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All flavor, no hangover

Where to get a trendy mocktail in North Jersey

Esther Davidowitz North Jersey Record | USA TODAY NETWORK - NORTH JERSEY

Mocktails, anyone? ■ You don't have to be a teetotaler to enjoy non-alcoholic cocktails. Just ask Christina Emma, senior mixologist for legendary New Jersey farm-to-table restaurant Ninety Acres in Peapack-Gladstone. "More and more people are asking for them," said Emma, who makes sure there are always three seasonal mocktails on the beverage menu. ■ "Not everyone can — or wants to — drink alcohol," she noted. "Some diners are underage, some gave up drinking, some don't want to drink too much, some are pregnant." ■ And some want something more fun than sparkling water or sugar-free iced tea with their dry-aged tenderloin, goat cheese salad or pan-roasted red snapper. ■ "I don't know about you but I don't necessarily want to drink Pepsi with my meal," said Leia Gaccione, chef and owner of BYO American bistro South + Pine in Morristown. "Mocktails are just super fun." ■ And often super tasty. Made with fresh ingredients — fresh herbs, from-the-farm fruits and vegetables, house-made jams, fruit purées, home-squeezed juice and infused syrups — today's mocktails are as creative, delicious and flavorful as most any alcoholic mixed drink. Indeed, they are nothing like that famous saccharine-sweet, liquor-free Shirley Temple that even the beverage's namesake loathed. "All over the world, I am served that," the famous star had told NPR. "I hate them. Too sweet!" **See MOCKTAILS, Page 3BL**

At south + Pine, mocktails are served at lunch and dinner. SOUTH + PINE

Here are a number of North Jersey restaurants that serve fresh, flavor-rich mocktails. Here's to no hangovers!

Spuntino Wine Bar & Italian Tapas, Clifton

About four years ago, Brian McAllister, general manager and wine and beverage director of Spuntino Wine Bar & Italian Tapas in Clifton, dropped by the chi-chi bar at the NoMad hotel and noticed "soft" (i.e., no alcohol) cocktails on its drinks menu. He also noticed mocktails on the beverage menu at Santina, a lively Manhattan restaurant by those restaurant wizards Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi. "I started seeing all these mocktails pop up in New York City," he said. "They jump right off the menu." He knew then that he had to offer mocktails at his "trend-forward" restaurant. "It's been very successful for us," he said. Just the other week, Spuntino hosted an 18-year-old's birthday party and sold some "100 mocktails."

"We take as much time creating our mocktails as we do our cocktails," McAllister said. The restaurant changes its mocktails every spring and fall. Some on the menu currently: Cherry Bomb, made with grenadine, vanilla simple syrup and milk topped with a maraschino cherry; Sparkling Lavender Lemonade, lemon juice, lavender simple syrup and club soda; and Strawberry Basil Mule, a nonalcoholic version of a mule, made with strawberry purée and garnished with dried strawberry, basil and candied ginger. Each cost \$6.

Go: 70 Kingsland Road, Clifton; 973-661-2435, spuntinowinebar.com.



Strawberry basil non-alcohol mule at Spuntino Wine Bar in Clifton. SPUNTINO WINE BAR AND ITALIAN TAPAS