



mix masters

classic drinks infuse the cocktail
party with modern spirit

BY KATIE O'CONNOR
PHOTOS BY CARMEN TROESSER

The latest wave in the cocktail renaissance? The cocktail party, of course. And at interior designer Amie Corley's Central West End home, gathering friends for drinks mixes influences old and new in her signature style, muddling midcentury kitsch with modern flair for a retro-chic affair that's of the moment.



PREVIOUS PAGE: *Edge Flute*, \$11.95, *Crate & Barrel*, 1 The Boulevard, Richmond Heights, 314.725.6380.



Amie Corley's décor masterfully mingles modern and traditional styles; chef Cassandra Vires of Ernesto's Wine Bar provided a cocktail-friendly menu to match, playfully updating classic '50s fare. Clockwise from top left, stuffed mushrooms raise the bar with Gorgonzola potatoes and red wine-braised short ribs, deviled eggs go gourmet with truffled egg purée and hardboiled quail eggs, and peppered biscuits wrapped in bacon and served with grainy mustard elevate the age-old pigs in a blanket. *Caspari paper cocktail napkins*, \$5.50, *The Woman's Exchange*, 9214 Clayton Road, Ladue, 314.997.4411.





BOURBON SWEETHEART

Courtesy of Terrene's Sunny McElwain

1 SERVING

2 oz. Wild Turkey Bourbon
½ oz. cherry liqueur
4 dashes cherry bitters
4 oz. lemon sour (recipe follows)

- Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker. Stir.
- Fill a double old-fashioned glass with ice and pour the mix into the glass.
- Garnish with an orange wedge.

LEMON SOUR

This recipe is to taste, so start with this and add more juice or syrup to your liking. Just beware of making it too sweet.

2 cups fresh-squeezed lemon juice
2 cups simple syrup

- Combine the ingredients. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Solano pitcher, \$24, Pottery Barn, 262 Plaza Frontenac, Frontenac, 314.996.2630 and 280 Chesterfield Mall, Chesterfield, 636.536.6101. Williams double old-fashioned glass, \$48 per set of four, Williams-Sonoma, 260 Plaza Frontenac, Frontenac, 314.567.9211 and 227 Chesterfield Mall, Chesterfield, 636.536.4370. Antique Silver Drink Coasters, \$29 per set of four, Pottery Barn.

Sunny McElwain considered the flavors of the food when creating the party's three signature cocktails, including the Brandy Berry Punch, below. "You never want to overwhelm the flavor of the food with your drinks," explained Terrene's bar manager, who suggested pairing the drinks with the strongest flavor in the food. "All pork, especially bacon, pairs well with bourbon."



Homeowners Amie and Rob Corley.

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RECIPES

BALSAMIC CARAMEL CORN

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 2 bags plain, unbuttered microwave popcorn
- 8 oz. unsalted butter
- 2 cups packed light brown sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. baking soda

- Preheat the oven to 200 degrees.
- Following product instructions, pop the popcorn. When cool enough to handle, remove and discard any unpopped kernels.
- In a large saucepan, combine the butter, brown sugar, salt, vinegar and corn syrup. Bring to a boil and stir until all ingredients are combined. Remove from the heat and stir in the baking soda. (The mixture will foam up.)
- Pour the mixture over the popcorn and toss to coat. Spread the popcorn mixture evenly onto a baking pan and cook for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Spread onto wax paper to dry.

PIGS ON A BLANKET

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 1 lb. wood-smoked bacon
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. cracked black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 8 Tbsp. cold butter, cut into pieces
- ¾ cup milk
- Grain mustard

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Place the bacon on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper and bake until it has started to crisp. Remove the bacon to paper towels to cool. Drain the fat from the pan and place it in the refrigerator to chill.
- In a large bowl, combine the flour, pepper, baking powder and salt. Using a pastry blender or two knives, cut the butter and ¼ cup of the chilled bacon fat into the flour mixture until it begins to look like cornmeal.
- Make a well in the flour mixture and slowly pour the milk into the middle. Knead the dough with your fingers, adding more milk as necessary.
- Form the dough into pieces about the size of your thumb. Place on a baking sheet and bake until lightly browned on the outside

and almost cooked through, about 8 minutes. Set aside to cool.

- Cut the strips of bacon in half. Wrap a bacon strip around each biscuit, secure with a toothpick and place on a baking sheet.
- Finely chop any leftover bacon and stir it into the grain mustard.
- Reheat the bacon-wrapped biscuits in the oven until the bacon crisps and the biscuit is warmed through, approximately 10 minutes.
- Serve immediately with the mustard mixture as a dipping sauce.

GOAT CHEESE BALLS

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 24 Medjool dates
- 8 oz. goat cheese
- 12 thin slices prosciutto

- Using a paring knife, slice each date lengthwise on one side, from tip to tip. Squeeze the top and bottom of the date to get it to open. Gently remove the pit and discard.
- Stuff the cavity of each date with goat cheese until full. Squeeze the date closed and wipe away any excess goat cheese.
- Cut the pieces of prosciutto in half lengthwise so that you have two long strips of prosciutto from each slice. Carefully wrap each date in a strip of prosciutto and fasten with a cocktail pick.
- Serve chilled or at room temperature.

SHRIMP COCKTAIL

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 3 cups extra virgin olive oil
- 2 pinches saffron threads
- 18 large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 large lemon
- 18 fresh basil leaves
- Cocktail sauce

- Combine the olive oil and saffron in a medium pan. Place over medium heat for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the saffron starts to color the oil. Remove the saffron.
- Heat the infused oil to 165 to 180 degrees. Add the shrimp and cook until opaque, approximately 8 minutes.
- Using a mandoline, thinly slice the lemon into rounds. Set aside.
- Wrap each poached shrimp in a basil leaf and secure with a cocktail pick.

