

# Classic vs. craft: Sangria

We explore Puesto's classic sangria and Cafe Sevilla's craft variation

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## Classic: Puesto's Sangria

“Se habla fresh,” is the slogan found on the hot pink take-out bags of the portside Mexican restaurant, **Puesto** (789 W Harbor Drive). While its commitment to speaking Spanish might not extend to the last word of a sentence, Puesto’s commitment to freshness is a staple. I’m happy to report that the slogan extends not only to its colorful decor, but also to its cocktails.

Tasting like Rosé wine with a fruit punch zing, the restaurant’s red wine-based sangria is mixed with vodka, apple liqueur, cherry liqueur and seasonal fruits. It has a traditional feel, since the original wine taste isn’t lost and also has a ripe sweetness that drives home its fresh vitality. You might expect an eclectic restaurant like Puesto to have some sort of outlandish craft sangria,

perhaps with a taco or two sticking out of the top. After all, the decor features large rainbow murals, vines growing up the walls and aesthetics that look as if they came straight from a modern art museum. That is, Puesto is anything but traditional, and yet when it comes to its sangria, the focus is almost exclusively on classic recipes.

This restaurant understands the difference between a true sangria of Spanish origin and a glass of wine with a few slices of fruit added to it. Though untraditional, Puesto has a classic California feel and so does its red sangria. The wine is rich, less ashy than most, and the fruit is perfect without any wrinkles or discoloration. In fact, the produce is almost as vibrant as the wall murals. Though it's a Mexican joint, sitting in Puesto's rope-woven chairs accompanied by an ocean breeze, it's easy to envision being on the Mediterranean. Just try not to fill up on the chips and salsa first.



## **Craft: Blood Orange Sangria**

There are some pretty crazy methods out there for creating craft sangrias. One of the more unconventional recipes is grilling the fruit and dipping it in cinnamon before it goes into the drink.

Story for another time.

Still, even the craftiest of the crafty tend to have the same base: wine. **Cafe Sevilla** (353 Fifth Ave.), on the other hand, takes a different approach, throwing Spanish wine traditions out the window. Located in the heart of the Gaslamp Quarter, this Spanish restaurant's Blood Orange craft sangria is beer(!) based. The drink starts out as Estrella beer and is then mixed with Pitu Cachaça, a Brazilian spirit made from fermented sugarcane juice. Slices of lime and orange are added and left to sit so the drink can soak up the sugars. After a certain amount of time, the fruit is strained from the drink so only the liquid is left. By some strange wizardry, the drink turns a bright, bloody orange after being separated from the fruit, hence the name.

Just for decoration—and possibly to add even more sugar—a squared orange slice on a toothpick is rested on top of the glass, barely touching the drink itself. It tastes almost exactly like orange juice, if orange juice was spiked with strong rum. Pitu Cachaça is very similar to rum, and its mix with beer strengthens the flavor if done well. The orange juice complements the rummy taste so that it's not overwhelming but also not overpowered by the taste of cold medicine.

It is possible that readers might get a sugar high in addition to the buzz after having a Blood Orange sangria, but at least you will fit in well with the “spirited” atmosphere (pun intended) at Cafe Sevilla. Everyone, including the servers, are happy. This could be from being able to eat endless supplies of tapas, but I'd like to think this joy is due to sugar infused craft drinks like the Blood Orange.