

# THE WHEATSHEAF INN PRESS

Cotswold Life - December 2009

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## Simply Red

As the hunt for the best Bloody Mary in the Cotswolds gets underway, Adam Edwards sings the praises of this wake-up call for the comatose

**O**UR SUNDAYS have changed. Churches are empty shops are full and, according to a recent report by the Food Standards Agency, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding has been eclipsed by a new favourite – Thai green curry and rice.

And yet there remains one constant, one old friend we can rely on as the satins shift under our Sabbath – the post Matins Bloody Mary.

It remains a wake-up call for the comatose. It is a fiery canon-ball through the morning-after rigging. In fact the definition of hope is when the red light at the end of the alcoholic tunnel is a 'bloody'.

Once a week this river of red juice flows through the veins of the Cotswolds. In a myriad of pubs and restaurants (as well as our own front rooms) the potent mixture of vodka and tomato juice kick-starts us into the Day of Rest.

Yet there is no exact recipe for a 'bloody'. Every Englishman produces his own particular strain and as with his barbecuing and driving skills he believes it cannot be bettered. In fact recipes are so many and so varied that the advice given by Bloody Mary connoisseurs to those setting out on long and hazardous journeys is to include in their luggage one phial of tomato juice, one of vodka, and a bottle of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce. The ingredients should be mixed together if the voyager gets lost. Within seconds a fellow countryman will lean over the traveller's shoulder and say, 'that's not the way you make a Bloody Mary.'

However there are those who believe that they have found the secret to this elusive Sunday drink, professional men so adept with the Tabasco and celery salt that they lay claim to have unlocked the door to vodka and tomato juice Valhalla. And many of them will be at the Wheatshaf Pub in Northleach on Friday November 6.

The Wheatshaf is a cheerful boozier recently revamped by Sam and Georgina Pearman. It serves proper beer, excellent devilled kidneys and soothes customers with an i-Pod

of Blues. It also does a fine Sunday morning 'Bloody' that Sam claims, rather immodestly in my view, is the best cocktail produced in our limestone hills. He has a secret ingredient (Clamato) uses fresh horseradish and challenges all comers to produce a better red devil.

Now that this gauntlet – or should that be barman's glasses cloth – has been thrown ten of our finest local institutions (The Kingham Plough; The Kings Head Inn at Bledington; The Tunnel House, Coates; The Seven Tuns, Chedworth; The Fox Inn, Barrington; The Wild Duck, Ewen;

Every Englishman produces his own particular strain and, as with his barbecuing and driving skills, he believes it cannot be bettered.

Made by Bob, Cirencester; The Hollow Bottom, Guiting Power;

The Mason's Arms, Meyse Hampton; The Hotel du Vin, Cheltenham) are to challenge Sam to put his Bloody where his oral cavity is and stop spouting so much Tabasco.

And so the first ever *Cotswold Life* Bloody Mary Challenge will be held at the Pearman's hostelry. It will be judged by Mark Savage (a Master of Wine), the well-known comedian Dom Joly (a master of

Happy Hour), Sir Roderick (Roddy) Llewellyn (a master in the garden) and *Cotswold Life* Editor Mike Lowe (a Master of the Saloon Bar). The winner will receive a unique trophy (but not a Virgin Mary figurine with red nail varnish painted on her heart as was suggested by one tasteless lush) and the chance to host the second *Cotswold Life* Bloody Mary Challenge next year.

It is claimed by some that the Bloody Mary was invented in the 1920s at Harry's Bar in Paris by the American bartender Fernand Petiot. And it was supposedly christened by Harry, the patron of Harry's Bar, who said that the mix reminded him of the Bucket of Blood Club in Chicago – and a girl he knew there called Mary. Another more likely view is that it was named after Henry VIII's eldest daughter Mary a devoted Catholic who had hundreds of Protestants executed in the name of Catholicism.

Either way the 1930 legendary Savoy Cocktail Book describes the Bloody Mary Cocktail as 1½ ounces of vodka, 2 ounces of tomato juice, ½ ounce of lemon juice and two dashes of Worcestershire sauce shaken and strained into a medium sized wine glass. This simple recipe has now metamorphosed into the spicy mixture of today served in a tall glass with Tabasco sauce and ice. However every maker will add his own touch from dashes of pepper and celery salt. If there is a secret ingredient, as is often claimed, it is usually – and I don't of course want to spoil the competition – a jigger of sherry or vermouth.

My own preference is for a 'no chewy bits' Bloody (one wants to drink the bloody thing, not eat it) with a dash of sweet sherry and a couple of drops of Tabasco added to the professionally made 'Big Tom Mix'.

