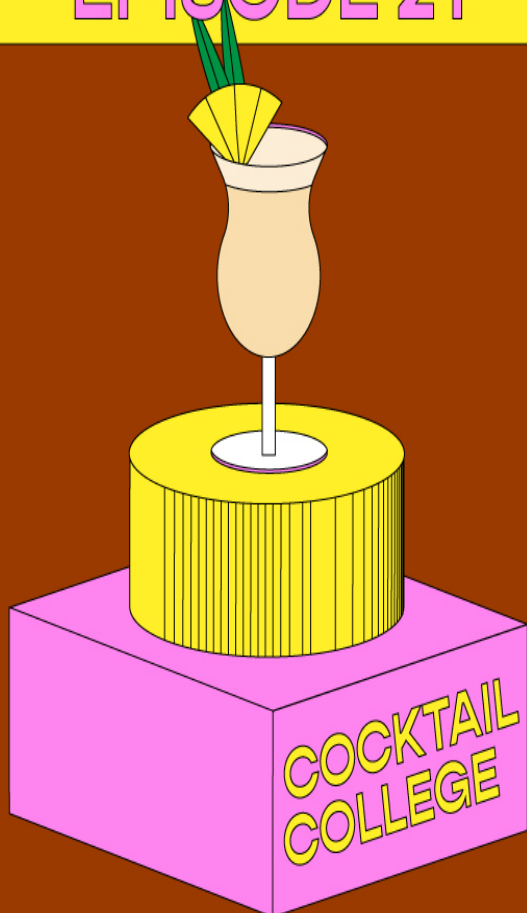




EPISODE 21



PIÑA COLADA

The Cocktail College Podcast: How to Make the Perfect Piña Colada

On this episode of “Cocktail College,” host Tim McKirdy chats about a classic tropical cocktail that came about in the 1950s: the Piña Colada (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-recipe/pina-colada/>). He is joined by Ivy Mix

(<https://store.vinepair.com/>).

(<https://www.ivymix.com/home>), owner of Brooklyn's Leyenda, author of "Spirits of Latin America," and co-founder of the Speed Rack Competition.

Between references to the popular '70s song inspired by the Piña Colada, the two discuss their favorite riffs on the drink, different rum (<https://vinepair.com/explore/category-type/rum/>), varieties bartenders can use in the cocktail, and why over-the-top garnishes make the Piña Colada all the more fun to sip. Tune in for more.

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Ive Mix's Piña Colada Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 ounce Novo Fogo Cachaça
- ¾ ounce Don Q rum
- ¼ ounce El Dorado 3 Year Old
- ¾ ounce fresh pineapple juice
- 1 ounce "coco biz" (equal parts Coco Lopez and full-fat coconut milk)
- ½ ounce fresh lemon juice

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- 1 teaspoon simple syrup
- Garnish: freshly grated nutmeg, pineapple frond, Jamaican dark rum float

Directions

- Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker with one ice cube.
- Shake vigorously until well chilled and aerated.
- Strain into a crushed-ice-filled Collins glass.
- Float a small amount of Jamaican dark rum on top and garnish with nutmeg and pineapple fronds.

CHECK OUT THE CONVERSATION HERE

Tim McKirdy: Hey, this is Tim McKirdy, and welcome to “VinePair’s “Cocktail College.” Leading us on today’s exploration of the Piña Colada (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-recipe/pina-colada/>) is Ivy Mix. Welcome to the show; thank you so much for joining us.

Ivy Mix: Thanks for having me.

T: I am personally very excited for today’s episode because the Piña Colada is a wonderful drink. What a refreshing, iconic cocktail. Before we do jump into that, before we do a deep dive, do you mind if we do a shallow dive on “The Piña Colada Song (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TazHNpt6OTo>)?” Because that, for me, was one of the songs of the pandemic.

I: “The Piña Colada Song?”

T: Yeah, I had it on repeat for most of the pandemic.

I: That’s so odd I was listening to, I don’t know, sad country.

