

## More bars growing own cocktail ingredients

Camper English, Special to The Chronicle

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Victoria D'Amato-Moran grows tomatoes, Asian pears, Fuji apples, blackberries, roses and many herbs in her South San Francisco garden. Sooner or later, everything in it winds up in her cocktails.

"Except the zucchinis," she says. "I haven't figured out how to use those yet."

The Bay Area has long been home to the farm-forward cocktail movement - initially personified by Scott Beattie, then of Cyrus restaurant, who sourced produce from neighbors' fruit trees for his bar. Lately, more bartenders are doing the gardening work themselves, for the same reason that backyard gardeners seem to have appeared everywhere.

The extra effort may not save money, and the drinks may not taste noticeably fresher to the customer, but you can bet they do to the proud garden tender who grew part of your gimlet from seed.

D'amato-Moran is one of several who have taken the back-to-the-land approach. She serves blackberry mojitos to customers at the Fairway Cocktail Lounge, and uses her homemade Asian pear jam, strawberry rhubarb syrup, edible flowers and other produce as ingredients and garnishes in cocktails for competitions and guest bartending stints.

H. Joseph Ehrmann, owner of the Mission bar Elixir, started a cocktail garden this year on the back patio of his apartment near San Francisco General Hospital. He planted not only herbs, mint and citrus trees but also rhubarb, blueberry bushes and four varieties of grapes.

"I would like to grow enough so I can eventually harvest enough to use it for the bar," says Ehrmann, acknowledging that it wouldn't be enough to meet his needs for very long.

"Maybe I'll harvest stuff, then step behind the bar for a couple hours and send out a Facebook message" announcing it.

New to gardening, Ehrmann says he's been spending a lot of time and money at garden stores buying plants and seeking organic pest solutions. He's made mistakes; cucumber

plants given to him as a garden-warming present died. "I expect to learn a lot this year, and harvest a little," he says.

### **Strong in suburbs**

Harvests are larger in gardens outside the city. Spruce and its sister venue, the Village Pub, have a contract with the SMIP Ranch in Woodside to provide produce like cucumbers, violets, rosemary and blueberries for use in drinks.

Brix restaurant in Napa has gardens and orchards on the property growing strawberries and basil for a caipirinha and lemon balm and mint for a rum iced tea drink. At Napa's Domaine Chandon winery, the garden and orchard provide peaches and mint used in Champagne cocktails in the tasting room and at the on-site restaurant Etoile.

During the winter, many of the Meyer lemons and other citrus used at the Union Square bar Cantina are sourced (and picked) by owner Duggan McDonnell from his friends' and relatives' gardens in the South Bay.

"The grapefruit tree is 40 years old. It was my grandmother's grapefruit tree and it throws off a lot of fruit. So I'll come back with 50, 60 pounds of it," says McDonnell.

Though he was initially taking advantage of free citrus from trees producing more fruit than their owners could use, McDonnell says he has taken a more active role in maintaining the trees. "It's a nice connection that your cocktail was made not only by someone who made up the recipe and uses local ingredients, but also who picked them," he says.

Within the city, patios and rooftops are being used to grow garnishes. The Fifth Floor restaurant offers three homegrown "Herb Garden Cocktails" - a Sagerac with fresh sage leaves, a rosemary cocktail and a version of the Lonsdale with basil leaves. Assistant General Manager Scott Stewart says the restaurant initially planted herbs to make use of extra garden space in its garden. But it has since become a point of pride.

"How many restaurants or bars can say that they pulled the herbs being used in their cuisine and cocktails from a garden less than 20 feet away?" he asks.

Just-opened Starbelly in the Castro features an herb garden on the back patio where beverage manager Lane Ford finds basil for garnish on a version of the Pimm's cup and as an ingredient in a nonalcoholic cocktail with egg whites, lemon, agave syrup and Darjeeling tea.

Behind Haight Street's Alembic bar are about 20 wine-barrel planters holding ingredients including borage flowers used as garnish, lavender used in lavender-honey syrup, and raspberries used in a syrup for the Clover Club cocktail.

Alembic bartender Daniel Hyatt grows both peppermint and spearmint, which he says taste quite different from each other. "I like to use a little mixture of both, especially when you pluck it out of the garden and throw it into a drink an hour later," he says. "There's a really bright flavor to that combination."

### **Plans for far more**

None of the San Francisco bars grows enough ingredients to supply all of its needs. But plans are growing ever more ambitious. Bartender and consultant Thad Vogler's bar-restaurant Bar Agricole, set to open in December, will have a biodynamic garden in front growing drink ingredients such as savory, thyme and hyssop. Cantina's McDonnell planted additional trees, including magrut lime, kumquat and additional Meyer lemon trees, to harvest in a few years.

Despite all the mint in the garden, Hyatt says, it's never enough during the summer julep season. "When you have a popular cocktail, you can run out of your garden stash really fast," he says. "What we should do is get a chicken coop to keep up with all the eggs I'm using."

### **Sagerac**

#### **Makes 1 drink**

Adapted from a recipe by Jacques Bezuidenhout for the Fifth Floor restaurant.

- -- Herbsaint pastis
- 4 dashes Peychauds bitters
- 1 dash of Angostura bitters
- 3 bar spoons simple syrup
- 5 to 8 sage leaves, + 1 leaf for garnish (depending on the strength of the leaves)
- 3 ounces Russell's Reserve Rye

**Instructions:** Chill a cocktail glass with ice and coat the ice with pastis. Leave to chill.

In a mixing glass, add the bitters, simple syrup and sage leaves. Lightly muddle to release the oils from the sage. Add ice and whisky, and stir for about 10 seconds. Discard the ice and

pastis from the cocktail glass. Strain cocktail into the chilled, pastis-coated glass. Add the sage leaf for garnish.

### **Lonsdale No. 3**

#### **Makes 1 drink**

Adapted from a recipe by Scott Stewart of the Fifth Floor restaurant

- 3 basil leaves, plus 1 leaf for garnish
- 1/2 ounce fresh lemon juice
- 2 ounces gin
- 1/2 ounce Drouin Blanche de Normandie or other apple eau de vie
- 1/2 ounce simple syrup

**Instructions:** In a mixing glass, lightly muddle the basil leaves with lemon juice. Add the rest of the ingredients, add ice and shake vigorously. Double strain (use two strainers) into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with remaining basil leaf.

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