

Cocktails with a cinematic twist for the Oscars

By MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press

Silver shakers and the silver screen go back a long time. Think French 75 from “Casablanca” and Agent 007’s dry martinis. So for those of you planning to drink along at home for the Feb. 28 showing of the Oscars this year, now might be a good time to get your cocktail act together. And Tim Federle, author of “Gone with the Gin,” has a few ideas about that.

From The Moon-Shining — moonshine, ruby red grapefruit juice, rum, that’s right, red rum — to Tequila Sunrise Boulevard (probably best NOT served poolside), the best-selling author has a line-up of cinematically inspired cocktails meant to be shaken, stirred and sipped with tongue planted firmly in cheek.

Bubbly as a Champagne cocktail, “Gone with the Gin” nonetheless has serious underpinnings. Federle worked with talented bartender Cody Goldstein, founder of Muddling Memories, a craft cocktail and bar consulting firm in New York. There also are useful sections on tools, techniques and even some fun food recipes.

“The approach was humorous and, yeah, they’d better taste good, too,” said Federle.

This cinematic cocktail collection follows Federle’s “Tequila Mockingbird,” which featured literary libations. For “Gone with the Gin,” Federle started by making a spreadsheet of the American Film Institute’s Top 100 films. Then, he looked for cocktail-friendly titles. So “White Christmas” plus white Russian became a drink called White Russian Christmas. Then he and Goldstein looked for ways to tweak the recipes to match the movies. For the White Russian Christmas, the classic recipe — vodka, coffee liqueur and cream — got a seasonal twist of vodka, creme de menthe, coffee liqueur, eggnog and crushed candy cane for a garnish.

(And for those movie buffs for whom



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

MONTY PYTHON AND THE STOLI GRAIL

Start to finish: 5 minutes
Servings: 1

- 1 1/2 ounces vodka
- 1 ounce light rum
- 1 ounce coconut water
- 2 ounces pineapple juice
- Sparkling wine, to serve

In an ice-filled cocktail shaker, combine the vodka, rum, coconut water and pineapple juice. Shake well, then strain into an ice-filled rocks glass. Top with a splash of sparkling wine.

this particular drink conjures up only one flick, the book also contains a Big Le-Brewski, a vodka, coffee and cream of coconut concoction in honor of the white Russian loving Dude of “The Big Lebowski.”)



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

THE MUPPETS MAKE MANHATTANS

Start to finish: 5 minutes
Servings: 1

- 2 ounces apple brandy
- 3/4 ounce sweet vermouth
- 1/2 ounce apple juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons honey
- 3 dashes baked apple or orange bitters
- Green apple slice, to garnish
- Bacon, to serve

In a mixing glass filled with ice, combine all ingredients except the apple. Stir well, then strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with the apple slice. Serve with a slice of bacon (with apologies to Miss Piggy).

In all, Federle serves up 50 recipes organized by genre (drama, sci-fi, etc.), and each recipe comes with a brief but infor-

mative blurb about the movie in question. And if you are a punster, the titles will be a delight. A standout: Muppets Make Manhattans. Some of the cute drink names were arrived at with the help of Federle’s thousands of Twitter followers, who also voted on which proposed title for the book they liked best.

Recipes aren’t just cleverly titled; they also have cunning tie-ins to the films. For example, hibiscus tea in the cocktail Boozy and the Beast echoes the roses of “Beauty and the Beast.” And Citizen Grain, named for the groundbreaking “Citizen Kane,” includes grain alcohol and just a touch of rose water. No promises that drinking it will help you better get to the bottom of the whole “Rosebud” thing, though.

Goldstein was particularly pleased with Star Wars-themed The Empire Likes Jack, which contains Jack Daniel’s, ice cream and root beer. “It’s basically a root beer float. You’re dropping the light aspect, the vanilla ice cream, into the root beer, which is the dark side.”

Some sections took more time than others. “We had a lot of days sitting and eating take-in and just going over some stuff,” said Goldstein. An honest man, he admitted that was “a really good time.”

