

september / october 2010  
volume 15 >> number 4



# Catering

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# cocktails with a kick

take a bite out  
of a hot trend by  
serving up some  
spicy drinks

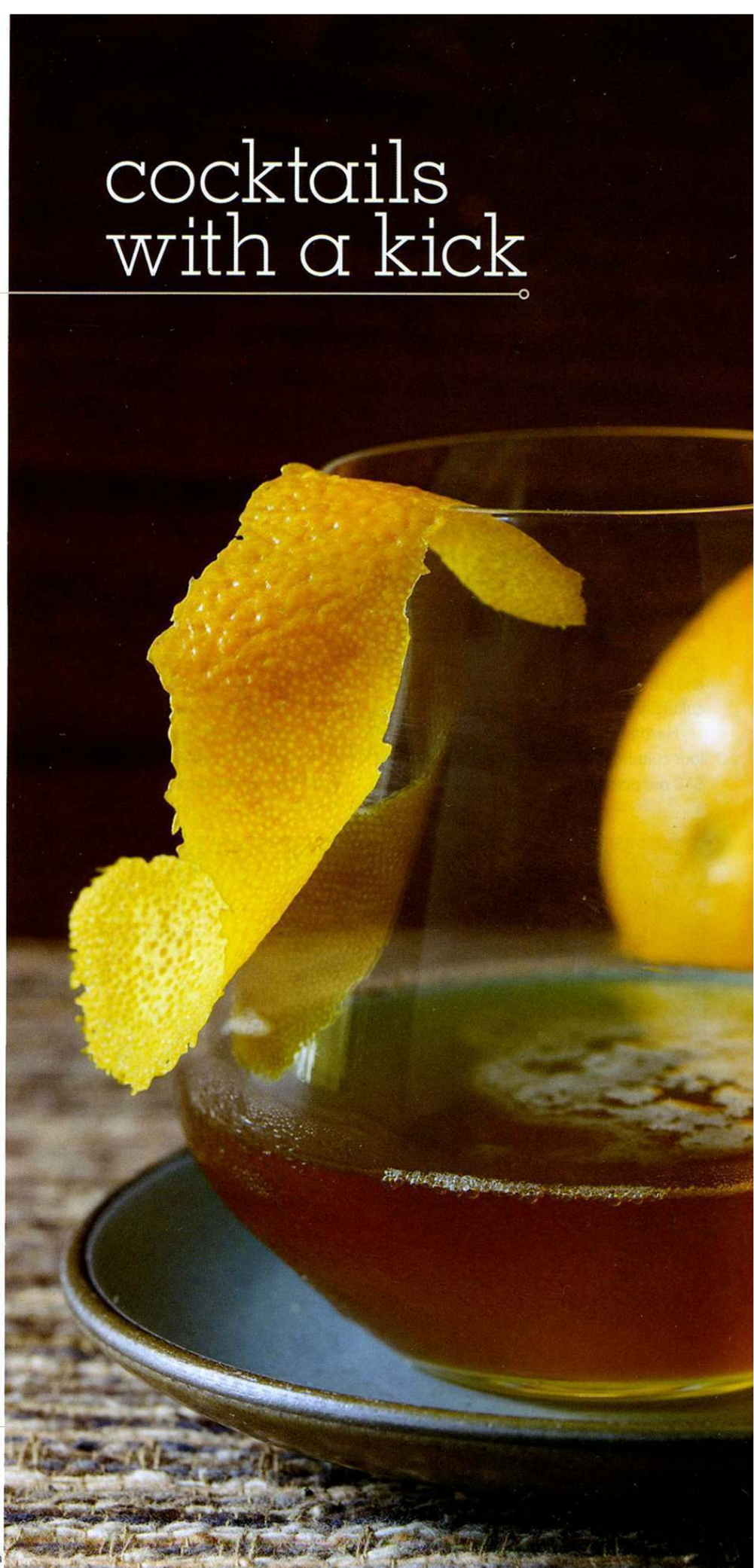
Some like it hot—even in their cocktails. As the weather in most of the country cools down, consider adding a spicy cocktail to the bar menu at your next event to warm things up a bit. They're interesting, flavorful, and tend to break the ice (so to speak).

