

It's Not a Cooler, It's a *Mist*

DECEMBER 11, 2023 | story: AMANDA ARNOLD | photo: LIZZIE MUNRO



At New York's Tigre, a forgotten 1970s-era category is the inspiration for a range of breezy, minimalist cocktails.

In *Playboy's Host & Bar Book*, published in 1971, there exists a section dedicated to “oddballs” of the cocktail world. Made up of “concoctions for special occasions and hard-to-please palates,” the drinks are further broken down by type, including the real (frappés and flips) and the made-up (“pick-me-ups,” a group of increasingly unhinged hair of the dog-type bracers). The most bemusing category, bar none, is entitled “Mists.” The format is uncomplicated: To prepare one, simply pour the spirit of your choice over crushed ice. If you desire a little more complexity, add a lemon twist.

“I noticed it as a section and I was like, ‘this is nonsense,’” recalls William Elliott, the executive bar director at Tigre, a new cocktail lounge from the team behind Brooklyn’s Maison Premiere. But the name stuck with Elliott, who’s giving mists a second, more promising chance in life at the Lower East Side spot.

Made with spirits less familiar to the average American, the quartet of mists prove that spirit-forward drinks need not be so dark and serious. Each mist is named after a fruit: Watermelon for instance, pairs its namesake with potent French pastis, a coupling inspired by one of bartender Orlando Franklin McCray’s creations. Guanabana (or soursop in English) and Prickly Pear lean on two of Mexico’s less-heralded agave spirits: sotol and bacanora, respectively. Compared to the other drinks that make up Tigre’s streamlined menu, the mists—which are served in rocks glasses over crushed ice—are meant to feel a little rudimentary. They’re “more two dimensional, rather than layered, almost like agua fresca,” explains Elliott. Depending on your selection, the drink might come garnished with a feathered citrus-peel twist on a cocktail pick, a thin watermelon wedge or a quarter of a yellow dragon fruit.



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Guanabana Mist

A tropical, spirit-forward cocktail highlighting soursop.

Crucially, they don’t feel derivative—which is the point. Within Tigre’s gold Ultrasuede walls, centered around a horseshoe-shaped bar made of green Brazilian quartzite, you’re meant to feel like you’ve stepped foot into the luxe abode of a worldly confidant with a well-stocked home bar; the year is unclear, though it’s probably sometime in the ’70s. Elliott completes the image: “The person who owns this residence has traveled all over the world and doesn’t really know alcohol but fancies himself or herself a connoisseur and has brought back bottles from every corner of the world.”

With that imaginary jet-setter in mind, Elliott set out to design a cocktail program that’d come off as breezy, simple. “We want to act as if classic cocktails don’t exist, so it’s like we’re starting from scratch in the ’70s or ’80s,” says Elliott. That’s not to say no cocktail staples appear at Tigre. At the top of the menu, “Then” cocktails, including riffs on *Airmails* and *Screwdrivers*, run alongside inventive “Now” tinctures like the *Cherchez La Femme*, which combines chartreuse with coffee and cacao. There’s also a robust Martini program. The mists have a counterpart, too: Coolers, which are taller, refreshing and a little more layered. Visually, though, there are parallels. “I wanted them to have this cohesive, thematic look,” Elliott says. Out of the four iterations—all of which are served in Collins glasses, per tradition—two are on crushed ice, while the other two are served with ice spears. And, like the mists, they come bearing playful garnishes.

Though the juxtaposition might suggest mists are the antithesis of coolers, that isn’t the case. (Elliott considers them a “collection.”) The drinks elude categorization; they’re simply designed to inspire experimentation. “I keep dreaming of this kind of bar where you can try out all of these exotic spirits in formats that are not as serious as ‘real’ cocktails,” Elliott says. “I wanted a way for people to tiptoe into trying bacanora for the first time.”

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