

   **THE NARDCAST** 

————— MUSIC, FOOD & BOOZE —————

Behind the Stick with Chris Cheng of barleymash

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If you like vodka with a nice take on refreshing fruits that are perfect for the summer, then this is the libation for you. **Chris Cheng**, bar manager of **barleymash**, located in downtown San Diego, created this cocktail by infusing cucumbers with Absolut Vodka Pears. Chris also shares his story, gives advice about being a bartender and he shows us how to make his refreshing cocktail called Doctor's Orders.

Doctor's Orders

\$12



.50 oz Almond Orgeat
.50 oz simple syrup
1 oz lime juice
2 oz cucumber-infused Absolut Pears
Topped with cinnamon

What's the story behind the Doctor's Orders?

It previously was one of our cocktails named the "Green Goose" which had pear vodka in it. I am not a huge fan of flavored vodkas, so I took it off the menu, however, a lot of our regulars kept ordering it, so eventually I looked at putting my twist on it and it turned out alright!

What's the process of infusing cucumbers with vodka and why did you choose cucumbers?

Originally we had muddled cucumbers in our past drink. I wanted to infuse it to make the flavors more consistent.

What's the key component of this drink?

Pear and cucumber infusion.

What reactions do you get from customers when they try this cocktail for the first time?

"Wow, this is great" and "So refreshing."

What's a good dish to pair with this cocktail?

Anything light, such as a salad or fish.

What kind of experience can diners get at barleymash?

The all inclusive package; sports, great food, beer, cocktails and service.

About Chris Cheng



Are you from San Diego?

Originally from Metro Detroit, spent four years in Los Angeles and have been here for two years.

How did you get into bartending?

I got into the world of bartending in college. My jaw dropped at how much money the bartenders were making. When I moved to LA, I was exposed to the slower paced, more service driven cocktail scene which gave me a good balanced perspective approach.

What has your journey been like leading up to your current position at barley mash?

Rough! I spent a lot of time between jobs in Los Angeles. There are so many different ownership and management personalities. I learned a tremendous amount through being a journeyman through it.

What's your favorite thing about bartending?

Being the best part about someone's day. The happy hours, the dinners, the dates, all of it!

What's your favorite spirit?

I love them all. They all have their amazing flavors and history. But if I have to be specific, something like a Wild Turkey Kentucky Spirit Single Barrel Bourbon. We go to Kentucky to pick the whiskey in our old fashioned cocktails. We always leave with one, but could make an argument to buy each barrel we taste, the last time it was 22!

Define the perfect cocktail.

Margarita or True Daiquiri. Just spirit, fresh juice and sugar with the right ratio.

What is one thing you wish people understood about bartending?

We are here to get you out of your comfort zone! Trust us!

What trends are you currently seeing in San Diego?

Tiki cocktail galore.

Any tips for potential bartenders?

Making drinks is easy. Coca-Cola made a machine called the Freestyle which makes a million combinations of drinks. A true plug and play. Imagine if they made that for the bar industry. Being a real bartender is difficult. Have a personality, take an interest in the rich culture that is bartending and focus on modern bar techniques. Most of all, understand what you like, may not be the same as what others like but be humble in service and make someone's day! Bartending should be fun, about the people and about the party (sometimes you have to be a kickstarter).

What are your favorite spots for a cocktail?

Polite Provisions, Counterpoint, Seven Grand. What trumps it all, and they would agree, is a forearm-sized tequila soda at 1:15 a.m. from Turf Club in Golden Hill with everyone getting off of work during the week.

What do you do in your spare time when you're not creating cocktails?

I like watching bartenders make drinks for guests and see their reactions to it. If I am not allowed to be at the bar for this questions, then I choose traveling to new cities and exploring!

What's next for you?

Growing and developing with barleymash.

Barleymash



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