

SAN DIEGO

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Dealing out  
dunce caps  
to local  
lunkheads

# San Diego Stupid

PAGE 16

Why Vespa theft in San Diego now? PAGE 6 ■ Mezcal mixology at Shake & Muddle PAGE 8

# Drinks All Around

BY AMANDA  
TASCHER

**JEFF MACKAY**  
Shake & Muddle  
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Chula Vista



People were so excited, especially the residents of Chula Vista, to have something like this in their neighborhood," says Shake & Muddle's lead mixologist Jeff Mackay about the establishment. He tells me about plans to double their patio size and expand the lounge area as he's mixing one of their most

popular mezcal cocktails. Laid across a black Hawaiian lava salt-rimmed glass, a cocktail pick lined with raspberry, blackberry and blueberry hovers over a pink-and-purple-hued drink. "It's called Berry the Rabbits, because I use three different seasonal berries that I muddle in there. And Cuatrocientos Conejos, which in English means '400 rabbits' — that's the brand of mezcal I use. So I'm 'berrying' the rabbits."

Mackay says that most mezcal cocktails lean towards citrus and spice, but what makes Berry the Rabbits unique is "the fact that I'm combining mezcal, which is a very smokey-flavored spirit, with berries, which are naturally sweet, and pineapple. Typically you wouldn't think that it would match too well, but it goes together perfectly. It was kind of a surprise to me."

Local patrons helped influence this particular cocktail. "When we first opened, a couple of our regulars had mentioned [400 Rabbits] to me, saying 'Every time we go to Mexico, we get this mezcal, it's so incredible, we can never find it out here...'" Mackay was able to

get his hands on some, once the brand became available in the States. "Some mezcals are overbearingly smokey — intentionally, because the smoke levels vary between each mezcal. But when you're mixing it with cocktails and you're adding other ingredients, you want something that's not overpowering." He puts 400 Rabbits in the middle of the spectrum, saying it has "the traditional smoke to it, but it kind of has a nice little spice as well. It leaves room to introduce other flavors." When preparing the recipe, he thought to himself, "How can I add other flavors that don't compete with it, but actually add to it? How do I pull the smoke out, and still keep it there?"

The resulting cocktail has a soft, lingering smokiness that doesn't attack on the front. "That's where the citrus will help. Because the citrus will hit first on that part of your palate, followed with the smoke." Mackay prefers to create harmony between the flavors, rather than mask the mezcal. "What's great about this is that it's not sugary at all. It's all-natural, so you have a fresh flavor."

## SHAKE & MUDDLE'S BERRY THE RABBITS



- ½ oz. lime juice
- ½ oz. gomme syrup
- 1 oz. pineapple juice
- 2 oz. 400 Conejos (Rabbits) mezcal
- 2 raspberries, 2 blackberries, and 4 blueberries

Add berries, lime juice, gomme syrup, and pineapple juice into a small shaker tin and muddle all ingredients about five times. Add the mezcal and a scoop of ice, shake, and strain over pebbled ice into a bucket glass with a black salt rim.

San Diego Reader features Shake & Muddle

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