



The Mighty Mango

I've always enjoyed using fresh mango in my drinks, especially when the mood lends itself to tropical, light, refreshing pool-side libations. It wasn't until I had the great pleasure of teaming up with Mario Batali for a taping of *Iron Chef America* that I truly embraced the versatility of the wonderful mango. We waited with anticipation as the Chairman announced the secret ingredient. As he mouthed the word "Mango," my mind raced with thoughts of how I would utilize this succulent fruit in more ways than for a Trader Vic's-inspired Tiki Bowl (which I did include as one of my six drinks).

First thoughts were of designing a drink for each course, from apéritif to dessert to digestif. The apéritif was my favorite; I liked it so much that we plan to feature it on the Specialty Menu at our new place, Bar Milano in New York.

Purgatory

- 1 oz. Belvedere Pomarancza vodka
- 1 oz. Aperol aperitivo
- 1/2 oz. St-Germain elderflower liqueur
- 1 oz. fresh mango purée (strained)*
- 1 oz. fresh, hand-extracted lime juice (filtered)

In the mixing glass of a Boston Shaker, add Belvedere Pomarancza, Aperol, St-Germain, fresh mango purée and hand-extracted lime juice. Shake until well blended and strain into a chilled cocktail glass.

After my appearance on *Iron Chef America*, I was contacted by the National Mango Board (who knew?) and invited to create a mango-inspired drink for this year's Grammy Celebration. The name came easy: I used Gwen Stefani's nominated song, "Sweet Escape." After much trial and error, and the elimination of several ingredients, I came up with a relatively simple concoction that showcased the mango, featured Ultimat vodka and quenched the thirst of some 2,000 guests. So much for shaking hands and kissing babies!

The Sweet Escape

- 1 oz. fresh mango purée*
- 1-1/2 oz. Ultimat vodka
- 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- 1 oz. simple syrup
- 2 oz. chilled soda water
- Mango slices (fanned) and lemon spiral for garnish

In a mixing glass, add fresh mango purée, Ultimat vodka, fresh lemon juice and simple syrup; add ice and shake until well blended. Strain into an ice-filled Collins glass and spritz with chilled soda water. Garnish with a fan of mango slices and a spiral of lemon.

As you can see, the mango, which is available virtually year round, is one of the most flavorful as well as versatile fruits on the planet.

**If making fresh mango purée is not an option, I recommend using fresh frozen purée from Boiron. ■■*

