

Doctor's Orders

The perfect prescription for an après tonic

BY ERICA DUECY

IN 19TH-CENTURY AMERICA, MIXED DRINKS WERE often sold in pharmacies as “restoratives” — patent medicines slightly more respectable than the snake oil sold on the streets. These forerunners to cocktails were packed with herbs and botanicals meant to cure various ailments — the croup, lumbago, and the headaches caused by too many restoratives the evening before.

As dedicated skiers, the bartenders of modern-American restaurant Sweet Basil in Vail, Colorado, were familiar with the symptoms of post-mountain malaise — achy legs, fatigue, and an unsociable desire to curl up in front of a fire. They set out to cure it with their own patent medicine: the Absinthe Minded, a clean and refreshing gin concoction that even non-gin-drinkers can appreciate.

To create it, then-bar manager KJ Williams* took

inspiration from one of the earliest-known cocktails, the Sazerac, rinsing the glass with absinthe before the other ingredients are added to impart an anise aroma. Then he added gin, lime juice, and mint leaves, shaking them together with a special ingredient: Velvet Falernum — a sugar cane-based liqueur scented with lime, ginger, and cloves, and a mainstay during the heyday of cocktail culture. The drink is finished with an orange twist.

With its intriguing aromas of orange, mint, and anise, and its palate-cleansing sweep of lime and botanicals, the Absinthe Minded is “really an eye-opening combination,” Williams says. “It’s crisp and tart — definitely not on the sweet side — and has a clean sophistication.” We’re not saying this cocktail will cure all that ails you, but it will definitely pep you up for a night out on the town. ●



The Absinthe Minded is an old-time cocktail for the good-time skier.