

GRAB BAG

Q&A // FUN

COLUMBIA BAR

Winter Solstice

By RYAN HUME

Tucked inside the Warrenton Highlands Shopping Plaza near Staples and Petco, The Uptown Cafe hid most of its charm during a recent visit on a brisk autumn afternoon. Inside there was cheery warmth radiating off the staff and the reclaimed wood excavated from a local historic church and an abandoned steamer.

I asked for a warm drink, and they did not disappoint.

Ironically, the recipe for the Winter Solstice, current bar manager Jacki Hoard told me, was forged in the heat of late summer and was originally an iced cocktail served in a small rocks glass. Though the drink is not her recipe, she still has one or two customers coming in who ask for the original chilled version even as the season has gathered hurricane-strength winds and enough inches of rain to make you rethink your inseam.

This beverage is still permutating behind the bar and at the pour of each tender. One variation, the Sweet

Tart, substitutes rum for Bulleit Bourbon and switches out the apple for cranberry juice. The constants are chai plus cinnamon, which invigorates and soothes each sip like a mulled wine.

In the name of science, I say, keep the experiments coming: Find two ounces of either spiced rum or bourbon and find a perfect cranberry, apple or cranapple equation plus chai and cinnamon — and don't forget to take at least one swig from the cinnamon stick as a straw.

Ingredients

2 ounces Captain Morgan's or another spiced rum
1 bar spoon of brown sugar (about 1 teaspoon)
Equal parts apple juice and chai
Cinnamon stick
Orange wheel

Directions

Add apple juice (or cranberry juice), chai and sugar to a cocktail mug and stir



until the sugar dissolves. Heat until nearly boiling. The Uptown Cafe accomplishes this on the steamer nozzle of the espresso machine, but a microwave, kettle or sauce pot will get the same result.

Once the liquid is giving off its winter breath, add the rum or bourbon, swizzle in the cinnamon stick and sink the orange wheel pith-deep onto the rim. Breathe in to enjoy the spice emanating off the steam and breathe out to cool it down before the first sip.

—Recipe courtesy Lynsi Jewell, assistant manager, and Jacki Hoard, bar manager, at The Uptown Cafe, Warrenton

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