

Prohibition's Nectar (A Manhattan With a Twist of Peru)

By Florence Fabricant

Oct. 16, 2002

In Lima, Peru, they know about the cocktail called El Capitán. It looks like a Manhattan, but in place of the whiskey that's usually mixed with the vermouth, this version calls for Pisco, the Peruvian brandy. The drink is lighter tasting than a Manhattan and delicious, as people who tried it at Peruvian lunches in the Delegates' Dining Room at the United Nations recently discovered.

Pedro C. Olaechea, the director of Viña Tacama, a wine and Pisco company in Peru, explained that during Prohibition, when whiskey was hard to get in Peru, Pisco was substituted and the drink was born. It is three parts Pisco, one part vermouth (usually sweet or a mixture of sweet and dry), a dash of bitters and a maraschino cherry. At a bar, you can ask for a Pisco Manhattan.

This Little Piggy Went . . . Well, a Little Crazy

You won't find Peter Callahan, who owns Callahan Catering in Manhattan and Philadelphia, making mundane triangles of smoked salmon on dark bread. He likes to rethink the hors d'oeuvre repertory, so for a winsome and savory cocktail nibble, he spreads thin pumpernickel with a film of cream cheese, tops it with smoked salmon and cuts it in the shape of a pig, then adds a black sesame- seed eye and a broad green belt of wasabi-flavored tobiko (flying fish eggs). Through Thanksgiving, he is selling the pink pigs for \$48 a dozen, plus shipping. The minimum order is four dozen. They are frozen and well sealed, so they can be kept on hand for holiday parties, and they thaw in less than an hour. Orders: (212) 327-1144.

Have You Hugged a Fish Today?

Three years ago the Audubon Society's Living Oceans program introduced a seafood wallet card, shaded in various colors to show which kinds of seafood are in danger of being depleted or harm the environment, and which ones are in good supply and have no such ill effects. Now there is a card specifically for fish commonly available in the New York region.

The card, produced with the Wildlife Conservation Society, approves of eating arctic char, Spanish mackerel, Alaskan salmon, Alaskan halibut and farmed clams, mussels and scallops. In a red zone of varieties to be avoided, it lists Chilean sea bass, shark, farmed Atlantic salmon, grouper and skate — the salmon because of the pollution that the farms produce, according to the society. Swordfish, which conservation groups urged people not to eat during a three-year campaign, is on the card's caution list, as it is showing signs of recovery from overfishing.

The cards are free at (718) 220-5155.

Dot-Com Desserts, From Connecticut

Until now you had to go to the Aux Délices shops in Greenwich or Riverside, Conn., to buy Debra Ponzek's intense but delicate single-layer chocolate torte cake or her light lemon crème fraîche cake. The store now takes orders on the Internet, at www.auxdelicesfoods.com. The cakes (\$22 each, plus shipping) are fresh, not frozen, and serve 8 to 10. Cookies, preserves, condiments and gift baskets are also sold.

From the Far Side of Long Island Fjord

For more than 10 years Scandia Food and Gifts has had stores in Farmington and Norwalk, Conn. But when the company set up a Web site, www.scandiafood.com, its owner, Peter Bjernestad, discovered that he had thousands of customers on the Upper East Side. So that is where he has just opened his third store, at 1685 First Avenue (87th Street). In the back, past the clogs and crystal, is a food section with flatbreads and crackers, jams, honeys, mustards, pancake mixes, candies and pickles. A freezer case offers bags of classic Swedish meatballs (\$7.20 a pound) and sweetly briny shrimp, with heads, to steam, peel and eat (\$11.95 for one and a half pounds). Jars of herring, smoked seafood spreads and cheeses are also sold.

Originally published October 16, 2002. Advertising removed from the supplied web export; article text retained.

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