

BAR POMPETTE

Cocktail Hour

WORDS BY MEREDITH HARDIE PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASHLEY VAN DER LAAN



Cornichon



It's Pink!



Garden & Soda

At Bar Pompette, a French-inspired drinking den in Little Italy, the cocktail menu is about way more than just booze.

DON'T THINK MUCH about the non-alcoholic ingredients in my cocktail. For Hugo Togni, co-owner and general manager of Bar Pompette, ingredients are always on his mind.

"Our producers had only worked with restaurants and chefs. They never worked with bars before," he says of local farms like Tamarack and Aldergrove who provide the charming College Street bar with herbs and produce so fresh "it hits straight to the bones."

When I stop by the "tipsy" (Pompette's meaning en français) tavern in the heart of Little Italy, I see exactly what he means.

With French doors still open and letting in the last warm breaths of summer, Bar Pompette feels instantly welcoming. "We wanted to have a neighbourhood bar. There are no reservations, no limits at the table," Togni encourages. "You can stay three hours with two cocktails, as long as you have a good time."

It's easy to lose track of time here as you linger over beverages bursting with intense flavours you can't typically access in drink form: rich and tangy crème fraîche from a small dairy farm, late Ontario peaches transformed into wine for a whisky sour, the last tomatoes of the season. "They're not the prettiest, but they're some of the tastiest," says Togni, who turns the overlooked fruit into a juicy marmalade that you can slurp up in a cocktail, which is set to drop in the fall.

Beneath Bar Pompette's weathered hardwood floors and the glow of antique brass lamps, a futuresque lab in the basement houses all the tools to extract, distill, preserve and, most importantly, play. A good example is Togni's beloved rotary evaporator that vacuum-distills at a lower temperature to capture all the essence and oils of fruits and herbs without overcooking them. Beaming, he explains that the consistent results are "bright and clean flavour profiles that provide the taste of summer in the middle of November."

And all the playing has paid off. This year, Bar Pompette earned the 15th spot (and highest new entry award) on North America's 50 Best Bars. "That was something special," says Togni of the surprise landing. Pop by Bar Pompette and you're sure to find a sip of something special, too. **f**



Co-owner and general manager, Hugo Togni, uses herbs and produce in the cocktails at Bar Pompette

Bar Pompette makes an orgeat out of dark roasted almonds with a bit of lemon. Then, the Pastis is cut with aromatic Ontario beeswax, which softens the flavour of the anise and liquorice. "It makes it mellower and easier to drink," says Togni, who adores this sometimes polarizing cocktail. "It's staying on the menu. It's not going anywhere."

11 a.m. in Marseille

The Pastis cocktail has been on the menu since day one. "It's a funny signature and that's what I like about it," says Togni of the intense anise and liquorice-flavoured spirit. It's not for everyone. "The people who know and enjoy this flavour — they've usually had it in the South of France, in the summertime. After the first sip, it brings you back."



Nitro Colada

"This was the first drink we created. The idea was a piña colada, but we wanted something lighter and less sweet," explains Togni. They make it by clarifying fresh pineapple juice with

coconut water before mixing it with a spiced almond syrup and a rum fat-washed with coconut oil. It's served on tap with nitrogen to give it a creamy, foamy texture.



Fat-washing aims to infuse fat into the alcohol. Togni adds coconut oil to the spirit then freezes it. The alcohol remains a liquid, but the fat hardens and separates so it can be removed, leaving a spirit without the fat content but all of the flavour.

BAR POMPETTE COCKTAIL RECIPE

Cocktail de Paris



— ▼ —

INGREDIENTS

- **1 oz** Courvoisier VS
- **1 oz** Dubonnet
- **1 oz** Campari
- **6 drops** Pernod

Method

1. Add all ingredients to a mixing glass filled with ice.
 2. Stir until chilled.
 3. Strain into a coupe glass and serve.
-

This tittle was originally created by Robert Carme in Paris in 1929 and published in *Cocktail de Paris*. Bar Pompette adds an extra touch of freshness to this fruity and bitter cocktail with Pernod. Think boulevardier, but make it (extra) French.