T: The actual title of the 1979 song, I believe it's Rupert Holmes, is "Escape." So maybe that's what I was looking for, right? I think it's an iconic song. I'd like to bring up a few issues I have with the concept of the song, though. Quick reminder here for anyone who's not familiar — the two listeners out there that are not familiar with this song — this is a couple whose relationship has gotten slightly stale. One of them takes a personal ad seeking other people. The other person responds with their own ad. Long story short, they end up at a bar and they end up meeting each other again. Interesting story. But the premise of the whole thing is based on the love of Piña Coladas. How is this not something they knew about each other?

I: Yeah, how does that work? Also, it's a horrible singles ad, because who doesn't like Piña Coladas?

T: If you have half a brain as well? Really setting the bar high here.

I: Exactly. "Singing in the Rain," that's a weird one.

T: Champagne (<https://vinepair.com/explore/category-type/champagne/>). I feel like a lot of people like Champagne.

I: You definitely are casting a wide, wide net.

T: Anyone will do. Fun fact about this song. Apparently, the original lyric wasn't Piña Colada. It was Humphrey Bogart or something, and he changed it five minutes before he recorded the song.

I: No, he made the right choice.

T: He did. It would have robbed the world of one of the best cocktail songs out there. So there we go. Anyway, we've gotten that out of the way, so let's dive into the drink. Let's get to the serious stuff now, the Piña Colada cocktail (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-recipe/pina-colada/>). Can you start by telling us some of the backstory of this cocktail and how it came about? Is this one that we know the tale of, or is it one of those ones that kind of comes about somewhat organically over time?

I: Like all cocktail history, it's all a bit blurry. What a surprise, because people were drinking. But, as far as the research that I've done, this one is pretty secure in its history. I think that almost everyone knows that this is a Puerto Rican cocktail. It's the cocktail of Puerto Rico. It was originally made in the 1950s, in 1954. I was doing some research before this because I know it's from Puerto Rico. I know it's kind of like the baby boomer cocktail; it was born around that time. When I was researching it, I was like, "Yep, I was right. Puerto Rico. Yep. It was made in 1954 as a baby boomer drink." But what I didn't know was the name of the man who made it, Ramón "Monchito" Marrero. And Marrero is the last name of my business partner at Speed Rack, Lynette Marrero (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-college/cocktail-college-pisco-sour/>). And she's Puerto Rican.

T: I know, she's a friend of the show.

I: So she could very well be the heir to the Piña Colada. I'm not sure she knows this, but she's listening. I'll send her an email and be like, "Guess what?"

T: That blew my mind when I saw it as well, and I was like, “Oh my God, this is wonderful.” So we need to definitely check with Lynnette about that. So this drink comprises rum (<https://vinepair.com/explore/category-type/rum/>), some kind of coconut cream, pineapple, lime, and maybe some other stuff.

I: Traditionally speaking, it doesn't have any citrus in it.

Traditionally speaking, it's just pineapple, coconut cream, ice, and rum.

T: Wow.

I: That's the thing. Coconut cream is like a heart attack in a can.

At Leyenda (<https://leyendabk.com>), we actually use Coco Lopez tins as our cutlery tins. Basically people pick up the Coco Lopez cans and read the back and the nutritional information; their eyes go out of their head. They're like, “Oh my God.”

T: You're not putting this in anything, right?

I: It makes Piña Coladas. So yeah, we put it in stuff. But I personally think that Piña Coladas should have some sort of citrus (<https://vinepair.com/articles/acid-adjusted-cocktail-recipe/>) in them.

T: Talk about that original iteration. That is very much a kind of boomer profile as well. The original iteration is sweet, in your face, probably quite boozy as well.

I: Quite boozy and it has so much sweetness and fat in it from the coconut that all that booze is kind of hidden.

T: Right.

I: If you're making it the original way, you have these beautiful, fresh pineapples from Puerto Rico, and the juice is just delicious. That cures a lot of acidity with it as well. So to be fair, it's not like you're using concentrated Dole or something like that. It's actually fresh juice. It makes a difference.

