple syrup & bubbles (soda water), you will want some berries. I recommend either smashing fresh berries when you add your lemon or steeping about a cup of berries into a half-cup of warm maple syrup and straining solids out before the workshop begins. This latter technique will give you a rich fruit-forward sweetener for your spirit-free beverage, creating a bit more flavor-layering in the absence of alcohol.

Luxardo Cherry Garnish (optional)--Cherry garnishes could be a workshop all by themselves; there's so much to say! For our purposes, the bitters is acting as an aromatic garnish in our Winter 75. However, if you are interested in exploring (or already have on your home bar) [Luxardo cherries](#), they add a nice ornamental touch. They are true maraschinos, not the bleached-red cherries on top of an ice cream sundae and carry this deep, dark, mouth-coating fruit flavor. Get fancy.

Tools Recommendations

I will say over and over how much I believe in the freedom of home bartending, which you are about to do. Even so, it can be adventurous or fun to grow your tools collection for cocktailing, if it strikes you as a hobby or delight. I will be using the following tools during our workshop.

Shaker/Strainer--In a cobbler shaker, these two tools come combined into one. You can use a Boston shaker or a mason jar or any container with a secure lid. We don't have to be fancy, just utilitarian. Insider tip: my dad uses a Tupperware container--and he used to own a tavern!

Juicer/Fork--You need some way to get your lemon juice from inside that peel to inside your glass. I will give you time to do this during the demo. A little mesh strainer can help to separate the pulp.

Jigger/Measuring Spoons--Measuring is important because the entire point of all this mixing is to achieve balance. A jigger is a niche tool, and easy to work around. If you have one, great! If not, 1oz is the same as 2TBS, so measuring spoons will also work.

Muddler/Back of Serving Utensil--A muddler is a sturdy handle with a flat end. I use the back of one of my serving/cooking utensils when I can't find mine. Oops! Our goal for spirit-free folks is to gently press some flavor from the berries if you did not make the infused maple syrup before class.

Ice--A tool or an ingredient...? Up for debate. A double agent! In any case, we will surely need some. You can use any shape or style for the drink we're making. Have your ice prepared in the freezer. And leave it there until we are ready to shake during class.

Remember: every cocktail goes in a glass! Have one handy for class.

I'll see you all inside our screens!

Cheers, Linda