

# Cocktail Challenge

**IGOR BEAULIEU** comes from Toulouse and is devoted to the finest products of France – he has just started on the serious business of assembling his own wine cellar devoted largely to French wines. However, he couldn't be more cosmopolitan in his approach to cocktail-making, having worked at some top establishments, including the Connaught and Claridge's. Manager at the Met Bar for seven months, Igor is a huge fan of rum: 'For me, rum and Cognac are the spirits to work with.' He made us three cocktails that have already established themselves on the Met's list.

## 01

### YOUR TIE

The strong, bright accents of the fruit bring out the best in the rum, the pineapples smoothing everything out and showing off the spicy vanilla flavours in the spirit. Big chunks of fruit make a brilliant 'pudding' once the liquid has been slurped up.

**SCORE: 8.5/10**

#### RECIPE

- 2 orange wedges
- 2 lime wedges
- 2 tsp brown sugar
- Half slice of fresh pineapple
- 50ml Cockspur Old Gold
- 20ml Grand Marnier

Muddle the orange, lime and sugar. Add the pineapple and muddle again. Add the spirits and mix well: do not shake. Serve in a tall glass with a pineapple slice to garnish.

#### TIME TO MAKE

90 seconds



**IGOR BEAULIEU**  
*Met Bar*

**THE VERDICT:** Igor and Alex are both bartenders of tremendous skill and dedication. Both display an admirable desire to keep things simple, yet they're willing to take risks. I give the edge to Igor because he keeps his drinks simpler and has a surer sense of balance. One of Alex's

## 02

### PASSION BLUSH

The passionfruit seeds give a faint touch of pleasant bitterness to the sweetness of the Chambord and the smoky mellowness of the rum. The total effect is that of a Kir with punch, kick and attitude.

**SCORE: 8/10**

#### RECIPE

- 15ml Cockspur Old Gold
- Half a passionfruit
- 20ml Chambord
- 125ml Champagne

Stir the rum in to the fruit in a Champagne flute, 'so they can see you're using fresh fruit', then add the Chambord and finally the Champagne.

#### TIME TO MAKE

60 seconds



## 03

### SUMMER IN THE ORCHARD

A complex drink that balances the acidic freshness of the fruit with the rounded, smoky flavour of the rum. In short, a perfect summer cocktail. The quality of the fruit purée is as important here as the quality of the rum.

**SCORE: 9/10**

#### RECIPE

- 25ml Les Vergers Boiron fruit purée (pear, plum, apricot, redcurrant)
- 15ml Poire William
- 10ml apricot brandy
- 50ml Cockspur Old Gold

Put all the ingredients in a shaker with ice. Shake well, then double-strain to remove every fragment of ice.

#### TIME TO MAKE

60 seconds



Rum is the in thing in spirits, we're told. And having heard from so many barmen that Mojitos are now their best-selling cocktail, we can easily believe it. But is there more to rum than the M-word? We set out to see what two of London's top bars could put together using seven-year-old Barbados rum Cockspur Old Gold. The venues: the ultra-des-res Met Bar in Park Lane and stunning Floridita in Soho. Richard Ehrlich reports



**ALEX FITZSIMONS**  
*Floridita*

lacked balance, another ventured into uncharted territory with mixed results: a cocktail has to be a pure pleasure from first sip to last, and he was just a bit too bold. But both understand the nature of a characterful rum such as Cockspur Old Gold and are creative whizzes.

**ALEX FITZSIMONS**, senior bartender at Floridita, has been with the bar since it opened last October. He's been in the business for nearly three years, and has worked at venues such as the Match Bar in London W1. Alex's enthusiasm for his craft is limitless – he even makes his own syrups and other mixers so that he can find exactly the right flavours. And, as he says in between mixing drinks, 'Find a job you love and you will never work a day in your life.'

PHOTOS: ADRIAN FRANKLIN

**PEAR-LY GATES**

A good balance between sweetness and acid, but the tannin in the tea adds a startling astringency. I'm not sure what the effect would be if you drank the whole thing. With plain syrup, it might get a higher mark.

**SCORE: 7/10**

**RECIPE**

- Half a russet pear, chopped
  - 1 small lime, quartered
  - 20ml vanilla tea syrup (homemade from tealeaves steeped in water, sugar and vanilla)
  - 60ml Cockspur Old Gold
- Muddle the pear in a shaker with the lime and syrup, then add the rum and ice. Shake all the ingredients and strain into a Martini glass.

**TIME TO MAKE**

90 seconds



**DUPPY CONQUEROR**

There is some seriously sharp astringency in here from the sour Seville orange. Alex makes no bones about it: 'When it's right for me, it's on the sour side.' Each to his own taste, but mine didn't do cartwheels over the total effect, which saw the sharpness dominate the sweet rum right down to the finish.

**SCORE: 6/10**

**RECIPE**

- 1 small Seville orange, chopped
  - 15ml agave syrup
  - 60ml Cockspur Old Gold
- Muddle the orange with the syrup in a shaker. Add the rum and crushed ice, and shake well but gently.

**TIME TO MAKE**

60 seconds



**03**

**BRAITHEWAITE**

The additions here are simple but exceptionally well thought out. The bitters bring out the fruity qualities of the rum, while the caramel in the Noilly Prat brings out its sweetness. Smoky on the finish. Terrific.

**SCORE: 9/10**

**RECIPE**

- Dash of orange bitters
  - 25ml Noilly Prat Ambré
  - 50ml Cockspur Old Gold
- Mix all ingredients over ice in an Old Fashioned glass and stir for a good length of time. This cocktail resembles an Old Fashioned in its dilution time: taste until you get it right!

Garnish with a slice of blood orange.

**TIME TO MAKE: 90 seconds**

