

# imbibe

LIQUID CULTURE

## Cocktails from the Garden



Eight  
Herb-infused  
Recipes





# get fresh

Summery herb-infused cocktails are a tonic for all the senses

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If there's one word to sum up summer, it's abundance. And few things grow with more abandon throughout the season than herbs. That's why we asked some of the best bartenders in the country to pick their favorite summertime herb and let it loose in a refreshing warm-weather sipper. The results run the gamut from a minty gin julep to a lavender-infused sparkler—enough to keep you happily quenched all summer long.

Photos by Stuart Mullenberg

# LAVENDER

## Soirée à La Rochelle

Named for the popular seaside resort town near Cognac, this cocktail finds inspiration in the misconception that dark spirits—especially Cognac—are for cold-weather seasons. “Summer cocktails are all about acidity, fruit and sugar,” says Massachusetts bartender Corey Bunnewith, “and Cognac has a natural acidity that makes it a great base-spirit even in the warmer months.”

2 oz. Cognac (Bunnewith uses Pierre Ferrand Ambre)  
1 oz. caramelized honey and lavender syrup (see below)  
1/2 oz. fresh lemon juice  
Ice cubes  
Sparkling rosé

Tools: shaker, strainer

Glass: flute

Garnish: crystallized lavender (see below)

Combine all ingredients except rosé in shaker. Shake, strain into a flute and top with sparkling rosé. Garnish.

## Caramelized Honey & Lavender Syrup

10 oz. honey (see tip)  
1 dash sea salt  
1 pinch freshly cracked black pepper  
5 sprigs fresh lavender  
5 oz. boiling water  
Superfine sugar for dusting

Combine honey, salt and pepper in a saucepan over medium-low heat. As the honey begins to darken and bubble (approximately 3-5 minutes), add the fresh lavender and remove from heat. Carefully stir the boiling water into the honey mixture, let sit for 10 minutes and remove the lavender. Let the lavender dry on an oiled cooling rack dust with superfine sugar before garnishing.

**Corey Bunnewith, Russell House Tavern,  
Cambridge, Mass.**



Bunnewith suggests using a honey with a mild flavor profile, like clover or heather, instead of more pungent varieties like chestnut, which may become bitter when caramelized.

# BASIL

## Basil Smash

"Nothing pairs better with a summer cocktail than relaxation and a little bit of laziness," says Seattle-based Anu Apte. "That's why I created a drink that's fast and easy to assemble—nothing has to be prepped beforehand." The vodka makes the drink light and airy while allowing the basil, clove and grapefruit flavors to shine, and the tequila rounds it all out with a little warmth and spice.

3 large basil leaves  
1 oz. vodka  
1/2 oz. reposado tequila  
1 whole clove  
1/8 oz. agave syrup  
1 dash Regans' orange bitters  
Natural grapefruit soda (Apte uses Jarritos)  
Ice cubes (for shaking)  
Crushed ice (for serving)

Tools: mixing glass, shaker,  
fine-mesh strainer

Glass: Collins

Garnish: Angostura bitters and basil leaf

In a mixing glass muddle the basil leaves. Add remaining ingredients, except the grapefruit soda, and shake for four seconds. Double strain into a crushed-ice-filled glass and top with grapefruit soda. Float 4-5 dashes of Angostura bitters on top and garnish with a basil leaf. Sip the cocktail through a long straw to fully enjoy the aromatics.

**Anu Apte, Rob Roy, Seattle**



Clove can easily overpower a drink, but when kept whole, it gives a subtle flavor that nicely complements the basil. That said, if a stronger clove presence is desired, go ahead and crush it under the back of a barspoon before adding it to the shaker.



# TARRAGON



## Pretty in Pink

When you're looking for a summery mocktail that's creative and decidedly grownup, look no further than shrubs. With their vinegary backbone, shrubs provide a deliciously sweet and acidic base that complements an array of fresh herbs. In this recipe, fresh cucumber and tarragon give a jammy raspberry shrub a layer of cooling freshness. Topped with a splash of soda water, summertime drinks don't get easier or more refreshing than this.

1 1/2 oz. Tait Farm Foods raspberry shrub  
3 (1/2 -inch-thick) slices peeled cucumber  
3 fresh raspberries  
1 sprig fresh tarragon  
Soda water  
Ice cubes

Tools: shaker, muddler, strainer

Glass: Collins or highball

Garnish: fresh raspberries and sprig of tarragon

Muddle the shrub, cucumber, raspberries and tarragon in the bottom of a shaker. Add ice and shake for about 10 seconds. Double strain into an ice-filled glass and garnish.

