BATTLE OF BRITAIN 2012

Take four teams of bartenders from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, challenge them to create the ultimate locally-sourced cocktail and set them loose on the main stage at Olympia – that, dear readers, is the all-new Imbibe Battle of Britain. **Alice Lascelles** gets a sneak preview of the entries ahead of the grand final at Imbibe Live on 3 July

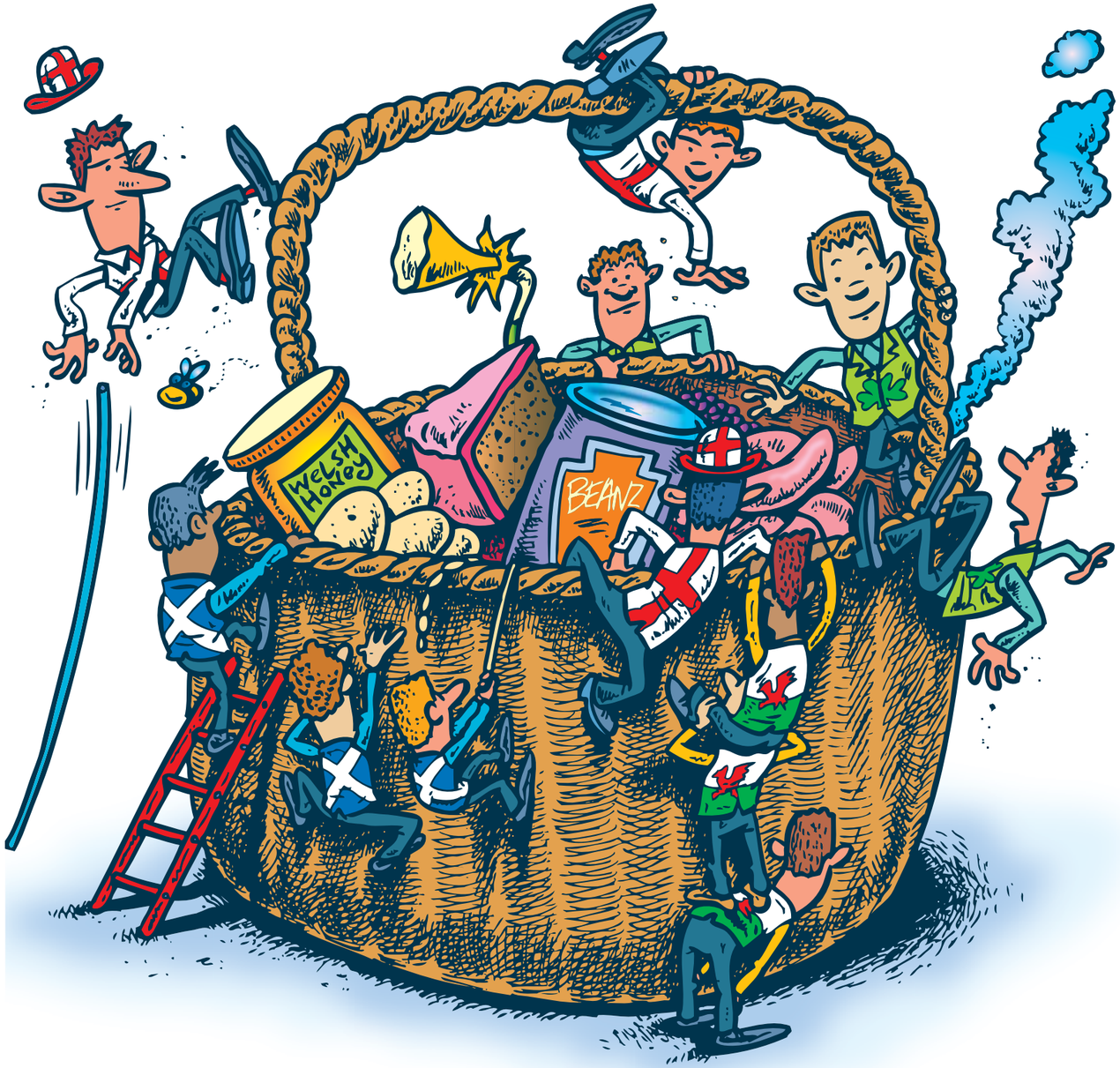


ILLUSTRATION: MARTIN CHATTERTON

Locally-sourced – it's a phrase that gets bandied around on menus a lot these days. So it was time, we decided, to put this woolly notion to the test with a new competition showcasing some of the best produce, as well as bartending talent, that this nation has to offer.

And so we threw the gauntlet down to teams from top bars in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales: create an entirely original cocktail using a base spirit and at least two other ingredients distilled, brewed, grown or crafted in your bar's native country. If you can use entirely local ingredients, then so much the better!

The results will be unveiled on the Centre Stage at Imbibe Live at Olympia on 3 July, where each display of national pride will be judged by an an international judging panel (and no doubt a few hundred flag-waving audience members too) – but before then, here's a little taster of what we've got to look forward to...

