

Can-Do Attitude

At Che Fico in San Francisco, Christopher Longoria's enthusiasm is front and center

Throughout his nearly two decade-long career, Christopher Longoria's bartending talent has not gone unnoticed. At his first job in 2002 at the San Francisco Korean bar Rohan Lounge, he was quickly promoted to lead bartender as well as events coordinator because he was already coming up with themes and events for each night of the week, such as Monday jazz nights. "That caught the eyes of two local restaurateurs, who asked me to work alongside them at a very popular soul food restaurant called Farmer Brown," Longoria says. And that wouldn't be the last time he was poached from one bartending gig to another. "Later, while I was the creative bar lead at the Michelin-starred Aziza, the team from another well-respected restaurant—Acquerello—enticed me to open a new project with them called 1760 as bar manager, where I was able to fully embrace cocktail-making and run with it," he says. "I spent a lot of time growing and experimenting and gained visibility from the cocktail community during that time. That's where Chef David Nayfeld and Matt Brewer became my regulars and we began discussing the possibility of opening Che Fico."



As bar director at Che Fico in San Francisco, Christopher Longoria showcases California flavors in drinks by focusing on kitchen ingredients.

At Che Fico, which opened in April 2019 and where he's currently bar director, Longoria's affinity for California flavors in his cocktails aligns with the kitchen's focus on fresh market ingredients. "I love making use of the bounty of fruits and vegetables around me—something vibrant, aromatic, expressive, colorful," he says. "I make clean, well-executed, balanced, original drinks that are seemingly rustic but subtly complex on the palate." This vision is clear on Longoria's beverage menu (cocktails are \$8-\$14) in such drinks as his Amargo (\$14), featuring St. Agrestis Inferno Bitter aperitif, Alessio Bianco vermouth, El Tesoro Blanco and Añejo Tequilas, and Fee Brothers Aztec Chocolate bitters, and his Milk Punch (\$14), which is a clarified drink comprising Cognac, banana liqueur, triple sec, dry vermouth, and Scotch (full recipe below). "One of my favorite things about what I do is that I'm always learning—there's always something new to absorb and add to my process," Longoria adds. "I've found that the more energy I put toward it, the more energy returns to me."

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Sally Kral

Christopher Longoria's Recipes

MILK PUNCH

Makes approximately 1 liter

INGREDIENTS:

- 6½ ounces H by Hine Cognac, plus 1 ounce for serving;
- 7 ounces Giffard Banane du Brésil banana liqueur;
- 3 ounces Merlet Trois Citrus triple sec;
- 2½ ounces Dolin Dry vermouth;
- ½ ounce Laphroaig 10-year-old Scotch;
- 7½ ounces lime juice;
- 5 ounces pineapple juice;
- 3 ounces simple syrup;
- ¼ ounce Angostura bitters;
- 10 dashes Fee Brothers Cherry bitters;
- Zest of half a lemon;
- 9 grams long pepper¹;
- 6½ grams cinnamon sticks², plus more for garnish;
- 5¾ ounces whole milk.



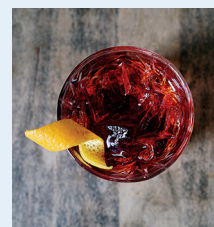
AMARGO

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ounce St. Agrestis Inferno Bitter aperitif;
- 1 ounce Alessio Bianco vermouth;
- ¾ ounce El Tesoro Blanco Tequila;
- ¾ ounce El Tesoro Añejo Tequila;
- 1 dash Fee Brothers Aztec Chocolate bitters;
- Grapefruit twist.

RECIPE:

In an ice-filled mixing glass, combine aperitif, vermouth, Tequilas, and bitters. Stir for 25 seconds, then strain into an ice-filled rocks glass. Express an orange twist over the drink and garnish with the twist.



RECIPE:

Combine all ingredients except the 1-ounce Cognac, the milk, and the cinnamon garnish in a Cambro container. Cover and refrigerate for 48 hours, then strain. In a separate Cambro container, add milk. Pour the first mixture slowly into the milk. Stir gently, then cover and refrigerate for a minimum of 4 hours or overnight. Slowly pour the whole mixture through an oil filter cone into a new Cambro container to establish the milk curd barrier, which happens when the flow regulates to steady drops and the batch runs clear. Repeat. Label and date the final milk punch mixture and keep in the fridge. To enjoy, pour 1 ounce Cognac and 3 ounces milk punch mixture into a rocks glass over a large ice cube. Garnish with cinnamon sticks.

¹Toast at 400°F for 3 minutes. Allow to cool. In a spice grinder, grind to a coarse texture. Do not pulverize!

²Toast at 400°F for 3 minutes. Allow to cool before manually cracking into smaller pieces.