

A down-to-earth treat

Looks great in the glass, goes down smooth

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DWIGHT STORRING



*Madison Homewood presents
"Shroom for Improvement"*

Responsibility and sustainability are important to me as a bartender and I put that on full display in this cocktail. Local and in-season ingredients all come together here to build a beautiful cocktail that goes down nice and smooth.

I used Silvercreek Vodka from Guelph infused with enoki mushrooms as my base spirit. Vodka is a great base for infusions as the starting flavours are very subtle, making it easier to infuse more delicate flavours. Using more obscure, savoury foods that are seasonal is becoming quite trendy in the cocktail world and mushrooms are a great example of that. Mushrooms also come in handy at this time of year as we try to avoid using produce that has to travel great distances to get here.

I had fun developing this cocktail. It gave me a chance to play and test new flavours. I took a more culinary approach, using ingredients that often get overlooked for use in drinks. And I avoided using out-of-season or processed fruit juices and the usual syrups. I enjoyed finding amazing local products such as the honey from the bees at the University of Guelph, and the products from Dixon's distillery in Guelph. By supporting local and reducing food miles, we're adding a whole new layer to "drinking responsibly."

I would describe my cocktail as savoury, refreshing, vegetal and delicious! I added a small amount of Mezcal to really prompt the earthy notes to come through, and by using equal parts citrus and thyme-honey syrup, it resembles a daiquiri-style cocktail.

Delicious and sweet, with a lot of earthy notes, this is a great drink for a cool spring day or to offer your guests before dinner.

Anything resembling work is done before your guests arrive. The infusion is the biggest time commitment, taking 12 to 24 hours, depending on the flavour you are creating.

After that it's simple and quick to make. Your friends will think you're a cool home mixologist.



Madison Homewood is a bartender at Langdon Hall Country House Hotel and Spa in Cambridge.

Shroom for Improvement

45 ml (1.5 ounces) mushroom-infused vodka (see below)

15 ml (0.5 ounce) Mezcal (I used Alcaran)

21 ml (0.75 ounce) fresh-squeezed lime juice

21 ml (0.75 ounce) Thyme Honey syrup (see below)

- Measure all ingredients into a cocktail shaker.

- Fill shaker with ice and shake 15 to 20 seconds.

- Strain into a coupe glass with no ice.

Infusion: Measure 500 millilitres (15 ounces) of Dixon's Silvercreek Vodka into a sealable jar and add roughly 50 grams of enoki mushrooms. Let the mushrooms infuse for at least 12 hours or as many as 24

hours, like I did. When you have reached your desired flavour, strain out the mushrooms and store the liquid in the jar, away from direct sunlight.

Syrup: Heat one cup of water at a low temperature to a simmer – not a boil – as you are trying to extract the oils, not cook the herb. Add a quarter bunch of thyme to simmering water. After 10 minutes measure 150 ml (5 oz.) of the thyme-infused water. Then add 75 grams (2.6 oz.) each of sugar and honey. You can also add three or four sticks of fresh thyme to boost its flavour.

Lime juice: Freshly squeezed lime juice is imperative. Limes are best squeezed six to eight hours before being used.

I recommend squeezing no sooner than the day before you plan on serving this cocktail.