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Mastering the citrus peel

One of the most utilized of the fruit garnishes is the citrus peel. To cut the peel, I prefer to use a Y vegetable peeler with a gripped handle. Using the peeler, cut a wide, thin swath from the top to the bottom of the fruit. Try to get a thick enough swath of peel so that there is a thin, almost translucent, layer of the pith of the fruit on the inside.

Another option is to use a paring knife instead of a peeler, but fruit tends to get slippery as it is peeled so I prefer the control offered by the peeler. In order to achieve sharper lines in the aesthetic of the twist, trim it with a paring knife to make the edges more uniform and give each end a diagonal cut.

Next, express the peel by holding it just above the cocktail between the pointer finger and thumb with the outside facing the drink and squeeze it lightly so the oils gently shower the cocktail, then twist it into a spiral and run it around the rim of the glass to completely utilize the oils before placing the peel into the cocktail or cut a small slit down the middle, balancing it on the rim of the glass.

Y peelers can also be useful for cutting thin ribbons of cucumber, rhubarb or celery for other skewered garnishes.

The trick to the spiral twist

If a thinner, spiral twist of peel is the desired garnish, I use a channel knife and cut the twist in a spiral pattern working from the top of the fruit at least one and a half rotations so there is enough peel to get a good curl.

To create the spiral, practice first by using the spiral handle of a long bar spoon as a guide, curling the twist around it and then, holding the twist together, carefully pull it off the handle to place in the cocktail. I prefer to curl the twist in my hands, however, so I can express the oils over the cocktail as I curl it.

Add more depth with dehydrated garnishes

Another great way to utilize citrus as a garnish is to thinly slice wheels (using a mandolin works best), and dehydrate them using a fruit and vegetable dehydrator. This technique can also work well with apple slices in fall cocktail recipes.

Not only does this add a lovely, rustic quality to the cocktail aesthetic, but dehydrating the fruit actually concentrates the flavors, adding another level of depth to the cocktail experience.

The craft cocktail world is endlessly ripe with opportunities for creativity and innovation. Whether enjoyed by yourself after a long day, or made to share with friends and



Photos by Nikki Davidson

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Emily O'Connor uses a peeler to create a cucumber garnish. A garnish can make a difference in the drinker's experience and the flavor of the cocktail itself. O'Connor suggests practicing with a spoon handle to create garnished spiral twist.

guests, when quality ingredients are utilized and a cocktail is made with passion, the results will undoubtedly be satisfying with every sip.

As always, please drink responsibly and never waste a drop! Cheers!

Emily O'Connor is the bar manager at the Bowline Hotel.