T: Amazing. The whole idea of this show is talking about how we can elevate drinks, how we can take them to the next level, and also incorporate more modern techniques (<https://vinepair.com/articles/modern-classic-cocktail-podcast/>). So we'll get into that in a second. But what are you looking for from a modern-day Piña Colada? Either if you order it, you're making it for yourself, or someone hands you one, what do you expect from that drink?

I: Traditionally, I think that Piña Coladas should be blended (<https://vinepair.com/articles/vinepair-podcast-blended-cocktails/>). That's what makes that silky mouthfeel. When you blend coconut cream in a drink, which has all the fat and the sugar, it really gives us an ice cream-like, thick, rich texture. That's not like a granita, like some frozen drinks. It's really smooth and creamy, and it's delicious. Traditionally it's made with a Spanish-style rum à la Bacardi (<https://vinepair.com/wine-blog/13-things-you-didnt-know-about-bacardi/>), Don Q (<https://vinepair.com/articles/don-q-puerto-rican-rum/>), the two Puerto Rican brands. You could definitely throw some Havana Club (<https://vinepair.com/articles/cuba-worlds-best-cheap-rum/>) in there if you can get your hands on a bottle. Now you see people doing their own types of rum blends in a Piña Colada. I actually like making my Piña Coladas with cachaça (<https://vinepair.com/spirits-101/intro-cachaca-guide/>). I think that it makes it a lot more interesting to use fresh sugar cane

juice. It's a bit more grassy, adds a little bit to the drink, and gives something for the coconut to butt up against rather than just being a coconut drink. If I get a Piña Colada, I expect a nice coconut flavor. Honestly, it's called a "Piña" Colada, with an emphasis on the pineapple. But to me, this is really a coconut drink. So I do want to have pineapple in there, and I like to have some citrus. All the better if you have a really powerful blender and you can actually put in a whole lime and get that lime pith and the bitterness in there. It makes for a really interesting drink.

T: Amazing. When's the perfect occasion to be drinking a Piña Colada?

I: I mean, the obvious answer is at a beach. But now, you can do variations on Piña Coladas. I mean, there's no bad time for Piña Colada. That's why that song is kind of ridiculous because who doesn't like Piña Coladas? And when's a bad time? There is no bad time. I guess the only bad time I could think of, is if you're freezing outside without a coat and gloves. That might be a bad time to drink a Piña Colada.

Breaking Down the Piña Colada

T: It's such a great drink. And I love all those little details that you mentioned there before about how we can, in a more modern way, add complexity and layers to this while still staying true to the soul of the drink. Let's dive into the ingredients, though. And let's start with our spirits. So you have a preference for cachaça. But if you were going to do it in a more modern classic way with rum, would you just go for one rum or would you go for your own blend there?

I: If I were really going to ball out and do it my way, I would probably do a blend of rums and try to get some Spanish-style rum in there, clear rums. I'll probably try to get a gold rum, but I think clear would be best. Either a lighter English style or a Spanish style

(<http://www.tenzingws.com/blog/2015/6/16/infochart-the-styles-of-rum-english-french-and-spanish-summerofrum>). Like I said, Bacardi or Don Q. Don Q actually helped us at Speed Rack reach our \$1 million mark for total funds raised for breast cancer when Lynnette and I won the Best Mentorship Award.

I: That's amazing.

I: Yeah, it was awesome. We got up and were like, "We're almost at a million dollars raised." And then Lynnette got a text message that was like, "Done. We're going to do it." So if you're going to make a Piña Colada, a) Don Q is the rum of Puerto Rico, and b) they hate breast cancer. And they actually put their money where their mouth is. So definitely Don Q you in there. Again, I like the fresh sugar cane juice aspect. So I'd put some cachaça in, or some agricole rhum (<https://vinepair.com/articles/what-is-rum-rhum-agricole-cachaca/>). Anything from Martinique (<https://meetmartinique.com/rum/>) to Run J.M. Blanc (<https://www.astorwines.com/SearchResultsSingle.aspx?search=21770>), any light rum.