However I am neither judge nor competitor. It is now up to the ten mine hosts (plus Sam at the Wheatshaf) to slice the lemon, punch out the Tabasco and let the bloody battle commence. ■



COTSWOLD BLOODY MARY



### THE RULES

Competitors, by invitation only, must provide their Bloody Mary for a blind tasting by the judges and public on the morning of Friday, November 6, 2009. Each judge will award a score out of five for each drink (in the fashion of *Come Dine With Me*). The Cocktail with the most points will be declared 'Best Cotswold Bloody' and will win the trophy, which the winner will be allowed to keep for one year.

Members of the public are welcome. It will cost £10 per person to taste each contestant's drink. The entrance fee will include a delicious pie and mash meal. The event is open from 12 to 3pm.

Numbers are strictly limited so please book ahead by calling 01451 860 244 or emailing [info@cotswoldswheatshaf.com](mailto:info@cotswoldswheatshaf.com)

# THE WHEATSHEAF INN

PRESS

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## Simply the Best

To celebrate the launch of our new nationwide website – and your chance to vote for your own favourites in the Great British Vote – we went in search of the best Bloody Mary in the Cotswolds. Adam Edwards reports on a hectic, highly-competitive and hugely enjoyable day

**I**T WAS – and there is no way around the pun – a red blooded affair. Testosterone, not tears, was to the fore. The blistering heat of Tabasco, the quantity of booze and the Bond-like secrecy surrounding the voting was what counted. It mattered not whether you won or lost but how you mixed the cocktail.

Err, actually that last sentence is not quite true. The smile on the winner while the losers' scowl – well one or two of them anyway – belonged in a M5 traffic jam.

The first annual Cotswold Bloody Mary Challenge Trophy held at the Wheatsheaf in Northleach ended with victory for the competition's hosts, Sam and Georgina Pearman ('Fi' I hear you cry, 'We wuz robbed'). But carping would be a churlish response to a magnificent concoction by the Wheatsheaf's landlord. He beat his nearest rivals by several points.

The judges, (*Cotswold Life* editor Mike Lowe, Master of Wine Mark Savage, *Cotswold Life's* gardening man and all round good egg Sir Roderic Llewellyn Bt, and comedian Dom Joly) were as impartial as any man can be after 11 Bloody Marys.

Palates were cleaned after each drink (sometimes with a cigarette) and the anonymous, numbered cocktails were tasted by each judge and occasionally re-tasted. And in the end it was a unanimous decision.

'It's a great victory,' said Sam holding up the trophy as if he was Jensen Button. 'I always believed our Bloody was the best,

ever though on this occasion we did forget the white truffle shavings.'

Second equal was the urbane Gerry Stonehill from the Mason Arms at South Leigh and the delightful Emily Watkins from the Kingham Plough. Cheltenham's Hotel du Vin was a worthy third.

Victory celebrations continued long into the night as everybody agreed that – get ready to groan – a bloody good time had been had by all. ■

**THE COMPETITORS**

The Kingham Plough; The Kings Head Inn at Bledington; The Mason Arms, Southleigh; The Seven Tuns, Chedworth; The Fox Inn, Barrington; The Wild Duck, Ewen; Made by Bob, Cirencester; The Hollow Bottom, Guiting Power; The Mason's Arms, Meyesley Hampton; The Hotel du Vin, Cheltenham;

### BEST BLOODY MARY

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Above: Ashley Harlow (centre left) serving Bloody Marys to Judges Mike Lowe, Mark Savage, Sir Roddy Llewellyn and Dom Joly. Left: The competition entrants' cocktails are sampled by the public.

Above: Archie Orr-Ewing with Paul Porter and Fiachra Hoey. Below: Danny McCarthy with Hugh Kelly, Katie Whitnall and Keith Rayner of The Hollow.

Above: Alex Davenport Jones and Steve Doolan. Below: Phyllida Clifford Holmes and Yanna Tiddy Mudie.

Above: Bob, Archie, Jonny and All Parkinson. Left: Maizie Ingram with Tim Boyd, Keith Blundell and Richard Blundell.

### IT BELONGS TO YOU

Our new website isn't just a giant store of useful information. It's also a place for you to communicate with other Life readers around the country and boast about all the great things we have in the Cotswolds.

If you've a wonderful photograph, uploading it couldn't be easier.

If you've a brilliant poem, log on and share it with us all.

If you've visited a terrific restaurant and want to write a review, get typing.

If you need a map to find your way to an event, look no further.

If you want to find out about that Great British holiday destination before you book, click that mouse.

Great British Life is a precious resource, but we want you to play with it. After all, you are part of the family.

### VOTE, VOTE, VOTE!

Turn the page and there's a fun way to kick off Great British Life. It's the Great British Vote and your views can help us promote the Cotswolds in a national survey designed to highlight all that's best in this country.

And what's more, there are some terrific prizes to be won. Make sure the Cotswolds region isn't left behind – so get voting!