



Photography: Kenneth Theissen

MINT AND MANGO SPICY MARTINI

☺Cocktail☺

You might not think an Italian restaurant known for its pear and Gorgonzola *agnolotti* and tomato-rich snapper and seafood *cacciucco* soup would also be a haven for rum lovers, but that will change once you meet *Il Tempio*'s two bartenders.

by Bartenders **Leo Valente** and **Alessandro Acquaro** of *Il Tempio*

Thanks in no small part to the restaurant's daily Milan-style *aperitivo* happy hour (which comes with a complimentary buffet of *focaccia*, *arancini* and other *antipasti* on Friday and Sunday), Leo Valente and Alessandro Acquaro know how to work with rum.

In addition to rums perfect for mojitos and rum punch, the restaurant's bar also boasts several bottles of fine rum meant for sipping rather than shaking, including Barbados' Foursquare Rum Distillery's 2005 vintage that won the *International Spirits Challenge* award for best spirit in 2018, as well as a no-longer-produced Zinfandel Cask Blend and the last on-island bottle of Foursquare's Empery rum, a 14-year blend of pot- and column-distilled rum aged in bourbon and sherry casks, only eight bottles of which were ever sold to Barbados restaurants.

So believe Valente when he says you need white rum for this mint and mango Spicy Martini – preferably E.S.A.F. white rum from local distillery R.L. Seale & Co. Ltd. “Dark rum with the mango and spice is terrible. Honestly, I think so”, says Valente, who's been at *Il Tempio* since it opened in 1995.

You can make this drink as a Martini, without ice, or in a tumbler with ice, adds Acquaro, but the Martini version is more intense from being undiluted. The appeal of the highball version is that the ice lowers the drink's sweetness and spiciness as it melts, while keeping it chilled longer. “But don't wait to drink it!” says Acquaro, because the first sip should be concentrated mango flavour with a little heat. “It's a drink where immediately you feel the spice, so the first feeling is ‘wow!’”

Valente also recommends not using a straw for this drink, because sipping from a lime-rimmed glass gives you the perfect sweet-and-sour balance to take the edge off the heat of local Scotch bonnet chilli peppers. “If you drink with a straw, honestly, bah! It's not the same feeling”, finishes Valente with Italian vehemence.

If you want the drink to be less spicy, you can use less of the infused rum. And if you want even more kick, you can always nibble the whole Scotch bonnet pepper on the garnish...

LEO VALENTE

Bartender / Co-owner – Il Tempio

ALESSANDRO ACQUARO

Bartender / Manager – Il Tempio

Mint and Mango Spicy Martini

Makes 1 cocktail

INGREDIENTS

Half a lime, cut in wedges
8-10 fresh mint leaves
3-4 oz. mango purée
1 oz. Scotch bonnet pepper-infused white rum
3 slices of fresh mango, a small sprig of mint and a whole Scotch bonnet pepper, for garnish

Instructions

1. Moisten the rim of a Martini glass with a lime wedge.
2. Gently muddle together the lime wedges and mint in a cocktail shaker.
3. Add the mango purée and rum along with ice and shake to combine.
4. Strain the drink into the lime-rimmed Martini glass and garnish with a skewer of Scotch bonnet pepper (if you're brave), a few slices of fresh mango and the sprig of mint.



MANGO PURÉE

For this recipe you'll need mango purée – preferably from an exceptionally ripe mango – rather than mango juice. The pulp of the purée softens the heat of the Scotch bonnet pepper. One small mango should make enough purée for a single drink, but make more for multiple cocktails and use any leftovers in smoothies, or for tomorrow's *aperitivo*.

To make the purée, cut around the pit of the mango, scrape out the flesh and blend it in a blender until smooth. There's no need to add sugar or water, says Acquaro. An exceptionally ripe mango mixed with the rum should be sweet enough, but you can always add simple syrup to taste. You can also use frozen mango purée, but most commercial purées are sweetened, so the cocktail will end up being sweeter.



TIPS FOR MAKING SCOTCH BONNET-INFUSED RUM

1. The amount of Scotch bonnet pepper you use depends on when you're planning to make the cocktail. Four peppers should infuse in two to three days. Five to six peppers will take about one to two days.
2. Remove the seeds and white pith from the insides of the peppers and discard them. "Otherwise the infusion becomes too spicy and bitter", says Acquaro. Then, pop the peppers into a full bottle of white rum and taste it every day until it's ready. Not all peppers are created equal and only you know how much spice you can handle. "The colour should be very pale yellow, almost white", says Valente. Then strain out the peppers and discard or use them for garnishing the drink.
3. After two weeks, the infused rum loses its flavour, so if you're not planning on going through a whole bottle of rum within that time, make a smaller batch.