

Cocktail class? We'll drink to that at kosher show

BY SIMON ROCKER

► “OH, IT’S gorgeous,” said Eva Greenspan, taking her first sip of a newly minted cocktail. So new that a name has still to be found for the concoction of Louis Royer brandy, Moses date vodka, a few notes of Carvo chocolate-infused vodka and some orange bitters, topped with ginger ale and stirred not shaken.

A demonstration of cocktail-making was one of two breakout sessions introduced this year into Kedem Europe’s annual Kosher Food and Wine Experience in Piccadilly. The other, on how to pair food and wine, was led by JC food editor Victoria Prever.

“It’s very refreshing,” said Mrs Greenspan, a Conservative councillor in Barnet, insisting that I try the cocktail, served in a cut-glass tumbler, which we were told was all the rage in fashionable London bars. By now the drink had acquired the name “Date Night” from one of the audience.

For his creative combinations, Andy Collinson, the demonstrator from Ace Bar Events, used some of the available kosher liqueurs, like Walders’ creamy but non-dairy Banoffee, which, he said, “you can mix with fruit juices and doesn’t split”.

Impressing the need not to stint on ice, Mr Collinson counselled: “Never use weak, watery ice. Ice makes the drink. If you over-dilute it, you are going to ruin it.”

Some barmen will even buy fist-sized

high-quality ice cubes at £1 a pop, he revealed. “When you make the drink, there’s no cloud in the ice.”

We learned about the vogue for different flavours of bitters — “many people are making their own” — and drink decoration. “Some people go overboard with their garnishes,” he noted. “I just came back from an exhibition where a guy had little desk lamps which lit up the drinks.”

Shaking up a Martini Espresso, his arms pumped back and forth like pistons on an old steam train. And as a rabbi might offer guidance on lulav use, he stressed: “There are many different ways of shaking.”

Security was unusually tight outside the Sheraton Grand Hotel this year, perhaps to prevent gatecrashers trying to snaffle a freshly made duck pancake, pulled beef roll or a glass of Syrah or Chardonnay.

The number of vineyards and distilleries exhibiting was up from 32 last year to 43, with a particularly strong French presence.



Guests get a taste for the food and wine experience



“When you go to a supermarket, you don’t know what to buy,” said Mrs Greenspan. “You are hesitant about buying a wine you haven’t heard of. We are creatures of habit. But here you have the opportunity to taste and to diversify.”

Not only was Rothschild Brut Champagne back after its successful debut last year. There were other French kosher champagnes to sample.

As the light sparkled in my glass of Champagne Demoiselle, Rebecca Bokobsa of distributors Selection Bokobsa explained: “It is more elegant, more feminine. The bubbles are very fine.”

Charline Drappier, 27 — the eighth generation of her family in the business — was handing out glasses of Drappier Champagne, the favourite bubbly of South Hampstead Synagogue board member Alan Traub.

“When you’re looking to buy kosher champagne it’s useful to know you can find good quality,” he said.

As I contemplated whether I should risk buying a Jeroboam of Rothschild on expenses, Keith

Barnett, a member of the Chief Rabbinate Trust, ushered me over to another table to try a Grand Cru Bordeaux, the Chateau Léoville Poyferre.

“Now this is a proper wine,” he said. “I think it’s the star of the show.”

With one previous vintage retailing in London at nearly £150 a bottle, this was a wine to be savoured, not swigged.

Mr Barnett has a Léoville at home, which he said he would “probably get round to opening for my retirement”.

A lighter, and at £18 a bottle, cheaper option was a Rothschild rosé, Les Lauriers — perfect as “an aperitif or on the beach”, suggested sales director Helene Combabessouse.

Other exhibitors included one of America’s best known kosher wineries, Herzog from California. A chef with one kosher caterer was particularly impressed by the new Clone #6 Cabernet Sauvignon 2014.

Also from California was Distillery No 209, which uniquely manufactures a “kosher for Pesach” gin. “You can’t use grain,” explained the distillery’s president, Jeff Hodson, “so we use cane sugar. There are only four places where you can source cane sugar of the quality [required]. We source ours from South Africa.”

Observing the hundreds of food and drink lovers from across the community flitting from stand to stand, he said he was glad he had come. “It’s a great show.”



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