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November 29, 2006

## Knock It, Then Try It

By PETE WELLS

NOBODY likes my Pernod and pomegranate Cosmopolitan, but I do.

The name is a part of the problem. In its “Sex and the City” heyday, the Cosmopolitan implied the promise of fresh romance. Now that its promises have been exhausted, it has the bruised and slightly dented air of an ex-husband.

When I offer to make my drink for friends, they act as if I’ve reminded them of something they were trying to forget. When I reassure them it’s not really a Cosmopolitan and tell them what’s in it, things get worse.

“I just don’t see how that could be any good,” one said.

Just after I came up with the recipe, I submitted it along with four others to a magazine. The four others appeared in print. My Cosmopolitan didn’t even make it to the test kitchen.

It is my position that the test kitchen would have loved my drink, given the chance. Its lush dose of pomegranate makes the regular Cosmopolitan seem vapid, but the grown-up element, the thing that makes my drink as cosmopolitan as the Cosmopolitan aspires to be, is the Pernod. It gets along beautifully with the pomegranate juice. For some reason, though, nobody can picture them together.

I am starting to feel a little sorry for my drink. It’s like a lost mutt who has been at the pound for 29 days. So I was relieved to hear that many bartenders — real bartenders, who make a living at this — occasionally invent cocktails that their customers would rather not try.

The trouble may be personal, an aversion rooted in an unhappy memory. “People are scared of gin,” said Scott Beattie, who mixes drinks almost entirely from Sonoma County ingredients at Cyrus restaurant in Healdsburg, Calif. “Brandy, too. They hear brandy and they think of Grandma and her Korbels on ice.” Or the stumbling block may be a partnership of ingredients that sounds doomed. Ryan Magarian, a bar consultant in Seattle, developed a cocktail he calls the Love Unit for the Hyde Lounge in West Hollywood. His clients were deeply skeptical when he told them the Love Unit contains vanilla rum, grapefruit juice, basil leaves and red bell peppers. “Everybody kind of went, ‘No way,’ ” Mr. Magarian recalled.

According to every bartender I know, the quickest way to scare off thirsty customers turns out to be using one of the most common ingredients of all: the egg. Customers seem to think raw eggs are slimy, or unhealthy, or something consumed in liquid form only by boxers in B movies. Jose Miranda, a mixologist at WD-50 on Manhattan's Lower East Side, gets puzzled looks whenever he drops an egg yolk into his Malta Fizz. "That's the part people don't understand," Mr. Miranda said. "It's like, 'Egg yolk in a cocktail?'" (Those puzzled looks don't always go away when Mr. Miranda explains that the Malta Fizz is named for another ingredient, malta, a dark brown beverage that is brewed from barley and hops but contains no alcohol.)

And yet the Love Unit and the Malta Fizz have found loyal followings. In each case all it took was some persuasion from the man behind the bar and a little trust from the people in front of it. I am very encouraged by this news. If there are customers out there who will drink cocktails with egg yolks and bell peppers, there must be someone who will try my Pernod and pomegranate Cosmopolitan, which I've renamed the Stray Dog. I offer the recipe [here](#), free to a good home.

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Photographs by Julie Keefe for The New York Times

RYAN MAGARIAN, above left, cannot explain why he called his rum drink with bell pepper and basil the Love Unit. "I have no idea why that name jumped into my head," he said. But he does know that the cocktail has overcome its out-of-nowhere name and its peculiar combination of ingredients to become a big seller at the Hyde Lounge in West Hollywood. Mr. Magarian recommends using the vanilla-flavored rum made by Mount Gay, and advises "spanking" the basil leaf garnish to release its aromas. "Put it on your palm and slap it," he said. "It just makes all the difference in the world." — PETE WELLS

[See Recipe: The Love Unit](#)

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## **Recipe: The Love Unit**

Time: 10 minutes

3 red bell pepper rings, sliced  $\frac{1}{4}$ - to  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick

3 basil leaves

1 ounce vanilla rum

1 ounce light rum

$\frac{3}{4}$  ounce fresh lime juice

$\frac{1}{2}$  ounce fresh grapefruit juice

$\frac{1}{2}$  ounce simple syrup.

