

# COLD FUSIONS

## BITTERCUBE COCKTAILS BRING A NEW ENERGY TO BACCHUS

Writer **Robert Bundy**

Photographer **Jerry Luterman**

Nicholas Kosevich, one half of the cocktail mixologist team known as Bittercube, is creating an exotic drink for me. As he does so, I catch a glimpse of the tattoo etched into his forearm. Permanently ingrained into his skin is an illustration of a cocktail strainer framed by a victory laurel. That emblem, however, depicts more than simply a tool of his trade; it's also illustrative of a deep level of commitment to his profession. In a neat row along the bar sit tiny eyedropper bottles, each with a handmade label bearing the Bittercube logo. Selecting one, Kosevich raises the slender glass tube an inch out of the bottle, draws a few milliliters of the dark, mysterious elixir into the fragile vessel, and gingerly deposits one drop to each point of the compass on the surface of the cocktail. Bittercube, you see, creates their own varieties of bitters, tinctures and essences. Born out of creative restlessness, a desire for specificity and — not least — a frustration with the limitations of commonly available retail products, Kosevich and partner Ira Koplowitz, formerly of Chicago's famed Violet Hour, create from scratch what they cannot acquire through conventional channels.

I ask Kosevich what their concoction adds to the mix and he tells me to hold out my hands. I do, and he allows a drop of the dark, tea-like liquid to fall into my palm. At his urging, I then rub my hands together briskly to evaporate the alcohol, and then



Nicholas Kosevich and Ira Koplowitz craft a complex cocktail at Bacchus.

cup my hands to my nose and breathe in the spicy scent of cloves. And cinnamon. Allspice maybe. And something else I can't quite put my finger on. While I've been following my nose, he's been finishing the drink he now carefully places before me. Sipping it, I can detect the presence of the

complex brew he employed in the making of it, but now it is subsumed into a chorus of flavors. The drink is better than the sum of its parts, and it's damn good, much like the duo that created it, now installed in the tony bar at Bacchus in the bartending world's version of artists in residence.

It may only take a moment or two for these award-winning mixologists to put together one of their signature cocktails, but that deft assembly is only the tip of the iceberg. The individual ingredients in that drink could actually have been weeks — even months — in the making. The two spend an enormous amount of time brewing their own tinctures, bitters and infusions, concocting homemade liqueurs, and endlessly experimenting with the resulting spirits in search of compelling flavor profiles. So when they finally elect to describe a cocktail mixture on their very select drink menu, you really are being treated to a unique gourmet experience available nowhere else.

After a winter drink menu heavy with fireplace-friendly soothers, the pair have recently released a new spring cocktail menu that features their custom liqueurs made from macerations of lavender, heather, chamomile, marigolds and elderflowers, elixirs with suspensions of ground vanilla beans, tinctures of Omanhene cocoa nibs, and frothy egg whites dusted with dehydrated orange zest. The new drinks are refreshing, colorful and light — the cocktail equivalent to a bouquet of May flowers — with a distinctive lushness and herbal complexity about them. And they're absolutely delicious.

But judge for yourself. Drop by Bacchus and submit yourself to these nouveau apothecaries for diagnosis and treatment. If you do, their first question will probably be the logical, "What do you like?" And go ahead and tell them your favorite drink, as they are sure to find something definitive in it that you never suspected existed. If, however, you have a taste for the unusual, this is a great place to respond, "Surprise me." If you do, your new favorite drink is likely to be the one they just placed before you.

While certain of their cocktails cannot be replicated without their custom-created ingredients, we've posted some Bittercube recipes that can be made at home on our Web site at [www.milwaukee-home.com](http://www.milwaukee-home.com).

Home design consultation and custom installations

[therainmakerhouse.com](http://therainmakerhouse.com)  
[rainmakerhouse.com](http://rainmakerhouse.com)

ARTISANS FOR A  
COST CONSCIOUS HOUSING MARKET