

Suburban bars find bitters add balance to cocktails

By Samantha Nelson

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When manager Angel Soto was working on the spring cocktail menu for Glen Ellyn's Reserve 22, he found a few of the drinks were missing something. So he made his own varieties of peach and chocolate bitters to add in.

"It brings the cocktail all together," he said. "We did experiment with a couple cocktails without the bitters, and it just didn't have the kick it needed."

"The customers' desire for that flavor profile is continuing to grow," Morgan said. "There's always a novelty factor with what was popular a long time ago. At the same time, our tastes as the consuming populous are changing from something that's sweet to something that's more balanced."

The restaurant, which has locations in Chicago and Schaumburg, offers a slate of cocktails with a bit of bitter bite including the Aviation, made with Tanqueray gin, Luxardo Maraschino liqueur, **The Bitter Truth violet liqueur** and lemon juice, and the Boulevardier, which blends Woodford Reserve bourbon, Carpano Antica Formula vermouth and the bitter Italian liqueur Campari.

"Bitter lends balance to a drink," Morgan said. "If you're going to drink a cocktail that's all booze, it can tend to dull the palate. A cocktail that's too sweet can coat the palate. For food you want that balance of sweet, acidity, booze and bitterness. It leaves the palate fresh for that next bite of food you're going to have, or the next drink of your cocktail."

The restaurant is looking to expand its bitter offerings in May, rolling out a Manhattan made with rye whiskey and the bitter liqueur amaro. The idea is a sort of return to form for the cocktail.

"There's a lot of classic cocktails that had bitters as a component in them once upon a time that dropped out," Morgan said. "Now we're seeing the true recipes come back."