"It's a conversation-starter," says Kara Newman, author of *Spice & Ice – 60 Tongue-Tingling Cocktails*. "It's good for events, because you can turn to someone and say, 'Have you tried this? It's so unusual!'"

Newman first noticed the trend toward spicy cocktails about two years ago, when they were popping up on restaurant menus across the country. They've gained in popularity so much since then, according to Newman, that "it's not a trend any longer. It's part of the overall cocktail flavor spectrum."

Of course, cocktails with a kick have been winning fans for a long time. Newman points to the Michelada—a Mexican drink that's been around for decades, combining beer, hot sauce and other flavorings, depending on the recipe—as one example. Another is the Bloody Mary—that popular brunch staple with vodka, tomato juice, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco and lemon—which is believed to have originated at Harry's New York Bar in Paris in the 1920s. The bar at the St. Regis Hotel in New York began serving the drink in the 1930s. "They called it the Red Snapper because they thought the phrase 'Bloody Mary' was indelicate," says Newman.

Experimenting with the Bloody Mary is one way to add your own spicy twist to a







*Russell House Tavern's Butler spices up his Bloody Mary menu with Serrano pepper-infused Minero Mezcal.*

## Fall Spice Cordial

**YIELD:** 1 drink

Rich with the flavors of orange, vanilla and the caramelized goodness of bourbon, this drink falls more on the "spiced" than "spicy" side of the spectrum. This sweet cordial pairs well with autumn pies and other desserts, or makes a great sipper to enjoy fireside.

- 1 ounce bourbon
- $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce chipotle-orange syrup\*
- 1 ounce vanilla vodka  
(or Navan vanilla cognac)
- 2 dashes Regan's orange bitters
- Orange peel, to garnish

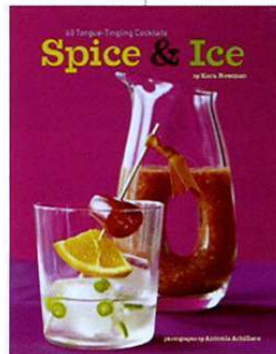
Mix together all ingredients except for orange peel. Shake together with ice, and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with orange peel.

### \*CHIPOTLE-ORANGE SYRUP

- 2 cups water
- 1 chipotle pepper
- 2 strips dried orange peel (or fresh peel, if dried is not available)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar

Bring the water to a boil in a small saucepan. Reduce to a simmer, and add the chipotle pepper and dried orange peel. Cover and let simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Strain with a fine-mesh sieve and add the sugar. Return to a boil and stir until the sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and let cool. Pour the syrup into a container and keep in the refrigerator.

*Recipe © Kara Newman, Spice & Ice – 60 Tongue-Tingling Cocktails (Chronicle Books, 2009)*



cocktail menu. Aaron Butler has done just that at the bar he manages at Russell House Tavern ([www.russellhousecambridge.com](http://www.russellhousecambridge.com)), a new restaurant in Cambridge, Mass. Butler has created a cocktail menu featuring familiar classic drinks and modern, handcrafted recipes using only fresh juices, homemade syrups and infusions. His spiciest drink is the Mezcal Mary, one of four Bloody Mary varieties the restaurant serves for brunch. The Mezcal Mary substitutes Serrano pepper-infused Minero Mezcal for traditional vodka and pairs it with fresh pineapple and the restaurant's own Bloody mix (already spicy on its own), creating a sweet, spicy and smoky take on the breakfast staple. "It has a small but strong following," says Butler.

San Diego-based Waters Fine Catering serves up a mean Michelada. "People go crazy for them!" says Andrew Spurgin, executive director and chef, who serves the drink at his own parties, too (see recipe on p. 24). "We serve them at Mexican street-food events, and anytime clients want 'cool drinks'—which clearly are spicy!"

