

COYOTE + OAK

VOLUME III

WWW.COYOTEANDOAK.COM

A PRINTED MAGAZINE, CREATED BY AND SHOWCASING CALIFORNIA ARTISTS AND ENTREPRENEURS.
FOLLOW ALONG ON THE JOURNEY ON INSTAGRAM AT @COYOTEANDOAK

A photograph of a bar scene. In the foreground, there are several bottles and glasses on the bar counter. From left to right, there are two small dark bottles with droppers, two larger glass bottles with orange and yellow liquids, a glass of orange liquid, a bottle of Campari, and a bottle of Refind Vodka. A slice of orange is also visible. In the background, there are shelves filled with various bottles of alcohol and glasses. The text "SOMETHING IS STIRRING IN THE SPIRIT WORLD" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font.

SOMETHING IS STIRRING IN THE SPIRIT WORLD



STORY BY KRISTEN CHANAIWA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY CAMERON INGALLS
RECIPE DESIGN BY BOURBON BLUE CARDS

THIS IS THE STORY OF ROBIN KIRK WOLF AND DOMINIQUE GONZALES, TWO WOMEN MIXING UP MAGIC IN THE CENTRAL COAST BEVERAGE INDUSTRY, EACH FINDING SUCCESS AS THEY TAKE AIM AT DOING THE CRAFT COCKTAIL RIGHT.

One reintroduces the world to an age-old tincture; the other adds an effervescent flourish to a common component.

"Cock-tail is a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water, and bitters...it renders the heart stout and bold, at the same time that it fuddles the head...a person, having swallowed a glass of it, is ready to swallow anything else."

- Henry Crosswell, May 13, 1806

Robin Kirk Wolf is the powerhouse creative force behind SLO Bitter Co. From wine to bourbon, she knows her booze well. After entering the service industry at age sixteen, she traveled to New York, where she spent ten years witnessing the rebirth of the craft cocktail movement, and went on to study the fine art of wine, becoming a sommelier at the Court of Master Sommeliers in 2012. For all the glitz and glamour of the big city, though, nothing compared to the natural beauty of life on the Central Coast, where inspiration came knocking at her door, and set up shop in her dining room.

Not unlike so many other stories of grand success, Robin's business was borne of a hobby. She started making bitters at home as Christmas gifts for friends and family. It wasn't until she began receiving e-mail and text requests for refills, and her Mixologist husband, Matthew Hanson, started using Robin's bitters in his cocktail recipes, that she realized there was a niche to be filled, and she was the girl to do it.

The history of bitters goes all the way back to the days of the ancient Egyptians, when wines were once infused with medicinal herbs and used for medical purposes. Today, SLO Bitter Co. bitters are small batch made in Robin's San Luis Obispo kitchen, and created with as many local, organic and in-season ingredients as she can source,

from the lavender fields of Paso Robles, to the student-grown citrus groves of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Robin infuses sustainably-produced, high-proof spirits with her broad imagination and a bit of alchemy, to create a collection of Lavender, Charred Cedar & Blackstrap, and Grapefruit Chili bitters, relying on the adage that 'what grows together goes together'. She's preparing Rose & Pink Peppercorn and Chicory Coffee flavors for release now. Her bitters are strictly for fun.

According to Robin, bitters are something everyone can use, from cocktail aficionados to teetotalers. Keep a few flavors on your bar, and a Tuesday night gin and tonic can become something otherworldly, with the squeeze of a dropper. You can also use bitters in the same way you might use an extraction such as vanilla extract: for cooking and baking. Lavender-scented cookies anyone?

In business for just a year, SLO Bitter Co. has taken an upward trajectory. Robin's product is sold online, and included on restaurant bar programs across the coast, from Fish Gaucha to The Hatch Rotisserie & Bar, and with fingers crossed, she looks forward to getting them into the craft-capable hands of the bar chefs at Sidecar Cocktail Company. Her goods will be displayed on the tasting room shelves of Northern San Luis Obispo County's *RE:FIND* Distillery soon.

For another of San Luis Obispo's lady libation creators, the key components of a great cocktail are twofold: bubbles and ease.

Twenty-something Dominique Gonzales has already spent one-third of her life behind the bar. Born and raised on the Central Coast, this pint-sized dynamo left high school and found herself serving up drinks for coeds at university area dives across California, while trying to decide if a college education was necessary to make her entrepreneurial dreams come true. Without a solid business plan in mind, Dominique bided her time getting to know liquor, and found she had a talent for making a drink that was better than the rest.

