

Vintage Cocktail Project

And other Adventures



The Aviation

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The Aviation



The Aviation

Oh happy day! The Aviation is one of my all-time favourite cocktails. If I were to laminate a top 5 list of preferred drinks it would proudly don a spot. But I have not done this because D says it's cheesy and altogether unnecessary. But I digress...

As The Aviation holds such a special place in my heart, I am going to take a strong stand against the recipe in Ted Haigh's book. Dr. Cocktail admits that The Aviation originally contained violette liqueur but neglects to include it in his formula. I am of the opinion that the violette *makes* this libation. What's more, this is one of the few drinks in *Vintage Spirits and Forgotten Cocktails* that

can be found in most quality bartender's guides. All but one of the books in my possession contain recipes for The Aviation.



And all but Haigh's include the violette (or, in one case apricot brandy.) In the spirit of this project we will make Haigh's version, but we will try out a few other blends as well.

Violette is undergoing a revival. When I first fell in love with this drink I was not yet able to find any form of violette locally, but this has changed. *The Bitter Truth Violette Liqueur* became available a few months ago and more recently we came across a bottle of the much-coveted *Crème Yvette*. The liqueurs are astoundingly different; *The Bitter Truth* violette offers intense floral aromas and an inky purple hue, while the *Crème Yvette* is sweeter and syrupy, more reminiscent of blackberries and vanilla with a softer burnt orange pigment. The *Yvette* is lovely on it's own, reminding me of a sweet port, while *The Bitter Truth* is soapy and requires blending. As these spirits are used in minute quantities I imagine it will take my lifetime and then some to finish off these acquisitions, but the heart wants what the heart wants.



Bitter Truth Violette



Crème Yvette

Over two tasting sessions we tried several variations of this drink. The recipe from the book, built upon a base of *Aviation Gin*, produced an exceptionally tart cocktail, more like a gin sour than any Aviation I've ever had. Quite apart from the omission of the violette I found it lacking in maraschino. We are both perplexed as to why Haigh left out the violette, this being about vintage and forgotten cocktails wouldn't it make sense to cite the original formula? While not a devastating crash this recipe should certainly be lost with the luggage.

Starting anew with the original 1916 recipe by Hugo Ensslin found in David Wondrich's *Imbibe!* and using *Beefeater London Dry Gin*, we sampled separate variations using *Crème Yvette* and *The Bitter Truth Violette Liqueur*.



Right Yvette, Left Bitter Truth

While both were satisfactory neither was an overwhelming success. The *Crème Yvette* produced a cocktail with a nice sweetness but lacking the floral qualities that I have come to associate with this drink. It was also the wrong colour. One expects a pale sky blue hue from this drink, not a murky purple that could only be associated with the most devastating of storms. *The Bitter Truth* liqueur, on the other hand, was fragrant and bloomy but decidedly lacked sweetness. I was disappointed with both versions and was quickly becoming disillusioned.

The next logical step was to use both the *The Bitter Truth* violette and the *Crème Yvette* mixed in equal proportions in the same cocktail. This was an improvement. The resultant cocktail now contained both a sweetness and a floral quality, though not enough of either. However upping the quantity of both does nothing to solve the problem, it merely hijacks the drink, masking the maraschino and citrus and gin.

Determined to perfect this cocktail I searched the *Aviation Gin* website for their recipe, and am I ever glad I did. This version includes $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of simple syrup (I used home-made gomme syrup)



Simple Syrup

which, when combined with *The Bitter Truth Violette Liqueur* exclusively, became the solution to my problem. The drink was now appropriately floral and sufficiently sweet. It was also a majestic sky blue that made me want to launch into a chorus of the *Army Air Corps Song*.

The Aviation offers ample opportunity for adjustment to personal taste. David Wondrich notes that the original Ensslin recipe contains more violette than he finds pleasing. For my part I like a fair dose of violette but prefer some additional sweetness from simple syrup. And while I'm happy with a London Dry Gin as the base, D "likes to go first class," preferring the more assertive *Aviation Gin* and omitting any added sugar. It may take several attempts but I'm sure you can find your perfect version too!

<http://badassdigest.com/2012/08/10/your-guide-to-drinking-this-weekend-the-aviation/>
<http://aviationgin.com/recipes/the-aviation-cocktail/>

Note: Several weeks after our initial experiments I attempted the Aviation Gin recipe with the addition of an egg white. I really enjoyed the silky smooth texture afforded by the egg white. It also had a pleasant blue-white color that I could describe as "snowflake." D suggested I name my creation and I immediately blurted out "The Fortress of Solitude!"



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I was, of course, referring to Superman's crystalline stronghold, but D, whose geekdom extends only to subjects with "star" in the title, did not understand my reference. He practically spat out his drink while declaring: "that is the absolute *worst* name for a cocktail!" And of course, it is. We henceforth banished the name, but I suspect that, as with many inside jokes, the damage has been done.

(Several weeks after "creating" the above I discovered that it has been done before, by the masterful Robert Hess no less, and has a proper name: The Eagle's Dream Cocktail.)

<http://www.smallscreennetwork.com/video/849/cocktail-spirit-eagles-dream-cocktail/>

The Aviation (K's preferred version)

Several months after writing this article we came across a bottle of Crème de Violette on our travels. It is now our violet liqueur of choice, though The Bitter Truth Violet remains an excellent stand-in.

- 1.5 ounces gin (Aviation if you are feeling assertive, otherwise Broker's works well)
- 1 tsp violet liqueur (preferably Crème de Violette)
- .5 ounce Luxardo Maraschino
- .75 ounce fresh lemon juice
- .25 ounce gomme syrup (optional)

Shake over ice. Strain. Garnish with lemon twist or cherry or both. Break into song.



The Aviation ingredients