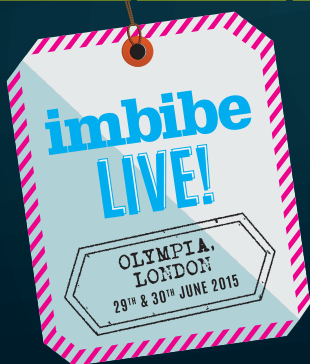


imbibe

The award-winning magazine for the on-trade

MARCH/APRIL 2015 £3.40



ON-TRADE STARS

MEET THE PERSONALITY OF THE
YEAR AWARDS WINNERS 2015

DO IT YOURSELF

HOW (AND HOW NOT) TO
MAKE YOUR OWN VERMOUTH

AFRICA RISING

THE WINERIES THAT ARE
MAKING THE CAPE COOL

PERFECT PINTS

OUR EXPERTS PICK THE TEN
BEST BEERS FOR YOUR BAR

HOT SHOTS

THE MAXI BENEFITS OF
MINI-SERVE COCKTAILS



LIGHT STRIKE

The wine fault that
can wreck a rosé
in less than a day...

PLUS

Liqueurs > Tassie wine > Rum v Tequila > 2014 vintage > Summer kit > Bar lambs

OTHER SPIRITS NEWS



BRAMBLE ON

New whisky distilleries always have that awkward first three years of maturation to contend with, and for many, this is when they turn to gin. Kilchoman, set up on Islay in 2005, had a sweeter idea in mind for something to offer distillery visitors in those early years. A few years down the line, the distillery is now making its Kilchoman New Spirit Bramble Liqueur more widely available. A combination of real bramble fruit, malt whisky, smoky spirit and honey, this is pretty fantastic stuff, as you can imagine. The peaty whisky dominates on the nose, only allowing the bramble fruit to really show itself on the palate, with some excellent sweet-and-sour fruitiness, before the smoke kicks in again.

One for the hipflask, we reckon.
19% abv. £18/50cl. Pol Roger Portfolio, 01432 262800



Clearly cacao

There are a few instances in culinary history when certain seeds have grown to exceed the fame and utility of their fruit, and cacao's definitely one of them. Cacao fruit is all but forgotten in chocolate's shadow, but at least now you can drink it, in distilled form.

You'll be disappointed if you're expecting chocolate from Solbeso, where it's notable by its absence. Rather, you could compare this to tequila or mezcal, maybe combined with eau-de-vie or grappa. There's some stinky vegetal character, but plenty of fruit, coconut, some citrus and some menthol, herbal character too.

Weird? Yup. Complex? Definitely. And certainly capable of being the base spirit in cocktails. Just don't add any chocolate bitters – let's allow cacao fruit to have its moment.

40% abv. £38/70cl. Catalyst Brands, 0844 822 3908

For more information turn to p.78



BIRTHDAY BOTTLES FOR COGNAC

You can't teach an old cognac house new tricks, and frankly why would you, when their old tricks often involve blinging it up with fancy new expressions? The latest to flex their super-premium muscles are Hennessy and Martell, both celebrating big milestones in their history.

Martell Premier Voyage marks the house's 300th anniversary, with only 300 bottles available, containing a cognac consisting of 18 eaux-de-vie, and each going for £9,000. Meanwhile, Hennessy's 250th birthday is being marked with the Hennessy 250 Collector Blend, a blend of eaux-de-vie aged in 250 specially-made 250-litre Limousin oak barrels.

Martell Premier Voyage: 40% abv. POA. Pernod Ricard UK, 0800 376 5550.

Hennessy 250 Collector Blend: 40% abv. £360/1l. Moët Hennessy UK, 020 7808 4400



In with the old...

Another new vermouth? Well not quite. The recipes for the Contratto range go back to the 1890s, but you can expect to see more of them in the UK in the months to come.

There are three vermouths in the range, starting with a hugely complex Vermouth Bianco (18% abv) containing a reported 50 botanicals. It has a richly vinous nose, with ripe fruit and some sugared-petal aromas. The Vermouth Rosso (17% abv) has been made with a light touch and fewer botanicals (closer to 31), and it's excellent for mixing.

Finally, there's the Americano Rosso (16.5% abv), sitting somewhere between the two. Mouthwatering acidity, about 25 botanicals, and moderate sweetness all make for a highly drinkable aromatised wine. This probably mixes well too, but we'll have ours neat, thanks.

£19 ex-VAT/70cl. The Wine Source, 020 3574 4031

For more on this story visit imbibe.com



CIAO BELLO

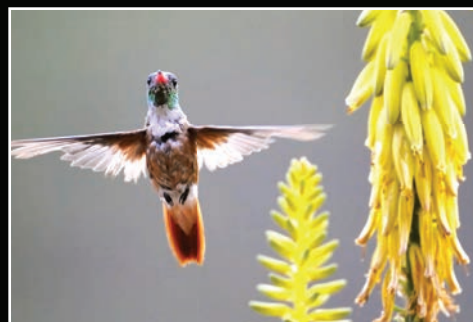
If East London made Italian amaros and liqueurs... Oh wait, they already do. Stellacello gained a stablemate in the form of Amaro London recently.