Federle, who grew up in San Francisco and Pittsburgh before moving to New York to dance on Broadway as a teenager, writes in multiple genres, including young adult fiction. His current project is co-writing “Tuck Everlasting,” a forthcoming Broadway musical based on the novel by Natalie Babbitt.

Like Goldstein, Federle seems happy in his work.

“Everything that got me sent to the principal’s office as a kid gets me paid now,” he said.

Recipes adapted from Tim Federle’s “Gone with the Gin,” Running Press, 2015



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

Slow cooker pork shoulder vindaloo.

Slow cookers bring out the best in pork and Indian flavors

By MEERA SODHA
Associated Press

There’s a real joy in slowing down in the kitchen. Gone is the frantic stress of trying to get dinner on the table in an instant and in its place comes a different type of gentle cooking. It allows beautiful smells to waft through the house and ingredients to mingle and develop over time into something deep, rich and flavorful.

Of all slow cooked dishes, Goan pork vindaloo is my favorite. Originally a Portuguese stew made with meat, garlic and wine, the dish made its way to India in the 1500s with Portuguese explorers. Like so many other dishes, it then was reinterpreted. Today, vindaloo curry is a sweet, hot and sour dish popular all over the world.

Though the modern recipe, like the original dish, still uses garlic and wine vinegar, it has changed to include chilies and

lots of warming spices, such as cinnamon, cumin and cloves. I like to use a cheaper and fattier cut of meat, such as pork shoulder, which responds well to a slow braise and shows its true colors after a few hours to become the best type of pork — succulent, sweet and soft.

Whatever happens, rest assured that there are no wrong moves with slow cooking. It’s one of the only mediums of cooking that creates a level playing field between the pro chef and the amateur. It gives you the flexibility to taste and adjust as you go until it tastes just right. The only trouble is that after several hours of cooking, it will only take a few minutes to eat.

Meera Sodha is an Indian foods expert and author of “Made in India: Recipes from an Indian family kitchen.” She lives in London, blogs at www.meerasodha.com and tweets at @meerasodha

- Cooked basmati rice, to serve

Set the slow cooker to saute mode. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil and heat until hot. Add the peppercorns, star anise, cinnamon, cloves and cumin. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the peppercorns and cloves swell and are fragrant. Transfer the spices to a mortar and pestle or spice grinder. Grind until smooth, then add the garlic, ginger and chili powder. Grind again, then transfer to a small bowl and stir in the vinegar. Set aside.

Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil in the slow cooker. When hot, add the onions and cook, stirring often, until brown and caramelized. Add the tomatoes, and cook for 5 minutes. Add the spice paste, salt and sugar. Stir well, then add the pork. Coat the pork with the paste then add just enough water to cover the meat. Stir well, then cover and cook for 3 hours on high or 5 hours on low, or until the meat is completely tender and straining to hold its shape.

Serve topped with grated ginger, dollops of yogurt and basmati rice.

Nutrition information per serving: 740 calories; 210 calories from fat (28 percent of total calories); 24 g fat (4.5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 155 mg cholesterol; 1040 mg sodium; 61 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 12 g sugar; 68 g protein.

SLOW COOKER PORK SHOULDER VINDALOO

If you’re nervous about the amount of chili powder, halve the amount called for in the recipe. It will still be delicious. If your slow cooker doesn’t have a saute setting, start the dish in a large saute pan, then transfer to a slow cooker.

Start to finish: 3 1/2 to 5 1/2 hours (1/2 hour active)
Servings: 4

- 4 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil, divided
- 20 black peppercorns
- 1 star anise
- 3-inch cinnamon stick
- 6 whole cloves
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 1/2-inch chunk fresh ginger, grated (plus extra to serve)
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 5 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 medium red onion, finely sliced
- 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 1/4 pounds boneless pork shoulder, trimmed and cut into 1-inch cubes
- Plain Greek-style yogurt, to serve

Dive into adventure in New Zealand

By JEREMY HAINSWORTH
Associated Press

QUEENSTOWN, New Zealand — For travelers wanting to take in the mind-bogglingly stunning scenery of New Zealand’s South Island while getting a high-octane shot of adrenaline, Queenstown and the surrounding Fiordland area are bucket-list must-dos.