Ever the entertainer, she started hosting house parties. Clearly a great host, her friends were having a blast; but for Dominique, each shindig just felt like an extended bar shift. Known for her mixing abilities as an award-winning cocktail competitor, it seemed no matter what she did to prepare self-serve concoctions, she was forever pouring and shaking for her guests, and missing out on the action. Punch bowls never provided enough variety to satisfy the masses, and easily became watered down. Never one to back down from a challenge, she set out to find a way to join the festivities while keeping her parties happily [continued on page 33]







Bittersweet

FILL A LARGE WINE GOBLET WITH ICE

add 1.5 oz
Vodka or gin

A BAR SPOON OF
CAMPARI

&
5 oz

ROOT
ELIXIRS

STRAWBERRY
LAVENDER
SODA

Garnish
with
-FRESH-

strawberries
& a lavender
sprig



THE LUMBERMATCH

muddle 2 slices ripe pear
& 2 DROPPERS SLO BITTER CO.
CHARRED CEDAR & BLACKSTRAP BITTERS

2OZ GOOD BOURBON *then add* .5OZ LEMON ROSEMARY SYRUP
.5OZ BENEDICTINE



shake vigorously with ice
and strain into a
COUPE glass... GARNISH WITH...



rosemary & pear slices

LEMON ROSEMARY SYRUP

in a pan, combine & boil
1 CUP WATER
1 CUP SUGAR
ZEST OF ½ LEMON
2 SPRIGS ROSEMARY
remove from heat, cool, strain, use









buzzed, and finally, she struck gold with Root Elixirs.

Root Elixirs is a cocktail mixer, designed with real, hand-squeezed fruit juice, Monterey Bay spices, and homemade simple syrup, all carbonated to perfection. Dominique has taken all of the work out of creating the perfect cocktail. She shops local farmers' markets for the ripest berries, juices the limes, and presses the ginger herself before marrying the ingredients in ideal ratios, so hosts across the coast can take all of the credit. A sophisticated blend of sparkling flavors that make entertaining like a pro a breeze— it is, simply put, “Soda with Spirit.”

Four years in, and Dominique is becoming the businesswoman she's always wanted to be. The goal was to create a product that removed the manpower required to prep craft beverages with fresh ingredients, making it possible for bartenders to produce quality drinks with speed and consistency. High-volume bars are just the kind of place she had in mind when starting out in search of accounts, and she's gained them with ease. Since 2014, she's been leading a team of some of the best bar masters in town at the popular Granada Hotel & Bistro, where her Ginger Beer, Strawberry Lavender, and Grapefruit Jalapeño varieties are served up in old school Moscow Mules, reimagined Spicy Palomas, and on their own, as festive 'mocktails'. She also counts restaurants Luna Red and Novo among her major clients. Devotees can purchase Root Elixirs by the growler-full at The Station, a local wine shop and bar, where they keep the good stuff on tap. All you gotta do is order or pour!

“A rising tide lifts all ships. If one person's doing well, we're all doing well.” - Robin Kirk Wolf

San Luis Obispo is a small town, and competition can be fierce, but these champions are doing well in their businesses, and say that people in the

industry have been receptive. Everyone seems to have the same vision across town.

Dominique describes the atmosphere as a friendly competition, and she loves to be in collaboration with others who are finding success around her; raising the bar in SLO means finding inspiration from others, and using it to push herself. She's made friends and found mentors and allies in the likes of *RE:FIND*'s Monica Villicana, who's been kind enough to show her the ropes, and in Granada's Kimberly Walker, who believed enough in Dominique's vision to buy the first keg Root Elixirs ever sold.

For Robin, the experience has been much the same. Her husband, a talented Mixologist himself, challenges, inspires and supports her beyond measure. She too has close ties to Villicana, who has been a proponent of SLO Bitter Co. since Robin's days of Christmas-gifting.

For both ladies, the future is bright. One day Dominique hopes Root Elixirs will be sold in grocery stores nationwide, and Robin envisions herself creating recipe books and leading classes for those eager to learn the art of the craft cocktail. Keep an eye out. You'll be seeing more of them both. Guaranteed. ☺

You can find Root Elixirs on Instagram at @root_elixirs, and SLO Bitter Co. at @slobitterco, and at www.slobitterco.com