

TAHINI

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- 1/4 cup tahini
- 2 tablespoons avocado oil or extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Juice of 1/2 lime
- 1 tablespoon chopped mint
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives (or green onion tops)

1. Set 1 hatch or poblano chile directly over a gas burner or a hot grill, or under a hot broiler, turning often, until chile skin blisters and blackens, about 5 minutes total. Cool, then peel off the blackened skin, remove the seeds and rinse under cool water. Chop.

2. Put 7 1/2 ounces of beans, 1/4 cup tahini, 2 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon salt and the juice of 1/2 a lime juice into a blender. Add 1/2 of the roasted chile and 1/3 cup water. Blend smooth. Taste for spice and add remaining chile if desired and blend smooth. Consistency should be that of creamy salad dressing; to thin, add a little more oil or water.

3. Cover and refrigerate for several days. Use at room temperature.

LAMB CHOPS WITH GREEN CHILE TAHINI SAUCE

Prep: 10 minutes
Cook: 8 minutes
Makes 3 to 5 servings

- 2 pounds lamb chop loins, about 9 to 10 chops
- Salt

- Freshly ground black pepper
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup green chile tahini sauce, see recipe in notes
- 1/2 cup cooked or canned white beans (4 ounces)
- Chopped roasted green chiles, for garnish
- Fresh chives, for garnish

1. Pat 9-10 lamb chops dry and place on a baking sheet. Sprinkle all sides generously with salt and pepper. Drizzle both sides with olive oil and refrigerate uncovered for up to 2 days.

2. Prepare a charcoal grill until coals are covered with gray ash or preheat a gas grill to medium-hot. Remove chops from the refrigerator. Gather all ingredients to the work surface.

3. Place chops over heat source on grill. Cover and grill for 4 minutes. Flip chops; close grill and cook to medium-rare, 2-3 minutes more. Remove to a platter.

4. To serve, put 2 or 3 chops on each serving plate. Drizzle chops and the serving plate with some of the green chile tahini and olive oil. Sprinkle with beans, chiles and chives.

MAPLE TAHINI GLAZE

Prep 10 minutes
Makes about 1/2 cup
To use this as a salad dressing, double the lemon juice and add 1/4 cup olive oil. Use on crisp romaine or over a wedge of iceberg. Sprinkle with chopped nuts and blue cheese.

- 1/4 cup tahini
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Grated rind of 1/2 lemon
- 3 tablespoons water



Kristen Mendiola/The Daily Meal-TNS

Creamy lemon hummus.

Put all ingredients in a small bowl and stir until combined. The glaze should be about the consistency of barbecue sauce. Refrigerate covered up to several days.

ROASTED ZUCCHINI WITH MAPLE TAHINI AND PISTACHIOS

Prep: 20 minutes
Cook: 20 minutes
Makes 4 servings
This is also great as a glaze for blanched green beans. Coat the beans in oil, then a few tablespoons of the glaze and roast until glazed, about 10 minutes.

- 2 large zucchini, total 1 1/2 pounds
- Olive oil
- Salt
- 1/4 cup maple tahini glaze, see recipe in notes
- Toasted crushed pistachios, hazelnuts or pecans

SESAME CASHEW AND TAHINI BLONDIES

Prep: 20 minutes
Cook: 35 minutes
Makes 48 small bars or 24 medium bars
Be sure the butter is soft for easy mixing. Sesame honey cashews are available at Trader Joe's. You can also use chopped bits of sesame brittle or any dry-roasted nut.

- 2 1/3 cups all-purpose flour

COCKTAILS

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A quick hit of simple syrup softens the tanginess of the citrus juices, and a tablespoon of orange liqueur rounds the drink's edges. Grenadine is added, too, just to make it pretty.

If you float the 151 rum on top, you can light it on fire. That's always fun, but if you try to drink it too soon it can be dangerous.

Not just dangerous — scary. Pomegranate Rum Punch is both full-flavored and refreshing, and is made in a large enough batch to be a hit at a Halloween party.

The blood-red color comes from pomegranate juice, and so does the primary flavor. But strong hibiscus tea adds charming floral notes, with cinnamon providing a touch of exotic spice and spiced rum bringing an alluring kick.

