

# Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

Vol. 30 June 2021

## THE SUMMER MINT: HISTORY OF AMERICAN JULEPS

Sara and I like to walk around our yard and take note of what's growing. Often we'll do this with a morning coffee cup in hand or directly following our afternoon walk. On a recent inspection of a new grape, I mentioned that the mint planted nearby was looking particularly vigorous. To which Sara responded, "Well... we need to make more cocktails." If there was ever any question as to why we are together this simple story should be illustration enough. Like the farm boy said to Buttercup, "As you wish."\*

With warm days and a plethora of mint on hand my mind instantly turns to Mint Juleps. Interestingly, the Mint Julep, now mostly associated with the Kentucky Derby, got its start in Virginia. An 1803 book titled *Travels of Four and a Half Years in the United States of America*, Englishman John Davis notes that the Mint Julep is a "dram of spirituous liquor that has mint steeped in it, taken by Virginians of a morning."

Certainly, this is a very genteel way to start the day. "Fancy a morning perusal in the garden with a Mint Julep, my dear, before we take to the fainting couch?"

The Mint Julep's absolute origins are unknown. It is referenced in 1770 as a medicinal tonic and in 1784 as a "cure for sickness at the stomach, with frequent retching."

Virginian taverns started to advertise Juleps as early as 1780s and a Norfolk inn offered Iced Juleps in an 1807 menu. These Juleps were probably first made with Cognac or aged Dutch gin call Genever, both of which had to be imported. In a time when ice was scarce, I imagine a cocktail which contained imported booze and a glass of ice must have been quite the luxury.

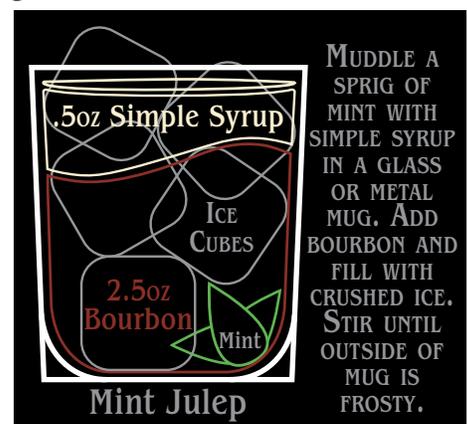
Enter the Tarascon brothers who emigrated from Cognac around 1807 via the frontier city of New Orleans. Using their knowledge of aging spirits in oak, and their connections in the French Quarter, the brothers started shipping barrels of corn whiskey from Louisville, Kentucky down river to the thirsty city on the delta. Louisiana's French settlers craved a taste of home and the brothers knew they could sell a lot of whiskey if they labeled it "French Brandy." They'd mark the barrels for delivery to saloons, brothels, and alehouses on Bourbon street.

The reputation of the whiskey spread and people would ask, "Do you have that whiskey they sell on Bourbon street?" And eventually it just became, "Do you have that Bourbon whiskey?"

Helped along the way by the Kentucky senator Henry Clay, the Mint Julep with Kentucky Bourbon found its way into the metal mugs full of ice and mint. The recipe for this American cocktail was cast.

The Mint Julep has been promoted at the Kentucky Derby since 1938. Since 2006 an extra premium Derby Julep has been served as a fund raiser for geriatric race horses. This \$1000 cocktail consists of Woodford Reserve Bourbon, mint imported from Ireland, spring water ice cubes from the Bavarian Alps, and sugar from Australia.

But no need to be an old race horse at my house, I've got plenty of mint and Bourbon to share, that is, if you fancy a morning walk through the garden.



\* If you are confused by this quote, please watch the classic swashbuckling, princess saving, wizard resurrecting, giant besting, man with six fingers, Rob Reiner directed movie, *The Princess Bride*.

# SPAIN ON MONDAY FRANCE ON WEDNESDAY

It's happening. International travel is returning. After the abrupt shutting of borders in March 2020, Spain announced that they will begin to accept tourists on Monday, June 7th, and France is keeping to its schedule and allowing tourists to enter the country on Wednesday, June 9th.

How? Well... despite the EU trying to act like a single entity, each country is setting its own rules. The French have produced a colored list of world countries. The three colors are Green, Orange and Red.

Green: EU, Australia, South Korea, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and Lebanon.

Red: South Africa, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Turkey and Uruguay.

Orange: Everyone else.

The entry system is divided into vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Green: Vaccinated citizens can enter France without restriction. Unvaccinated can enter only with a negative Covid test.

Orange: Vaccinated citizens can enter by presenting a negative Covid test. Unvaccinated can enter by presenting a negative test, then quarantining for 7 days, then presenting another negative test.

Red: Vaccinated can enter with a compelling reason, presenting a

negative test, then quarantining for 7 days, followed by another negative test. Unvaccinated can enter with a compelling reason, presenting a negative test, quarantining for 10 days, followed by another negative test. All quarantines will be enforced with police checks at the registered quarantine address.

Valid vaccinations are vaccines that have been approved by the European Medicines Agency – Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson (known as Janssen in France).

The French authorities have not yet offered instruction on how you prove your vaccine status but I imagine that information will come in the next few days.

France is currently unbundling restrictions. They've previously said they expect all restrictions to be removed by June 30th. The entire European Union is set to offer region wide travel from July 1st but how that will be implemented still remains to be seen. The United States isn't allowing tourists. Arrivals are still limited to citizens, residents or those with a compelling reason to travel and all must present a negative Covid test.

But it's happening, it's working, the science is winning - each vaccinated citizen of the world protects the future for all of us. It's a small thing to do and if it allows me to travel, to see my friends, my family and to remove my mask, I'm happy to oblige.

## *Dîner en Blanc Duluth*

Eighteen months ago I wrote in this newsletter to invite you to our version of *Dîner en Blanc Duluth*. The time feels right to try to do this again. If you are reading this, consider yourself formally invited to our own version of the classic French popup meal, *Dîner en Blanc*.

Not sure what this is? Here is a [short video explaining](#) this quirky French picnic. *Dîner en Blanc Duluth* will be on August 7th, 2021 at our house, 2620 E. Superior Street, in the yard.

Here's what you need to know:

 It is BYOE. (*Bring Your Own Everything.*) Literally everything. Food, chairs, drink. You can make this as fancy or as simple as you like ~ table and chairs or a blanket.

 **Dress code:** all white. Really. This is a fancy, all white dress up picnic. I did say it's quirky.

 **RSVP:** (*répondez s'il vous plait*) to [david@savvynomad.com](mailto:david@savvynomad.com).

 **August 7th, 2021.** Come set up between 6-7pm, share in the *Votre Sante*, (*to your health*) toast at 7pm. Eat and drink at your leisure.

This is essentially just a picnic at our house, out in the garden, and in the driveway if needed. An evening of socializing, eating, drinking and toasting to our collective existence, to life. This is a renewal of our friendships in person, rather than in digital, and an opportunity to enjoy each others company with grace, elegance, food, wine and companionship. Will you join us for *Dîner en Blanc Duluth*?