

Excerpted from the book “The Cuban Table: A Celebration of Food, Flavors, and History” by Ana Sofia Peláez. Copyright © 2014 by Ana Sofia Peláez. Reprinted with permission from St. Martin's Press.

Mojito

Serves 1

Though Hemingway popularized the drink with a single backhanded compliment to his favorite Havana watering holes, declaring, “My mojito in La Bodeguita, my daiquirí in El Floridita,” the cocktail’s origin can be traced back to the sixteenth-century el Draque, a crude blend of lime, sugar and aguardiente, invented by pirates on expedition with Sir Francis Drake. Eventually, the aguardiente was replaced with smooth, light-bodied rums elaborated in the late 1800s and the Mojito—an African word roughly translated as “little spell”—was cast.

This recipe comes from my uncle Guillermo Tremols who learned it from Deus, a bartender at Havana’s Miramar Yacht Club.

12 fresh spearmint leaves with stems
1 ounce freshly squeezed lime juice
1 1/2 tablespoons confectioners’ sugar
2 1/2 ounces white rum
2 to 3 ounces club soda, to top off
1 to 2 dashes Angostura bitters (optional)

Muddle the mint, lime juice, and sugar in an 8-ounce glass until the mint is gently bruised. Stir in the rum and add ice. Top off with club soda. Add Angostura bitters, if using, to taste. Garnish with a sprig of mint.