- Layer the lemon slices on a serving platter, and then arrange the wrapped shrimp over the lemon slices. Garnish with lemon wedges and serve with a spicy cocktail sauce.

STUFFED MUSHROOMS

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 2 lbs. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and diced
- Salt and pepper
- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 6 oz. Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
- 24 large cremini mushrooms
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cups braised short ribs, pulled and warmed in sauce (recipe follows)

- Place the potatoes in a large stock pot, cover with cold water and add a large pinch of salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium and cook the potatoes until fork-tender. Drain well and return them to the pan.
- Meanwhile, heat the butter and cream until hot. Add the Gorgonzola cheese and stir together. Add the sauce to the potatoes and mash them until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Using a paring knife, remove and discard the stems and insides of the mushrooms. With a damp paper cloth, gently wipe the outsides of the mushrooms, removing all dirt and sediment. Place them cap-side up on a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil, then sprinkle with salt and pepper.
- Bake until the caps start to brown and soften, approximately 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.
- Using a piping bag, fill the mushroom caps with the mashed potatoes. (If you have allowed the potatoes to cool, reheat them before piping them into the mushroom caps.)
- Top each mushroom with warmed short rib meat and serve.

BRAISED SHORT RIBS

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 2 Tbsp. canola oil
- 6 flanken-style short ribs with bones, cut 2 inches thick (about 4 lbs.)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 3 celery ribs, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, thickly sliced
- One 750-ml bottle dry red wine, such as Cabernet Sauvignon
- 4 thyme sprigs
- 4 rosemary sprigs
- 3 cups chicken stock

- In a large skillet, heat the oil. Season the ribs with salt and pepper. Add them to the skillet and cook over moderate heat, turning once, until browned and crusty, about 18 minutes. Transfer the ribs to a shallow baking dish, arranging them in a single layer.
- Add the onion, carrot, celery and garlic to the skillet and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until very soft and lightly browned, about 20 minutes. Add the wine, thyme and rosemary and bring to a boil over high heat. Pour the hot marinade over the ribs and let cool. Cover and refrigerate overnight, turning the ribs once.
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Transfer the ribs and marinade to a large, enameled cast-iron casserole dish. Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Cover and cook in the lower third of the oven for 1½ hours, until the meat is tender but not falling apart. Uncover and braise for 45 minutes longer, turning the ribs once or twice, until the sauce is reduced by about half and the meat is very tender.
- Transfer the meat to a clean, shallow baking dish, discarding the bones as they fall off. Strain the sauce into a heatproof measuring cup and skim off as much fat as possible. Pour the sauce over the meat; there should be about 2 cups.

TRUFFLED "DEVILED" EGGS

Courtesy of Ernesto's Wine Bar's Cassandra Vires

- 10 large eggs
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp. white truffle oil
- ½ tsp. minced garlic
- 3 large anchovy fillets, drained and minced
- 1 Tbsp. coarsely chopped parsley
- ½ tsp. minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- ½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest
- ¾ cup bread crumbs
- Rye bread, cut into squares and toasted
- Quail eggs, hardboiled
- Micro greens

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- In a large saucepan, cover the eggs with water and bring to a simmer. Cook over moderate heat for 8 minutes. Drain the eggs, return them to the pan and shake the pan to crack the shells all over. Fill the pan with cold water and let the eggs cool for 3 minutes.

Drain and peel the eggs; pat dry.

- Slice the eggs in half and remove the cooked yolks from the whites. Reserve the whites for a future use and place the yolks in a small bowl. Using a fork, mash together the egg yolks, mayonnaise, truffle oil, garlic, one-third of the minced anchovies and the parsley. Place in a piping bag and refrigerate until needed.
- In a small skillet, melt the butter over moderate heat. Add the remaining minced anchovies and cook, stirring, until they break down, about 1 minute. Stir in the lemon zest and bread crumbs and transfer to a rimmed baking sheet. Bake the crumbs until golden brown and crisp, about 2 minutes.
- Place the rye bread toasts on a platter. Pipe the egg yolk mixture onto the bread and then top with anchovy crumbs.
- Garnish with hardboiled quail eggs and micro greens, or chopped egg white and parsley.

THE MOVIE STAR

Courtesy of Terrene's Sunny McElwain

1 SERVING

- 1 piece candied ginger
- 3 dashes grapefruit bitters
- ½ oz. Velvet Falernum
- Champagne or sparkling wine

- Coat the candied ginger with the bitters and drop it into a Champagne flute.
- Add the Velvet Falernum, then top with the Champagne.

BRANDY BERRY PUNCH

Courtesy of Terrene's Sunny McElwain

12 SERVINGS

- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
- 2 cups fresh pineapple, cut into small pieces
- 1 lb. powdered sugar
- 2 cups dark rum
- 2 cups fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 2 cups fresh-squeezed orange juice
- ½ cup fresh-squeezed lime juice
- ½ cup pomegranate syrup (found in Asian markets)
- 2 750-ml bottles brandy or cognac
- 1 2-liter bottle ginger ale

- Mix the fruit, sugar and rum together in a large container. Crush the fruit slightly with a muddler or the back of a large spoon. Cover and let sit for at least 4 hours.
- Just before serving, add the lemon, orange and lime juice, pomegranate syrup and brandy. Stir and pour into a punch bowl.
- As guests arrive, add the ginger ale and serve.



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