

LAUNCH PAD

Legendary Launch

SOMETIMES A PRODUCT IS SO OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD
THAT ONLY A VEGAS NIGHTCLUB CAN LAUNCH IT:
ENTER THE DRAGON (FRUIT)

by E.C. Gladstone / photos by Beverly Poppe



SKYY Spirits took their new **All Natural SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit** to PURE nightclub at Caesars Palace in April, transforming the multi-level dance spot into a lush Asian rainforest, with Hollywood's Selita Ebanks and Olivia Munn hosting.

"This is a crowd that is exposed to hundreds of brands a year," Maura McGinn, Group Brand Director, SKYY Spirits tells THE TASTING PANEL. "So to see such an amazing response to the introduction of SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit is really satisfying. Our Las Vegas event was the culmination of a lot of hard work and consumer research. When you look out on a very high-energy club packed with 2,000 people enjoying your product, it makes all your hard work worth the effort."

McGinn notes that between its healthful "superfruit" properties—even more anti-oxidant properties than pomegranate or açai—and familiarity to Asian and Latino consumers, dragon fruit is quickly becoming the new "it" fruit. "It's on the cusp of being the next hot trend."

Wet Republic model/cocktail server Claudia Morales is pictured with the Dragon Fruit Spritzer: fresh fruity and tart with a little froth—cooling and not overly sweet.



AMG Mixologist and Lead Bartender Ray Srp is pictured at Savile Row, with his Button Down, the most impressive of all SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit concoctions, with a berry nose, velvety mouth feel and vinegar tartness—sweet yet serious.



Selita Ebanks and Olivia Munn entertained everyone in the VIP area for the launch party at PURE nightclub in Caesars Palace.



Social House General Manager Michael LaPorte is pictured with the Spirit of the Dragon, sweet and creamy, great for pairing with their curry lobster or crispy eel sushi rolls. One taste and LaPorte wanted to add it to the menu immediately.

"We don't want to play the 'me-too' flavors game," McGinn says. "We are really focused on advancing the flavored vodka category, bringing truly innovative products to the market that excite both bartenders and consumers alike, rather than playing follow the leader."

According to McGinn, the SKYY Infusions development team came across the exotic fruit in a farmers' market. "It looks like nothing you have ever seen, almost straight out of a mystical land. Then you cut it open and taste the surprising red berry flavor. We knew we had a winner. Today's Millennial consumer grew up loving

drinks with really bright flavors, like Vitamin Water and Jamba Juice, so as they move on to spirits, the fresh, bursting flavor of SKYY Infusions is a natural progression."

The Dragon Fruit Challenge

THE TASTING PANEL asked Ray Srp, Mixologist for Angel Management Group—PURE's corporate parent—to create drinks that would work in sister properties Wet Republic (a pool and "dayclub" at the MGM Grand resort), Social House (an Asian fusion restaurant at Crystals, City Center) and Savile Row (a speakeasy-inspired mixology bar at the Luxor resort), all located at

other Strip properties.

He came up with the simple but refreshing watermelon-berry Dragon Fruit Spritzer for Wet Republic, fragrant yuzu and ginger infused Spirit of the Dragon for Social House and complex but balanced Button Down for Savile Row.

"To me, it's a cross between kiwi and pear," says Srp of dragon fruit's flavor. "The SKYY Infusion represents that flavor well, and it has a very balanced profile that mixes well in cocktails." Clearly, Srp's cocktails, each distinctly different, show that SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit indeed has the legs to cross continents. ■

DRAGON FRUIT SPRITZER

created by Ray Srp for Wet Republic

- 1½ oz. SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit
- ½ oz. Marie Brizard Watermelon liqueur
- 1½ oz. Fresh lemon sour
- 3 oz. champagne
- Serve over ice; garnish with a watermelon wedge.

SPIRIT OF THE DRAGON

created by Ray Srp for Social House

- 1½ oz. SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit
- ¾ oz. Domaine de Canton ginger liqueur
- 2 oz. Sence Rose Nectar
- ½ oz. yuzu juice
- ½ oz. agave nectar simple syrup
- Shake and strain into a cocktail or Martini glass. Garnish with candied ginger.

BUTTON DOWN

created by Ray Srp for Savile Row

- 1½ oz. SKYY Infusions Dragon Fruit
- 1 oz. Fragoli Wild Strawberry liqueur
- ½ oz. passionfruit purée
- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. white balsamic vinegar
- 1 oz. agave nectar simple syrup
- Serve over ice; garnish with a strawberry.