



CHAMPAGNE COCKTAILS MANAGE TO BE RECKLESS AND SOPHISTICATED at the same time. Booze in the morning would normally peg you as an alcoholic. But a mimosa made from champagne and orange juice at a Sunday brunch paints a stylish picture that's only slightly risqué. I remember in my crazy early 20s having a morning of champagne and truffled scrambled eggs with my lover of the time that still rates as the height of chic with only a touch of *louche*.

Recently, I've read about the Flawless cocktail, a drink that comes from Mo*vida, a lavish London nightclub (England, of course) and celebrity hangout built within the vaults of the London Palladium. The recipe includes half a bottle of Cristal rosé, a large measure of Louis XIII cognac and a few flakes of 24-karat gold leaf with the *pièce de résistance*: an 11-carat diamond ring at the bottom of the crystal glass.

All yours to swallow or keep for the truly queenly sum of £35,000 (about C\$68,000). These publicity stunts only go to show how much luxury is synonymous with good bubbles. Without the diamond, the Flawless is just a twist on an old favourite, the champagne cocktail. This is the perfect aperitif cocktail — a dollop of good brandy put in a flute that has an Angostura bitters-soaked sugar cube in the base and is filled to the brim with champagne.

Another old-time champagne favourite is the French 75, named after a 75-millimetre field gun that French forces and the American National Guard used during the First World War. I love it for its refreshing taste. The officers, it is said, enjoyed it pre-battle for the kick of “Dutch courage” (the nickname for gin at the time) that's added to it. An orange twist and a splash of lemon juice are all that's needed to complete the drink.

The Bellini is a classic that will never go out of style. Created by Giuseppe Cipriani at Harry's Bar in Venice as a summertime refresher, it's a blend of one ounce of white peach purée to four ounces of an Italian sparkling wine, prosecco. Which brings up the question of whether real champagne is necessary in a “champagne” cocktail recipe. For Harry's Bar, the use of an Italian bubbly is completely natural and justified. However, for a champagne cocktail, a French 75 and other archetypal drinks such as the *crème de cassis*-flavoured Kir Royale, it's sacrilege in my opinion to deviate from the original base of true champagne.

If you overindulge, there's even a champagne cocktail to cure your hangover. The Black Velvet is said to have been invented at Brooks's Club in London in 1861, while the nation was grieving the death of Prince Albert. Guinness stout was added to the champagne to give it a sombre hue. Today, for those with a pounding head, the dark colour is easy on the eyes while the barley-based vitamin B in the stout and the natural carbonation in both are supposedly an aid to recovery. Bottoms up! **Z**