



Lime time

The green fruit is San Diego's go-to citrus for a reason



Photo courtesy of The Smoking Gun

Sal Ti Punch

It has recently come to be that my once ubiquitous use of hot sauce has now been replaced with putting lime juice on just about everything. The same goes for cocktails. I've been increasingly attracted to micheladas, mojitos, margaritas and just about any other cocktail that features lime juice. But for this feature, I really wanted to seek out some creative alternatives to the usual lime-based suspects.

I started at **Cloak & Petal** (1953 India St.) the newish Japanese social dining joint in Little Italy. I had heard that the sake and cocktail list was particularly creative, emphasizing artisanal Japanese ingredients and spirits. I tried a High Kick, a genmaicha-infused reposado tequila cocktail that includes lime, spiced ginger, cucumber and a pinch of salt. The lime, however, was barely there.



Photo courtesy of Alternative Strategies

Devil's Advocate

But the green citrus shines in the Devil's Advocate, a tropical concoction that is made with rum, cashew milk, lime juice, bitters and more rum. Sweet and tart at the same time, the lime's slight sourness is a supporting player (I mean, there's a lot of rum), albeit one whose part packs a punch. The cashew milk gives it a smooth, almost White Russian-like consistency, which could be off-putting to those who don't like dairy, but it's worth noting that I can't stand milky drinks and I *loved* the Devil's Advocate. A perfect summertime order, it's worth pairing with some sashimi or the jalapeño-topped Ceviche Roll.

After Cloak & Petal, I headed to the Gaslamp to try the Hot Chilaka at [The Smoking Gun](#) (555 Market St.). While The Smoking Gun is essentially an upscale sports bar (not usually my scene), the craftiness when it comes to drinks is evident. The Hot Chilaka was an exceptional blend of Los Javis mezcal, St. George green chile vodka, lime, fresh pineapple, firewater bitters and soda. It managed to be both sweet and spicy, bold and refreshing, and the pineapple accents from the juice (complete with foam) were a nice touch.

But the Hot Chilaka was a warm-up act to the Sal Tí Punch, an addictive recent addition to the menu. It's an innovative take on a Tí Punch (lime juice, sugar syrup and rhum agricole), the national cocktail of Martinique. Where has this drink been all my life? Mixologist Alex Greg also adds the tips of limes (he calls them "lime nipples") that have been cured in kosher salt. The original version is light and almost earthy, but the updated take's citrusy, salty tones make it more than an update. It's an upgrade. Light, refreshing and almost grassy. The rum itself (Rhum Clement Rum Premiere Canne) was pleasant enough, but once combined with those limes, it became something like a summer cocktail times a thousand. It's the national cocktail of the island of me.

Ok, that last line makes me think I should probably stop drinking, but I headed to [Café Sevilla](#) (353 Fifth Ave.), because a colleague of mine couldn't stop raving about some of the new drinks on the menu. Of the newer cocktails on the menu, I was tempted to order the Chilean Midnight Mojito or the Margarita La Mancha, but instead tried the Oaxacan Flower and the Gin-Gin Mule. The former was nice enough, but that Gin-Gin Mule was truly something special. A mix of Uncle Val's botanical gin, absinthe, ginger syrup, lime juice and topped with soda, it will certainly appeal to licorice fans (thanks to the absinthe). However, the overwhelming nature of the absinthe is balanced out by the rest of the ingredients, with the gin giving it a fresh mouth feel and the lime adding just the right amount of tartness.