**From the Imbibe Test Kitchen**

**tip** >>>

For the best flavor, be sure your herbs are very fresh. If they've been lingering too long in the fridge, they can lose their potency.

# THYME

## Artemis Flower

Named after the goddess of the hunt, this herbal, spiked twist on classic strawberry limeade balances the richness from the bourbon and sambuca with summery strawberry and thyme. "The strawberry and anise flavors work beautifully with the thyme," says New Orleans bartender Danny Valdez. "And the bourbon and demerara provide depth, while the acid from the lime adds a summery brightness."

1 fresh strawberry, halved  
2 sprigs fresh thyme  
2 oz. bourbon  
3/4 oz. demerara syrup (2:1)  
1/2 oz. fresh lime  
1/2 oz. sambuca (Valdez uses Averna)  
Ice cubes  
Club soda

Tools: muddler, shaker, strainer

Glass: Collins or double rocks

Garnish: thyme-wrapped strawberry (optional)

Muddle strawberry and thyme in the bottom of a shaker. Add remaining ingredients except club soda and shake. Pour into an ice-filled Collins glass, top with the soda and garnish.

**Danny Valdez, Cure, New Orleans**



Valdez recommends selecting a bourbon that isn't overly sweet in order to balance the richness of the demerara and sambuca in this cocktail. He suggests Wild Turkey 101 or the Hudson Baby Bourbon from Tuthilltown.



# LEMONGRASS

## Devil's Haircut

While traveling through Thailand this spring, Alex Day, a Death + Co. bartender turned cocktail consultant, couldn't help being inspired by the proliferation of aromatic herbs that flavor every dish. He created this flavor-packed drink while in Bangkok, naming the lemongrass- and ginger-infused syrup "Jatujak" after the dizzyingly large weekend market in Bangkok. "This is a good example of how lemongrass can be used to complement the larger composition of a drink," he says, "and not dominate with its own character."

2 oz. chamomile-infused  
Flor de Caña 4-year-old  
white rum (see below)

3/4 oz. fresh lemon juice

3/4 oz. Jatujak syrup  
(see below)

Ice cubes

Tools: shaker, strainer

Glass: cocktail

Garnish: lemon slice

Shake all ingredients  
with ice and strain into  
cocktail glass. Garnish.

**To make the chamomile-infused rum:** Combine 3 heaping barspoons of loose-leaf chamomile tea and 6 ounces Flor de Caña 4-year-old white rum. Let sit for 1 1/2 hours, then strain through fine-mesh sieve or cheesecloth.

**To make the Jatujak syrup:** Place approximately 16 grams (about 2 ounces or 2 tablespoons) finely chopped lemongrass, 20 grams (about 2.5 ounces or 2 1/2 tablespoons) peeled and roughly chopped ginger and 2 cups water in a saucepan. Set over medium heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and allow to steep for 6 hours. Strain out the solids, measure the liquid and stir in an equal part of honey (clover works well).

Alex Day, Proprietors LLC, Los Angeles



Day says lemongrass can be incredibly delicate on its own, but when boiled or juiced, it can be too pungent. He finds that boiling the lemongrass with ginger tones it down perfectly.



# MINT



## Cheater Tin Julep

For bartender and Pacific Northwest-native Elizabeth Markham, mint has become synonymous with summertime. "Growing up in Oregon, you can find mint in almost every backyard," she says. This cocktail plays up genever's strong malty profile with a bittersweet balance from the Port and Cynar, with the mint coming in for a lasting, fresh finish. "I see myself hanging out with a handful of friends, grilling some homemade sausages and drinking these all summer long," says Markham.

1 1/2 oz. Bols genever  
1/2 oz. Cynar  
1 oz. Kopke white Port  
3/4 oz. spearmint simple syrup (see below)  
Crushed ice

Tools: shaker, strainer

Glass: Julep cup or cheater tin

Garnish: spanked mint sprig

Combine all ingredients except ice in a shaker, dry shake and strain into a Julep cup or cheater tin filled with crushed ice. Garnish by taking a mint sprig by its stem, slapping it against the back of your hand and placing it in the drink.