Fresh-squeezed orange juice is a mild counterpoint to the pomegranate, and the punch is turned immediately effervescent with a bottle of prosecco.

The next cocktail I made, Witches' Brew, is just a lot of fun. It is a bright neon green, courtesy of Midori melon liqueur, which blends remarkably well with an orange liqueur, such as Cointreau or Triple Sec.

Those liqueurs are both on the sweet side, so the Witches' Brew adds fresh lemon juice to create a sweet-and-tart combination that is unusually pleasant.

For Halloween, we added a bit of dry ice to create that smoky cauldron effect. It isn't frightening, but it's diverting.

The next two cocktails I made are pitch black, which is admittedly a great look for Halloween.

Both are made with black

vodka, which is a problem. There is only one brand in the world that makes black vodka, Blavod, and it can be hard to find this side of Chicago. So I made my own.

Black vodka is just vodka that is colored black. All I did was take plain vodka and added food coloring to it. I couldn't easily find black food coloring (black gel coloring would be even better, but black writing gel for cakes does not work), so I just kept adding blue, red and green food coloring to the vodka in small amounts until it essentially turned black.

I used the black vodka to make a Black Magic cocktail, which is simple yet delicious. It, too, is a sweet-and-tart drink, of the most elemental sort. Along with the essentially flavorless vodka, all it has is a squeeze of lime juice and an equal amount of simple syrup. Sweet, meet tart.

The black vodka makes it look cool, and a swirl of edible pearl dust (it's used for baking) adds a mystery of white specks.

The other drink using black vodka is called a Black Heart Cocktail, and it is amazing — if you love figs.

I love figs, but I had not even heard of fig vodka. Nevertheless, it exists, and a Black Heart Cocktail mixes a tablespoon of it with a tablespoon of black vodka and three tablespoons of crème de cassis, the liqueur made from blackcurrant berries. A few drops of dry vermouth help to cut the sweetness.

It makes an exceptional, perfectly balanced drink for any fall or winter day.

My final cocktail takes a classic and adds an autumnal twist. A Cider Sidecar takes the cognac, Cointreau and lemon juice that makes up a traditional Sidecar and adds a hefty helping of fresh apple cider.

The cider makes it a different drink altogether. Instead of tasting like a cocktail, it becomes an apple-cider drink with a mellow alcoholic warmth.

I added a pair of eyeballs to mine, made out of lychee nuts and blueberries. You know, to be scary.

CIDER SIDECAR

- Yield: 1 serving
- 2 ounces apple cider
- 2 ounces cognac
- 1 ounce Cointreau or other orange liqueur (Grand Marnier, triple sec)
- 1 ounce fresh lemon juice
- Strip of lemon zest
- Branded or maraschino cherries
- 2 blueberries, optional
- 2 lychee nuts, optional, see note
- Note: Lychee nuts are available canned in international food stores.

1. Place cider, cognac, Cointreau and lemon juice in a cocktail shaker. Add ice, cover and shake until the shaker feels very cold to the touch, about 20 to 30 seconds. Strain into a glass and top with zest and cherries.

2. If desired, place blueberries into lychee nuts to form "eyeballs" and serve with drink.

Per serving: 290 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; no protein; 25 g carbohydrate; 23 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 17 mg sodium; 7 mg calcium
— Adapted from Country Living

POMEGRANATE RUM PUNCH

- Yield: 12 servings
- 4 hibiscus tea bags
- 1 small cinnamon stick, smashed
- 3 cups pomegranate juice
- 1 cup spiced rum
- 1/2 cup fresh orange juice
- 1 (750 ml) bottle prosecco or other sparkling wine, chilled
- Pomegranate seeds, for serving

1. Place tea bags and cinnamon stick in a large measuring cup. Add 1 cup boiling water; let steep 5 minutes. Strain and cool to room temperature.

2. Combine tea, pomegranate juice, rum and orange juice in a pitcher or punch bowl. Slowly stir in prosecco. Serve over ice with orange slices and pomegranate seeds.

