

KK'S PAINKILLER

I don't know about you, but winter is starting to get on my nerves. I think it's time for a tropical distraction. It's time for a Painkiller. Supposedly this drink originated in the British Virgin Islands, but thankfully it made it past US customs into the US Virgin Islands where I first tasted one. I don't know what it is about rum and the Caribbean, but it's a perfect pairing. Here's my take on it. Note the little extra something at the end.

INGREDIENTS

1 ounce light rum

1 ounce dark rum

1 ounce freshly squeezed orange juice

4 ounces pineapple juice

1 ounce cream of coconut

1 ounce Grand Marnier

Freshly grated nutmeg and orange twist for garnish

PREPARATION

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Pour in the rums, orange juice, pineapple juice and cream of coconut. Shake well.

Pour into a chilled highball glass. Gently pour the Grand Marnier on top as a floater. Garnish with grated nutmeg and an orange twist

THE HAPPY PLACE

As the temperature continues to drop and the days go from gray to ugly gray, I long for my happy place, St. John in the Virgin Islands. My husband and I have been lucky enough to return to their white sand beaches and aquamarine waters many times. I imagine we're there as the smell of conch fritters frying up at the local beach bar lures us over.



We place an order for a dozen as we sip on rum painkillers while we wait. There's no shame in day-drinking here, it's just what you do.

After lunch, we find a nice beach, settle in with a good book and immediately fall asleep. That painkiller was strong. No matter, there's nothing to do but relax, take a swim, look out at the passing sailboats and think about dinner. We have no cell service here and even that's a blessing.



The only thing that breaks our reverie is the arrival of a swarm of no see-ums around sunset. It's like a tropical alarm clock to get us to move.

We head back to the house we've rented, make ourselves another painkiller and watch the sunset from above Hawksnest Beach.



We're too relaxed to get dressed to go out, so we heat up some leftovers for dinner. As we turn out the lights, the sky reveals a sea of stars. The Milky Way crosses over our house and we even spot a messier within Orion without binoculars. We

know tomorrow will be just like today and the day before and we're fine with that.



If I could only bottle that feeling as I sit here shivering waiting for the oil company to fix our boiler, all would be well in my world.

EGGS FOR DINNER

Do you want to lighten up your dinner plans a bit after your gluttonous holiday celebrations? How about eggs for dinner? To me, they are the perfect food. They have protein to keep you sated and they can go with almost anything leftover in your fridge. Rummaging through mine, I found some leftover moo shu

chicken, a container of fried rice and a few scallions. It will do.

INGREDIENTS (serves 1 or 2)

1/3 cup leftover *moo shu* chicken (feel free to substitute other Chinese food leftovers)

1/3 cup fried rice

2 scallions, chopped

3 eggs

1 Tablespoon soy sauce

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

PREPARATION (serves 1 or 2)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the *moo shu* chicken, fried rice, and all but one tablespoon of the scallions in a bowl. Save the remaining scallions for garnish.

In a separate bowl, lightly beat the eggs and the soy sauce together. (*NOTE: Normally at this point, I would add salt, but there's enough salt in the Chinese food and soy sauce for this dish. No need to add more unless you like things very salty.*)



In an oven-proof skillet, heat the oil. Add the *moo shu* rice mixture and heat for one minute, lightly stirring ingredients in pan.

Add the eggs and quickly even out the mixture and eggs with a spatula. Cook on top of stove for one minute.

Gently move the pan to the oven. Bake for 7-8 minutes.

Remove from oven. Using a spatula, gently dig under the eggs to loosen from pan. Once loosen, gently slide onto plate. Garnish with remaining scallions.

Chī hǎo hē hǎo!



PASILLA POZOLE SOUP

When I was in Mexico late last year, I stuffed my suitcase with all kinds of food products that I can't find here in New York. One older woman tucked in a corner of a market in Oaxaca offered a taste of her homemade pasilla paste. It tasted smoky and earthy and had a rich dark brown color. Of course I bought some and it's been sitting in my fridge ever since. That is, until today. Say hello to my version of pasilla pozole soup. Fair warning – it's got a bit of a kick.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 sweet onion, sliced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 poblano pepper, diced

2 tablespoons pasilla paste (or any Mexican medium-hot pepper paste)

6 cups turkey bone broth (or boxed chicken broth)

1 14 oz can pozole

1 ear of corn, stripped, (or one small can sweet corn)

1 cup chopped cooked chicken

1 avocado, sliced for garnish

sour cream for garnish

3 corn tortillas for garnish

PREPARATION

In a dutch oven, heat olive oil. Sauté the onion until

translucent, about 8 minutes. Add in garlic, poblano and pasilla paste, stirring for about one minute. Add in 1/2 cup of the broth to help dissolve the paste. Add in pozole, corn and chicken and stir one more minute. Pour in the rest of the stock, bring to a boil and then simmer for 25 minutes. Make sure that all of the pasilla paste has dissolved and that there are no clumps remaining.

While the soup is simmering, cut the tortillas into ½"-inch strips. Spray or brush lightly with olive oil. Bake them in the oven at 375-degrees until they just begin to brown and become stiff, about 5-8 minutes. You want the strips to have a good crunch factor.

TO SERVE

Ladle soup into a bowl and garnish with a dollop of sour cream, a few slices of avocado, and some tortilla strips.

SOUP SOLVES EVERYTHING

Just off Serangoon Road in Singapore, on the 4th floor City Square Mall's Food Republic is a small hawker stall that serves the best cure-all soup I've ever tasted. If you're feeling blue, homesick, or just under the weather, find your way to *Qiu Lian Ban Mian* and order the #5 Dumpling *Ban Mee* Soup. I realize this may be a tad out of the way for many of you, but should you find yourself nearby, it's well worth a visit.



Ban Mian is a handmade Chinese thick noodle served in an addictive Asian chicken broth that I've been trying to replicate for years. (If any of my old Singaporean pals have a

good recipe, please send it my way!)).

First the noodles go in the bottom of the bowl, the broth is added, and then some *xiao bai cai* (little white cabbage). Next, two or three enormous pork wontons are gingerly placed on top of the noodles. The wontons alone would be enough for any meal. A common accompaniment in many Asian dishes is a raw egg. It is cracked on top, cooked by the heat of the broth and adds a richness and depth to the soup. And finally, the bowl is garnished with small anchovies, fried shallots, and a few drops of chili oil.

I first discovered this dish while in the midst of a horrible head cold. The steaming broth and kick from the chili oil opened my nasal passages enough to allow my tastebuds to luxuriate in this heavenly dish. I am convinced that it has healing properties and I would return for more whenever I had a bad day or wasn't feeling 100%.

Although I've bombed out on all of my attempts to make this dish, I have hope that one day it will all come together. If not, I'll just have to save up those frequent flyer miles and return. I don't think traveling half way around the globe for a bowl of soup is too excessive, do you?