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WINE

THE COCKTAILIAN *By Gary Regan*

From lavender to bitters

I have this love-hate thing going on when it comes to lavender. I love the flavor, and I hate admitting it. It's just too, well, it's too feminine for a manly man such as me. It's all about perfume and flowers and delicateness and daintiness and all those things that we macho guys refuse to own up to, but I love it all the same.

There, now, I'm out of the lavender closet. How darned liberating is that?

In the distilled spirit world it was Aviation gin that first opened my eyes to my love for lavender, and when that gin is paired with maraschino liqueur, crème de violet and fresh lemon juice in an Aviation cocktail, the gods of the lavender fields are appeased, and the stars align no matter the day, month, or year.

Recently, when a new flavored vodka hit the shelves, lavender reared its pretty little head again. What would I concoct with Square One Botanical? Made from a base of organic rye, this flavored vodka is oh-so-politically correct, but that's not really the point. The vodka is flavored not only with lavender, but also with pears, rose petals, chamomile, lemon verbena, rosemary, coriander and citrus peel — yes, they're all organic, but that's not what we mannish men concern ourselves with. We look for big, bold flavors. Even if they're sort of perfume-y.

Using my usual standby, I married Square One Botanical with sweet vermouth, and added a couple of dashes of An-



Erick Wong / The Chronicle; styled by Rose Amoroso

Cheek to Cheek

Makes 1 drink

- 2 ounces Square One Botanical spirit
- 1 ounce Aperol
- 3 dashes Regans' Orange Bitters No. 6
- 1 orange twist, as garnish

Instructions: Stir ingredients over ice for at least 20 seconds, strain into a chilled Champagne flute, and add the garnish.

gostura, but the resultant drink didn't float my boat. I used it as a base for an Aviation next, but the lack of juniper resulted in a drink that needed an extra little something. Juniper, probably.

How would this stuff fare in a Negroni? I wondered. It sort of got lost

in there — I think the sweet vermouth just wasn't making out well with the lavender, perhaps because she's so used to hanging out with sturdy whiskey or juniper-forward gin.

Aperol ended up saving the day. Aperol and Regans' Orange Bitters No. 6. That's right. My very own orange bitters figure into this one. Not because they're the very best orange bitters on the market — which they are unless you prefer something a little lighter. In that case look for the Fee Brothers bottling, or go with Angostura orange bitters for a beautifully balanced product with a nice tangy edge.

The reason I went for my own orange bitters in this particular instance is that cardamom figures heavily into my recipe, and cardamom likes to dance with lavender. It's a sort of Rogers and Astaire thing.

Before you make my Cheek to Cheek cocktail, you're going to have to procure some of my orange bitters, and in the newspaper biz, it's best to make full disclosure, so I'll put my cards on the table. Every time 12 bottles of Regans' Orange Bitters No. 6 are sold (www.buffalotrace.com) — I'm hoping the Chief doesn't catch this), I get a check for \$1. I'm well on my way to becoming a hundredaire, and if I achieve this goal, I promise I'll still speak to you. OK?

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