

Negroni Sbagliato — Equal parts (Campari) and Vermouth (sweet), finished with sparkling wine & citrus peel

It's back! This wine-inspired cocktail [Negroni Sbagliato] is making its third return to our December wine club. First off, it's ok if you don't like Campari. We didn't include it. Campari is a spirit-based bittering agent. We've included Cappelletti Americano Rosso, which is a wine-based bittering agent. When I hear criticisms of Campari it's often that it is too "bitter". Well, it is a bittering agent and it's supposed to be. Just like a dish can be too salty, it's not that salt is a bad flavor it's that it wasn't used judiciously and perhaps overpowers the dish. It's about balance, and the **Negroni Sbagliato provides an easy way to develop a feel for *balance* in cocktails...**

Sbagliato is a gin-less Negroni with sparkling wine as replacement. A Negroni turned spritz! It's name means 'mistake' in Italian. The idea is that a bartender accidentally poured sparkling wine rather than gin when making a Negroni and came upon this fresh, juicy spritz by surprise.

Spritz make for great 'welcome' drinks. They're easy to make on the fly and avoid off-notions regarding particular spirits. The Negroni Sbagliato glistens with a warm, vibrant hue that captures the attention of a room. Every time I bring a 'Sbagliato kit' to a party, I never have enough to go around as slowly everybody wants to share in the allure...

The classic recipe calls for equal parts of each: sparkling wine (typically Prosecco), sweet vermouth, and Campari (in this case, the tamer Cappelletti). I prefer to use sparkling wine with more body, texture, and acidity than Prosecco. The lees-aging and bottle conditioning of Crémant, Cava, or other Champagne-Method sparklers adds a touch of complexity and more persistent bubbles. We've packed our go-to entry-level Champagne-Method sparkler sourced from vineyards around Burgundy, France. We've also packed Dolin Rouge, a vermouth from Chambéry, France. The classic recipe calls for Italian vermouth, but I find any dark-colored, sweet vermouth works as a substitute. In fact, the savory herbal notes of Dolin Rouge blend well with the juiciness of Cappelletti Americano Rosso. These substitutes bring a warm wintery depth to Sbagliato, even if non-traditional.

The fun here is finding *your* perfect balance of these three components. Start by pouring about equal parts vermouth and Cappelletti into a rocks glass over ice. Then, pour sparkling wine over these two components until the color concentration looks appropriate. It should look a glowing, vibrant ruby red in the glass. Again, part of the fun is finding your preferred balance. More vermouth for body and sweetness. More Cappelletti for bitterness and structure. More sparkling wine for lift, elegance, and to tone down the other two in the case of a heavy-handed pour. When perfected, the Sbagliato is fresh, juicy, and sophisticated all at once. **After you think you've got the right ratio, it's time for the citrus peel. DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP.** I prefer orange but lemon will also work. Go out in the snow, in the rain, in the dead heat, whatever — do it. Take the peel and sort of scrunch the outside over the top of the glass to mist the oils out into the drink. I like to wipe it around the rim before dropping in the glass. And there you go. Welcome to the Negroni Sbagliato!

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