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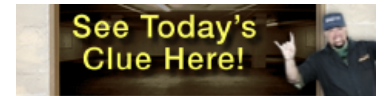


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Winnipeg Free Press > [Life & Style](#) > [Home and Family](#) > LATIN FLAVOURS INSPIRE HOT NEW COCKTAILS AS BARTENDERS PUT A LITTLE SPICE ON ICE

## HOME AND FAMILY

The Canadian Press - ONLINE EDITION

### Latin flavours inspire hot new cocktails as bartenders put a little spice on ice

By: Michelle Locke, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
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SAN FRANCISCO - Looking to put a little pep in that mint julep? Add zing to your martini? A growing number of bartenders are playing with fire and ice, looking to Latin flavours for some hot new cocktails.

"Spicy cocktails are good - why not?" says Camber Lay, who serves up drinks using fresh peppers such as fresnos and poblanos at San Francisco's Epic Roasthouse bar.

After all, she points out, "You can only do so many citrus cocktails."

As with so many other things in cocktail trends, the spice surge is related to the rise of fresh, local herbs and other ingredients in mixed drinks.

It also dovetails with a general interest in Latin flavours, which account for more than half of the ethnic food market, says Maria Caranfa, an analyst with market research firm Mintel.

In fact, restaurant menu items with a Latin or Southwestern touch increased 17 per cent from 2007 to 2009, Caranfa says.

"A lot of bars have really embraced it because of the wow!-factor," says Kara Newman, author of "Spice & Ice: 60 Tongue-tingling Cocktails." She says these cocktails have become particularly popular at bars during the past two years.

Recipes in Newman's book include a mint jalapeno julep - "It's equal parts refreshing and hot at the same time." - and a lemon pepper martini.

As with so many trends, drinks with bite are something that have to be done right.

"Balance is so critical to having a successful drink," she says. "You still need to want to have that second sip."

No one could be happier about the trend than Mike Hultquist, a website developer from Lake in the Hills, Ill., who in his spare time runs the site JalapenoMadness.com.

Hultquist, who makes a jalapeno spiced simple syrup that he uses as a base for a margarita, isn't surprised to see peppers getting their star turn. "Everyone loves them."

Or almost everyone.

"I'm still trying to get my wife to love spicy food," Hultquist says with a laugh.

The approach of Cinco de Mayo, the May 5 celebration of Mexico's victory over French forces in the 19th century, had some bartenders on their mettle.

Tad Carducci, a partner in the New York-based bar-consulting business Tippling Bros., has come up with a Cinco de Mayo drink he is calling the world's hottest cocktail.

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The exact formulation is a secret, but it's going to contain six different chilies ranging from somewhat mild to incendiary.

Carducci, who's still perfecting the drink, says it will be balanced, flavourful and tasty, but definitely not for those with a low threshold for heat.

"We've generated a waiver for people to sign because it is going to be that hot," he says.

The Blind Side

Start to finish: 5 minutes

Juice of 1/2 lemon

22 ml (3/4 oz) vanilla simple syrup

7 strips (each 5 cm/2 inches long) poblano or other hot pepper

45 ml (1 1/2 oz) bourbon

15 ml ( 1/2 oz) Benedictine

Ice

In a cocktail shaker, combine lemon juice, vanilla syrup and poblano strips. Muddle lightly, then add bourbon and Benedictine. Fill shaker halfway with ice, then cover and shake. Pour drink into a pint glass and add more ice, if desired.

Makes 1 serving.

Source: Recipe adapted from Camber Lay of Epic Roasthouse bar in San Francisco

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On the Net:

Kara Newman: [www.karanewman.com](http://www.karanewman.com)

Tad Carducci: [www.tipplingbros.com](http://www.tipplingbros.com)

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