



Paper Plane: The Summer Cocktail That Makes Italian Amaro Soar

The recipe created by Sam Ross in 2008 has become a global icon thanks to the delicate balance of its ingredients and the complexity of Amaro Nonino.

By Giuliana Di Paola

This summer, the Paper Plane comes of age. The cocktail that made Italian amaro take flight, landing on the counters of some of the world's most renowned cocktail bars, turns 18. Its story began in 2008 at The Violet Hour, a luxurious Chicago bar inspired by the pre-Prohibition era, both in its interior design and its cocktail recipes. From this venue began the revival of mixology in the Windy City, with a little help from friends in New York, such as Sam Ross from Milk & Honey. At the time, the legendary bartender was working at the iconic Manhattan speakeasy which, around the turn of the millennium, had revolutionized the cocktail scene. He had been asked to help create the drink list for the new Chicago venue.

As fate would have it, Sam Ross had just tasted a new product and was immediately captivated by it: Amaro Nonino Quintessentia®. He instantly thought of incorporating it into a recipe. "I wanted people to discover it," the bartender explained. "It was so rich, deep, musky, with a body that no other amaro had. I had to find a way to get people to taste it." And so the Paper Plane was born. It quickly became a modern classic and was later included by the International Bartenders Association in its "New Era Drinks" category.

The Original Recipe That Soars

Easy to replicate but difficult to perfect, like all equal-parts recipes, the Paper Plane has become a global icon thanks to the delicate balance of four ingredients in equal proportions. The recipe is simple, immediate and perfectly balanced. It combines sweetness, fresh citrus notes and the bitter, herbal character of the liqueur created according to Antonio Nonino's ancient recipe, later passed down through generations. This delicate balance is achieved by using the ingredients from the original recipe.



In the Paper Plane cocktail, Amaro Nonino gives the drink its distinctive coral color.

Ingredients

- 30 ml Amaro Nonino Quintessentia
- 30 ml Bourbon Whiskey
- 30 ml Aperol
- 30 ml Fresh lemon juice

Method

Pour all the ingredients into a shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously and strain into a previously chilled coupe glass.

Sam Ross's Intuition

Initially, the recipe appeared on The Violet Hour's menu as The Paper Airplane, inspired by a song by singer M.I.A. that was playing everywhere that summer of 2008. Then the shorter name took over, and the cocktail took off across drink lists around the world, eventually making its way to Italy. Where, incidentally, its ingredients come from.

At first, not only the name but also the recipe was different: Sam Ross had used Campari, but after noticing that its bitter notes dominated, he switched to Aperol, the sweeter Italian aperitivo, also part of the group based in Sesto San Giovanni.

Ross's idea was to create a structure similar to a great classic such as the Last Word, which is also based on the perfect balance of four equal-parts ingredients and features another famous liqueur of great character: Chartreuse, created by the Carthusian monks of the French monastery of the same name.

The Ingredient That Makes the Paper Plane Take Flight

As with the Last Word, at the heart of this twist is the complexity of the Italian amaro that holds the entire recipe together. The secret behind the unique taste of Amaro Nonino, which sets it apart from every other amaro, lies in the fact that it is made from grape spirit, aged in barriques. It is precisely this distinctive base that makes it such an ideal ingredient for mixology.



Francesca Bardelli Nonino, sixth generation of the Friulian distillery, during Paper Plane Week in New York.

As explained by the Friulian distillery internationally renowned for its grappa, Amaro Nonino Quintessentia® adds three unique elements to the Paper Plane: “its unmistakable coral color, a magnificent foam created on the surface by shaking, and an aromatic structure that makes it unforgettable from the very first sip.”

The recipe has enjoyed such success overseas that it inspired **#NoninoPaperPlaneWeek**, an entire week dedicated to shaking the cocktail that revolutionized contemporary mixology, becoming one of the most beloved modern classics of all time.

All rights reserved.