



a toast to the garden

Learn how
the best summer
cocktails use fresh
herbs, veggies and
berries plucked
from the garden

BY: MELISSA BUOTE

PHOTOS BY: ANDREW CHOW

Slate coasters, slate cutting board and acacia tray
courtesy Oddjects in Halifax (www.oddjects.ca)

Tart berries, crisp vegetables and peppery herbs—these ingredients are ever present in the memories connecting people with the land they live on. Whether it's the elemental, paradoxically clean smell of dirt made robust with the heat from the sun or freshly dug beets blushing bright against Prince Edward Island's red soil, those sights and smells, tastes and touches are remembrances planted in every garden. And blooming alongside these summer seedlings are new ideas for creative cocktails that take advantage of the fruit—and vegetables—of your labour.

"I have a lifetime love affair with cherries," says Katrina Roberts, wine and beverage director at Morris East. The gourmet pizzeria in downtown Halifax is becoming as renowned for its creative cocktail menu as it is for its wood-fired pizza. "I still remember my family driving up to the Valley so my mom could buy a crate of sour cherries for us," Roberts recalls. "I use cherry in several of the cocktails I've created for this reason." The Kiss 75 cocktail at Morris East, a popular choice on the menu, features a cherry cordial Roberts makes from scratch using Nova Scotia cherries.

The trend of using fresh ingredients in beverages is also inspiring artisanal distilleries across Atlantic Canada. "My father was from a farm in Cape Breton and spent his career in the world of agriculture," says Lynne MacKay, co-owner of Ironworks Distillery in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. The micro-distillery produces small batches of vodka, rum, apple brandy, eaux de vie and fruit liqueurs. "We were never without a family garden—no matter where we lived," MacKay says. "For years, I followed suit and had vegetable and flower gardens wherever I lived."

Though MacKay abandoned her gardens in order to devote her land and time to the distillery, she still uses field-fresh ingredients in her recipes. The distillery's eaux de vie, for example, uses local berries, pears and peaches. "We get to know the producers and their farms," says MacKay. "We can see how much care and attention they lavish on their product. Picking what goes into our spirits is easy—only the very best fruit. No great distance from the field to our still."

It's a similar story for Julie Shore from Prince Edward Distillery in Hermanville, P.E.I. "My family used to have a distillery, pre-prohibition, in the fine state of North Carolina, making a corn whiskey similar to bourbon," Shore recalls. "I grew up with these really cool stories of the distillery. I never could understand why the family didn't get back into it. They got into farming."

While Shore did get back into distilling, the fields of local farms—the most epic of gardens—are the backbone of her business. She and her partner Arla Johnson use fresh P.E.I. potatoes in their potato vodka and wild blueberries in their blueberry vodka. "Distilling is not too unlike cooking a meal," Shore says. "If you have great ingredients, you have a great meal."

They like counting their liquors—vodka, gin and rum—amongst the ingredients home cooks can use in cocktails. Fresh ingredients, after all, are the crux of a great cocktail. "We have noticed that there is a movement to put kitchen ingredients into cocktails," Shore notes. She uses her potato vodka in Bloody Marys and Caesars, throwing in a teaspoon of balsamic vinegar and horseradish along with the Worcestershire sauce.

Whether sourced in backyards, urban gardens or farm markets, garden ingredients are as delicious as they are accessible. "Start with growing what you most love to eat," says Carey Jernigan, urban garden project outreach coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax. "There are some lovely local seed companies which would have good advice—Annapolis Seeds and Pumpkin Moon, for example—and there's always the wisdom of neighbours and friends."



Fresh ingredients, after all, are the crux of a great cocktail.

Last year, Jernigan shared a plot at the North End Community Garden in Halifax. "I grew tomatoes, basil, kale, salad greens, coriander, parsley, thyme and oregano, broccoli, peas, beans...and a selection of medicinal plants and flowers," she says.