Adds Saul Paniagua, general manager of Waters Bar Services, "We absolutely love incorporating heat into our branded cocktails that we create for our clients." Waters' spicy

*Kara Newman's Fall Spice Cordial is perfect for autumn events.*

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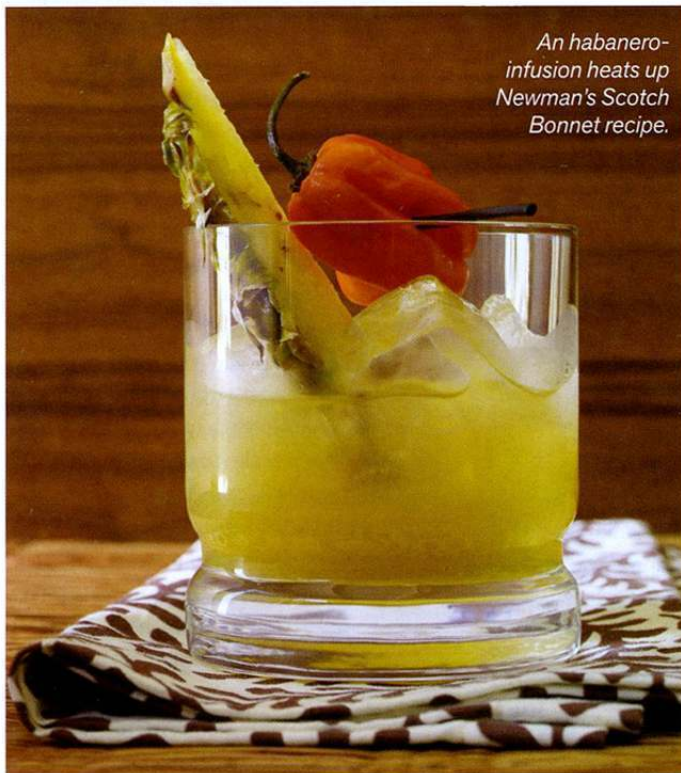


signature cocktails include the Sangroño, a house-made black-pepper Sangrita (a Mexican aperitif), laced with a roasted jalapeño puree; the Pisco Capel, with pisco, house-made cracked black-pepper reduction, fresh lime juice, fresh white grapefruit juice, Kaffir lime leaves and preserved lime; and the Agave Loma, with Don Julio Añejo Tequila, seeded and julienned Serrano peppers, fresh lime juice, organic agave nectar, orange liqueur, fresh prickly-pear puree and edible white petite rose petals.

Certain liquors lend themselves to spicy flavors, according to Newman. "Tequila has a lot of intrinsic spicy characteristics and adapts very well to infusions," she says. "If you're looking for a fall/winter drink,



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*An habanero-infusion heats up Newman's Scotch Bonnet recipe.*

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## Scotch Bonnet

**YIELD:** 1 drink

Take a sip, and then another; the flavor of this masculine, almost smoky drink opens up beautifully. Opt for a peaty Scotch for best effect.

2 ounces habanero-infused Scotch  
2 ounces pineapple juice  
Wedge of pineapple, to garnish

To make habanero-infused Scotch: To one cup of Scotch, add one cut habanero pepper. Allow to steep for at least one hour, and test for strength. When desired heat is achieved, remove the pepper.

Stir together habanero Scotch and pineapple juice in an old-fashioned glass. Add ice to fill the glass.

Recipes © Kara Newman, *Spice & Ice – 60 Tongue-Tingling Cocktails* (Chronicle Books, 2009)



For a festive holiday drink, try the Sparkling Ginger Daisy.

## Sparkling Ginger Daisy

YIELD: 1 drink

A daisy is a classic juice-based cocktail sweetened with grenadine or a red liqueur, and often topped with sparkling wine. Here, the bright spice of ginger plays against a backdrop of bubbles for a festive holiday sparkler. And if you feel like gilding the lily, try one or both of the optional special touches below.

