

[drink]

taste



Just Like Old Times

Those of you who still think a martini should be made with gin and vermouth will be happy to know the Prohibition on classic cocktails has been lifted. Get your tumblers ready because the giggle juice is flowing again. *By Terry Sullivan*

The bee's knees is back. Sounds ungrammatical to you, doesn't it? It sounds like a singular step in the right direction to me. And that direction is back toward a world in which young men wanted to grow up to be William Powell (that's of *The Thin Man* series, Sonny) instead of Ashton Kutcher.

The Bee's Knees is a cocktail from the 1920s — when there were more gentlemen than jackasses, at least in the movies. And the gentleman making this particular cocktail is Andrew Green at Spruce in San Francisco, but he's not alone. Careful, if exhausting, beverage research has unearthed a generation of mixological scientists from coast to coast bringing back, and often improving, the classics.

The drink in question, by the way, is simplicity itself. Put half an ounce of fresh lemon juice in a pint glass with ice, add half an ounce of honey water (one part honey, one part hot water — the better to dissolve the former), add a jigger (1-1/2 oz.) of gin and shake. Pour the

result into a rocks glass and garnish with a lemon wheel, and you'll understand the name.

While Green is shaking that one up in Presidio Heights, Jonathon Pogash in New York has brought back the Churchill Cocktail, and just in time for Tony Blair's resignation. Jonathan (www.thecocktailguru.com) creates drinks for a number of boites, and this cocktail is now showing at The Carnegie Club on West 56th Street. Nothing to it — just grab a United flight. Or for a few dollars less, fill a shaker with ice, add a jigger of Scotch (he uses Johnny Walker Black, but any good blended whiskey, or a single malt, will do), half an ounce of Grand Marnier, half an ounce of sweet vermouth, and a quarter-ounce of fresh lime juice. Shake it up, strain into a stemmed glass with a lemon twist garnish, and mumble a toast about blood, sweat, toil and tears. The cigar is optional.

Another Jonathan from San Francisco, Jonathan Raglin at the Absinthe Brasserie and Bar, is busy tweaking traditional libations. His

take on the Manhattan is called the Bob-tailed Nag. Start with two ounces of rye whiskey (a return to the original recipe) in a glass with ice and then add half an ounce of Cocci's Barolo chinato — an aromatized Barolo that's aged with a number of things, including the root for quinine, and there are other versions besides Cocci's. It's puckery and rich, and a stunning after-dinner tot on its own. Stir the result and add two dashes of mint bitters. The result is worth the price of the Barolo, but if you don't want to buy it, do what the mixologists do and experiment. Try other fortified wines, and if you can't find mint bitters, use what you have and crush a mint leaf or two into it.

Closer to your neck, or at least elbow, of the woods, Adam Seger is playing with your father's drinks at Nacional 27 in River North. I recommend his Hibiscus Daiquiri and his newest, the Latin Manhattan, which features cigar-infused Woodford Reserve Bourbon.

We'll skip the recipes because you probably shouldn't try this at home.

For that, I suggest that you might want to use your next weekend escape to learn your way around the bar, and learn how to experiment with drinks and amaze your friends. Jonathan Pogash and a bunch of other new classicists have attended *Cocktails in the Country*, a two-day seminar-cum-party run by Gary and Mardee Regan in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York. They're spirits and cocktail mavens with long pedigrees, and the weekend (or weekday) program is run at Painter's Tavern in the Hudson River Valley about 50 miles north of Manhattan. Think history of cocktails, behind-the-bar skills, the basics of a hundred drinks and how to remember them, a four-course cocktail dinner and brunch, and delicious homework. They've got programs for amateurs and professionals, and last time I looked the tuition was a bargain \$100 or so, and, believe it or not, there are sometimes scholarships available. You do have to pay for a room at the inn, but you don't have to find the town — the Regans will pick you and your classmates up in a stretch limo in Manhattan and whisk you up the Hudson for the program. Think of it as an outward-bound program for people who entertain a lot. Like Nick and Nora Charles. No jackasses need apply. ☐

For *Cocktails in the Country* information, go to www.ardentpills.com or email gary@ardentpills.com.