

# Mathilde Liqueur

As Seen In  
**Accent**  
Spring/Summer 2011



■ SPIRITS



## Orange You Glad?

ORANGES RETURN TO SPIRITS, COCKTAILS AND CULINARY CULTURE  
BY ROBERT HAYNES-PETERSON

**R**enewed interest in the cocktail over the past few years means high-quality citrus fruits, from the exotic (yuzu, dragonfruit) to the everyday (lemons and limes), have come to the fore as important drink ingredients. Lost in this renaissance until recently, the unassuming orange.

Oranges were a luxury in Marie Antoinette's day when any manor worth its zest boasted an orange grove. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the cognoscenti drank Planter's Punch, which included exotic ingredients like rum and orange juice. Unfortunately, somewhere in the 1960s, oranges got a bad rap following one too many comfy Polynesian restaurants and a cocktail culture that devolved the Tequila Sunrise into a syrupy mess.

Thankfully, these days the lowly orange is squeezing into better cocktails and cuisine. In drinking establishments around the country orange bitters, orange flower water, Orgot and orange marmalade are all increasingly common ingredients on the bar. They're also showing up inside the bottle, in both liquors and the hard stuff.

Where once tipplers chose between pricey Cointreau or Grand Marnier and cheap, sugary triple secs for their Margaritas and Sidecars, an entire shelf's-worth of premium options is now available, including Combier and Mathilde Orange XO (both out of France), Creole Schrubb (Martinique) and Patrón Citronge (Mexico). Each has a distinctive flavor profile ranging from "intense, fresh orange" to "creamsicle," something to consider when crafting drinks. Combier, for example, uses a blend of sun-dried sweet and bitter orange peels for a not-too-sweet, palate-cleansing finish. You can also now seek out variations like Soleimo Blood Orange Liqueur (rich, red and tart) or Bois Dry Orange containing rum. Tuaca, an Italian liqueur rich

Left: A few of the high-quality options drinkers now have to upgrade their Margaritas, Harvey Wallbangers and Sidecars.

"FOR THE LIFE OF ME, I CAN'T SEE WHY ANY BAR USES ANYTHING BUT PURE FRESH LEMON OR ORANGE JUICE." —VICTOR "TRADER VIC" BERGERON, 1948

In vanilla and orange, has made an unlikely resurgence at Arizona bars, according to a spokesperson.

In spirits, orange-flavored vodkas dance on bars in Miami and Vegas, adding a sweet-tart component to nightclub drinks. Last fall, Stolichnaya introduced a limited edition Stoli Citray featuring the Playboy bunny logo to "celebrate our brand relationship" with Playboy founder Hugh Hefner. Sazerac's, meanwhile, launched an Orange Twisted Gin that ratchets up the orange peel most London Dry Gins already include in their distillations.

Most intriguing on the premium end is Compass Box Whisky's recently re-launched Orange, a lightly infused whisky out of Scotland, featuring fresh orange zest "actually zested for us by little old ladies in Bath," according to Compass Box president John Glaser. The 10-year blend of grain and malt whiskies undergoes three iterations: cassia bark, clove and orange zest, the result being a mild, well-balanced sipping Scotch sure to intrigue purists and intrigue newcomers.

When it comes to cocktails, the rediscovery of classics like the Blood and Sand (OJ, sweet vermouth, scotch, cherry liqueur) and a variety of upgraded and refined Tiki drinks are putting oranges back on the bar in a big way.

"The juice, fresh and zest can all be used in making both sweet and savory dishes and drinks," says restaurateur Todd English. "Oranges specifically are great acid enhancers in salads, fish and meat dishes. They also pair beautifully with flavors such as vanilla and chocolate in desserts and cocktails." At English's Food Hall in New York's West Village, diners can sip on a Food Hall Old Fashioned (Benedeky, Aperol and St. Germain, muddled oranges and fresh-squeezed orange juice).

Adding orange to booze is nothing new, of course, according to spirits historian and Square drinks columnist David Wondrich in his latest book, *Punch: The Delights (and Dangers) of the Rowing Bowl* (2010 Perseus Trade). Among the fashionable people drinking alcoholic punch in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, limes were decidedly unfashionable (in part due to their association with sailors and the rough-and-tumble British Royal Navy), while lemons and oranges were "in." Oranges were, at first, used when lemons weren't available, but eventually there arose a faction of tipplers who made

their punch with oranges alone," Wondrich writes in a chapter dedicated to Orange Punch.

Kimberly Paton-Bragg, a New Orleans bartender and an On the Rocks semi-finalist, agrees: "Fresh orange juice can bring a softness, acidity and mouthfeel other citrus can't," she says. "But not everyone is sold on contemplating the Navel. Honolulu mogul David Chang says he's focused on exploring the savory rather than the sweet side of citrus. 'Not that we don't love oranges,' he assures, "but on the culinary side we like yuzu, kaffir lime, and similar Asian citrus."

**Orange Punch**  
Adapted from Jerry Thomas' *Bordeaux Wine and Liqueur Dealer's Guide*, 1858. Reprinted in *Punch* (David Wondrich 2010) and reprinted here with the author's permission. Serves 16.

The juice of 3 to 4 oranges (Navel for sweetness or Sevilla for complexity)  
The peel of 1 or 2 oranges  
½ lb of sugar  
3 ½ pints boiling water  
¼ pint Port  
¼ to 1 pint each dark rum and brandy  
Make an ozo-accaram by infusing/marinating peels and sugar for a half hour; add juice, then strain into a punch bowl. Add boiling water, ½ pint Port (beef) and ¼ to 1 pint each of dark rum and brandy. Add more warm water and sugar as desired for proper strength and sweetness.

**Earl Grey Garden**  
by Kimberly Paton-Bragg, Clever, New Orleans

2 oz. Ketel One Orange vodka  
1 oz. Earl Grey simple syrup  
½ fresh lemon  
½ fresh orange  
1 thyme sprig  
Club soda  
To make the simple syrup, combine 1 cup hot tea with 1 cup sugar; stir until dissolved and cool. Cut lemon and orange halves into quarters and muddle with Earl Grey syrup in a mixing glass. Add vodka and ice. Shake and strain into a tall glass. Top with club soda, and garnish with thyme.

47

Where once tipplers chose between pricey Cointreau or Grand Marnier and cheap, sugary triple secs for their Margaritas and Sidecars, an entire shelf's-worth of premium options is now available, including Combier and Mathildé Orange XO (both out of France), Creole Schrubb (Martinique) and Patrón Citronge (Mexico). Each has a distinctive flavor profile ranging from "intense, fresh orange" to "creamsicle," something to consider when crafting drinks.