1. In a cocktail shaker gently muddle two bell pepper rings and two basil leaves. Add remaining ingredients. Fill shaker with ice and shake vigorously for 6 seconds.

2. Pour drink through a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth into a chilled cocktail glass. Place second basil leaf on palm of one hand and slap it with the other. Float it atop drink. Balance other bell pepper ring on rim of glass.

Yield: 1 cocktail.

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Photographs by Julie Keefe for The New York Times

THE horseradish pomegranate margarita was developed by Ryan Magarian for a private party in Aspen last summer. The guests were skeptical, and their skepticism didn't evaporate the minute they tasted it. "It wasn't an instant like," Mr. Magarian said. "They'd chew on it. They didn't dislike it right away but they didn't like it, either. But then they would come back to the table with a whole group of people and say, 'You've got to try this.'" He suggests checking the intensity of the horseradish tequila infusion after about 12 hours. "I try not to get too much heat," he said, "but I want your eyelids to shake." — PETE WELLS

[See Recipe: Horseradish Pomegranate Margarita](#)

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## Recipe: Horseradish Pomegranate Margarita

Adapted from Ryan Magarian

Time: 5 minutes plus 24 hours' infusing

1/3 cup fresh horseradish, peeled and chopped

1 cup silver (blanco) tequila

1/2 ounce Cointreau

3/4 ounce fresh lime juice

1/2 ounce pomegranate juice

1/4 ounce simple syrup.

1. In a bowl mix horseradish with tequila and let mixture sit for 24 hours. Strain through cheesecloth.
2. Pour 1 1/2 ounces horseradish-infused tequila and all other ingredients into a cocktail shaker. (You will have some leftover tequila mixture.) Fill shaker with ice and shake it vigorously for 6 seconds. Add ice cubes to an Old-Fashioned glass and pour drink over them.

Yield: 1 cocktail.

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Photographs by Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

JOSE MIRANDA of WD-50, who is known to almost everybody as Juice, grew up in Puerto Rico, where his mother used to make what he called a sports shake out of Carnation instant milk, brown sugar and egg yolks. "I figured me becoming this mixologist, I'd try to incorporate this into a cocktail, and I liked the way rum worked with it," he said. He tells guests that the Malta Fizz is "almost like an eggnog, just to steer people in the right direction," and added: "Once they have one they say, 'Wow, this is not what I expected.'" Invariably the surprise is a pleasant one. "I sold close to 25 of them last night," he said on Sunday. — PETE WELLS

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## **Recipe: Malta Fizz**

Adapted from WD-50

Time: 5 minutes

2 ounces amber rum

2 ounces malta (carbonated malt beverage)

$\frac{3}{4}$  ounce lime juice

1 ounce simple syrup

1 egg yolk

Ground cinnamon for garnish.

Add ice to a glass cocktail shaker. Pour in all ingredients. Shake vigorously for 20 seconds to emulsify egg yolk. Strain into a Collins glass filled with ice. Garnish with ground cinnamon.

*Yield:* 1 cocktail.

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Tony Genicola/The New York Times

ANY bartender will instantly recognize the Stray Dog as a simple variation on the Cosmopolitan. Pure pomegranate juice stands in for cranberry juice cocktail, and improves on it. I developed the recipe in collaboration with a friend who had discovered that pomegranate has a surprising affinity for the licorice flavors of Pernod. The technique of rinsing the glass with Pernod is an old bartender's trick that is employed in the Sazerac, a New Orleans classic. Although I have borrowed or stolen nearly all the inspiration for the Stray Dog, I take full responsibility for its failure to catch on. — PETE WELLS

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## **Recipe: The Stray Dog**

**Time: 5 minutes**

Splash of Pernod, ouzo or other licorice-flavored spirit

1½ ounces vodka

1 tablespoon Cointreau

1½ teaspoons fresh lime juice

1 ounce pomegranate juice (fresh or Pom Wonderful brand).

Splash some Pernod in a chilled cocktail glass, swirl it around well, then dump it out. Add ice to a cocktail shaker and pour all remaining ingredients into it. Shake and strain into glass.

*Yield:* 1 cocktail.

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