

## [A Beginner's Guide to Cocchi Americano](#)

By Samir Osman



With the explosion of the craft cocktail, small batch spirits—including many long forgotten and some as-of-yet unavailable in the U.S.—have resurfaced and are flourishing within the cocktail community. One of those long-coveted liquors is Cocchi Americano (the name is actually a twist on the Italian term for the process of making a bitter, and has nothing to do with the States). This smooth and herbaceous liqueur is unofficially said to be the closest thing available to the original Kina Lillet formula, a popular aperitif before it was reformulated to Lillet Blanc to appeal to a broader audience in 1986. Made with the same recipe since 1891, Cocchi is an aperitif derived from Muscato D'Asti, a fortified white wine, and then spiced up with cinchona bark (the Peruvian bittering agent used in quinine production for tonic water), gentian, orange peels, and other herbs, and is somewhat similar to a vermouth but with decidedly more character. Imagine a white wine that has been sweetened, then infused with spices, and finally rounded out with a bitter finish and you have a good idea of the spirit itself.

Many bartenders and aficionados have yearned for the more robust spirits of the old days since so many liquors have been watered down to appeal to broader audiences over the past few decades. Luckily, things like Cocchi are now available in the U.S. and are being used in the hottest cocktail programs around the country. One such drink can be found in Jason "Buffalo" LoGrasso's Rum & Cocchi on the bar menu at Cotogna, Quince's new casual sister spot next door at Jackson and Montgomery. The Rum & Cocchi features aged Caribbean rum, locally produced LuLu's garden apricot preserves, vanilla-infused honey made by bees right on the roof of the restaurant, and, of course, Cocchi. The drink is as playful on the palate as its name suggests. Lemon is the more prominent feature upon entry, but the Cocchi is apparent in the finish and gives the cocktail its depth and character.

When asked why he chose to work with Cocchi, LoGrasso had this to say: "I came up with the name first to introduce new flavors to the clientele we cater to. I decided if someone ordered a "Rum and Coke" I was going to give them something to expand their palate, and the "Rum & Cocchi" was the perfect opportunity to do that. I've always liked bitter things and aperitifs. I loved that it was new to the market but has an irrefutable history. It doesn't claim to be anything it's not. It's just a great citrus-forward, intellectual spirit. I love how it lacks any French pretense but instead swims in Italian bravado. It works great with anything sparkling, from soda or tonic to sparkling wine. It should always be prominent in whatever application it's used. It's not a seventh layer kind of spirit. It needs to stand out as a primary ingredient."

Posted on Friday, February 11th, 2011

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