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Reina Punch

MAKES ABOUT 13 SERVINGS IN A 2-QUART PITCHER

Juicy red bell peppers are just as refreshing as any other fruit, and this drink from Atlanta bartender Emily Earp Mitchell shows the intriguing flavor they can add to cocktails too. Slicing the peppers thin and letting them macerate with sugar draws out the juices, which are paired with tart hibiscus tea and lime. Tequila adds its desert sage note, and Pinot Noir backs up the band with its own earthy qualities. Think of this as sangria gone savory and all the way fresh.

2½ cups chilled blanco tequila
1¼ cups Pinot Noir
1¼ cups chilled hibiscus–bell pepper syrup (*recipe follows*)
¾ cup water
1¼ cups fresh lime juice

TO SERVE

8 lime wheels
13 rosemary sprigs (optional)

At least 2 hours and up to 12 hours before serving, make the batch. Pour chilled tequila, Pinot Noir, chilled hibiscus–bell pepper syrup, and water into a 2-quart pitcher and stir to mix. Seal well, covering with plastic wrap if needed, and refrigerate.

Up to 2 hours before serving, prepare lime juice and stir into pitcher mix. Reseal and return to refrigerator if not serving immediately.

To serve, stir mixture well and add lime wheels to pitcher. Pour into ice-filled rocks glasses and garnish each glass with a rosemary sprig.

HIBISCUS–BELL PEPPER SYRUP

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

1 red bell pepper, stemmed and seeded
1 cup sugar
1 hibiscus tea bag (such as *Traditional Medicinals*)
1 cup boiling water

Using a very sharp knife, slice red parts of bell pepper into the thinnest strips you can manage. Place in a heat-safe bowl along with sugar and use a muddler to bruise slightly. Let macerate for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. When time is almost up, steep tea bag in boiling water for 3 minutes, then discard tea bag and pour hot tea over bell pepper mixture. Stir to incorporate sugar. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer into a resealable container and let cool. Refrigerate until chilled or for up to 2 days.



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