

WILD ZING

Lottie Muir – aka the Cocktail Gardener – mixes up a zingy springtime recipe, harnessing the heady bouquet of beautiful cherry blossom.

PHOTOGRAPHY KIM LIGHTBODY

The Cherry Blossom

Serves 1

YOU WILL NEED • ¾ oz (22ml) yuzu (a fruit that is commonly used in Japan as a lemon substitute, with its overtones of grapefruit and mandarin; you can order it online from Japanese suppliers) or lemon juice • dried pink cherry blossom, ground into pink salt • 1 oz (30ml) plum wine • 1 oz (30ml) vodka • ½ oz (15ml) sake • 2 tsp (10ml) sour cherry juice • ice cubes

GARNISH Candied pink cherry blossom (see recipe below)

METHOD 1 Chill a glass thoroughly in the freezer or refrigerator for 2 or 4 hours respectively. 2 Dip the glass into a saucer of yuzu or lemon juice and then turn the outside edge of the glass into the salted cherry blossom mix. 3 Pour the remaining ingredients into a cocktail shaker, fill it two thirds of the way up with ice, and shake hard for 20 seconds. 4 Strain the contents of the shaker into the chilled glass and garnish with a candied pink cherry blossom.

Salt or sugar rims

These can be used sparingly to give a sweet touch to a cocktail. Sugars and salts can be smoked or flavoured with crushed dried flowers or spices. I use a range of pink and black salts, and flavoured sugars. The trick is to make sure the individual crystals are small enough to coat the rim. Use a pestle and mortar to reduce the particle size if you need to.

Candied cherry blossom

Simply make about a third of a cup (75ml) of egg wash by mixing 1 lightly whisked egg white and half a cup (100g) of superfine caster sugar. Using a fine paintbrush, paint each individual petal on both sides with a light coating of egg wash and, with your fingers, scatter a light coating of sugar over them before placing on a sheet of parchment paper inside a tray on a sunny windowsill or in a warm area. They may take 24-48 hours to dry. Once dried, store in an airtight container and use within a week.



Japan is known for its cherry blossom celebrations and even on Irish streets, the drama of cherry blossoms (*Prunus serrulata*) falling from the trees like confetti is not just a visual feast. The blossoms themselves can be candied for a wonderful garnish or dried and mixed with salt for a cocktail rim.

Recipe taken from *Wild Cocktails from the Midnight Apothecary* by Lottie Muir (Cico Books, €24.50), which features more than 100 recipes using homegrown and foraged fruits, herbs and edible flowers. Lottie is the creator of the Midnight Apothecary pop-up cocktail bar, set in a roof garden in the heart of London, where she also grows many of the ingredients for her mixes.

