

AGGRESSIVE FLAVOR COMPONENTS

BY ROBIN SCHEMP

Riffing on culinary ris is all the rage, as are watermelon-feta-tomato salads. This concoction incorporates the earthiness, sweet fruit, salty cheese and bit of acid contrast of that salad. Combining all these aggressive characteristics can appeal to the pink-drink crowd without alienating the more vigorous flavor-holics.

SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVIN' IS EASY

2 oz. Heirloom tomato chunks
2 oz. Watermelon chunks
1/2 oz. White balsamic vinegar
1/4 oz. Simple syrup
2 oz. Gin
Pink salt
Cherry tomato
Watermelon wedge
Pink salt for garnish (optional)

In a shaker cup, muddle the tomato and watermelon until pulverized. Add the vinegar, simple syrup, a pinch of salt and the gin. Shake the ingredients together with ice vigorously, then double-strain into a glass.

► It is entirely possible to batch this cocktail by processing and straining the fruit in advance and blending with the vinegar and simple.

► An earthy, herbaceous gin style is a terrific partner for this sweet-savory cocktail, but tequila, mezcal or a refreshing vodka can also pair well.

► The white balsamic vinegar can be replaced with another vinegar style or a good, acidic fruit shrub with equally pleasant results.

► Flavoring the simple syrup with mint or basil or another late-summer herbal flavor will give the cocktail additional dimension.

► Garnish could include a half rim of salt, one or both fruits, a bit of contrasting herb or even a piece of salty feta or ricotta salata cheese—or perhaps a skewer of all of them to complete the salad effect.

► This could be served as a super-refreshing tall drink with crushed ice.