

PUNCH

Amaro, Meet the Moka Pot

The stovetop coffee maker is the shortcut to an extra-Italian digestivo.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2021 | story: **KARA NEWMAN** | photo: **LIZZIE MUNRO**



We do not have any tea in my restaurant,” says Davide Oldani, chef at Milan’s D’O.

Instead, he offers “Café di Riflessione”—reflection coffee—a tableside infusion for guests to close out a meal. Fresh herbs, citrus peels and coffee beans are steeped in hot water, then strained out; the infused water is then combined with Amaro Nonino for a bracingly aromatic nightcap.

The drink—and aversion to dried tea leaves—stems from Oldani’s insistence on working with fresh ingredients as much as possible. This is part of his culinary philosophy, which he terms “Cucina Pop,” a catchy abbreviation of “cucina popolare” (popular cuisine), a more affordable version of haute cuisine, with a strong emphasis on seasonality.

“Everything has to be fresh,” he says. “The flavor, when you use the freshest thing, is the top.” For this drink, that means freshly roasted whole coffee beans as well as fresh herbs and citrus peels.

Oldani keeps a small cart inside the restaurant stockpiled with seasonal herbs and spices. In the fall, sage and rosemary might be displayed alongside spices like black pepper, cinnamon or star anise. Whole coffee beans, specifically Lavazza Kafa beans sourced from the Kaffa Forest in Ethiopia, also are kept on the cart.

At the end of the meal, the coffee beans and hot water—held below the point of boiling, at 70 to 75 degrees Celsius (158 to 167 degrees Fahrenheit), “not higher,” Oldani specifies—are brought to the table in a moka pot. Herbs and botanicals, ranging from small chile peppers to bergamot or orange peel, are selected, snipped and placed in a small mesh bag. After infusing in the moka pot for 3 1/2 to 4 minutes, the spice bag is removed. The liquid is poured into a double-walled glass through a small tea strainer, yielding a fragrant brew with a mild, almost nutty flavor. This is then combined with about 2 ounces of Amaro **Nonino**. The nuanced coffee flavor plus amaro is “really, really Italian,” says Oldani.

For the home bartender, Punch Partnerships Manager Allison Hamlin has found a streamlined way to translate D’O’s sophisticated tableside service into a user-friendly version that stays true to the extra-Italian nature of the original. As in cooking a one-pot dinner, Hamlin adds all her ingredients to the stovetop coffee maker at once—ground espresso in the prescribed compartment, then equal parts amaro and water in the bottom, turning up the heat to allow the elements to integrate and infuse. “Medium heat prevents the sugars from scorching,” she advises. The result is a coffee-amaro blend that can be customized with infinite combinations of herbal flavorings—both in the moka pot and in the glass—just as with chef Oldani’s formula, though it’s inherently more coffee-forward thanks to the amaro-water combination percolating through the espresso grounds.

While Oldani serves the drink in thick, double-walled glassware he designed—“a kind of glassware you can keep in your hand,” he says—a teacup, coffee mug or small Irish Coffee glass works, too.

No additional garnish is needed: When guests remove fresh herbs from the glass, the lingering aroma from essential oils helps perfume the drink. “At the end, you have the smell of the herbs left on your hands,” Oldani says. “It’s very elegant, delicate, as we are. This is the only natural garnish we put on top of the glasses.”

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