Second Amaretto Experiment

Amaretto is a liqueur made from infusing alcohol with the pits of stone fruits and almonds. Its name comes from the Italian word *amaro* which means bitter; making the diminutive form translate roughly to "little bitter." As is usual with infusions, additional spices and sugars are added to round the flavor. Most typically, almonds, apricot kernel, sour cherry stones, caramelized sugar, fennel, vanilla. It is typically between 20-30 percent alcohol by volume. There is also a cousin to Amaretto from Portugal called *Licor de Amêndoa Amarga* or *Amarguinha.*

There are two fanciful claims to the history of modern Amaretto; One from the Reina family who says that their recipe originated in 1525 when a widowed innkeeper in Saronno gifted it to Bernardino Luini, who was painting frescos in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie; allegedly she became his lover and his model for the Madonna in the "Adoration of the Magi". Somehow in 1600 Giovanni Reina is said to have discovered the original recipe and made the liqueur passing it down generation after generation. It has been stated that Giovanni had been working for the Lazzaroni family in their cookie business at this time. Modernly, The Reina family markets their recipe as DiSaronno. The other origin story is from the Lazzaroni family, also of Saronno, who state that the liqueur was crafted after their amaretti cookies which were a popular favorite of the region's King; they created an infusion with their cookies and began to sell it commercially in 1851.

I suspect that the real inspiration came from the Roman practice of steeping almonds, fruit, and other spices in wine; this is a way to make *posca*; the watered sour wine that has not been vinegared, more potable and extend its life for the Roman soldiers and the poor. Adding fruit was found in *temetum* which was often made with rowan fruit. The red berries are quite bitter but harvested after a frost; sweeten and have a flavor like cranberry.

Apricots were introduced to Italy by the Ancient Romans by way of Greece as evidenced by the writing of Pliny the Elder in the 1st century AD who dubbed it *praecocum* "the precocious one" and later in the writings of the scientist Gian Battista Porta around 1583. The Romans typically served them as part of the appetizers course paired with wine and *mulsum* (wines prepared with honey and grapes). We start to see appetizers prepared with apricots in the recipes attributed to Macus Gavius Apicius. (Ancient Roman Cooking: Ingredients, Recipes, Sources by Marco Gavio De Rubeis)

I did some research to find recipes that included both almonds and apricots and tried to match the ingredients to the old world so that I could create an Amaretto flavor that is less sweet than commercial bitters but not objectionable to the modern pallet. Amaretto recipes are family secrets and the base spirit seems to shift so I have decided to try mixing with overproof vodka, overproof rum, and brandy. This is my second attempt and I have made a few adjustments to be closer to a period possible recipe.

All three variations have been created with the same ingredients but the base spirits have been varied to see what flavors would be created by the different bases.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup Dried apricots, rough chopped and rehydrated in hot water for 30 minutes
- 1 cup filtered water
- ¼ cup Apricot kernels, broken open but not finely ground
- ¼ cup Raw almonds, rough smashed
- 1 tablespoon Fennel seeds, broken open but not finely ground
- 1 tablespoon Mahlab, broken open but not finely ground
- 1 green Cardamom pod, broken open but not finely ground
- 1/2 teaspoon is 2 parts cinnamon to 1 part clove and 1 part nutmeg [taking place of the allspice berry from the original source material in attempt 1]
- 80 proof Christian Brothers Brandy
- 126 proof Rway and Nephew Rum
- 190 proof Diesel vodka
- ½ cup cane sugar in ½ cup filtered water
- ½ white sugar that has been caramelized

Spices and fruit were chopped or ground coarsely and left to soak in their respective alcohol for 12 days. (November 26, 2023 – December 8th, 2023). Each day the air tight containers were shaken well in the morning and in the evening. [With the First Experiment each was left for 25 days.]

Each used a batch of caramelized white sugar, cane sugar, and filtered water.

Amaretto # 4 – Rum and Brandy

fruit and spiced alcohol was added to the sugar syrup mixture and had the addition of ½ cup of brandy as well as ¼ filtered water to help round the flavors. The yield of the spiced and fruit mixture was 390ml; with the addition of more alcohol and the sugar syrup mixture it was approximately 510 ml.

Observations: This batch is extremely sweet and before the additional ¼ cup of filtered water was nearly a syrup that overwhelmed the pallet with sweetness and no flavors of fruit or nut were distinguished. With the additional water, this mellows and you get more of the complexity.

Amaretto # 5 – Vodka and Brandy

fruit and spiced alcohol was added to the sugar syrup mixture and had the addition of ½ cup of brandy. The yield of the spiced and fruit mixture was 400ml; with the addition of more alcohol and the sugar syrup mixture it was approximately 530 mls.