1 ounce Plymouth Gin  
1 ounce Domaine de Canton  
ginger liqueur  
Lemon juice  
1 teaspoon grenadine  
Brut champagne

Combine gin, ginger liqueur, lemon juice and grenadine in an ice-filled mixing glass. Stir until well chilled, and strain into a champagne flute. Top with champagne.

**Optional touch #1:** If desired, rim the flute with sparkling sugar before pouring in the drink.

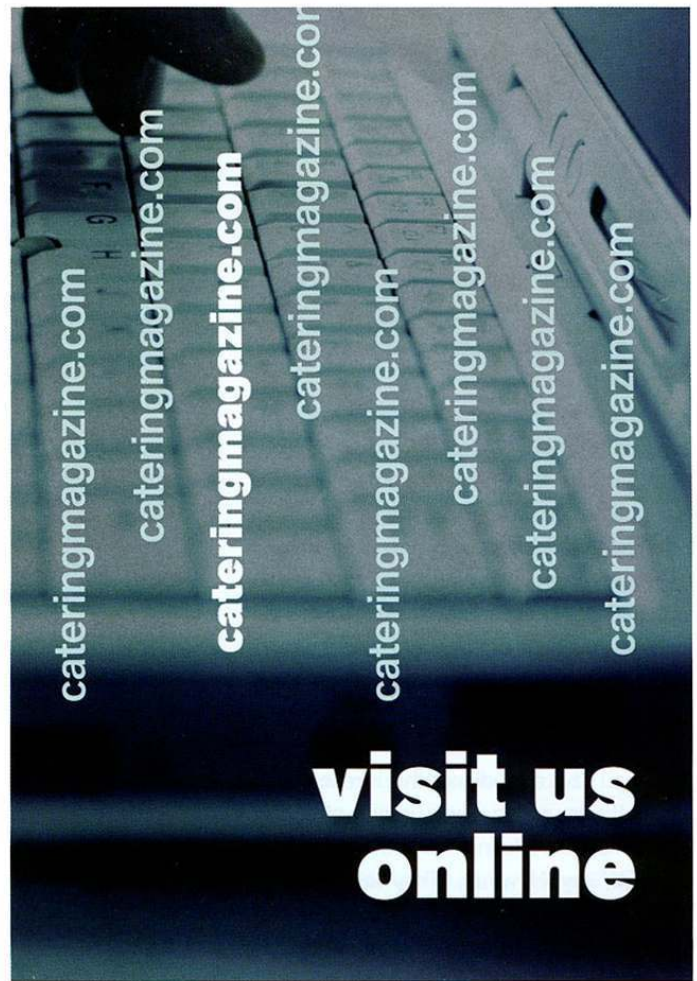
**Optional touch #2:** Garnish with a cherry at the bottom of the flute.

Recipe © Kara Newman, *Spice & Ice – 60 Tongue-Tingling Cocktails* (Chronicle Books, 2009)

bourbon is great for spicy drinks because it has a warm caramel backbone, and a good bite to it. Vodka has a neutral flavor, and it lends itself to spicy elements."

As for spicy seasonings, they can extend beyond chile peppers to peppercorns, cinnamon, cloves, peppermint and ginger. Russell House Tavern, for example, serves the Moscow Mule, which adds fresh ginger to Butler's homemade ginger beer. "It's a different style of spice, but it does tingle the tongue," he says.

Newman mentions a cocktail she recently sampled at Vandaag, a new restaurant in New York's East Village. The Pack Mule blends strawberry-peppercorn aquavit



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with ginger, Pimm's, lemon and Campari. "It had this great, icy zing from the peppercorns and ginger, and bitterness from the Campari and Pimm's," she says. "It was a well-balanced drink, and pretty to look at, with a great pink color."

In fact, "well-balanced" is the key to successful spicy cocktails, including balancing the flavors (so they're not so spicy that guests can't take more than one sip); balancing the food served alongside them (so you're offering some cooling food, such as bread and cheese, that doesn't compete with the spiciness of the drink); and balancing their placement on a cocktail menu (so there are plenty more options if guests don't want that extra kick).

