

Entertaining INNovations

By Barry Werner

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As I write this month's article, the air conditioning is blasting away while the sweltering 100+° humidity swirls about outside. I walked earlier to Cross Street Market to get some produce for the B&B and by the time I made the short walk back, I felt as if I had been breathing hot jell-o the whole time. What I wouldn't give for a little refreshment...that reminds me...

In April we hosted nearly 300 women as part of the Great Taste '08 Home Tour, a charity event held by The Ladies' Board of Johns Hopkins Hospital. For these fine ladies, we wanted to go the extra mile in our offerings. We had cookies galore, including our signature sage and apricot sandwiches, (a delectable cookie of two cornmeal shortbread rounds, studded with fresh sage leaves with thick apricot jam sandwiched in between). As for the drinks, we wanted to give them something just a bit more seasonal. After some investigation, including a trip to California, we found just the right beverage.

While in Disneyland of all places, I had a fantastic cocktail of vodka, strawberries, basil, and lemonade. I loved the unique blends of flavors that can be commonly found in a salad perhaps, but not in a drink. The sweetness of the berries played very well with the soothing and herbaceous green notes of the basil leaves afloat in the tall glass.

I searched on-line for a recipe to adapt to suit our needs and tastes and found it on a site called mylifetime.com. Our version is a bit more flavorful, in my own personal opinion. Claudette and I thought it was mighty good, but we knew we had a winner when half way through the Ladies' Tour, we had women ringing our door bell and asking if we were the place with the wonderful strawberry lemonade.

Below is our recipe, we hope you enjoy it as much as our Ladies' did. Don't be afraid to use this as a guide to concoct your own tasty infusions and libations (see INNovative Tips, below). I know we will be drinking it all summer long,

At Scarborough Fair, we pride ourselves on only being TripAdvisor.com's number one rated bed & breakfast for all of Baltimore as well as the first and only B&B to be awarded membership to Select Registry. We also are proud to offer our deliciously healthy breakfasts and unique takes on entertaining. In this bi-monthly column, my assistant innkeeper, Claudette, and I are sharing recipes, kitchen techniques and entertaining ideas inspired by celebrations at our bed & breakfast and our guests' desires for seasonal & tasty cuisine.

especially on the oppressively hot days of Baltimore's summers.

Scarborough Fair's Strawberry Basil Lemonade

Makes 10, 8 oz. servings

This light and bright tasting drink should be a highlight of your summer parties and barbecues. The sweetness of the berries plays very well with the soothing and herbaceous green notes of the basil leaves afloat in the glass. With ease you can create a drink that tastes unique and is very special indeed.

2 Quarts Pink Lemonade
2 Pints Strawberries, hulled and sliced (plus six to ten additional for garnish)
18 Fresh Basil Leaves (reserve six for garnish)

Pour one cup of the pink lemonade into blender or food processor with strawberries and basil and pulse until basil is finely chopped and strawberries are completely liquefied into a smooth liquid with small bits of berry and flecks of basil. (If needed, add more lemonade to the mixture to ensure smoothness.) Pour this mixture into the remaining lemonade and stir well. Serve with garnish of remaining sliced strawberries and whole basil leaves.

Keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Innovative Tips:

There are several ways you can experiment with summer time drinks. Here are a few that inspired us.

☞ Keep your drinks cool by adding flavor to your beverages in stead of watering them down. If you have extra fruit and cannot utilize it before it receives its death knell, use it in your teas and lemonades. Prepare it properly, (wash, cut, hull, etc) and place on a lined cookie sheet in the freezer. Once frozen, place fruit into freezer bags, write the date on the bag, and return to the freezer. This fruit should keep for up to a month and can be added to drinks in lieu of ice. Or puree the fruit and stir into teas and punches.

☞ Another great way to chill down your beverages is by adding one of the fantastic sorbets from whole foods, Riesling is great and blackberry wine is another personal favorite.

☞ Try some extra pizzazz by experimenting with different flavored liquors in your teas and fruit-ades. Citrus vodka works very well in this recipe, as does lemon and blueberry. A splash of lemongello in each serving would also be a hit I am sure.

☞ You can combine different teas, herbs and juices to make your vey own signature punch, (the more exotic, the better). Green tea with fresh ginger, rosemary and fresh nectarines are one we adore here at the inn. Lavender flowers infused in iced white or chamomile tea with a splish and a splash of lemon, raspberry or blackberry vodka is a great way to unwind after a stress filled hot summers day.