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Summer is the time to drink yourself COOL

Never mind the weather, you can get a bit of sunshine in your glass with fresh and seasonal cocktails, says **Zoe Strimpel**

THE past week may have been dodgy weather-wise, but we've still got a month till summer's officially over. Rain or shine, there's no better way to grasp that summer feeling than a good summery cocktail or five. Here three of London's top mixologists have told us what they think makes the perfect August tippie.

Summer cocktails should be big, icy and filled with fresh fruit. "In the summer I think it's criminal to use fruit that isn't in season," says Alessandro Palazzo, of the famous martini bar at Duke's Hotel in Mayfair. He makes a Pimms in a big silver mug that is "rather like a fruit salad." Fresh peaches and berries feature heavily in summer; (think Prosecco bellinis blend-

ed with fresh mashed fruit). Another summer winner is a martini with gin, fresh cucumber and elderflower cordial.

HIGHBALL GLASS

Mark Jenner, mixing maestro at the Connaught Hotel's swanky new Coburg Bar, thinks long cocktails capture the sunshine best. "Drinks served in a highball glass with loads of ice can be more refresh-

ing; you literally sip them over a longer time. It's about dilution from the ice, which chills it down, makes each sip colder and longer." Jenner's favourite is the gin

"Summer cocktails should be big, icy – and it's a crime not to use lots of fresh seasonal fruit.



Peaches and berries feature heavily”

and cointreau-based Singapore Sling; Mojitos and juleps are also classic long drinks.

Best of all are cocktails with a heavy component of fresh seasonal (and exotic)

fruit. At the Coburg, the Pimms cup cocktail “is going down fantastically well at the moment” – it comes with a big mound of summer fruit on the side. The champagne cobbler comes with two thick slices of pineapple.

BRITISH GLORY

Then there’s our British glory: the strawberry. Strawberry daquiries and margaritas are fantastic. “Because it’s strawberry season and they’re naturally so sweet, we use less liqueur and sugar. So it’s a healthier cocktail as well.” Jenner says he uses four or five strawbs per drink. “You don’t have to add much else,” he adds.

Joe McCanta, mixologist at London’s new gourmet vegan restaurant Saf is

unbounded in his enthusiasm for seasonal cocktails, and frankly thinks there’s nothing else that will hit the spot at this time of year.

“Summer offers the perfect opportunity to sip exotic-named, umbrella-laden, colourful air-conditioner-in-a-glass cocktails to beat the heat.

“There are two routes to go when you need to cool off,” he says. “First is to stick with refreshing and innovative ingredients that create just the right mix of flavour and what I like to call the ‘cool down’ factor. But the most important factor for a well-made summer cocktail is ice

and lots of it.” McCanta agrees with Jenner: the most pleasing summer bevies are those that improve while sitting in the sun, becoming increasingly diluted.

“So many cocktails these days aren’t direct enough to actually open up with the addition of water or ice. My biggest rule of thumb with a summer drink has always been that the first sip should be a little bit tight or intense so that by the third or fourth you have a superbly balanced mouthful of cool.” And that’s why Saf’s summer cocktail menu is a party of exotic spices and seasonal berries. Chin chin.

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