

Mindful Mixology

A Comprehensive Guide to
No- and Low-Alcohol Cocktails

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I'm happy to say that this drink has served me well over the last decade. It's a riff on the sangria—not sangaree—using white wine and melon. And it works for exactly the same reason as sangria: It's refreshing, colorful, and light. The frozen melon balls are beautiful in

the glass, but they also slowly melt and add flavor. The basil garnish is essential to aromatize the drink. Use a melon baller to scoop out small watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew melon balls and then freeze them (I found it easiest to put these in an ice tray).

Melon-Basil Cup

Makes 1 drink
Serve in a wine glass
10% ABV

3 ounces dry white wine (or Navarro Vineyards Gewürztraminer Verjus; see page 44)
½ ounce orange oleo saccharum (see page 45)
1 dash fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon honey syrup*
1 sprig basil for garnish
Special equipment: melon baller

Combine ingredients in a wine glass and gently stir. Use frozen melon balls in place of ice. Garnish with basil sprig.

*To make honey syrup, add 2 parts honey to 1 part boiling water, stir, and allow to cool before using.

Verjus

Verjus is the juice from unripened grapes, red or white, literally “green juice” in French. (Picture biting into a sour green grape.) It’s helpful to think of this less like wine and more like tart, fresh juice or even vinegar.

Like wine, however, the quality varies depending on the producer. You can get wonderful floral and partially sweet verjus or grapey and mouthwall-tearing verjus. One works well with cocktails, the other is better fit for salad dressing. I absolutely love Navarro Vineyards gewurztraminer. Made from gewurztraminer grapes, it embodies many of the floral and tropical notes you get from their gewurztraminer wine. In fact, it makes a great wine-replacement with a little bit of water added.

Fruit Syrups

I tell bartenders I’m training that fruit doesn’t taste like fruit without adding extra sugar. Fruit syrups are just that: fruit and sugar. I know sugar isn’t healthy for you in vast quantities, and I know that non-alcoholic drinks have a reputation for being too sweet, but sugar is still important for balance, texture, and flavor. You can always reduce the sugar and play around with alternative sweeteners, but I’ve found that products like agave syrup and honey have their own unique flavor and low-caloric sweeteners like stevia leave an aftertaste.

Fruit syrups can, as advertised, be made from just about any fruit. But some should be done through a cold infusion and others through heat. Strawberries that are heated have a very different flavor than strawberries from a cold infusion. I tend to prefer the latter and often dump sugar over a bowl of fresh sliced strawberries and let it sit until a sweet, red syrup pools at the bottom. Call me lazy. However, with persimmons I’m going to add sugar and cook them until they extract a dark, sweet syrup that pairs wonderfully with spices. Oleo saccharum (sweet oil) is a kind of syrup that uses the fruit rinds, resulting in a greater depth of flavor. It’s especially used in punch recipes.

Here are recipes for a few common syrups used throughout the book:

Lemon Oleo Saccharum

Makes approximately 1 cup

4 lemons

1 cup sugar

Wash and peel lemons into strips, making sure to avoid as much pith as possible. Place lemon peels and sugar in a mason jar or Tupperware container and pulverize. Seal and leave overnight. The next day, stir and add a small amount of lemon juice to dissolve remaining crystals. Press and strain syrup through a fine mesh strainer. Discard the peels.

Lemon Syrup

Makes approximately 1 cup

½ cup sugar

½ cup water

Zest of 3 lemons (wash before zesting)

6 ounces lemon juice

Add sugar, water, and lemon zest to a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and simmer until sugar crystals are dissolved. Stir, remove from heat, and combine lemon juice in the mixture.

(To make lime syrup, substitute lime zest and juice in the same proportions.)

Orange Oleo Saccharum

Makes approximately 1 cup

2 oranges

1 cup sugar



My former business partner and best friend, Angie Fetherston, doesn't drink. When I first served her a drink, she asked for a non-alcoholic cocktail. I made her a drink from Jerry Thomas' *Bon Vivant's Guide*, or *How to Mix Drinks*, an Orgeat Lemonade. She loved it, and it

was then that I truly realized the importance of non-alcoholic drinks. Orgeat syrup is a sweetened almond syrup and can be purchased online.

Orgeat Lemonade

Make 1 drink

Serve in a highball glass

2 ounces fresh lemon juice

1 ounce orgeat syrup

1 tablespoon powdered sugar

Fresh berries and mint sprig for garnish

In a shaker, combine liquid ingredients with ice and shake vigorously. Strain liquid into a highball glass and add crushed ice. Garnish with a skewer of fresh berries and mint sprig.