"If you have an audience that is receptive to new flavors, and the menu is innovative, I would suggest offering one or two spicy cocktails," says Newman. "They don't appeal to everyone's tastes, but when they do, people get very excited and very enthusiastic." ●

## Andrew's Perfect Michelada

(from Andrew Spurgin,  
Waters Fine Catering)

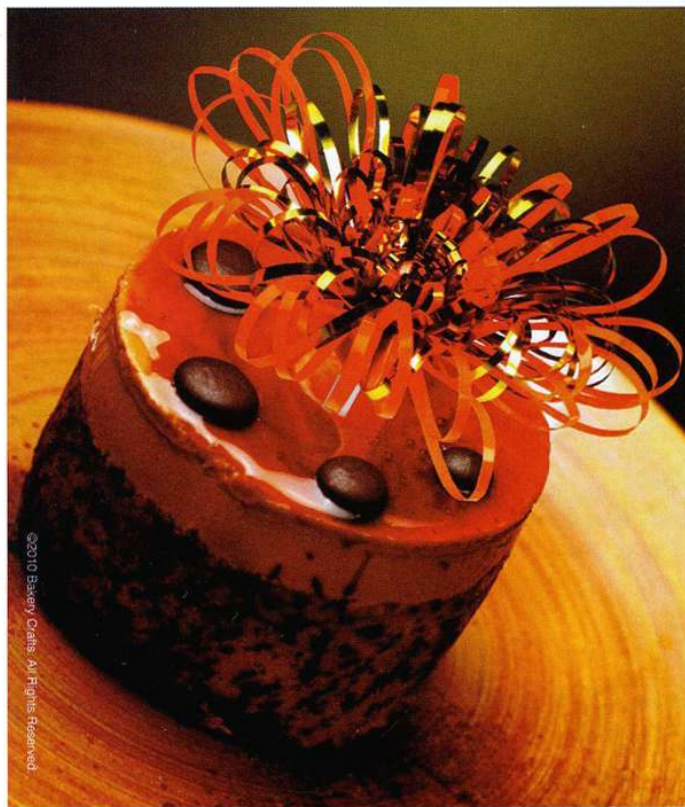
In a high-ball glass:  
Rim the glass with key lime juice  
and then Tajin powder  
Add a dash (to taste) of Maggi seasoning  
Add a dash (to taste) of Tabasco  
Squeeze the juice of two or three  
key limes\* into the glass  
Fill half the glass with ice  
Fill half the glass with Clamato juice  
Fill the remainder of the glass with  
Tecate beer  
Add a dash (to taste) of kosher salt  
Garnish with blistered Padron pepper,  
house pickled lemon cucumber and  
black olive  
Stir and drink three!

\*Better than regular limes, like they use  
in Mexico.

The spiciness  
in the Bangkok  
Margarita can be  
adjusted to taste.



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## Bangkok Margarita

YIELD: 1 drink

Aleppo pepper is a Syrian red pepper with a bit of smokiness and just a faint touch of heat. Like its city namesake, the finished cocktail is sophisticated, exotic and a little dangerous.

2 ounces Reposado Tequila  
2 ounces pineapple juice  
1 ounce Domaine de Canton  
ginger liqueur  
Pinch of Maldon salt  
Pinch of Aleppo pepper  
Lime

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, combine tequila, pineapple juice and

ginger liqueur. Shake vigorously and strain into a martini glass. Sprinkle the salt and pepper on top. With a hand grater, grate lime zest over the top of the drink. Tap lightly to release zest and oil into the drink.

Note: Aleppo pepper adds more savoriness than outright heat. For a spicier cocktail, substitute cayenne, ancho or chipotle powder for Aleppo pepper.

Recipe © Kara Newman, *Spice & Ice – 60 Tongue-Tingling Cocktails* (Chronicle Books, 2009)



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