

# cider & rye

## Hunting And Gathering - Installment No. 1

*March 31, 2014*



When you return from a trip do you find that certain details linger? Maybe the turquoise green of a sea anemone in a tide pool or the warm scent of plumeria? There is often an urge to recreate something enjoyed on an adventure, such as a pumpkin seed mole, a mai tai, or Boston brown bread. You can bring back the adventure with a sip or a bite.

But what about our micro-adventures? Because my time is so limited these days I try to glean inspiration from a walk in the neighborhood or while I am out running errands. The trick is to see things with new eyes. There is inspiration lurking for those who take notice. When we slow down and really look around there are tiny changes in the season, new bits of color, and a plethora of ideas. Ordinary things can bring inspiration, whether it be a persimmon tree bent with fruit, the wavy reflection of buildings in a puddle, or an interesting rock.

When I am feeling stuck or frustrated, sometimes the best thing is to open the door and get out in the yard. The act of pulling a few weeds provides just the right attitude adjustment.

On my walks I try to collect things visually, but I must admit that I have come home with a few leaves, acorns, or dandelions in my pocket. Last summer we had friends visiting from out of town. We were walking back home from a trip to our local bookstore when we passed a huge patch of red shiso in a front yard. It was growing like a weed. It really needed to be pinched back, so I was compelled to take home a couple of leaves. I know better, but I am a terrible neighbor! When we came home I made cocktails with gin, muddled shiso, and backyard plums. Crime has never tasted so good.



pine cone hanging from a tree in my neighborhood

I must admit that I am not just a thief, but a litterbug too. In San Francisco I lived near Billy Goat Hill and would take regular neighborhood walks. Occasionally I would collect fallen eucalyptus leaves to use in art projects.

I had an old typewriter and would type nonsensical messages on the leaves, filling the room with the wonderful, but slightly clinical, eucalyptus scent. On my next walk, I would leave the altered leaves on a park bench, along a sidewalk, or on a stairway path for a passerby to find. I only witnessed one person find my leaves. I had left a poem that was typed across several leaves left in a row. I saw a Buddhist monk pick them up, read them, chuckle, and put them back. It has

been a long time since I left these little gifts, but I do try to make something from my walks, usually something you can sip.

So this brings me to my point. I want to start a new series here: I want to share food and drinks based on a walk or an adventure. This assignment will change with the season, my moods, what I have foraged, and my travels near and far. I challenge you to do this too. You don't have to go far, a walk in the neighborhood, a trip to a farmers market, or your weekend errands. Walks like these will open you up, provide some perspective, and maybe inspire you to try something different.

## HERE IS MY FIRST INSTALLMENT:

This time of year my daughter and I like to take blossom walks. Portland is truly impressive in its blossom finery. Entire streets are littered with camellia blooms and pink snow falls from ornamental cherry trees. The normally grey sky shines a purplish pink above the canopy of blossoms.



blossom skies



flowering currant - *ribes sanguineum* at a local cafe

This time of year our first violets appear on the south side of the yard. The combination of the blossom sky and the appearance of violets made me want to make a violet based cocktail.

Violets are sweet, but have a slightly perfumey flavor. They are lovely on top of cakes or in salads. Did you know that they also provide essential spring time nutrition? They help provide our bodies with moisture after being exposed to months of dry winter air. Violets are nice in a simple syrup or jelly, although I find that it concentrates the perfuminess. I prefer mine raw or candied.

I thought they would be nice in an Aviation, to take place of Creme de Violette, which I find to be cloyingly sweet. I felt a little bad for muddling these delicate blooms, but they made a lovely drink.





violets in our front yard

## AVIATION WITH MUDDLED VIOLETS

*Cocktails the color of the blossom sky.*

*Makes two small cocktails.*

4 ounces gin, I suggest Aviation gin from House Spirits in Portland

1 ounce lemon juice

1 ounce Maraschino liqueur

small handful of violets with stems

ice

In a shaker or mason jar gently muddle the violets in the lemon juice. Add the gin, liqueur, and ice. Shake well and strain into small cocktail or Nick and Nora glasses. Garnish with violet flowers.

*About Maraschino liqueur:* This clear liqueur is essential in classic cocktails such as an aviation, a Martinez, or a Hemingway daiquiri. It adds a bit of body and sweetness, with lingering flavors of cherry, almond, and violet. It is distilled from marasca cherries from Dalmatia.

Happy Spring!



Aviation gin and Maraschino liqueur



An aviation with violets



spring light





violet garnish in my empty glass



hello