T: Quick question here about blending rums. This is something, of course, that we see within other styles of tropical drinks (<https://vinepair.com/articles/11-best-tropical-cocktail-recipes/>). I'm sure it does happen with other categories of spirits, but I've often noticed that more in rum. Is there a reason for that? Is it just because rum is such an incredibly broad spectrum (<https://vinepair.com/articles/these-rum-cocktails->

reimagine-the-spirit/)? Or does that speak to tropical-style drinks? They can be a little bit extra, let's be honest, when it comes to ingredients, profile, and build.

I: A lot of spirits are just blends, right? So that's one bit. And rum has no rules, really. When you see a rum that's 12 years old, depending on where you are in the world, that could mean the youngest rum in that bottle is 12 years old. Or the average age is 12 years old. Or the oldest rum is 12 years old.

T: There's a solera system (<https://vinepair.com/articles/aging-cocktails-guide/>) going on, maybe, in the numbers on the bottle.

I: So it's kind of a bit of a mess. Also, depending on how you make your rum, you get so many different flavor varieties. So it really lends itself to blending, because it all is made from the same ingredient: sugar. That is the most obvious thing to make booze out of. And you get these really crazy flavor nuances and balance. Look at a rum Old Fashioned (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-recipe/old-fashioned/>). If you're making a rum Old Fashioned with just one type of rum, you're doing something wrong. Mix it up, experiment. See what other kinds are out there. There are ones that add a lot of caramel. There are some that are really dark and molasses-y. There are ones that are really dry and light. There's column still and pot still (<https://vinepair.com/articles/pot-column-distilling-vodka/>). There's long fermentation. You can take all of these different styles and make a new spirit with it. Not just blending with itself, rum goes very well when blending with other spirits as well.

T: Amazing, thank you for that. Tell us about pineapple juice, then. Is the ideal scenario using fresh pineapple for this, and how are you doing that? And what's the reality, as well, when it comes to running a bar these days with that?

I: At the bar, I have an industrial juicer. We have two types of juicers. You have the [citrus juicer](https://vinepair.com/picks/best-citrus-press-juicer-2020/) (<https://vinepair.com/picks/best-citrus-press-juicer-2020/>) that has the cone and you put half a citrus on top and it kind of spins it out. Then, you have a juice extractor, which you use for pineapple. It's essentially a rotating blade and a chute, and you put the fruit or the vegetables in. It's like if you go to a juice bar, they do it there. All the pulp goes out one end, and all the juice goes out in the other. We do that at Leyenda. Sometimes, I find it to be like an exercise in humility, though, because sometimes the pineapples are not ripe. They're just kind of soft. And the flavor is fine, but I wouldn't call it excellent. So if you can, get your hands on a ripe pineapple. You can tell, because you pick it up and it just reeks of pineapple. It smells good, it's very, very juicy. It's not firm to the touch. Another way to tell is when the leaves of the pineapple pull out very easily. That's a good way to tell it is ready to be eaten. So find it, and if you have a juice extractor handy, go for it. Juice extractors are a real pain in the ass to clean. So if you don't want to deal with it, I don't blame you. Go get some Dole. Go get some canned pineapple juice. It's totally OK. Lots of bars will mix Dole and fresh, because Dole is just consistent. You always have the same flavor, right? There's no variance there. You know what you're going to get.

T: So you want to add a bit of character by adding maybe some fresh pineapple or just changing that up. I feel like Dole is one of those things, it's an ingredient where, as soon as you taste it, you

almost know straight away. Like you said, it has that kind of consistency.

I: Yeah, it's consistent. But you don't get as much frothiness with it. It's certainly not as acidic as fresh pineapple juice. So I would say, if you can, go juice yourself some pineapple. Especially if it's ripe, you'll taste the difference.

T: I bet there's probably a ton of people out there with juicers that they maybe bought in January and have since stopped using. Definitely not speaking from personal experience there at all. So bring it back out. Bring out the juicer for the pineapple. And then Coco Lopez — COC as they say in Spanish. What is Coco Lopez, essentially? How does it differ from other products if I'm walking down the aisle and see coconut milk or other coconut products there?

