

Worldly Wonders

At Mace in New York City, Nico de Soto highlights global flavors

Nico de Soto is a man of the world: Born and raised in Paris, he's traveled to 85 different countries and worked in 31 of them. His bartending journey has taken him from city to city for most of his career. After training in Paris in 2005, he spent 2007 tending bar in Melbourne, Australia before returning to Paris, where he eventually joined the team at the renowned Experimental Cocktail Club. He came stateside in 2010, helping to open an Experimental Cocktail Club location in New York City and then another in London, serving as head mixologist at both. In 2015, he opened his first cocktail bar, Mace, in New York City's East Village. The venue earned recognition as one of the best in the world at London's The World's 50 Best Bars awards in 2016 and 2017.

The cocktails at Mace (\$14-\$16) are inspired by de Soto's travels. "I wanted a bar where I could use ingredients from all around the world," he says. A quick perusal of the Mace cocktail menu shows influences from Peru, Mexico, Japan, Brazil, and beyond, but the drink names themselves center on specific ingredients. The Ghost Chile comprises white cocoa fat-washed



At New York City-based Mace, owner Nico de Soto (pictured) serves inventive cocktails that are inspired by his global travels.

Linie aquavit, passionfruit purée, coconut milk, house-made ghost chile tincture, and egg. The drink is \$16, but for an additional \$20 guests can add a spoonful of Pointy Snout Osetra caviar.

De Soto's time at the Experimental Cocktail Club is also evident in his cocktails, many of which employ unique techniques and infusions. The Pink Peppercorn (\$15) features bacon fat-washed Elijah Craig Bourbon, dark chocolate-infused Cynar amaro, Thai chili-infused Carpano Antica Formula sweet vermouth, Himalayan salt, and pink peppercorn. "My style is that of a 'liquid chef,'" de Soto says. "I work with flavors first and use a lot of homemade ingredients and different culinary techniques like fat washing and

clarification." Indeed, the processes for creating many of de Soto's cocktail ingredients are similar to those that might be used in the kitchen, like sous-vide for fat-washing.

Despite the dedication and care that de Soto puts into his work, when discussing what led him down this path of inventive mixology and bar ownership, he takes a philosophical bent: "I didn't decide; it came to me."

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Sally Kral

Nico De Soto's Recipes



GHOST CHILE

INGREDIENTS:

2 ounces white cocoa fat-washed Linie aquavit¹;
1 ounce passionfruit purée;
1 ounce coconut milk;
5 dashes ghost chile tincture²;
1 egg;
Grated white chocolate;
Spoonful Pointy Snout Osetra caviar (optional).

RECIPE:

Combine aquavit, passionfruit, coconut milk, tincture, and egg in a cocktail shaker and dry shake. Add ice and shake again. Strain into a flip glass, and garnish with grated white chocolate and optional spoonful of caviar.



PINK PEPPERCORN

INGREDIENTS:

1½ ounces bacon fat-washed Elijah Craig Small Batch Bourbon³;
¾ ounce dark chocolate-infused Cynar amaro⁴;
¾ ounce Thai chili-infused Carpano Antica Formula sweet vermouth⁵;
Himalayan salt rock;
Pink peppercorns.

RECIPE:

Combine Bourbon, amaro, and vermouth in a mixing glass with ice and stir. Strain into a rocks glass over a big ice cube. Grate Himalayan rock and sprinkle a few pink peppercorns on top as garnish.

¹Combine 30 grams white cocoa with 750-ml. aquavit. Infuse for 1 hour, freeze for 4, and then strain.

²Combine 20 ghost chiles with ½ liter of any vodka brand. Infuse for 2 weeks, then strain.

³Combine 45 grams bacon fat with 750-ml. Bourbon. Sous-vide the mixture at 126°F (52°C) for 1 hour. Let sit for 3 hours, then freeze overnight, and strain.

⁴Combine 30 grams toasted cacao nibs with 750-ml. amaro. Sous-vide the mixture at 126°F (52°C) for 1 hour. Let sit for 48 hours, then strain.

⁵Combine 1 Thai chili pepper with 750-ml. sweet vermouth. Let infuse for 48 hours, then strain.