

Mellinis

This recipe comes from David Tanis, head chef of Chez Panisse, for whom I recently made a large batch of melon puree for the restaurant guests' aperitifs. He didn't call them 'mellinis', but that's what they are to me. Just make sure you get a perfectly ripe melon with sweet, juicy and fragrant orange flesh.

Makes: 15-20 cocktails

Time: 30 mins

- 1 ripe cantaloupe melon, or similar
- 2 tbsps fine white sugar, or to taste
- 1½ tsps lemon juice, or to taste
- 1 tbsp lime juice, or to taste
- 3 bottles of good Italian (of course) prosecco, well chilled
- small sprigs of mint and/or thin slices of lime to garnish (optional)

1. Cut all the skin off the melon, halve it, scoop out the seeds, then slice and chop into 1" pieces. Puree in batches in a blender. Pass through a sieve into a jug, rubbing through with the underside of a ladle if necessary. You should now have a beautifully smooth puree.
2. Stir in sugar, lemon and lime juices, tasting as you go. The puree should not taste particularly lemony or limey; they're just there to brighten it a bit.
3. Cover and keep chilled until needed. You should have about 750ml (3+ cups). Do not make more than a few hours in advance.
4. When time to serve, pour out several glasses of prosecco to $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Add 2-3 tbsps of melon puree to each and stir gently with the handle of a teaspoon. Add in a touch more prosecco if needed. You will need to make several test glasses to decide how much puree you like. This shouldn't be too much of a chore. Garnish with mint sprigs and/or lime slices if you wish.