Herbs are perhaps the easiest plants to grow and they are important ingredients for fresh, unique cocktails. Not only are they an easy garnish, they also bring flavour and richness to syrups and infusions. "Herbs offer complexity and deep flavours with sometimes a bit of bitterness to make the balance more interesting," Roberts says. "Basil, sage and thyme are ingredients people are reticent to use in cocktails but they are so readily available to us."

She enjoys using lemon balm, basil, thyme and sage from local gardens and farms in her cocktails. "We are fortunate in this province to have talented and conscientious farmers," she says. "I've been making mojitos for 10 years and have never tasted one better than with local organic mint from Riverview Herbs."

The first sprouts of the season offer leafy promise to Roberts. "Flavours are bigger, bolder and brighter when they are fresh," she says. "They offer complexity and that is what I like to play with."

Beyond the usual fruit ingredients, she likes sampling unexpected vegetables in her cocktails. "We have juiced carrots as a component in a cocktail," she says. "I have used fire-roasted tomatoes, created a digestive cocktail with local pumpkin and I have been playing with a vodka beet infusion. I am planning a cocktail for the fall which will have a parsnip element to it as well." As Roberts demonstrates, any idea can take root at the bottom of a highball glass. ✨

LEFT: Morris East Bloody Mary

ABOVE RIGHT: Kiss 75, Morris East Bloody Mary and The Bees Knees.



Cherry Thyme Cordial

Recipe courtesy Morris East

DIRECTIONS

Simmer for 30 to 40 minutes and strain. Refrigerate immediately. Keeps for up to 3 weeks.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups (500 ml) black cherry juice
1 cup (250 ml) water
1 cup (250 ml) sugar
2 thyme sprigs



Kiss 75

Recipe courtesy Morris East

DIRECTIONS

Chill a martini glass. Add all ingredients except the sparkling wine to a cocktail shaker and shake for 10 seconds. Pour into martini glass, add sparkling wine and garnish with fresh thyme sprig and sour cherry.

INGREDIENTS

1 oz gin
1 oz sparkling wine
1/2 oz cherry thyme cordial (see recipe above)
2 lemon quarters
1/2 oz simple syrup

Morris East Bloody Mary

Recipe courtesy Morris East

DIRECTIONS

Rim glass with crushed pink and green peppercorns. Fill glass with ice and add all ingredients. Stir well and garnish with fresh garden chives. Cook tomatoes on the barbecue over charcoal and finish by juicing them (juice some fresh tomatoes into the mix as well). Add salt to taste. The slight smokiness of the tomatoes complements the Sriracha.

INGREDIENTS

1.5 oz chive infused vodka
3 oz wood-fired tomato juice
1 bar spoon horseradish
2 lemon quarters
1 bar spoon Thai hot sauce (Sriracha)
 salt to taste

