

Southern sips

By Alison Highberger / *For The Bulletin*

Published: June 28, 2011 4:00AM PST

A bottle of beer or a glass of wine is a perfectly fine drink, but a cocktail is an occasion — a reason to “sit a spell” and relax.

Southerners have always done cocktail hour better than the rest of us.

The hot, humid, south-of-the-Mason-Dixon-Line weather is the reason.

Before air conditioning, a screened porch was the way to escape both the heat indoors and the bugs outdoors.

Kicking back with a cocktail was a sweet reward for suffering through a sweltering summer Southern day punctuated by too many mosquitoes and gnats.

Rebecca Lang's new cookbook, “Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less” celebrates the great food traditions of the South. Lang dedicates Chapter 3 to “Sipping on the Screened Porch,” and makes you want to find a rocking chair, a few friends and some chilled cocktails.

“Making cocktails takes a few more steps, and it's nice. It's fun and refreshing to mix up something and sit down with a fun glass,” Lang said in a phone interview from her home in Athens, Ga.

Lang's Spiked Lemonade (see recipe, below right) calls for freshly squeezed Meyer lemon juice, which she writes is “a popular choice of gardeners along the Southern coasts and throughout Florida.”

The Meyer lemon's flavor is a mix of orange and lemon, but regular fresh lemon juice with a splash of orange juice will make a delicious adult beverage, too.

Lang's Lime Mint Julep and Peach Daiquiris (see recipes) are light



Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

Cocktails such as the Mississippi Mule are more popular than wine and beer during summer at the Bond Street Grill, says bartender Eric Lunsford.



and fresh cocktails perfect for warm summer evenings.

She takes the classic julep and brightens the flavor with fresh lime juice and crème de menthe to intensify the mint flavor

Lang's daiquiris not only use ripe peaches, but also nectar. "Peach nectar, found in the juice section of the store, is thicker than juice. It makes the drink a lot more peachy," she said.

Bend's Bond Street Grill features a popular Southern-inspired Mississippi Mule (see recipe).

You'll need a cocktail shaker to make it the way bartender Eric Lunsford does.

"Shake the bourbon, lime juice and simple syrup in a pint glass filled with ice. Then fill the glass with a strong ginger ale made with real ginger," said Lunsford.

He said that cocktails are more popular than wine and beer during summer at the Bond Street Grill. He infuses vodka with fresh lavender, and offers drinks made with vodkas flavored with cucumber, raspberry and pomegranate.

Lunsford even makes a martini with fresh cilantro.

"It's worth having a \$6 metal shaker to make these drinks at home," Lunsford said.

Lang said if you see a kind of liquor in a cocktail recipe that you're not a fan of, don't be afraid to replace it with something you enjoy.

"If you don't like the sound of bourbon in a julep, a light rum would be lovely. Vodka would taste good. Let's not stress out about what we're drinking. Life's too short," said Lang.

Change up your wine or beer routine this summer, and host a Southern-style cocktail hour on your porch or deck.

It'll make y'all relax and show some hospitality.

Alison Highberger can be reached at ahighberger@mac.com.



Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

Spiked Lemonade served with fresh mint and raspberries is a delightful Southern-inspired cocktail for a summer afternoon.



Andy Tullis / The Bulletin

Spiked Lemonade served with fresh mint and raspberries is a delightful Southern-inspired cocktail for a summer afternoon.

Cocktail shaking

Shaking a cocktail with ice accomplishes three things: It chills the drink to make it palatable; it adds a little water to make it refreshing; and it aerates the liquid to

enhance its texture.

The longer a drink is shaken, the more watered-down it becomes. For a stronger drink, shake a few times. For a weaker version, shake a little longer.

Sources: "Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less," by Rebecca Lang, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011, and "The Cocktail Primer," by Eben Klemm, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2009

Mississippi Mule from the Bond Street Grill

Makes 1 serving.

It's a twist on the Moscow Mule, which is made with vodka. Bourbon and simple syrup give this drink its Southern flavor.