I: Right. It's a cream of coconut. I love Coco Lopez. It is not a health food. It is not only extremely high in all sorts of fats, both good and bad, but there are also just a bunch of preservatives in there. It's pretty intense. If I had the time and the energy to make my own coconut cream, that's what I would do. It's not easy.

T: What might that process look like?

I: You take coconut sugar, there's maceration (<https://vinepair.com/articles/wine-101-carbonic-maceration/>) involved, and there's coconut oil involved. Honestly, I haven't done it in quite some time. Christine, who's my business partner at Leyenda, her husband K.J., who works at Long Island Bar (<http://thelongislandbar.com>), has a delicious homemade coconut cream recipe. And he was like, "You should use it at Leyenda." We go through way too much coconut, so I'm not sure.

But again, consistency and getting the coconut, it can be tricky. At Leyenda, we don't use straight Coco Lopez. We do what we call "coco biz," because I think that straight Coco Lopez is way too sweet and way too syrupy. You don't really get that milky quality that I really like from coconut drinks. So we do equal parts Coco Lopez to full-fat coconut milk, and we blend them together. It's a lot easier to use, it's not as thick. It's more syrupy, and you really get a lot more of that milkiness, which coconut cream is sometimes lacking. There's a lot of coconut cream out there. They come in plastic bottles and cans, and you can make your own. You'll probably have the best luck making your own. It's very time consuming.

T: I love the fact that you said it's not a health food, because that brings us back to our song. I do believe that Rupert Holmes's ad that he put out in response said he's not much into health food. So maybe this is starting to come back. The plot holes are not as thick as I thought they were. So then after that, we have fresh lime juice. Fresh is best. Any thoughts there?

I: I actually use lemon.

T: Lemon? OK. Is lime the standard or did I just completely mix that up?

I: People use all sorts. Traditionally, there is no lime, lemon, or citrus. Traditionally, you wouldn't have any of that. Lime, in many ways, makes more sense geographically speaking and where it is in the world. But I actually had my mind changed when we were working on our classic cocktail specs at Leyenda. I was like, "quarter-ounce of lime," and my head bartender Liane, "half-an-ounce of lemon." Then we tasted it side by side, and it

just worked. Limes are a bit bitter and sharper, whereas lemons are a little bit lighter and rounder. It just works better with the coconut.

T: I can see why that would mix in better with the rest of those ingredients and maybe doesn't stand out as much.

I: It does what it's supposed to do. It becomes more of a bridge and a lightener in there, especially with the pineapple, it doesn't overpower the pineapple with its own acidity. It's a nice change.

Ivy Mix's Leyenda Piña Colada

T: Interesting. I don't believe I've ever consciously made one with lemon or maybe tried one, so I definitely need to go down that route. Talk us through the build and preparation of this drink. You mentioned before that ideally this would be something that's blended for you rather than shaken. Can you talk us through the two preparations, including the spec that you might use?

I: At Leyenda, we actually do our Piña Colada, generally speaking, over cobbled ice (<https://vinepair.com/articles/best-ice-for-cocktails-guide/>). That kind of pellet ice. The reason being, I am really anti-having blenders on the bar. I think they're loud. I think they're annoying. We have a frozen drink machine, but don't usually put classic cocktails into the frozen drink machine unless it's Cinco de Mayo (<https://vinepair.com/wine-blog/11-things-you-need-to-know-about-cinco-de-mayo/>) and we're crushing Margaritas (<https://vinepair.com/best-margarita-recipe-guide/>). But usually that's more of a proprietary cocktail. So because I don't like blenders at the bar, we tend to put hours over cobbled ice. It can look really nice.

The other option is to blend it. Everyone should know this, if you are drinking a blended drink or a drink that is in a frozen drink machine, it has so much more sugar than normal cocktails.

T: Interesting.