**To make the spearmint simple syrup:** Combine 1 cup of granulated sugar, 3 cups of water and 1 cup of packed spearmint leaves in a medium saucepan set over medium heat. Bring the syrup to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar, and submerge the mint. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature. Strain into a clean glass jar and refrigerate for up to four weeks.

**Elizabeth Markham**



Kopke white port is bone dry with rich, nutty characteristics and just a hint of spice. Store it in the fridge and serve chilled as a summery aperitif or try drizzling it over fresh melon with torn mint leaves.



## Ms. Dolores Erickson Reviver #1

Chad Doll came to the final version of this summery cocktail while "Love Potion No. 9" played in the background—hence that album's cover model making an appearance in the drink's name. "The homemade fennel cordial adds a light, summery element and plays off of the spiciness of the rye," says Doll, "while the finish is pure, refreshing lemon zest and citrus."

1/4 fresh fennel bulb  
Pinch of kosher salt  
1 oz. rye (Doll uses Sazerac 6-Year)  
1 oz. fennel cordial (see right)  
1 oz. Lillet Blanc  
3/4 oz. fresh lemon juice  
1 heavy dash Peychaud's bitters  
1 heavy dash Regans' orange bitters  
Dash absinthe  
Ice cubes

Tools: mixing glass, shaker, strainer, muddler, sharp knife

Glass: coupe

Finely mince fennel and place in a mixing glass. Add a pinch of kosher salt and muddle thoroughly. Add all ingredients to the glass except absinthe. Shake hard for 12 seconds and double strain into a chilled and absinthe-washed coupe.

### Fennel Cordial

10 whole green cardamom pods  
1 1/2 cups finely minced fennel bulb  
Zest of 3 medium lemons  
8 oz. Wray and Nephew overproof rum  
1 1/2 cups simple syrup

Toast cardamom seeds in a dry skillet over medium heat until they're fragrant, about five minutes. Combine toasted cardamom, fennel, lemon zest and rum in a lidded glass jar. Let it sit at room temperature for one week. After a week, add simple syrup to the jar and lightly shake to combine. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth into a clean glass bottle. Will keep refrigerated for two weeks.

**Chad Doll, Bryant's Cocktail Lounge,  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**



Both cardamom and fennel have long been touted for their digestive properties, making this cordial a great solo sipper after a big meal.

SAGE



## Tequila & Sage Smash

Unlike most drinks that rely on very precise measurements, “a smash lets you feel your way around the drink,” says Erik Adkins, bar manager at Heaven’s Dog in San Francisco. The amount of honey syrup you use will depend on the size and acidity of the lemons. “This drink should be rich with a strong midpalate, not bright and tart like a sour.”

1/2 lemon, cut into wedges  
6 fresh sage leaves  
2 oz. añejo tequila  
3/4 oz. honey syrup (see below)  
Ice cubes

Tools: shaker, muddler, strainer  
Glass: Collins  
Garnish: spanked sage bouquet

Muddle lemon in the bottom of shaker. Add sage and gently muddle. Add remaining ingredients and shake. Double strain into an ice-filled glass and garnish.

For the honey syrup, combine equal parts hot water and honey.

**Erik Adkins, Heaven’s Dog,  
San Francisco**

tip >>>

To “spank” the sage, place it in one hand, then slap it with the other. This helps it release its aroma, so when you sip the drink the sage is under your nose giving a strong aromatic quality to the drink.

## shopping list

### Wines & Spirits

Absinthe  
Bols genever  
Cognac  
Cynar  
Flor de Caña 4-year-old  
white rum  
Kopke white Port  
Lillet Blanc  
Tequila, reposado and añejo  
Rye whiskey  
Sambuca  
Sparkling rosé  
Wray and Nephew  
overproof rum  
Vodka

### Other Ingredients

Agave syrup  
Cardamom pods, whole and green  
Chamomile tea, loose-leaf  
Grapefruit soda, like Jarritos  
Honey  
Peychaud's bitters  
Regans' orange bitters  
Salt, both kosher and sea  
Soda water  
Sugar, both granulated and demerara  
Tait Farm Foods raspberry shrub  
Whole cloves

### Fresh Herbs, Fruits & Veggies

Basil  
Cucumber  
Fennel  
Ginger  
Lavender  
Lemons  
Lemongrass  
Limes  
Raspberries  
Sage  
Spearmint  
Strawberries  
Tarragon  
Thyme

web extra 

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