

Spirited Entertaining

Mixing Up A Creative Cocktail Party

(NAPSA)—To help you and your guests get the most fun with the least fuss out of your next party, heed these hints:

- First, it pays to plan ahead. Allow plenty of time to prepare for your party and make lists.

- Next, the food. Allow about five hot hors d'oeuvres per guest. Keep finger food easy to handle.

- Create a festive atmosphere with decorations, scented candles and music.

- To add style to the festivities, consider a trendy cocktail such as a caipirinha (kai-pur-EEN-ya), the national drink of Brazil. Here's the recipe:

- 2 ½ oz. Leblon Cachaca**
- 2 Lime slices**
- 2 Tbsp. superfine sugar**

Place lime slices in a shaker and add sugar. Muddle well. Fill the shaker with ice and Leblon Cachaca. Shake vigorously, pour into a rocks glass and garnish with a slice of lime.

Here are 10 tips to help you keep your caipirinhas tip-top:

1. Start with fresh fruit, cut right before for the freshest taste. Use lime, pineapple, strawberry, raspberry or tangerine.

2. Roll the limes on a board before cutting to release the juices.

3. If your fruit is dry, double the amount.

4. To be authentically Brazilian, sweeten with superfine sugar. Raw sugar takes longer but the large crystals help release the lime zest. Simple syrup is a fast alternative that assists blending—mix two parts sugar with one part boiling water. For calorie counters, Splenda works well.

5. Don't over- or undermuddle.



Serving stylish cocktails such as the caipirinha from Brazil can help your parties have a sophisticated atmosphere.

If you undermuddle, you don't get the juices from the fruit. If you muddle too hard or too long, the drink becomes bitter because the deeper, bitter oils are extracted. Three to five easy pushes and twists should do the trick.

6. Use only quality cachaca. The newer, premium cachacas are not as harsh as the low-grade varieties of old. The award-winning Leblon, for instance, is aged for a more refined taste.

7. Balance is key. Pay attention to your measurements and taste before you serve.

8. Use lots of ice. Ice not only cools the drink, it helps the mixing process. The smaller the ice pieces, the better for mixing. Consider making your ice with springwater.

9. Shake it—unless you want to thoroughly stir each drink for 30 seconds. Shaking instead of stirring means it's mixed properly—faster.

10. As they say in Brazil: We taste with our eyes, then our mouth. Use attractive glassware. The rocks glass is traditional but you can use a martini glass as well. And garnish with fruit.

You can learn more online at www.liveloveleblon.com.