The new amaro is a deep and rich combination of sweet citrus with plenty of warming spice, and a hefty kick of bitterness. Nice label too.

The suggestion from Bethnal Green is to try this in a Stellaroni, with Amaro London stepping in for Campari in a Negroni. We're keen to try it out in an Americano ourselves. An Americano...? Amarocano? Oh, nevermind. 23% abv. £28/50cl.

Stellacello, stellacello.com





FORGOTTEN FRUIT

Chocolate has just become the second-best thing to come from the cacao plant, with the introduction of cacao fruit spirit Solbeso

There is never any shortage of new products in the spirits world. But new categories? Solbeso, a spirit made from fresh cacao fruit, is just that.

This is cacao, but not as you know it. Instead of being produced from the seed like all of cacao's most famous products, Solbeso is instead created from naturally organic fresh cacao fruit. The fruit is highly perishable, so production takes place right at the source, in remote Ecuador and Peru.

You probably won't be surprised to hear that the fermentation of cacao fruit predates the discovery of chocolate, and Solbeso's production methods echo these old techniques, with the fruit laid out in open-air fermentation beds in the sun. It's precisely this sun-kissed method that gives this spirit its name.

The fermented result is then distilled,

also at the source, in cognac-style alembic stills. What emerges from those stills is a complex, fascinating spirit, with floral and citrus elements, distilled grape and agave-type aromas, and a subtle, rounded toffee sweetness on the palate.

While this is great for everyone drinking it, Solbeso is also good for the cacao farmers. Thanks to this new spirit, they now receive income for what was previously a waste product. Combine this with the brand's organic and sustainable-farming credentials, its fascinating flavour profile and eye-catching packaging, and it really does tick all the boxes.

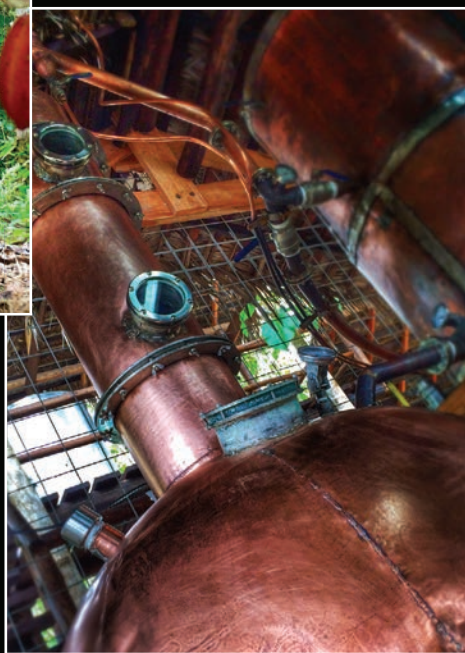
So it's unsurprising that it has had some major success around the US since its launch, and now the brand has hopped the Pond and is making itself at home in the UK.

Gary Squire, managing director of

Catalyst Brands, that has secured the agency rights for the UK, comments: 'We are thrilled to be introducing Solbeso to the UK market. Solbeso is a truly innovative product, and will give cocktail enthusiasts what they are looking for: a completely new class of spirit which can be used to create a unique array of original serves.'

Multi-talented spirit

So what exactly do you do with this unusual liquid? Founders Tom Higbee and Thomas Aabo have some ideas. 'What's unique about Solbeso is that you can enjoy it as it is on the rocks, in classic cocktails like a Manhattan where Solbeso works like a bourbon, and even in bright citrus inspirations like the Beso Picante No 2 made with muddled jalapeño and fresh lemon juice,' suggests Higbee.



But don't just take his word for it. For Andy Mil, joint owner of The Cocktail Trading Co, 'Solbeso has the versatility of a white spirit, but the complexity of a dark spirit, allowing you to create a depth of character that you would struggle to get from most white spirits.'

Chris Edwards, cocktail counsellor and director of Salts of the Earth, is also sold on Solbeso's versatility. 'Solbeso is a welcome addition to the world of spirits. What makes it such a great liquid is not only its quality but its adaptability. At The Shrub & Shutter we were lucky enough to get hold of some and have a play and found it mixed supremely well with rum, tequila and of course pisco, or could substitute any of those ingredients in a cocktail. We can't wait to use it on our upcoming new spring menu.'

It's not every day you encounter a new spirits category, but even rarer to find one that offers quite so much potential when it comes to cocktails.

To find out more about where to buy Solbeso in the UK, please contact Catalyst Brands on enquiries@catalystbrands.co.uk or 0844 822 3908.



SIGNATURE SERVES

Solbeso is best enjoyed over ice with lemon zest, or in cocktails where it shines through. Here are a couple of ideas:

THE BIRDS & THE BEES

Glass: Cocktail glass

Garnish: Lemon peel

Method: Combine ingredients in a shaker filled with ice. Shake, then strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with a lemon peel.

2 parts Solbeso
0.5 part lemon juice
0.5 part honey syrup



EL CONQUISTADOR

Glass: Cocktail glass

Garnish: Cherry or orange peel twist

Method: Combine ingredients in a mixing glass. Stir 40 times, strain into a chilled cocktail glass and garnish.

2 parts Solbeso
1 part sweet vermouth
4 dashes Angostura bitters



drinkaware.co.uk for the facts