

MIXOLOGY

Thanksgiving, Infused

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Apples, cloves
and... pumpkin
pie? Customize
your own spirits for
a holiday surprise

BY BILL BURKE

Fall-Flavored Infused Vodka

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The to-do list on Thanksgiving can get a little daunting: brine the bird, mash the potatoes, fix the stuffing, squash the squash, and finally — choose the perfectly paired cocktail to serve to your guests.

Why not just include it all in one glass? Infusing spirits with traditional holiday flavors creates a new and often unique experience. And since infused spirits need time to steep and absorb those flavorful characteristics, they must be made ahead of time, which saves valuable time on Thanksgiving Day.

Infusing is a technique where ingredients are introduced into a liquid to create new flavors. The infused liquid is allowed to rest for a period of time — anywhere from overnight to two weeks — so the spirit absorbs the flavors of the introduced ingredients. Once it has achieved the desired flavor profile, the ingredients are removed and the spirit is served. Infusions can add a deeper level of unexpected aromas and tastes to your cocktails, giving creative home mixologists a new palate of flavors to add to their arsenal.

Here's how to elevate your spirits at home, transforming the routine into something new and exciting:

- You'll need to choose a spirit, infusion ingredients, a container such as a Mason jar or a bottle that can be resealed, and a strainer for when the process is complete.
- Fill a bottle or jar with your spirit of choice, add the infusion, shake and close tightly.
- Store the infusion in a cool, dark spot, and shake it a few times daily. Intense ingredients like vanilla, lemon and mint, for example, take a shorter time to impart their characteristic flavors, while milder flavors like strawberries, mangoes and ginger take more time.

- Once the infusion is ready, remove the flavoring ingredients.
- Using a strainer, a coffee filter or cheese cloth, strain the spirit into a decanter — you can use the original bottle, thoroughly cleaned — and it's ready to serve.

But first, the fun part — concocting flavor combinations that will fuse best with your spirit of choice. Many people use fruits, but herbs and even vegetables can be a great part of an infusion recipe.

We're going full-on Thanksgiving.

The infused spirit can be portioned out into drinks using the normal measurements — typically 1 ½ ounces per cocktail.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MYLIFEBOOK.COM



Fall-Flavored Infused Vodka

courtesy mylifecookbook.com

- ½ bottle of vodka
- 2 tablespoons whole cloves
- ¼ cup star anise
- 1 8-ounce bag of fresh cranberries
- The peel of 1-2 oranges (or 2-3 drops of sweet orange pure essential oil)

In a large mason jar, layer all ingredients except for the vodka. Next, add the vodka, seal and store in a cool, dark area for one week. Strain the vodka into a glass and refill the jar to make more.

Tip: Once this recipe has been strained and poured into a storage container (or into your guests' glasses), the remaining spices can be reused a second time. Just refill the Mason jar with vodka and let it steep for a week.



While it's said that a slice (or two) of pumpkin pie is a must at the end of a Thanksgiving meal — no matter how full you may be — there's always a few slices left over. Rather than use it for a little Black Friday shopping fuel, try this inventive recipe. It combines the seasonal flavors of pumpkin pie with the classic rye whiskey spice for a spirit that adds an autumnal character to any cocktail.

Pumpkin Pie-Infused Rye

courtesy thrillist.com

- 10 ounces rye whiskey
 - 2 slices leftover pumpkin pie
- Measure the rye into a blender and add the pie. Blend on high until combined. Strain through a chinois, then again through a coffee filter. Refrigerate until ready to use.
- Try it in The Great Pumpkin cocktail (at right), which makes the most of the sweet and savory combination thanks to the espresso and the lemon-lime mix.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THRILLIST.COM

ON THE COVER

The Great Pumpkin

courtesy thrillist.com

- 2 ounces pumpkin pie rye (recipe to left)
 - ½ ounce espresso liqueur
 - ¼ ounce lemon juice
 - ¼ ounce lime juice
 - ¼ ounce simple syrup
- Measure all the ingredients into a cocktail shaker. Fill with ice and shake hard until chilled. Double strain into a chilled coupe glass and garnish with a lemon wheel.

If Thanksgiving is an away-game this year, take along a pre-made bottle of this innovative take on apple pie, which serves as a perfect gift for any host or hostess. Using fresh Vermont apples straight from the orchard and infusing warming spices into the rich whiskey creates autumn in a glass.

Serve it on the rocks — preferably when the leftovers are put away, the dishes are in the dishwasher, the guests have retreated home and the lights of the next holiday are just starting to twinkle.