Per serving: 146 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; 1 g protein; 15 g carbohydrate; 13 g sugar; no fiber; 9 mg sodium; 19 mg calcium
— Adapted from Country Living

BLACK MAGIC COCKTAIL

- Yield: 1 serving
- 2 1/2 ounces black vodka, see note
- 3/4 ounce fresh lime juice
- 3/4 ounce simple syrup, see note
- Edible pearl dust, optional, see note
- Notes: Black vodka is made by Blavod, but it can be hard to find. Make your own by adding black food coloring or gel into a bottle of vodka, a few drops at a time, and shaking until it becomes black. Or add blue, red and green food coloring or gel into a bottle of vodka, a few drops at a time, and shaking until it becomes black.
- To make simple syrup, boil together equal amounts of water and granulated sugar, stirring occasionally, until the sugar dissolves; can be stored in a clean jar in the refrigerator for several months.
- Edible pearl dust can be found at baking supply stores or in the baking aisle of craft stores. Do not use similar products that do not specifically say they are edible.

Place black vodka, lime juice and simple syrup in a cocktail shaker, add ice and shake until cold. Sprinkle edible pearl dust in bottom of a martini or coupe glass. Strain in drink. Add more pearl dust if it is not shimmering enough; stir with a bar spoon to combine it.
Per serving: 207 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; no protein; 12 g carbohydrate; 11 g sugar; no fiber; 1 mg sodium; 3 mg calcium
— Recipe from elletalk.com

WITCHES' BREW

- Yield: 1 serving
- 1 1/2 ounces Midori
- 1 1/2 ounces Cointreau or other orange liqueur (Grand Marnier, triple sec)
- 1 ounce fresh lemon juice
- Cocktail cherry
- 1 small piece (1/2-1 inch) dry ice, optional

1. Add the Midori, Cointreau and lemon juice to a glass or cocktail shaker, add ice and stir until cold. Strain into a lowball glass. Garnish with cocktail cherry.

2. If desired, carefully add a piece of dry ice. Do not drink until the dry ice has dissolved.
Per serving: 243 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; 1 g protein; 26 g carbohydrate; 23 g sugar; no fiber; 4 mg sodium; 8 mg calcium
— Recipe from acouplecooks.com

BLACK HEART COCKTAIL

- Yield: 1 serving
- 1/2 ounce black vodka, see note
- 1/2 ounce fig vodka
- 1 1/2 ounces creme de cassis
- Dash of dry (white) vermouth
- Note: Black vodka is made by Blavod, but it can be hard to find. Make your own by adding black food coloring or gel into a bottle of vodka, a few drops at a time, and shaking until it becomes black. Or add blue, red and green food coloring or gel into a bottle of vodka, a few drops at a time, and shaking until it becomes black.

Pour black vodka, fig vodka, creme de cassis and vermouth into a cocktail shaker. Add ice, shake until cold, and strain into a glass.

Per serving: 268 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; no protein; 21 g carbohydrate; 18 g sugar; no fiber; 2 mg sodium; 30 mg calcium
— Recipe from minted.com

ZOMBIE

- Yield: 1 serving
- 1 ounce white rum
- 1 ounce gold rum
- 1/2 ounce orange liqueur (Cointreau, Grand Marnier or triple sec)
- 1 1/2 ounces fresh orange juice
- 1 ounce pineapple juice
- 1/2 ounce lime juice
- 1/2 ounce simple syrup, see note
- 1 1/2 teaspoons grenadine
- 1/2 ounce 151 rum
- Notes: To make simple syrup, boil together equal amounts of water and granulated sugar, stirring occasionally, until the sugar dissolves; can be stored in a clean jar in the refrigerator for several months. If you do not have a 1/2-ounce measure, use 1 tablespoon.

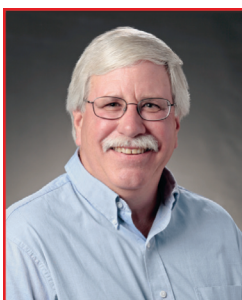
Pour white rum, gold rum, orange liqueur, orange juice, pineapple juice, lime juice, simple syrup and grenadine into a cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake until cold. Fill a tall glass with ice and strain drink into it. Carefully pour 151 rum on top; do not stir. If desired, you can light top of drink on fire.

Per serving: 350 calories; no fat; no saturated fat; no cholesterol; 1 g protein; 36 g carbohydrate; 32 g sugar; no fiber; 6 mg sodium; 11 mg calcium
— Recipe by Daniel Neman



Christian Gooden/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

The Cider Sidecar cocktail.



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