

COLUMBIA BAR

Slow Boat to Mexico



By RYAN HUME
FOR COAST WEEKEND

On a recent afternoon visit to Clemente's Cafe and Public House on the Pier 14 Pilot Station, there was a mystery afoot behind the bar. A recently poured gin and soda had emerged from the fountain gun with a decidedly golden hue. The bartender was a bit perplexed, but the customer, thankfully, was more curious than angry. "Flat cola?" she wondered aloud.

Enter chef and owner Gordon Clement. After a bit of gumshoe work, Clement

concluded that: 1. Delivery of the bar station beverages had just happened. 2. The beverage in question was not soda water at all but ginger ale. 3. Following the tube back to the pressurized canister from which it flows, the canister was mislabeled soda.

This meant the real culprit was not the delivery guy or a staff member, but someone far off site in a warehouse or factory or wherever these kinds of canisters get filled. With one swift phone call to HQ, a replacement tank was en route and Clement could rest, case solved.



Gordon Clement of Clemente's Cafe and Public House.

"We won't charge you for the ginger ale," he told the customer, then addressed the few of us at the bar: "The ginger ale is free!" When no one immediately took him

up on it, he siphoned off a pint of the fizzy golden soda for himself.

But a restaurant owner's work is never done. Once that snafu was fixed, who should he find at the end of his bar but a thirsty reporter. Thinking on his feet in the way only a chef can do, Clement surveyed his collection of booze until he landed on a brand-new unopened bottle of Cannon Beach Distillery's Dorymen's Rum, a clear, unspiced, un-aged spirit made from evaporated sugar cane, which is less sweet and more straightforward than your average rum. Think of a Caribbean vodka and you're on the right track.

He took a moment to rummage through the kitchen and returned with a lime and a bottle of Tamarind Jarritos, which just happens to be one of my favorite sodas in the world. (By this time the delivery man had already returned and was replacing the tank of ginger ale with a canister of true soda water, so that was no longer an option.)

If you're unfamiliar with tamarindo — the Spanish term for the tree pod often

used north of the border, too — it is the muy potent, sweet and tart ingredient staining your Indian and Thai curries yellow. It is what puts the pucker in Worcestershire sauce, and it's in there in part because tamarind is also a great meat tenderizer. The Jarritos' flavored soda is based on the more traditional Mexican drink of agua de tamarindo. A sneaky slip of tamarind is also what produces the color in cheap boxed mixes claiming to be saffron rice.

Playing things by ear, Clement kept concocting, mixing sweet and sour until he achieved the balance he was looking for. Then he added a float of dark rum, which marbled through the sunny glass like some descending CGI alien goop.

The result of this late-afternoon experiment was bubbly, just sweet and with an after-note of tart. The tamarind hid in the background as it often does — that character actor whose name you cannot remember, but whose performance lifts up the entire ensemble. The drink was complete. Clement returned to his ginger ale, and by



RYAN HUME PHOTO

Slow Boat to Mexico, concocted at Clemente's Cafe and Public House

the end of my glass the true soda water was hooked up, the delivery man back on schedule.

But there was still one more thing: What should we call this?

SLOW BOAT TO MEXICO

1 1/2 ounces Cannon Beach Distillery Dorymen's Rum, or any white rum

1/4 ounce (or an eyeball) dark rum

Fresh squeezed juice of 1/2 a lime

Tamarind Jarritos
Simple syrup, to taste
Slice of lime for garnish
Ice

Pour the Dorymen's, lime juice and simple syrup into a cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake. Fill a highball glass half full with ice. Strain the contents of the shaker into the glass, top off with Jarritos, leaving just a 1/4 inch or so at the lip. Carefully float the dark rum and garnish with a slice of fresh lime.

—Recipe courtesy of Gordon Clement, owner and chef, Clemente's Cafe and Public House, Astoria, Oregon **CW**

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