

**5@5 – Mixologist Mattias Hägglund**

Our managing editor already waxed poetic about the refreshing revelation that is tomatoes and booze. Now, it's **Mattias Hägglund's** turn to get in the mix and raise up those unsung heroes of the cocktail world. Perhaps we should mention he's the mixologist at **elements** in Princeton, New Jersey - so let's just say being behind the bar is kind of his thing.

**Five Ingredients That You Might Not Think of Including in Cocktails, But Really Should: Mattias Hägglund****1. Beer**

"The Shandy, Black Velvet and Michelada may be known throughout the country already, but there are real possibilities to serious cocktails given the broad scope of flavor found in beer. At elements we've used beer in multiple cocktails, from lagers to lambics to my favorite one yet: a cocktail called Orange Smoke using Johnny Walker Black, Seville orange, Grand Marnier, gomme syrup and a German smoke-ale from Schlenkerla."

**2. Fresh hops**

"As we are in the Garden State, there are quite a few options available locally if I want to get my hands on some fresh hops. They're delightfully pungent, and can bring flavors and aromatics of citrus, evergreen, spices and earth. Shaking a small amount into cocktails can work wonders, or you can steep them in a high proof spirit to make a tincture that will add a complex bite to whatever you wish. This past fall, a guest brought me a pound of fresh Cascade hops. With that I put together a batch of homemade hops bitters, and used it to help flavor my Maple Loch cocktail: a combination of Ardbeg 10 Year Islay Scotch, Nux Alpina Walnut Liqueur, fresh lemon, hops bitters, and (next up on the list) maple syrup."

**3. Maple syrup**

"There are many sweeteners aside from common white sugar that mixologists are using in cocktails these days. These vary from the classic demerara sugar to agave nectar to cane syrup. Often overlooked is maple syrup. Maple can lend a richness that other sweetening agents frequently can't, and it works well with a surprising array of base spirits. One that I'm particularly fond of is Blis bourbon-barrel aged maple syrup. In addition to the Maple Loch listed above, I also use it in my brunch cocktail, Maple Milk Punch. It's a variation on the New Orleans brunch classic cocktail, but based with rye rather than brandy. Rye, Blis maple syrup, Nux Alpina Walnut Liqueur, whole milk, Fee Brothers Old Fashion Bitters and a float of brandy come together very nicely on a lazy Sunday morning."

**4. Peppercorns**

"Ground pepper in a Bloody Mary is nothing new, but I like to use peppercorns in other ways. In cocktails, I especially like pink peppercorns. They still carry plenty of spice but they also have a very floral nature to them. These can be muddled into cocktails easily, or steeped into a simple syrup. I also try to keep a pink peppercorn sugar prepped at the restaurant at all times, as this can help take common favorites in a new direction. For a long while many guests' favorite on my cocktail list was called the Pink Queen. Sure the name's silly, but it was made with Snow Queen vodka, fresh pink grapefruit juice, a syrup of lemon thyme and pink peppercorn, and topped with dry sparkling rosé. The pink peppercorn sugar went on the rim as a garnish. Given the vodka and the final color, what other name could we have picked?"

**5. Vinegar**

"When looking for acid to balance out a cocktail the usual go-to is lemon, lime, or some other citrus. While those fruits are great options, another important thing to remember is that vinegar is also an option. Used in small doses it can provide a great tangy kick in the mouth that surprises and pleases as you imbibe. In addition to being a key component to our Bloody Mary mix, I've just added a cocktail onto the list we're calling the Red Velvet, using vodka, dry vermouth, local raspberry purée, citrus, raspberry vinegar and Benedictine. It's lively and refreshing, and tastes like summer."

