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The Cosmopolitan at Truss & Twine in Palm Springs.

Three Ways: Cosmopolitan

Invented in the 1980s and launched to fame in the late '90s, the Cosmopolitan has been both adored and maligned. When Toby Cecchini, longtime New York barman and current owner of Brooklyn's Long Island Bar, invented the drink in 1988 while working at The Odeon in Tribeca, he likely had no idea that the cocktail would become what he's since called an albatross around his neck. His original version—a tart yet balanced mix of citrus vodka, Cointreau, fresh lime and a splash of cranberry juice—is pale pink and much less sweet than the 'tini-fied Cosmo that eventually took over. But bartenders with an appreciation for nostalgia have been putting their spins on the drink for years, creating versions that both elevate and evolve the classic.

Truss & Twine's Cosmopolitan. At Truss & Twine in Palm Springs, drinks are divided into categories such as Golden Age and Prohibition. “The Cosmopolitan is in the ‘Dark Ages’ section,” says bar manager Dave Castillo. “But with the help of a beautiful lime cordial, ours is balanced and nuanced, while hitting all the flavors and paying homage to a hugely popular cocktail of the time.” To make the lime cordial, in a medium saucepan combine 2½ cups of fresh lime juice (reserving the zest from 2 limes) with 3½ cups of white sugar and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and let cool for 5 minutes, then add the lime zest and 2 oz. of minced ginger. Steep the mixture for 15 minutes, then strain it through a fine-mesh strainer; bottle the cordial and keep it refrigerated for up to 2 months. To mix the drink, add 2 oz. of vodka, ¾ oz. of lime cordial, ¾ oz. of cranberry juice cocktail (such as Ocean Spray) and ½ oz. of fresh lime juice to an ice-filled shaker. Shake and double strain the cocktail into a chilled coupe, then garnish with an orange twist.

Vanity Fair. The Vanity Fair at Seattle's Good Bar swaps orange liqueur for Aperol for a hint of bitterness, and adds complexity with a housemade citrus shrub. “The Cosmo is juicy and approachable, yet has a certain mystique,” says bar manager Joshua Batway. “The Vanity Fair has that same vibe, but the ingredients are more detailed and a bit posh.” For the shrub, chop ½ lb. of lemongrass (removing the woody base and tough outer layers) and muddle it with 2 lime leaves and the zest of half a lemon and half a lime, then add everything to a sealable glass jar with ½ cup of champagne vinegar, ¼ cup of fresh lime juice, ¼ cup of fresh lemon juice and ½ cup of white sugar. Shake until the sugar dissolves, then refrigerate for 1 week. Strain the shrub through a fine-mesh strainer, then rebottle for use; keep the remainder refrigerated and use within 1 month. To mix the cocktail, in an ice-filled shaker combine 1¼ oz. of vodka, 1 oz. of Aperol, 1 oz. of pure cranberry juice (not from concentrate) and ¼ oz. of the citrus shrub. Shake and strain into a chilled coupe, then garnish with a lemon twist.

Cosmonaut. Using the bright citrus profile of the Cosmo as a launching pad, Kevin Kok, beverage director at Austin's Bar Peached, creates a playful interpretation by trading citrus vodka for a lemongrass-infused version, then adding a ginger liqueur and pomegranate syrup. “Lemongrass has a buttery note that contrasts very well with ginger,” says Kok. For the vodka, add 2 to 3 stalks of roughly chopped and broken apart lemongrass to a sealable jar with 1 liter of vodka. Cover and let infuse for 1 week, then strain and rebottle. For the pomegranate syrup, in a medium saucepan combine ½ cup of 100-percent pomegranate juice, ½ cup of white sugar, 2 tsp. of pomegranate molasses and 1½ tsp. of orange flower water and bring to a boil. Stir until the sugar is dissolved, then remove from the heat and cool before bottling; use within 2 weeks. To make the cocktail, add 1 oz. of the lemongrass-infused vodka, ¾ oz. of fresh lime juice, ¾ oz. of ginger liqueur and ½ oz. of the pomegranate syrup to an ice-filled shaker. Shake well, then strain into a chilled flute and top with prosecco.