I: The drink is so cold that you kind of numb out your palate, and all of a sudden you can't taste as much as you could before. So in order to make the drinks more successful, you have to really pump up the sugar. You'd probably be like, "Oh, this isn't as good as I remember it being." Or why does this taste a bit muted? The reason being is because everything's blended together, so your palate can't really be open to it. At Leyenda, we do 2 ounces of white rum for a Piña Colada. In the white rum, we have our own blend. So we do 1 ounce of Novo Fogo Cachaça (<https://www.totalwine.com/spirits/rum/cachaca/novo-fogo-silver-cachaca/p/117687750>), the silver. They're great friends, super awesome. There is a lot of sugar cane flavor, it's delicious. Then you do three-quarters of an ounce of Don Q Silver Rum, and a quarter-ounce of El Dorado 3 (<https://vinepair.com/buy-this-booze/6-best-white-rums-for-daiquiris/>). I know it's kind of ridiculous, but it just adds it through the whole path and how the thing tastes. You are covering this up with a bunch of coconut and pineapple, so people are like, "Why is so much effort put into the rum?" But it's delicious. When in doubt, 2 ounces of rum is fine. I think those are great. El Dorado wouldn't be the traditional one I would use, because it's from Guyana. Don Q would be a traditional one, and Bacardi would be a traditional one. I'm a big fan of doing cachaça. So if you do 2 ounces of cachaça on this, it's going to be great.

T: Amazing.

I: Then we do 1 ounce of what we call coco biz. Again, that's equal parts Coco Lopez and full-fat coconut milk. If you take a can, measure them, blend them together, and then put it in a quart container, it will stay for quite some time refrigerated.

T: Nice.

I: Then, we do three-quarters of an ounce of pineapple juice (fresh is best), a half-ounce of lemon, and then just a splash of simple. If you're blending this, you put between a quarter and a half-an-ounce of simple. If you're just going to shake it up, depending on how sweet the pineapple is, you can do a teaspoon or just omit it completely. Then, you want to put one ice cube in and you shake it for a long time. And you're pretty much putting lots of air in there and you're going to pour it over cobbled ice. My trick is that I really like to do a float of dark rum on top. I like to use Jamaican rum, so anything dark and rich and old. I personally love Coruba (<https://vinepair.com/articles/cheap-rum-tiki-bartender-secret/>) for something like this, but honestly, you can use a Goslings (<https://vinepair.com/articles/get-to-know-goslings-rum-the-spirit-of-bermuda/>) or Cruzan Black Strap (<https://www.totalwine.com/spirits/rum/dark-rum/cruzan-black-strap-rum/p/99813750>), something rich and unctuous.

T: Wow.

I: And then you do some nutmeg and some pineapple fronds. I don't understand it when people do mint on a Piña Colada. I don't get it. But if you want to do mint, go do mint. I like some nutmeg, and I make a beautiful pineapple wedge and the pineapple fronds.

T: This is a fun drink, right? This is one where we should have that license to go a little bit extra with the garnish. I know this has been something of a hot topic in recent years in the bar industry, but would this be a drink that would be with a straw or without? It's interesting with the float there.

I: I would say to use a straw. Metal straws (<https://vinepair.com/articles/plastic-straw-ban-controversy/>) are tough with frozen drinks, because your mouth will be super cold. But there are tons of reusable wood or recyclable, compostable straws that are out there and easy to use. Frozen drinks and drinks with crushed ice are pretty tricky, in my personal opinion, to drink without a straw.

T: I love that idea, as well, of just enjoying this drink that you've built in a very complex way or with complex ingredients, but also having the aromatics of that rum float on top, too. That dual sensory experience sounds wonderful.

I: Yeah, it's super delicious. I'm going to have one today, I think.

T: I'm definitely fast approaching the point where I need a Piña Colada imminently. Do you have any other thoughts about this drink, this cocktail, or any riffs (https://vinepair.com/cocktail-recipe/?fwp_search_cocktails=pina%20colada)? I've definitely seen one. Another friend of the show, Erik Castro (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-college/cocktail-college-margarita/>), I believe he's done this with chartreuse (<https://vinepair.com/explore/category-type/chartreuse/>) in the past. And that's a wonderful drink.