1.5 oz bourbon

2 oz fresh squeezed lime juice

1 oz Sugar (Simple) Syrup (see recipe below)

1 bottle strong ginger ale made with real ginger

Fill a pint glass with ice, pour in bourbon, lime juice and simple syrup. Put a cocktail shaker over the top and give it a few shakes. Fill the rest of the glass with ginger beer or your choice of ginger ale-type soda.

— From Eric Lunsford, bartender, Bond Street Grill, 1051 N.W. Bond St., Bend, www.bondstreetgrill.com

Spiked Lemonade

Makes 4 servings.

1½ C sugar

2½ C freshly squeezed Meyer lemon juice or regular lemon juice

1 C vodka

Ice

Fresh raspberries, for garnish

Fresh mint sprigs, for garnish

In a large pitcher, combine the sugar, lemon juice and vodka. Serve over ice with a straw in highball glasses. Add a few raspberries to the glass and garnish with a mint sprig.

— From "Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less" by Rebecca Lang, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011

Peach Daiquiris

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

To keep the peach color bright and fresh, use light rum. If you have time, frost the glasses in the freezer for a few minutes.

— Rebecca Lang
6 med peaches, or 3 C frozen peaches, thawed
½ C peach nectar
4½ C ice
½ to ¾ C rum

Peel and coarsely chop the peaches and place them in a blender. Add about 2 tablespoons of nectar. Blend until the peaches are completely pureed. Add the ice and blend until all of it is crushed. Add the remaining 6 tablespoons of nectar and the rum and blend to mix. Serve in large wineglasses.

— From “Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less” by Rebecca Lang, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011

Sugar (simple) Syrup

Makes 3½ cups.

I like to keep a jar of sugar syrup around for making sweet tea before lunch. It's often called for in recipes for cocktails and other beverages. Make as much as you need. It can be easily halved or doubled.

— Rebecca Lang
3 C water
1 C sugar

Combine the water and sugar in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar dissolves, about 3 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and cool for at least 10 minutes. Store in the fridge for up to one week.

— From “Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less” by Rebecca Lang, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011

Lime Mint Julep

Makes 1 serving.

The Kentucky Derby is known for its mint juleps and ladies sporting magnificent hats. The julep is traditionally served in a short sterling silver cup. Because the condensation on the cup should not be touched, Southerners traditionally drink their juleps with their hands touching only the rim and bottom of the cup. Most people don't own sterling cups, so choose a rocks glass instead. If you're not a fan of bourbon, add what works for you. Never stress over liquor.

— Rebecca Lang
2 TBS bourbon
¼ C freshly squeezed lime juice
2 TBS clear crème de menthe
¼ C sparkling water
Ice
Fresh mint sprig

Whisk or shake together the bourbon, lime juice, crème de menthe and sparkling water. Serve over ice with a mint sprig.

Note: Crème de menthe comes in both clear and green. Unless a drink needs to be turned bright green, choose the clear.

— From “Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less” by Rebecca Lang, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011

Classic Sweet Tea

Makes 8 cups.

There are few things more Southern than sweet tea. Some like it sweeter than others, so play with the sugar to make it perfect for you.

— Rebecca Lang

5 C water

2 family-sized iced tea bags

3½ C Sugar (Simple) Syrup

Ice

Bring 5 cups of water to a boil in a large saucepan, about 10 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and add the tea bags. Allow the tea to steep for 5 minutes.

Remove the tea bags and discard them. Pour the sugar (simple) syrup into a pitcher with at least a 1-quart capacity. Add the steeped tea and stir to combine. Pour over ice to enjoy. Serve on the same day.

Note: For Mint Sweet Tea, add 2½ C torn fresh mint leaves to the sugar syrup when you take it off the heat. After cooling for 10 minutes, strain and discard the mint leaves. Continue with the recipe as directed.

— From “Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less” by Rebecca Lang, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2011

Published Daily in Bend Oregon by Western Communications, Inc. © 2010

www.bendbulletin.com