

Cocktail Pioneer

H. Joseph Ehrmann's bar Elixir is a San Francisco institution

When H. Joseph Ehrmann opened Elixir in San Francisco in 2003, the modern cocktail movement was in its infancy. After the dot-com crash, Ehrmann was looking for stability—his goal was to open “an exceptional neighborhood bar that made money 365 days a year.”

Ehrmann has cultivated Elixir into exactly what he envisioned by focusing on marketing plans and developing world-class spirits and cocktail programs. “All of that continues to this day with the same goal of driving business year-round,” he says.

Whiskies from around the world are the focal point at Elixir, which in 2017 earned a spot on Whisky Advocate's Top 40 Whisky Bars in America list. Joining Elixir's menu of more than 450 whiskies is a cocktail list that features a rotating selection of seasonal concoctions as well as classic drinks. Ehrmann's Pamplemousse au Poivre (\$14), earned the title “Cocktail of the Year” at the 2018 San Francisco World Spirits Competition. The drink features Del Maguey Vida mezcal, Giffard Crème de Pamplemousse Rose pink grapefruit liqueur, house-made “Elixir de Poivre” cordial,



H. Joseph Ehrmann (pictured), who's made his bar Elixir a San Francisco institution, regularly explores different spirits, regions, and cocktail applications.

lemon juice, and The Bitter Truth Grapefruit bitters.

“I started my hospitality career as a line cook, so I've always applied a culinary approach to my recipes, using kitchen techniques and fresh, organic ingredients,” Ehrmann says. “As I began visiting distilleries around the world, I became more focused on the unique characteristics of spirits and their production processes.” He notes that these days, he prefers simple cocktails that highlight the character of the base spirit. His Kentucky Pilgrim (\$14) is a classic sour build comprising cranberry, cardamom, and cinnamon-infused Wild Turkey

101 Bourbon, lemon juice, Luxardo Maraschino liqueur, and Demerara simple syrup.

Ehrmann is entrenched in the world of spirits and cocktail creation, operating his own beverage consulting company, Cocktail Ambassadors, and running beverage event production company Elixir To Go. In these capacities, he explores different spirits, regions, and cocktail applications. “I taste and mix with everything I can get my hands on,” he says. **mw**

Sally Kral

H. Joseph Ehrmann's Recipes



PAMPLEMOUSSE AU POIVRE

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ounces Del Maguey Vida mezcal;
- 1 ounce Giffard Crème de Pamplemousse Rose pink grapefruit liqueur;
- ½ ounce house-made Elixir de Poivre cordial¹;
- ½ ounce lemon juice;
- Dash The Bitter Truth Grapefruit bitters;
- Pink peppercorns;
- Lemon twist.

RECIPE:

In an ice-filled cocktail shaker, combine mezcal, liqueur, cordial, lemon juice, and bitters. Shake and strain into a tumbler or rocks glass over crushed ice. Garnish with a sprinkle of pink peppercorns and a wide lemon twist.



THE KENTUCKY PILGRIM

INGREDIENTS:

- 1½ ounces cranberry, cardamom, and cinnamon-infused Wild Turkey 101 Bourbon²;
- ½ ounce Luxardo Maraschino liqueur;
- 1 ounce lemon juice;
- ½ ounce Demerara simple syrup (1:1 mix);
- Lemon twist.

RECIPE:

In a cocktail shaker, combine Bourbon, liqueur, lemon juice, and simple syrup. Fill with ice and shake well for 10 seconds. Hawthorne strain into a wine glass or Irish coffee glass and garnish with a long lemon twist.

¹In a jar, combine 8 ounces Stolen Heart Overproof vodka, 1 tablespoon pink peppercorns, ¼ teaspoon Sichuan peppercorns, and ½ teaspoon coriander seed. Allow to macerate for 12-24 hours, then strain out solids and mix liquid with equal parts 1:1 simple syrup.

²In a jar place 1 liter Wild Turkey 101 and 1 tablespoon cardamom seeds. Close and leave in a dark, cool place for one day. Strain out cardamom and add 1½ cups dried unsweetened cranberries and 3 cinnamon sticks. Close and leave for another two days, agitating once per day. Strain solids and store in the original whiskey bottle.

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN FONG