Observations: The first attempt at this mixture became neither too sweet nor too herbal but had a middle of the road that pleased very few. Perhaps it's the shorter time with the spices and fruit or the lower the base spirits proof but this version is much more pleasant.

Amaretto # 6 – Brandy and Vodka and Rum (jorundr's blend)

fruit and spiced alcohol was added to the sugar syrup mixture and had the addition of ½ cup of alcohol (split equally between brandy, vodka, and rum). The yield of the spiced and fruit mixture was 400ml; with the addition of more alcohol and the sugar syrup mixture it was approximately 600ml.

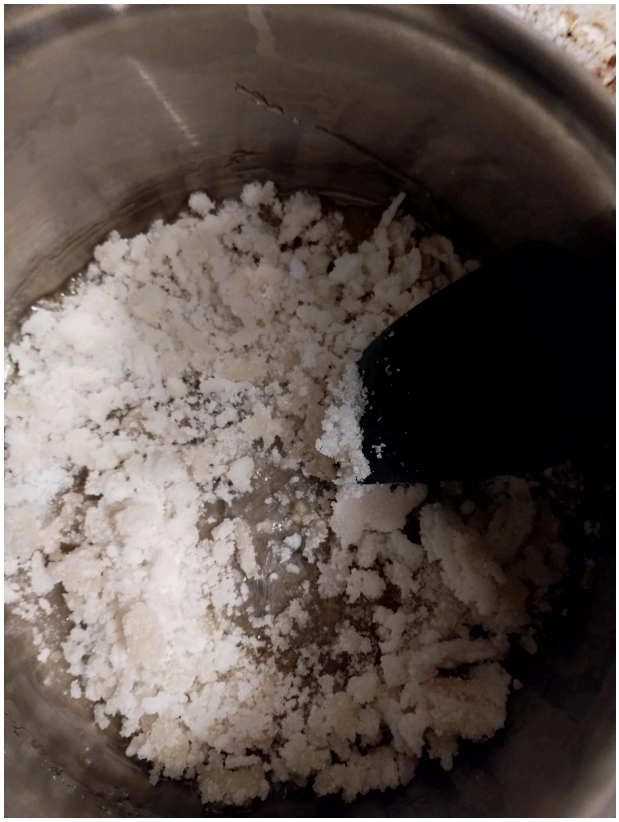
Observations from jorundr: nut flavor forward, fennel in the middle, and a peppery finish. This is his preference and a play on the Rum and Vodka variant made in the first experiment.

What changed from the First Experiment to the Second Experiment?

- White sugar was used for caramelization instead of cane or turbinado sugar. The Allspice berry was replaced by period correct spices (2 parts cinnamon to 1 part clove and 1 part nutmeg).
- small batched the Cane sugar syrup, caramelized white sugar, and blended them together while still hot where previously we prepared this for all three batched in one go.
- The previous experiment was run for about 25 days where this test was done in about 12 days.
- The proof of the rum was taken down from 130 to 126.
- Filtered through Cheesecloth and chinoise, muslin, then #2 coffee filters.
- No Vanilla or simple syrup was added at the end to round flavors.



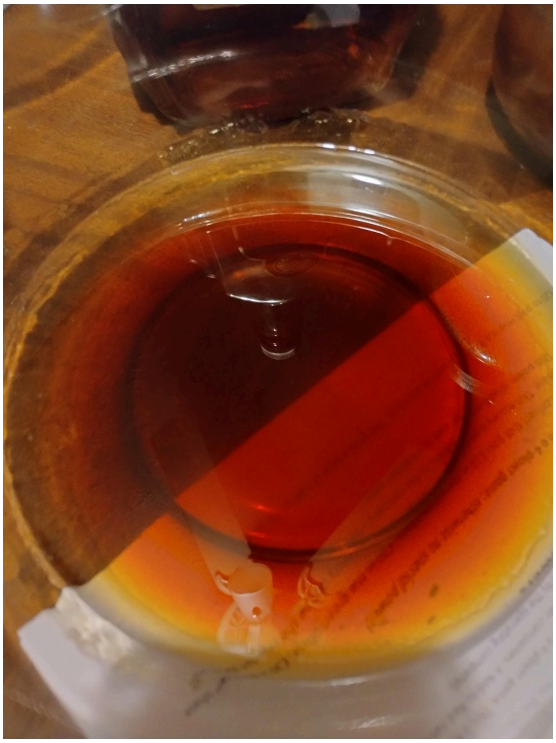
Cane Sugar and filtered water for Simple Syrup



Caramelizing white sugar



Simple Syrup with caramelized white sugar



alcohol and sugar mixture combined

The First Experiment:

