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Brandy Rand

"It is well to remember that there are five reasons for drinking: the arrival of a friend, one's present or future thirst, the excellence of the wine, or for any other reason." Latin Proverb

Refrigerator Aperitifs: My Love for Cocchi Americano

Posted on August 31, 2011



When the top shelf of your refrigerator begins to resemble a bar, well, I guess it's time to make some cocktails.

Finding the creamer for my morning coffee requires navigation through frosty European aperitif bottles and bubbly (chilled and ready for special occasions...but mostly just a Monday night episode of *No Reservations*). I realize our fridge contents may be a bit unusual compared to most – my best friend has baby bottles in hers – but they serve a purpose.

Aperitifs are designed to open up the appetite before a meal. Much more common in Europe, these lower-alcohol tipples have been around for centuries. Most are made from fortified wines mixed with herbs and spices. Vermouth*, for example, is consumed on the rocks in other countries, but here in the United States, we've commonly relegated it to a drop in very, very dry martinis. (Tsk, tsk.) In my house, we practice being Franco-Italian often, sipping a lovely and complex sweet vermouth like Carpano Antica on the rocks while making dinner.

My habitual favorite is **Cocchi Americano** (pronounced "COKE-ey") a once obscure Italian aperitif that finally made it stateside in 2010. It's made from Moscato di Asti grapes found in the Piedmont region, then fortified and flavored with cinchona bark, citrus peel, spices and other botanicals. Cinchona gives Cocchi a slightly bitter edge, though not as intense as Campari. The color of a buttery chardonnay, Cocchi is best served on the rocks with an orange twist and perhaps a splash of soda water. [Listen to my WBZ Connoisseur's Corner radio segment on Cocchi.](#)

Now a staple in most craft cocktail bars, Cocchi Americano gives a certain umami to drinks. It goes without saying; there is always a bottle in my fridge, right next to the ketchup. Here are my go-to Cocchi cocktails:

Cocchi Negroni

My husband and I made this up after playing around with various aperitifs to change up the classic negroni.

1 oz. Cocchi Americano

1 oz. Aperol (another fantastic Italian aperitif)

1 oz. Gin

Stir all ingredients in a mixing glass filled with ice. Strain in to a chilled glass. Garnish with an orange peel.

Bird Bath

Created by Carrie Cole at Craigie on Main in 2010 but destined to be a classic. Love the clever name that plays off bird-themed labels on all the bottles!

2 oz. Cocchi Americano
1 oz. Scarlet Ibis Rum
1/2 oz. Fighting Cock Bourbon
Stir with ice and strain in to a coupe glass.

**It amazes me how many people keep vermouth opened in a cabinet from snowfall to summer without refrigeration. It's wine people! It goes bad quickly, especially if left to fester on a shelf until next Christmas. Once opened, chill it, and it will last about a month. Drink up.*

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