

Much More Than a Mimosa

ADVENTURES WITH THE UNDERAPPRECIATED WINE COCKTAIL Words by Molly Templeton | Photos by Todd Cooper



EAST OF EDEN

It all started with **one drink.**

Or rather, it started with the idea of a drink, with the recipe Bel Ami bartender Jeffrey Morgenthaler posted to his blog one afternoon. Morgenthaler was fudging a little with a “Mixology Monday” (a groupthink in which blogging mixologists focus on the same topic) topic: fruit liqueurs. Rather than using a fruit liqueur exactly, he’d created a drink that used Bombay gin, lemon, St. Germain elderflower liqueur and a syrup made from Sweet Cheeks 2006 Estate Pinot Gris.

In Morgenthaler’s photo, the resulting drink — the East of Eden — was a lovely pale peachy color. Later that day, the East of Eden tasted as good as it looked: sweet like a wine, and complicated but not needlessly so; Morgenthaler wrote that it “embodies the sort of building-layers-of-flavor thing I’ve been working on lately.”

East of Eden wasn’t just a delicious drink with perfectly layered flavors, though. It was an introduction, albeit a rather roundabout one, to an oft-neglected subcategory of cocktails (using the general definition rather than the one that specifies certain ingredients): those made with wine.

Plenty of noses will wrinkle at the thought, but those with a historical bent might nod knowingly. In *Imbibe! From Absinthe Cocktail to Whiskey Smash, a Salute in Stories and Drinks to “Professor” Jerry Thomas, Pioneer of the American Bar*, David Wondrich writes that if someone asked “the average drinking man of 1863” to choose “one drink to survive the test of time, odds are heavy he would’ve gone for the Sherry Cobbler.” That’s a drink which consists of nothing more than sherry, sugar, ice and a slice or two of orange and was described as “without a doubt the most popular beverage in the country” in an 1888 bartending manual.

But it wasn’t only fortified wine being used to create drinks way back when; the Champagne cocktail — sugar, bitters, lemon twist and Champagne — was “the first evolved cocktail on record,” Wondrich writes, meaning that it was the first time the word cocktail was used as “a generic term for any short, iced drink.” But while sherry cobbles and claret punch have fallen off most menus, Champagne (and other sparkling wine) drinks still crop up everywhere, from the mediocre mimosas on fixed-price brunch menus to the selection of delicious Champagne cocktails on Marché’s bar menu.

Marché bar manager James West offers a seasonally changing apéritif and a handful of other Champagne drinks, some of which change throughout the year and some of which stay on the menu — like the sparkling cosmopolitan, of which West says, “It’s popular in the winter, because it’s kind of a festive, Christmas party approach to the cosmopolitan, and then