WALES

Jonty Dexter – *Lab 22, Cardiff*
Tim Evans – *Tempus, St Davids Hotel, Cardiff*
Christos Kyriakidis – *Vanilla Rooms, Cardiff (Cptn)*

'For our base spirit we've chosen the Welsh whiskey Penderyn Madeira, which has notes of vanilla, cream toffee, raisins, apples and rich fruits. We've also used Brains Dark ale, firstly because Brains provides the beer wash which Penderyn uses to make its whisky, and secondly because it has tasting notes that complement the whisky. Brains is also a sponsor of Welsh rugby, which helps! The pinch of sea salt brings out the chocolate notes of the ale, which in turn complements the toffee and raisin notes of the whisky. In place of the nutmeg garnish on a traditional Flip, we have a vanilla and liquorice "steam", which will be created when the judges pour a blend of Penderyn new-make, grated liquorice and vanilla pod into a cup containing a dry ice piece. It looks and smells great. We also made a reduction of the Brains beer wash used by Penderyn with a bit of sugar, and we'll serve it on a Welsh lovespoon with our homemade bara brith (Welsh fruit cake) which shares many of the same tasting notes as the whisky. The drink is presented on slate, as slate tiles are used a lot in Wales – even on the roof of the Penderyn distillery, and it will be garnished with the symbol of Wales: a daffodil.'

THE BRECON FLIP

Glass: Chilled coupe
Garnish: Vanilla and liquorice botanical, made using dry ice
Method: Place beer in a Boston glass, swirl around to decarbonate, add honey and dissolve. Add rest of ingredients, shake hard with ice and strain into glass.

50ml Penderyn Madeira Finished Single Malt Whisky
25ml Brains Dark ale
1 barspoon of Welsh honey
1 organic Welsh egg
Pinch of Halen Môn Welsh Vanilla sea salt

NORTHERN IRELAND

Nathan O'Neill
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast (Cptn)
Hayden Scott Lambert
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast
Mark G Velasquez
The Merchant Hotel, Belfast

'Being from New Zealand, England and the Philippines, taking part in this competition made us realise how many cultural differences there are within Northern Ireland. Our idea is based on the Irish mythological hero Cú Chulainn, a fierce warrior whose deeds gave him everlasting fame. Our recipe blends the fantastic Bushmills Black Bush whiskey with Romate Oloroso sherry, which echoes the characteristics already evident in Black Bush thanks to its sherry cask ageing. The drink also takes in the Irish countryside, and the illicit distilling of poteen. Throw in some Armagh AJ Apple Juice, a touch of traditional Irish honey, and a little homemade orgeat, and you have the Chulainn Cobbler.'

CHULAINN COBBLER

Glass: Punch goblet
Garnish: Antrim apple slice and mint
Method: Shake with ice and strain over cracked ice.

30ml Bushmills Black Bush whiskey
15ml Knockeen Hills Farmers Strength Poteen
10ml Romate Oloroso sherry
30ml lemon juice
15ml Boyne Valley Irish Honey syrup
35ml Armagh AJ Apple Juice
10ml homemade orgeat

SCOTLAND

Iain McPherson
The Voodoo Rooms, Edinburgh
Danil Nevsky
Society Bar & Restaurant, Aberdeen (Cptn)
David Smillie,
Booly Mardy's, Glasgow

'Many weeks ago, a pigeon buffeted its way through the weather to a remote Scottish outpost. The pigeon carried news of a quest concerning national pride and freedom. Three fearsome warriors from each of Scotland's greatest cities were selected for the Battle of Britain. The weapon they selected to enter battle with takes elements from all corners of Scotland: the smokiest whisky of the Isles, the most flavourful beer of the North-East, the fruitiest Highland bramble vinegar and the sweetest Lowland heather honey. All these things combine to release the Wee Beastie! This is Scotland.'

WEE BEASTIE!

Glass: Served from a 40-litre quarter cask, poured into beer tankards
Garnish: An original rendition of 'Pride of the North'
Method: Dry shake all the ingredients, decant into cask and serve over ice.

For a single serve:
50ml Laphroaig 10yo
50ml BrewDog Punk IPA
25ml Demijohn Bramble Vinegar
10ml Scottish heather honey
2 dashes Scottish bitters (secret recipe)

ENGLAND

Jake Burger
Portobello Star, London
Lyndon Higginson
Liars Club, Manchester (Cptn)
Bart Murphy
Hula, Manchester

'We will be making a full English breakfast on stage and using the ingredients to make a Bloody Mary. Lincolnshire sausage-infused English gin, rotovap-made baked bean juice essence, egg yolk, blended grilled tomato, a homemade HP sauce rim, black pudding foam and a candied, smoked bacon garnish. Served with an actual cup of tea from a teapot with just tea in (not anything wanky).'

THE FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST MARY

Glass: Collins
Garnish: Cup of tea
Method: It's complicated.

baked bean juice
black pudding
egg yolk
Portobello Road Gin
grilled tomato
homemade brown sauce
Lincolnshire sausage
smoked bacon

BE THERE TO SUPPORT YOUR TEAM AT THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN GRAND FINAL – 3 JULY AT IMBIBE LIVE AT OLYMPIA