

APERITIVO: THE CLASSICS

When it comes to aperitivo, few countries have mastered the art like Italy. In fact many credit the nation with creating that moment where a quality cocktail tempts the taste buds ahead of the dinner gong. To find out more about the heritage of the aperitivo we met talented Italian mixologist Simone Caporale, who can be found behind the bar at The Langham in London, mixing and shaking at the hotel's multi-award winning bar Artesian, a jewel of London's cocktail scene.

'Importantly the aperitivo is related with low-alcohol drinks – generally bitters ingredients that stimulate our appetite,' says Simone. 'But it's more than this,' he adds. 'Aperitivo is an occasion to disconnect from work and gently enter into free time. To blend a drink with something light to eat and gather a bunch of good friends around you.'

'I've learned spirits and liquors are not the only source of flavours to make drinks. For many, seeing beer on a cocktail recipe might seem strange, but we shouldn't forget that the first examples of beer cocktails were actually invented in the UK during the 1600s, so there is a lot of heritage here. It's an ingredient I've started using much more.' With this in mind, we asked Simone to show us his favourite twists on three aperitivo favourites.

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MODERN FRUIT CUP

'Whenever you approach cocktails like an aperitivo, the challenge is to make a new combination of flavours work,' chimes Simone. This much is evident in his take on the classic English summer tippie.

'I've added a peach foam to my Modern Fruit Cup, to remind me of the flavours and aromas I enjoyed in my own birthplace, Lake Como, as well as beer to lengthen and add that slightly dry quality. One for warm weather, when we feel like extending that aperitivo moment.'

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THE AMERICAN

One pre-dinner drink Simone reaches for before dinner is the Americano, which, along with the Negroni is one of the quintessential aperitivo cocktails. Originally known as the Torino-Milano, it uses a splash of vermouth from Turin and Campari from Milan. It started smacking lips up in Italian cafés during the mid-1800s and was re-named the Americano when American tourists added soda to the mix.

'This is the king of aperitivi,' says Simone. 'When I think of my best aperitivo moment it is with an Americano, sipping and then taking a bite from the fresh wedge of orange that garnishes it. The juice is zesty with notes of the bitter herbal liquid that soaks into the fruit. It's perfect.'

American by name, Italian by nature, Simone modernises his Americano, replacing soda with a Peroni Nastro Azzurro top, poured from a Piccola bottle.



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CHERRY JUICE

The cherry is a regular garnish in the world of aperitivo, most notably in the Manhattan cocktail. Sitting pretty is all well and good, but here Simone makes the fruit work a bit harder, implementing its bitter sweet elements into the main body, along with Verjuice and Peroni Nastro Azzurro.

This is where Simone excels, taking traditional elements of the aperitivo moment and twisting them to get the imagination wandering and the mouth watering. Yet Simone makes clear nothing is done for experiment's sake: 'The biggest aim for any bartender is simply to make drinks that guests will love.'

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