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Hot Chocolate Valentine

By THE NEW YORK TIMES

If you're staying in on Valentine's Day, try this spicy chocolate cocktail. The mellow kick is from pepper vodka and a rim of hot Hungarian paprika — spicy pepper is a reputed aphrodisiac, as it contains capsaicin, a chemical that quickens the heart, and gives off a little heat.

1 tablespoon hot Hungarian paprika (see note)

2 1/2 ounces clear crème de cacao, plus about one ounce more for rimming the glasses

3 ounces dark crème de cacao or other dark chocolate liqueur, like Godiva

1 1/2 ounces chili-pepper-flavored vodka, like Absolut Peppar

1 ounce vanilla-flavored vodka.

1. Set out two martini glasses and two saucers wider than the glasses' rims. In one of the saucers, sprinkle the paprika in a rough circle approximately the diameter of the glasses' rims; in the other, put an ounce of the clear crème de cacao. Dip each glass rim in the liqueur, tap off the excess liquid, then dip in the paprika to coat.

2. Put remaining clear crème de cacao, dark crème de cacao and vodkas in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake until condensation appears. Pour evenly between the two rimmed glasses.

Yield: 2 servings

Note: Instead of the paprika, another ground chili, like ancho, which is hotter, or Aleppo, which is more coarse, can be used, but avoid spice mixtures labeled "chili powder," which often include cumin, a distinctive flavor that is not recommended here.

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