

LOADED PISTOL

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 ounces mezcal
- 3/4 ounce sweet vermouth
- 1/2 ounce Strega
- 1 dash grapefruit bitters
- Garnish: grasshopper salt*

Steps

1. Add the mezcal, sweet vermouth, Strega and grapefruit bitters to a mixing glass with ice and stir until well-chilled.
2. Strain into double Old Fashioned glass over a large ice cube.
3. Garnish with sprinkle of grasshopper salt.

*Grasshopper salt: In a blender, add 1/2 cup flaky sea salt and 2 teaspoons dehydrated grasshoppers.

As cocktail makers and drinkers have become more sophisticated, salt has been finding a regular home behind the bar. The element brightens and awakens even the most dormant ingredients, balances acidity and imbues a drink with exciting new layers. The most common use for salt is to line the rim of a beverage—most famously the Margarita—but using salt directly in the drink has its benefits, too. And as the American palate continues to crave fresh, new flavor combinations, infused salts are stepping into the spotlight. One such example is grasshopper salt, as is used in the Loaded Pistol.

Created by Erick Castro, the co-founder of San Diego's Polite Provisions, the Loaded Pistol uses a garnish of grasshopper salt to enhance the flavors of mezcal, sweet vermouth and Strega, but also to lend a unique aspect. "The beauty of infused salts is that they bring their own flavor, rather than a simple sensation such as salty, sweet or sour," says Castro. And while many in the United States may find grasshopper salt unfamiliar, it's a relatively commonplace product in Oaxaca;



because of this, mezcal, also from the Mexican state, makes perfect sense to pair with it.

You won't have to go raid your nearby garden with a net to make grasshopper salt—dried grasshoppers can be found in speciality stores, Latin American markets, and, of course, via the internet. And while the recipe is easy enough to throw together, there's also the option to order pre-made grasshopper salt. However, making your own has the added benefit of trying the grasshoppers themselves. Consider serving a small bowl of them as an accompaniment to the drink.

The Loaded Pistol also includes sweet vermouth and Liqueure Strega, an Italian digestivo. The liqueur gets its signature yellow hue from saffron, though it contains around 70 other ingredients including mint and fennel. Highly botanical and unusually strong for a liqueur at 80-proof, it gives the Loaded Pistol a deep herbaceous complexity. This is aided by a dash of grapefruit bitters, which also brighten the lush tones of the cocktail.