I: This is a wonderful thing. Like the song and like everything else, they're super delicious. Make it with one type of rum, make it with whiskey (<https://vinepair.com/explore/category-type/whiskey/>). You can really change up what goes into this drink. I'm a big fan of making this drink with other types of vegetable juice. Coconut and pineapple go very well with root vegetables like carrots or sweet potatoes. Every year, we do a holiday pop up at Leyenda called Sleyenda. This year, I made a drink that we called the Kwanzaa Colada, getting in on the holiday of Kwanzaa that people don't really understand or know anything about. But it's a holiday that has a lot of harvest root vegetables and stuff like that. So we did a sweet potato coconut cream that was really delicious. I've done pumpkin Piña Coladas. Think about pies and stuff that you're making — it makes sense, it lends itself to sweetness. So definitely experiment with that. It's unusual and fun. I've made a papaya Piña Colada.

T: That sounds amazing. I'm all for this, the Piña Colada not just being a drink, but becoming the next family of drinks. The opportunities for exploration sound to be kind of limitless.

I: One of the first times I experimented with a Piña Colada was on the opening menu at Leyenda, and it's also a cocktail I feature in my book. It's called the Maiden Name (<https://www.foodandwine.com/recipes/maiden-name>), and it's with cachaça, pineapple, coconut, a bit of lime, passion fruit, vanilla and cinnamon. The passion fruit, vanilla, and cinnamon are no-brainers in a way, but it's a slightly more elevated version of a Piña Colada. And it's so good. Possibilities like that are endless.

T: I love when we're making drinks like this, or drinking these, that it allows us to bring in different baking spices in a way that doesn't stand out too much. I want a better word here, but it's not offensive. Sometimes they can be a bit much, but it works with rum in this style of drink.

I: Yeah, exactly.

Getting To Know Ivy Mix

T: Wonderful. That's so good. I'm definitely ready for my Piña Colada today. But before we do that, we're about to enter the segment where we get to know our bartender a little bit more and our guests through our five recurring questions. How do you feel? Are we ready?

I: I'm ready.

T: Fantastic. Question No. 1: What style or category of spirit typically enjoys the most real estate on your back bars?

I: At Leyenda, we specialize in Latin spirits. My background has always been in mezcal (<https://vinepair.com/explore/category-type/mezcal/>), which has such ample, neat, spirit-drinking capabilities. So we have a lot, a lot, a lot of agave-based distillates back there.

T: Wonderful. When folks are typically ordering and exploring those, is there that understanding there, that this is something that maybe you want to approach neat (<https://www.liquor.com/articles/how-to-drink-mezcal-right/>)? Or are people like, "I want you to make a cocktail with this mezcal (<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-recipe/base/mezcal/>)?"

I: I'll do it. It is fun to make cocktails with these really unusual mezcals. It's fun because they are so flavorful. I think that cocktails are kind of a gateway into drinking spirits neat, anyway. That's really been my goal, you know? People ask how I recommend it. Neat; drink it neat. Don't put an ice cube in it. Like I said, it just dulls your palate, so you're robbing yourself of the very thing you're buying yourself.

T: If you want that dilution, go for a couple of drops of water.

Question No. 2: Which ingredient or tool do you think is the most undervalued in a bartender's arsenal?

I: A good peeler.

T: What's your preference on peelers?

I: Everyone does all sorts of stuff. I myself have — knock on wood — never taken off any of my fingertips before. But I have had many a staff member use workman's comp to go to the emergency room to get their fingers sewed back together. They are dangerous, especially when working in high volume environments. You can get all sorts of fancy, sexy silver ones that have special blades you put in. I think they are terrifying. I get ones that cost \$1.50. I have no idea what brand name they are.

T: Are they the single stick ones with the plastic handle and the vertical?

I: I like the ones that are a "U" with a stick on it, and the blade goes across.

T: I have this peeler at home. Sorry, quick sidebar here. But it's the other type that I was describing. And it is terrible for peeling everything, apart from lemon twists for my Martini

(<https://vinepair.com/cocktail-college/complete-guide-martini-recipe/>). It just comes out amazing every time. And I'm like, "This is the best peeler I've ever come across."