Queenstown is not only an adventure tourism capital, but it’s also home to an important place in bungee-jumping history. In November 1988, from Queenstown’s Kawarau Bridge, bungee pioneers A.J. Hackett and Henry van Asch launched one of the world’s first commercially operated bungee jumping sites. More than 27 years later, Kawarau Bridge Bungy remains renowned as one of Queenstown’s most exhilarating activities.

While a 141-foot jump might sound insane, not to mention fear-punching and adrenaline-driving, there are those who want more. The region also offers a plethora of other buzz-filled activities sure to knock the complacency out of any travel-weary adventurer. On the list of activities to consider are skydiving, jet boating, kayaking, white-water rafting and rainforest trekking. And Queenstown can provide it.

When it comes to skydiving, jumpers leave the planes operated by NZONE Skydive Queenstown at more than 16,000 feet above sea level, well above peaceful Lake Wakatipu and the 2,319-foot heights of the craggy Remarkables mountain range that rivals western Canada’s Rockies in magnificence.

There are few, if any, other places in the world where you can do some scenic mountain sightseeing while plunging at a velocity of 124 mph for 10,000 feet of free fall. In 60 seconds.

There are several jump options but my friend Andrew Benson and I went



NZONE Skydiving Queenstown via AP

This Oct. 8, 2015 photo shows Andrew Benson, bottom, with a tandem skydiver after jumping from a plane in New Zealand’s Remarkables mountain range over Queenstown, New Zealand.

all the way and chose 15,000-foot jumps with experienced tandem skydivers. If you’ve never fully experienced being totally present in the moment, skydiving is the only way to go. Nothing else is happening as you plummet earthward before the canopy opens above you.

“Do it with someone whose smile gives you joy,” Andrew said.

NZONE also provides skydiving photographers to capture your jump for an extra fee. We took them up on the offer and wound up joining hands with our photographer in mid-air.

The mind-blowing rush of the free fall lasted 60 seconds after which we enjoyed five minutes of sailing through clear skies under the chutes’ canopies.

Next, a short bus ride from Queenstown’s center took us to Shotover Jet’s Shotover River launch site. There, we donned black water slickers, emptied our pockets and strapped in for the speedboat ride. The half-hour trip took us at an exhilarating 75 mph through the river’s twisting narrow canyons.

We could almost reach out and touch canyon walls as the driver took hairpin bends and did 360-degree turns at high speed.

“Keep your arms inside the boat,” driver Mike Topp warned us.

Indeed, passengers are

warned to alert staff if they suffer from a back or neck conditions.

Then, a Real Journeys cruise took us through a howling gale through Milford Sound in Fiordland National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Area, and out onto the Tasman Sea. As the three-masted Milford Mariner turned to re-enter the sound, waves blasted the side of the boat. We got soaked but Andrew was dancing with glee like a little kid as I howled and grinned.

Around us, mist-embraced mountains poured waterfalls thousands of feet into the sound’s waters.

While most enjoy a more sedate cruise on sunnier days, we leaned at angles approaching 45 degrees on the bow in winds approaching 70 kilometers an hour.

It had been our intention to fly in by helicopter and kayak the sound with some hiking through the coastal rainforest. We went for the cruise when the weather dampened the original plan. Either way, we were going to get wet — and we didn’t care.

Another option for the sound is the four-day hike of the Milford Track, reputed to be one of the world’s best hikes. Next time!

In all, we spent two weeks in New Zealand, exploring the Coromandel Peninsula’s beaches, skirting Tongariro National Park to see Mount Ngauruhoe, which was used as a stand-in for the fictional Mount Doom in “The Lord of the Rings” films, and watching little blue penguins tumble out of the sea at night onto the beach at the Otago Peninsula near Dunedin.

However, it was Queenstown with its high-octane thrills that captured our hearts and leaving us gasping breathless for more.

Or, at the very least, lying on the grass after we got our skydive suits off gazing at others descending and muttering, “Man, what a ride.”



Shotover Jet via AP

This Oct. 6, 2015 photo shows a group on the Shotover River outside Queenstown, New Zealand.