



LEANN LOCHER

bit of raw sugar or the juice of a lime to help release the flavors.

For stronger flavors such as fresh rosemary, lavender or ginger, a simple syrup is easily made and prepared ahead of time by steeping a few pinches (or inches in the case of ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped) in 4 or so cups of water and 1 cup of sugar. Allow the combination to come to a boil, then simmer a wee bit until the flavor of the herb is released. Let cool, strain and keep in your refrigerator for up to a week for easy access to intense flavor to your beverages. Decrease the ratio of water to sugar to intensify the flavor and sweetness.

As for booze, take your pick. Vodka plays well as a neutral base to the many combinations above, but I've been playing with whiskey and have found it's delicious with a peach purée and a dash of ginger syrup. Cachaça, the cane alcohol used in Brazilian Caipirinha, works well with a muddling of pineapple sage, lime and raw sugar. Tequila definitely has made an appearance this season in a deliciously summery watermelon basil margarita.

To top off almost all of my fresh cocktails is soda water. Mineral water works perfectly for this, but I've been toying with homemade soda water, thanks to a countertop gadget called the SodaStream (sodastreamusa.com). Cold tap water instantly transforms to bubbly water thanks to the use of a CO2 bottle.

If all of this is sounding complex, try a flavored soda, but instead of a too-sweet high-fructose corn syrup-ladled atrocity, why not opt for a fresh, new one such as DrySoda (drysoda.com)? This Seattle-based soda maker has a delicious cucumber soda, lightly sweetened and perfect for a summertime cocktail made with vodka and fresh cucumber slices. For the easiest of seasonal drinks, consider the über simplicity of popping a few raspberries in a glass

Berries in a cocktail are beautiful and delicious.

of wine or champagne—so pretty and summery.

Whiskey-A-Go-Go

Create a ginger syrup as described above. Create a peach purée by blending fresh peaches, skins removed and pitted, in a blender on high. Combine 2 tablespoons each of ginger syrup and peach purée into your glass, and mix well. Add one shot of whiskey, ice and top with soda water.

Watermelon Basil Margarita

Create a watermelon water as described above. In the blender, add one shot of tequila, one shot of triple sec, a cup of watermelon water, two basil leaves and a cup of ice. Blend well.

Pineapple Sage Caipirinha

In the bottom of a glass, muddle two leaves of pineapple sage with half a lime, cut into wedges, and a tablespoon of raw sugar. Keep muddling: You want to infuse the three ingredients into a fragrant mix. Add one shot of Cachaça, ice and top with soda water. Refreshing!

Berry Bedazzler

Create a berry syrup as described above. Add 1 tablespoon into the bottom of your glass, one shot of vodka, and top with soda water. Squeeze one quarter of a lime into the glass. Stir well. Serve on the rocks and float one berry on top. ☺

LEANN LOCHER gardens, and evidently drinks in her garden, in North Portland. She's threatening her tomatoes to ripen before fall arrives. Find her at lelonopo.com or and at facebook.com/sassygardener.

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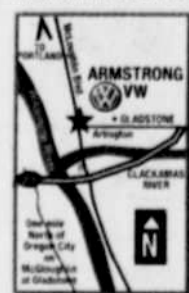


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