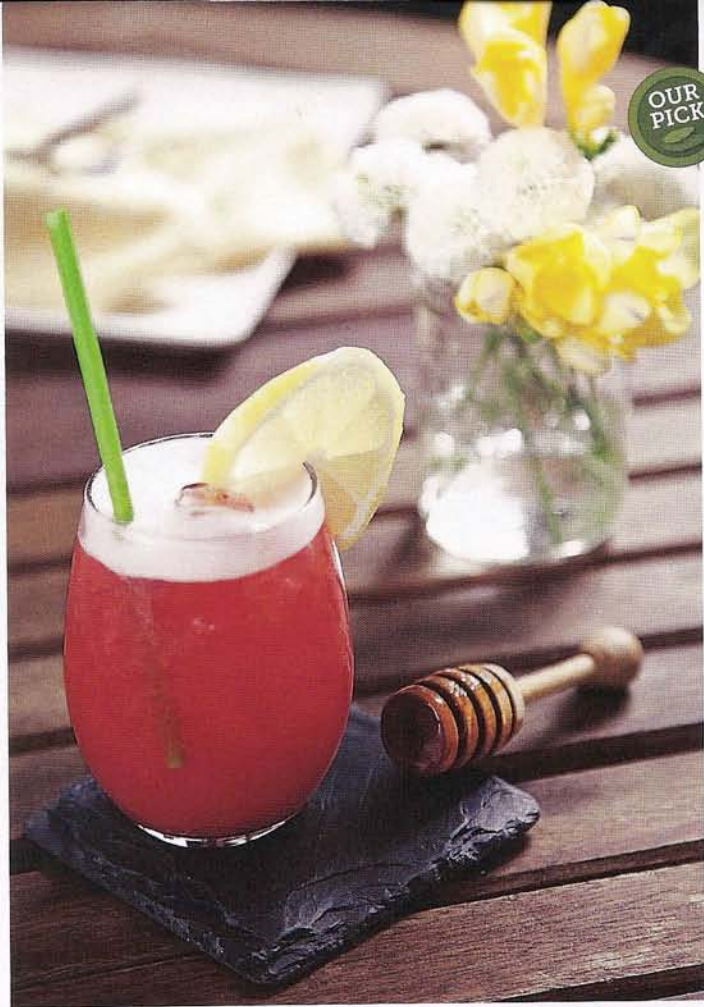
MARKETPLACE

TO ADVERTISE

For advertising, please contact:
 Jessica MacInnis
 Project Manager
 East Coast Living
jmacinnis@metroguide.ca
 902-420-9943, ext 278

LIGHTING

FABRIC



OUR PICK

The Bees Knees

Recipe courtesy Morris East

DIRECTIONS

Fill a lowball glass with ice. Add all the ingredients to your cocktail shaker. Add ice and shake well. Pour into lowball glass and garnish with a lemon twist.

INGREDIENTS

1 oz rye
 1/2 oz local wildflower honey
 1/2 oz Evan Williams Honey Reserve Bourbon
 1/2 oz local strawberry purée
 2 lemon quarters

Maritime Blue

Recipe courtesy Prince Edward Distillery

DIRECTIONS

Mix ingredients together and serve straight up in martini glass, champagne flute or glass with ice.

INGREDIENTS

1.5 oz Prince Edward Wild Blueberry Vodka
 3/4 cup (175 ml) local blueberry juice
 1/4 cup (60 ml) club soda or sparkling wine
 fresh fruit slices (lemon, lime and oranges)



Muir Murray
 ESTATE WINERY

90 Dyke Road
 Lower Wolfville
 Nova Scotia B4P 2R1
 (902) 542-0343

www.muirmurrayestatewinery.com

Dr. Jonathan Murray and his wife Lesley came to Nova Scotia in 2003 and wanted to grow grapes.

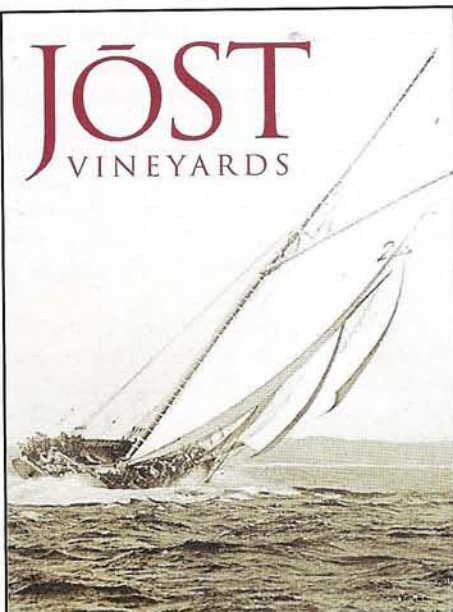
They are now the proud owners of Nova Scotia's newest Estate Winery in the beautiful Annapolis Valley, just 2 km outside the town of Wolfville. Come, relax, savour and enjoy some of Nova Scotia's finest wines with us at Muir Murray Estate Winery.



The Perfect Blend
 Lunch and Tea Room now open
 Wednesday – Sunday from 10am – 4pm

Complimentary Wine tastings

Join our culinary seminars with Chef Steve Podolinsky and other Nova Scotian guest chefs.



JOST
 VINEYARDS

Nova Scotia Wine
 Award Winning Taste

Malagash, NS
 1-800-565-4567

Visit our website:
www.jostwine.com