I: Some of them are great for citrus. The other day, I was teaching a cocktail class online, and someone had a potato peeler.

T: I think that might be what mine is. I'm not sure. Given that we're going down this rabbit hole, one final question. I saw some videos doing the rounds online at the end of last year. I believe it might have been Jeffrey Morgan Tyler, but I might be wrong there. So apologies. The cheese peeler. Did you see this hack?

I: I think that was Jeffrey. It makes a lot of sense. It is a flat peeler. I have yet to experiment with that myself. I also have no experience sharpening a cheese peeler.

T: I don't know how that's done.

I: So I don't know how that's done, but I bet you it makes a wide swath of very wide twists, which is good, so you don't get those little wimpy things.

T: Yeah, you get a lot of pith with it. But it does negate that risk of employees having to go to the emergency room. So maybe that's what you start out with, you know?

I: Exactly.

T: Anyway, at the risk of this becoming the peeler episode, here's question No. 3: What's the most important piece of advice that you've received in this industry?

I: Probably just to not care so much. At the end of the day, we're bartenders. We all got into this to have a little bit of freedom and flexibility in our lives. To have a bit of fun, to be able to take time off when we want to and travel when we want to, to live our own lives and not to the beat of the capitalistic drum. I had moments in my career where I was just nose down to the grindstone, working my ass off. All work and no play makes people suck. In this industry, we're lucky that we get to do things like working in these environments that are fun. It doesn't have to be so serious. We're just making cocktails. Literally, machines can do it. So it's not that hard.

T: Take care of yourselves, guys. Question No. 4: If you could only visit one last bar in your life, which one would it be?

I: [Para de Sufrir \(https://www.facebook.com/Pare-de-Sufrir-Tome-Mezcal-175385519212027/\)](https://www.facebook.com/Pare-de-Sufrir-Tome-Mezcal-175385519212027/) in Guadalajara, Mexico is the best bar on planet Earth. It's the best. It's all agave distillates, they play cumbia with fantastic DJs, and there's a disco ball in the room that isn't motorized so you have to push it with a stick. All the bartenders are so skilled at yielding this really long stick and spinning it around in a circle with a stick. It starts to go again, and everyone starts clapping and dancing to cumbia. It's the best place ever.

T: That sounds amazing. Final question for you today: If you knew that the next cocktail you drank was going to be your last, what would you order or make?

I: Oh, God. That's a good question. Usually people are like, "What do you always drink? What's your favorite cocktail?" I always order a [Negroni \(https://vinepair.com/articles/negroni-](https://vinepair.com/articles/negroni-)

variations/) because I love them and they're really hard to mess up. But if it were the last cocktail I would ever have to drink, I would have a Piña Colada. I think I would have a Piña Colada.

T: I'm not saying that this is the final moment of your life, but if it were, you'd be pretty happy.

I: But with double the amount of booze. Piña Coladas don't have enough alcohol in them. So put 3 or 4 ounces of booze in that, please. That would be a little sweet, a little sour, a little comforting, and fatty. And then, I could be on my merry way.

T: Amazing. Wonderful. Ivy, thank you so much for joining us today. It's been a ton of fun talking Humphrey Bogart and Piña Coladas. Thank you.

I: Thank you, it's been a blast. I'll talk about Piña Coladas any day of the week.

T: Thank you very much.

If you enjoy listening to the show anywhere near as much as we enjoy making it, go ahead and hit subscribe, and please leave a rating or review wherever you get your podcasts — whether that's Apple, Spotify, or Stitcher. And please tell your friends.

Now, for the credits. "Cocktail College" is recorded and produced in New York City by myself and Keith Beavers, VinePair's tastings director and all-around podcast guru. Of course, I want to give a huge shout-out to everyone on the VinePair team. Too many awesome people to mention. They know who they are. I want to give some credit here to Danielle Grinberg, art director at VinePair, for designing the awesome show logo. And listen to

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