Apple Pie-Infused Whiskey

courtesy cakenknife.com

- 1 ½ cups whiskey (or bourbon, if preferred)
- 1 apple, sliced
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ teaspoon whole cloves
- 1 ½ teaspoon honey

Add apple slices, cinnamon stick, cloves and honey to a large Mason jar. Pour over the whiskey, which should cover all the ingredients. Seal and store the jar in a dark place to infuse for up to two weeks. Strain and store the whiskey.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAKENKNIFE.COM

Always drink in moderation.

A bottle of Absente Absinthe Refined 110 Proof next to its box. The box features a portrait of a man with a beard and a blue jacket, and the text 'TRADITIONAL ABSINTHE WITH WORMWOOD'. The bottle label also says 'ABSENTE ABSINTHE REFINED 110 PROOF'. The background is a blue pattern of swirling lines.

ABSENTE™

ABSINTHE REFINED

110 PROOF

Crafted in the French Alps from Wormwood and 8 other herbs, ABSENTE reveals a floral taste with a Spicy and Bitter finish. Offered with the ritual absinthe spoon

CODE 64000

A drink with a straw and lemon slices. The drink is in a glass and has a pinkish-red color. The background is a blurred image of a bar or kitchen.

Be the life of the party

BE A DESIGNATED DRIVER!

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE AND DON'T LET FRIENDS DRINK AND DRIVE.

ASK YOUR BARTENDER ABOUT MOCKTAILS.

802 Spirits

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOOD52.COM



For a perfect after-dinner treat, try this fragrant liqueur, which combines home-made butternut squash-infused vodka and a five-spice syrup that sweetens the concoction perfectly.

Butternut Squash-Infused Five-Spice Liqueur

courtesy food52.com

For the butternut squash-infused vodka

- 3-4 pounds butternut squash
- 1 liter of vodka (enough to cover the squash)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Peel butternut squash, cut in half lengthwise, then clean. Discard skin and seeds. Cut the squash up into 1 1/2 inch chunks. Spread out in an even layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake until just tender, about 20-30 minutes. Let the squash cool to room temperature, then transfer to a large Mason jar. Add vodka to the jar until it covers it by an inch. Seal the jar and store in a cool, dark spot. Give the jar a shake every few days.

Tip: Taste-test after a week. It should taste strongly of butternut squash. It may take as



long as two weeks. Pour the mixture through a medium-mesh basket strainer into a clean bowl or jar. Discard the solids. Strain again through a fine-mesh strainer into another clean bowl or jar.

For the Five-Spice Syrup

- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup packed light brown sugar
- 5 whole star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick, broken into smaller pieces
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves
- 1 cup water

In a small saucepan, combine sugars, spices and water. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Once the mixture comes to a boil, drop the heat to low, and simmer for 5 minutes. Let the mixture cool completely, then strain out all of the spices. Discard spices. Pour syrup into the infused vodka, stirring to combine. Cover and let rest for one more day before serving.

Infusion: A few tips before starting

- Fresh ingredients infuse more quickly than dry ingredients
- Allowing the mixture to steep for too long increases the potency and intensity of the flavors
- Strain the infused spirits using a small fine-mesh strainer
- Try using a coffee filter to strain out finer particles
- If you're bringing infused spirits as a gift, use a decorative, resealable bottle
- As a general rule, use 2-3 cups of fruit for every four cups of liquor

When the day is done, it's time to settle in with a nightcap. This infusion lends itself perfectly to an end-of-the-day sipper.

Apple Pear Cinnamon-Infused Vodka

courtesy berries.com

- 1 red apple cut into large chunks
- 1 pear cut into large chunks
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 quart vodka

Place the apple, pear and cinnamon stick into a Mason jar, pour in the vodka and seal. Let the spirit infuse for 3-5 days.

Tip: Try pairing this with caramel apples or in a punched-up vodka tonic. Or, try an Apple Cider Moscow Mule.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BERRIES.COM

Apple Cider Moscow Mule

courtesy savannahsaidit.com

- 1 1/2 ounces Apple Pear Cinnamon-Infused Vodka
- 4 ounces hard apple cider
- 4 ounces ginger beer
- Apple chunks and cinnamon sticks for garnish
- Ice

In a cocktail shaker, add ice cubes, hard cider, ginger beer and vodka. Shake, and then pour the mixture into a copper cup over ice. Garnish with apple chunks and a cinnamon stick.

