

The Moscow Mule

A classic cocktail in a copper cup



Leslie Klipsch

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

The Moscow Mule is enjoying a comeback and one thing that makes this throwback cocktail stand out is that a few Q-C bartenders are serving it as it was originally intended — in an elegant copper mug. From the Moscow Mule’s early 1940s debut, the copper mug has helped to make the drink not only a smooth cocktail, but a conversation piece as well. The combination of vodka, ginger beer, and fresh lime come together for a classic beverage that tastes as bright and refreshing as it looks.

Retro drinks have made a huge comeback in recent years and many young consumers are ordering post-prohibition cocktails more common to their grandparents’ day. According to Tricia Collins, a bartender at downtown Davenport’s Me & Billy, drinks like the classic vodka or gin martini, Manhattans, and old-fashionedes have become very popular once again. Part of her job is to find ways to recreate the classics to further appeal to a younger generation.

“Making an old-fashioned with a honey whiskey or even a splash of a maple simple syrup changes the classic from something your grandparents

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“MAKING AN OLD-FASHIONED WITH A HONEY WHISKEY OR EVEN A SPLASH OF A MAPLE SIMPLE SYRUP CHANGES THE CLASSIC FROM SOMETHING YOUR GRANDPARENTS USED TO DRINK TO SOMETHING WITH A REFRESHING NEW TWIST.”

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used to drink to something with a refreshing new twist,” she said.

The Moscow Mule is no exception. The cocktail is said to have originated in a Los Angeles bar when two down-and-out distributors (one selling vodka, the other ginger beer) sat down to drown their sorrows and instead came up with a pleasant new drink. They enlisted a friend with a copper factory to use his excess copper mugs and soon the mug/mule combination was born.

“The Moscow Mule is one that is fun to put a new spin on,” said Ms. Collins. “The ginger beer pairs with a multitude of different flavors. We have made our Mules with different flavors of vodka and even whiskey. The blueberry, peach and pear flavored Moscow Mule have quickly become favorites.”

Serving it in a copper mug adds to both its drinkability (it keeps the drink dependably chilled) and timeless allure.

As craft spirits have grown in popularity throughout the United States, more and more bars are catering to the nation’s taste and staying true to the history of the beverage. However, copper mugs are expensive, so if an establishment decides to carry them, they tend to put in place a bit of an insurance policy to prevent the theft of their interesting glassware. At Me & Billy, for instance, the bartender will ask for a photo I.D. as well as either a credit card or a \$25 cash deposit in an attempt to hold onto the two dozen or so mugs that the establishment has invested in.

“Although the mug is more of a novelty than necessity for the beverage, people seem to believe the mug makes the drink taste better. It is a bonus that the copper keeps the sweet and tart concoction very cold,” Ms. Collins said. Having recently enjoyed the drink in a copper mug for the first time, I would have to agree that the mug makes the Mule even more fun.

What I love about the Moscow Mule

On a recent afternoon at Me & Billy, my lunch companions and I sipped both the classic Moscow Mule and a Blueberry Mule, which is a variation made with blueberry-flavored vodka. Though I prefer the spicy snap of ginger in the classic version, both were delightfully refreshing. As the sun poured in from the 3rd Street windows, my friends and I dreamed of summer and decided that the Moscow Mule in a copper cup would make for perfect front-porch merriment on a warm and breezy summer day.

Why Quad-Citians love the Moscow Mule

Ms. Collins attributes the popularity of the drink to the sweet, yet tart, taste that seems to appeal to the masses. “(A Moscow Mule) is very refreshing and can be made to just about anyone’s taste,” she said. “As fun as it is to try to find something to mix with candy bar or bacon-flavored vodka, the Moscow Mule is a classic that has an easy and great drinkability for most.”

The details

Though this trend is likely to catch on throughout the Q-C area, for now you can be certain to enjoy a Moscow Mule at Me & Billy, 200 W. 3rd St., Davenport (meandbilly.com), or Pub 1848, 1601 River Drive, Moline (facebook.com/Pub1848). For months both places have been serving the classic cocktail, and bartenders — in exchange for your credit card and/or photo identification — will gladly hand you the drink in a shiny, sturdy copper mug. Find out more about each locale online. Cheers!

Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and three young children and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer. Read more of Leslie at leslieklipsch.com.

