

The Night Before Halloween Cocktail: Black Widow

The Black Widow Cocktail is of course named for the venomous spider. Good news: the black widow's bite is very rarely fatal.

There are a lot of variations out there but for Halloween we're talking about the version that features mezcal. Mezcal's profile can be smoky, earthy, a little funky; some might say weird or eerie. But if you like tequila you should know that technically tequila is a subcategory of mezcal. You could even substitute tequila here.



Mezcal also comes to us from Mexico, where our connections with the dead are the basis of colorful celebrations, albeit at a different time of year. In the Black Widow Cocktail mezcal is combined with the sweetness of the Concord grape — a childhood association for many from a time in life when dressing up and eating too much candy still carried transgressive thrills.

There are Stanford associations as well, since Jane Stanford was a widow. Indeed, it was after her husband died that Jane played a pivotal role in securing Stanford's future fighting the government's claim on part of the estate that was meant to establish the university. And some people believe Jane Stanford died by poisoning when she took a drink from her customary bottle of spring water. The historian Richard White tells the story in his book *Who Killed Jane Stanford?*

For a non-alcoholic alternative to the Black Widow you could substitute sparkling mineral water for the mezcal. If you do, you can still enjoy one of this cocktail's other appropriate qualities: a deep Cardinal color.

Black Widow Cocktail

Ingredients

4 fresh blackberries, plus more for serving
3/4 oz. fresh lime juice
2 oz. mezcal
1 oz. Concord grape juice
3/4 oz. simple syrup
Ice
Ginger beer, for topping off
Bay leaf, for serving
One navel orange for flaming zest
Lighter

Directions

Step 1

In a cocktail shaker, muddle blackberries and lime juice until berries are broken down, 10 to 20 seconds.

Step 2

Add mezcal, grape juice, and simple syrup. Fill shaker with ice, cover, and vigorously shake until outside of shaker is very frosty, about 20 seconds.

Step 3

Double-strain by straining drink into a fine-mesh strainer held directly above an ice-filled glass. Double straining ensures a smooth, seedless drink. The fine-mesh strainer will catch any rouge seeds during the muddling process.

Step 4

Top off with ginger beer.

Step 5

Squeeze a small piece of orange peel over the glass and light the orange oil as it is expressed. Garnish with bay leaf and more blackberries.

Mocktail alternative

Replace mezcal with cold lapsang souchong tea. Same amount. This tea has a nice smoky quality that is similar to mezcal.