

Booze 101: Infusing spirits



These days in the ever trending cocktail world, the buzz is all about infusions. As in, “You’ve got to try the nori-infused gin at Cloak & Petal!” (The cocktail is cleverly monikered *Nick and Nori*).

If your response is “What is an infusion?” you probably aren’t alone. In a nutshell, an infusion typically involves a spirit, often neutral like vodka or gin, that has an ingredient introduced to it, like a spice, herb or fruit, that lends said spirit a new character.

Bars around the city are dipping a variety of their liquors into a world of infusions, but it’s the inventive, out-of-the-box concoctions at Cloak & Petal that captured our taste buds.

Along with seaweed gin, Cloak & Petal infusions also include The Japanese to English with toasted sesame-infused Japanese whisky, The High Kick with green tea-infused reposado tequila, The Absin-tea-ism with sweet basil-infused gin, The Shogun with brown rice tea-infused reposado tequila, and The Elyx Fix with rosemary-infused vodka.



To learn more about the infusion trend, PACIFIC chatted with Cloak & Petal bar Manager Faisal Asseri to find out how to try this trend at home.

PACIFIC: What's the first thing to know about infusing liquors?

FAISAL ASSERI: Infusing is trial and error. So it's always important to have a couple of test batches ready to go. Have a timer ready with a notebook, so you can keep track of the taste as you go.

What's a good liquor to start with? Vodka, or does it matter?

Vodka is easy to infuse with since it's a neutral spirit. Whatever you introduce, it will taste like it after infusing. I like to play with gin, it has a great balance of taste and aroma to start off with, and offers more to play in terms of

complimenting flavors. It's honestly up to you what you want to infuse! Whisky, gin, rum, it's all fun to play with.

PACIFIC readers would like to try to infuse something at home.

What are the basic steps?

For infusing at home, I'd try something like an herb or spice that you can find at any grocery store, like a couple sprigs of lavender — six or so — in a 750ml bottle of vodka or a handful of cinnamon sticks — five and crack them to release some of that flavor — in whisky is easy. Set a timer for every hour or so and go from there. The longer you infuse, the more flavor is being extracted and introduced to the spirit. We generally go for a 24 hour infusion for a lot of our spirits here. If you aren't getting the desired flavor, add a little more.



The Japanese to English cocktail at Cloak & Petal uses toasted sesame-infused Japanese whisky.

(Courtesy photo)

What's a no-no for infusing liquors?

You never want to throw all your ingredients into your first infusion. It's easier to add little by little so you can control and modify. If you add all of it into a

spirit and it turns out it's way too strong, you can't dial it back anymore. And you've wasted an entire bottle of alcohol!

What's your favorite infusion you've made?

As far as favorite infusions, a green tea infusion with reposado tequila is pretty amazing. As well as our yuzu infused blanco.

Cloak & Petal, 1953 India St., Little Italy, 619.501.5505, cloakandpetal.com