

**Audrey Saunders and the Modern Classic Cocktails  
Bargiornale magazine March 2020**

**An interview by Shane Eaton**

***At what point did you realize your cocktails were classics?***

I honestly could not say. At some point in time after the cocktail revival had settled down in the US, a number of publications began talking about "Modern Classics", and I saw my cocktails on those lists.

***What is the best way to serve your cocktails?***

The Gin-Gin Mule is served in a highball, and the Old Cuban is served in a large Champagne Coupe or Martini glass.

***Are there any curiosities that people don't know about your drinks?***

None. I always try to provide as much information as possible about my drinks whenever someone asks about them. I want people to experience the flavor of one of my drinks as closely as I do when I prepare them, and providing as much information as possible is the only way to achieve that.

***What advice would you give a young bartender who wants to reinterpret your recipes?***

Whether it is my drink, or another classic, LESS IS MORE. Many drinks I taste nowadays are exhausting, overworked and fatigue the palate. The question I always pose to my bartenders whenever they are creating a drink is if it is DELICIOUS?

Deliciousness is the most important aspect of a drink. Is the drink delicious enough that the guest would want to finish to the end and then happily reorder another? That is my test. Most drinks today have an excessive number of ingredients, and because of that they lack distinction and a "grace note". Forget about making a drink with wormwood bitters + 3 different amari + barrel aging + smoked finish! I wouldn't order it because the ingredients alone are exhausting, excessive and overkill. When your drink is finished, you should revisit the ingredients and ask yourself if all those ingredients actually need to be involved. Clean it up and try to eliminate at least one or two ingredients.

Another point when reinterpreting recipes- kindly change the name. Please. Whether it's mine or someone else's. If you reinterpret a drink and change the ingredients, it is no longer the original drink and it should be renamed something entirely different. It is fine if you would like to give credit and mention that the drink was inspired by XYZ- but do not use the same name. It simply isn't.

### ***How was the Gin-Gin Mule born & what is the recipe?***

I created the Gin-Gin Mule in 2000, at Beacon Restaurant. It was a blending of the Mojito and the Moscow Mule. Mojitos were new to NY in 1999, when Dale DeGroff taught me how to make them at Blackbird (where I worked with him). After Blackbird closed, I moved over to Beacon Restaurant in 2000 where I became the Head Bartender (also owned by the same company that owned Blackbird). After Dale taught me about the mojito, it became one of my favorite drinks. It was the first time I had ever experienced an herb in a drink and I was enamored with the fresh flavor from the mint. I had also just begun to immerse myself in the study of gin at that very same time. So I decided to replace the rum with gin.

I thought this was good, but wanted to add an ingredient which I thought would enhance the gin. At Beacon Restaurant, I had complete access to all the ingredients. It was also at Beacon that I created the recipe for both the homemade ginger beer (along with one of the line cooks). I had also created the Jamaican firefly (Dark & Stormy with lime juice) at Beacon and it was already on the menu at Beacon. So I already had the homemade ginger beer behind the bar at that time as well.

I looked at all the ingredients that I had behind the bar, and thought that the spiciness of the ginger beer would be an excellent complement to the gin. I proceeded to make one with gin and then tried it. I liked it very, very much. I fine-tuned the proportions of all the ingredients until I hit on the recipe.

#### Homemade Ginger Beer - 1 gallon

1 pound (.45 kilo) Ginger root, finely chopped

1 gallon (3.75 liters) Filtered water

4 oz (120ml) Light brown sugar

2 oz (60 ml) fresh lime juice

Add water to a pot and bring to a boil. Break-up ginger root into smaller pieces, and place in a food processor. Add a cup of the boiling water to make processing easier. Process till almost mulch-like.

After ginger is minced, add it back into the boiling water. Shut off heat. Stir well, and cover for 1 hour. Strain through a fine chinois or cheesecloth, and add lime juice & light brown sugar. Let cool. Transfer into bottled containers and store in the refrigerator.

IMPORTANT – when you are straining the ginger through the strainer, take a spoon or ladle and firmly press down on the ginger to extract the flavor. The strongest part of the ginger essence is still hiding in there, and needs to be pressed out manually. Its appearance will be cloudy; this is natural.

## **GIN-GIN MULE**

### Ingredients:

$\frac{3}{4}$  oz (22.5 ml) Fresh Lime Juice

1 oz Simple Syrup (30 ml) (1-1 sugar/ water) (do not use gomme!)

2 mint sprigs (1 for muddling; 1 for garnish)

1 oz (30ml) Homemade Ginger Beer (see recipe below)

1  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz (52.5 ml) Tanqueray Classic Gin

Measure lime juice, simple syrup, and mint into a mixing glass. Muddle well. Add gin, ginger beer, and ice. Shake well, and strain into a highball glass.

Glass: 10 oz Highball

Garnish: Mint Sprig, lime wheel & Candied Ginger. Serve with long straws

**The trick is the homemade ginger beer, because the store-bought stuff has a peppery (more than gingery) profile--and many times sickly-sweet and insipid. *BUT* if you've absolutely must use commercial ginger beer, then PLEASE reduce the simple syrup in the drink down to a 1/2 ounce.**

### ***How was the Old Cuban born & what is the recipe?***

As I mentioned with the Gin-Gin Mule, I love Mojitos. I wanted to create a version of a Mojito that would be as welcome on New Year's Eve as it would be on a hot day. The Old Cuban to me is a Mojito in a little, black cocktail dress. Crisp, clean, refreshing, yet elegant and festive and having complexity and depth.

A classic mojito utilizes club soda. That club soda is a good fit for a blanco rum, and everything altogether is well-balanced, and light in the overall profile of the drink. But on New Year's Eve (or any other festive occasion) I'm not drinking club soda. I want to

drink champagne. If you take a mojito with blanco rum and add champagne, the lightness of blanco rum is dominated by the champagne, right? But if we replace the blanco with añejo rum, that begins to make more sense, right? The two ingredients complement each other, they are more balanced and in-tune with each other. The angostura bitters add more depth & complexity, and they tie all of the other ingredients together.

For that same reason I always have my own mojitos with angostura. It helps to cut the sugar on the palate- and because of that, it tastes a bit cleaner.

### **Old Cuban Recipe**

1  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz (52.5 ml) Bacardi 8 Rum

$\frac{3}{4}$  oz (22.5 ml) Lime Juice

1 oz (30ml) Simple Syrup (1-1 sugar to water)

1-2 dashes Angostura

6 Mint leaves

2 oz Champagne (60 ml)

Please do not use Prosecco in the Old Cuban. In this instance it is much too floral and overpowers the other flavors)

Muddle / Shake / Fine-strain / Top w Champagne.

Glass: Marie Antoinette

Garnish: Mint Sprig & Lime Wheel