

Dry days ahead

I was just debating the other day whether a chilled lemonade, with loads of ice and a slice of squeezed green lime floating in a tall glass, the rim of the which is laced with salt and sugar crystals, can be called a mocktail.

I think it can. However, someone I know, begs to differ; they could not visualise why a regular 'lebur shorbot' that mum made all the time, pretending to be a lemon mocktail just because the wifey dressed it in fancy-schmancy manner.

"And why not?" I ask again. I am a believer because our very own 'bel er shorbot' can be made into a smoothie by simply adding vanilla ice cream and serving in a mason jar; or our sweet or salty yoghurt lassi served in terracotta glasses can elevate it from the humble drink that it is, simply with some careful food styling.

Any drink without alcohol is a mocktail — an ordinary orange juice, pumped up with a bit of tonic water, or ginger ale tastes divine; watermelon juice with mint and sparkling water is out of the world; frozen blackberry or green mango granita with any fizzy drink; soda or bitter lemon garnished with some fresh fruit is just the perfect drink to cool off on a warm day; a yoghurt and tomato based savoury drink with a little bit of tang from the yoghurt is a perfect mocktail for a ladies' lunch. And you get the idea!

A cocktail is a mixed alcoholic drink, and 'mock' means to copy or mimic something, so mocktails are a great alternative for people who do not want to consume alcohol, but do want to socialise and enjoy a great time with friends, because water is too boring, fizzy drinks are too passé, and virgin cocktails are unbelievably expensive!

Let's just flip through a few cool mocktail recipes this week, along with the advisory on the perfect sort of glasses to use, or even the right garnishes. Enjoy these personally compiled recipes.

Cheers!

WOOD APPLE MOCKTAIL

Take out the pulp in the traditional manner by cracking the hard shell and carefully removing the gluey seeds, working your way up the seed trail. Sieve the pulp and you can simply water-down the consistency. Do not add extra sugar to enhance the sweetness of the fruit, serve it in a long glass with few ice cubes.

However, if you are anything like my father, then add thickened milk and serve it in a round glass and garnish it with the cream or 'shhor' of the milk, and yes, place a shard of caramelised sugar on the side in case you need it to be sweet.

THE MILK, ROOH AFZA, AND VANILLA SHENANIGANS

This is what my grandmother served her sons-in-law every time they visited her. This mocktail or smoothie is a dessert of supreme quality that has been lost to time and we just make poor knock offs of her original recipe.

The boiled milk has to be made into a frothy consistence by using traditional wooden swizzle stick or 'daal gutni' by mer-

cilessly swizzling it in hand, until the perfect frothiness is attained. In a separate bowl, mix a bit of Rooh Afza and saffron bits to the milk and stir it — it must have a light rosy colour; add that to the froth and crushed ice cubes, almond and pistachio splits, and serve it in a silver glass with rose petals as garnish.

To make it all simple, add powder milk, vanilla essence, and strawberry ice-cream, and blend. Voila!

FRESH LIME SODA

Lime and soda have been favoured mocktails for years. The fresh twist on the recipe here will be fresh (slightly bashed) mint leaves.



POSH TONIC WATER

They taste refreshing if you add a dash of pomegranate, molasses, or iced rose tea; you can even add cucumber or crunchy fruits, if you really want to add more fun to your margarita glass.

LEMONADE WITH A SALT AND SUGAR RIM

Well, half of South East Asians drink lemonade with salt, but the other half take it with at least three spoons of sugary syrup. But add a salt and sugar rim and a wedge of lime to lemonade, and take it up a notch.

— RBR

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

DRESSING UP THE DRINKS:

Garnishes and Rims

Garnishes and rims are visual flourishes that can give a cocktail a little edge, or at their most extreme, transform them into works of art. They are easy way to make even the most basic drinks look special.

CITRUS

The most common garnishes are citrus fruits – which makes total sense when you consider that many drinks are made with fresh lemon, lime, or grapefruit juice.

You can try adding a citrus round — a

apples, strawberries, and everything in between (including olives, which yes, are a fruit). Cut a vertical slice in the fruit and mount it on the side of the glass, or skewer it on a cocktail pick and lay it across the top.

EDIBLE FLOWERS

Flowers bring a lush, feminine, botanical aesthetic to your drink. There are many different types of edible flowers, including common garden flowers like cornflowers, nasturtiums, pansies, squash blossoms, and dandelions. If you do not feel like foraging through your flowerbed, specialty grocery stores often sell edible flowers in the fresh herbs section.

HERBS

Herb garnishes can range from understated (a delicate spring of sage) to downright wild and overgrown (several bunches of mint or basil). Herbs do not just look pretty – they also add an intoxicating aroma to your cocktail, which you will inhale each time you take a sip. Before you add your herb garnish, press on the leaves to release their essential oils (but not so hard that you crush them).

SHRIMP AND PICKLES

If you want your garnish to be able to look you in the eye, a shrimp is a good bet. Shrimp and pickled vegetables (carrots, green beans, asparagus, onions) are go-to garnishes for savoury drinks like Bloody Marys and Caesars.

UMBRELLAS, STRAWS, AND OTHER NON-EDIBLES

Tiny umbrellas bring a playful, camp mood to a cocktail; you will typically find them used as garnishes for tropical drinks. The same goes for wacky, colourful plastic garnishes like miniature giraffes and elephants. But you might want to consider eschewing the plastic altogether, particularly when it comes to straws, which just end up in the trash.

Reusable stainless steel straws are ten times classier than plastic ones, and widely available, too.

RIMS

Your first experience with a cocktail rim was likely the salted edge of a Margarita glass, but there are other options, too. You can use either sugar or salt, and experiment with mixing in other herbs and spices (try a chilli salt mixture, or cinnamon sugar). To rim a glass, pour the salt or sugar in a thin layer onto a plate, run a lime or lemon around the edge of your glass, and then dip the glass into the rimming mixture.

Source: *Free the Tipple, Kickass Cocktails Inspired by Iconic Women* by Jennifer Croll, with illustrations by Kelly Shami

thin, circular cross-section of the entire fruit cut with a knife — for a fun, tropical feel, or a citrus wedge (that familiar bar garnish) if you want to squeeze the juice into your drink.

A citrus twist is the classiest of the bunch; to make one, slice off a thin strip of citrus peel using a knife or a peeler, twist it or wrap it around a straw to give it a spiral shape, then drape over the rim of a glass.

It's quick, sophisticated, and adds both the aroma and flavour of citrus oil to your drink.

FRUIT

Citrus is not the only fruit garnish in town. You can use almost any kind of fruit as a garnish, including cherries, pineapple,