



Carajillo Granita

Imagine having that sweet treat right in your freezer, just chillin', waiting for you and your spoon.

Recipe and photo by Christian Reynoso

It's never not a good idea to have a little something sweet at your fingertips when you're like, "I need a pick-me-up after this dinner," or "Help! I'm not trying to become one with my couch yet!" When summer hits, it's a game changer. Imagine having that sweet treat right in your freezer, just chillin', waiting for you and your spoon. Enter the Carajillo Granita – it's like Italian shaved ice plus a perfect balance of sweet, spicy and a little coffee flavor, all in one.

The Carajillo, in its cocktail form, has a history that started in Spain, but has since trotted the globe, leaving mesmerized fans like me everywhere. In Mexico City, where I just spent the first half of the summer, it's especially popular.

This cocktail blends espresso and a Spanish liqueur called Licor 43 that's sweet and spicy in the sense of cinnamon, vanilla and maybe a little orange zest. It's a little herbaceous. You shake these two liquids plus some ice, and the friction aerates so much that it gets super frothy, almost creamy at the top. Overall, it's an incredibly simple cocktail reminiscent of an espresso martini, but less boozy and better for any time of the day.

Because there's no way to authentically re-create the creamy froth from the cocktail, I like to pair this with whipped cream, so you'll notice a certain dairy in the ingredient list of my recipe below, which when served in a glass, reminds me of the iconic Espresso Granita at Zuni Café. But on that note, I don't call for espresso, because my house is not a café and I don't own an espresso machine. However, I call for cold brew, because it's strong enough to counter the sweet liqueur and is readily available, just as this icy sweet treat will be in your freezer.

Serves 4 to 6

Inspired by the Spanish cocktail, this icy, light treat is great for any time of the day. It's a simple mix of cold brew coffee and Licor 43, a sweet liqueur with hints of orange, vanilla and cinnamon. Topping the granita with whipped cream evokes the creamy froth the cocktail is known for, but it is optional. Remember to chill glassware or bowls ahead so the granita melts more slowly.

2 cups unsweetened cold brew

½ cup Licor 43

¼ cup granulated sugar

Salt

Whipped cream, for serving (optional)

Place 4 serving glasses or bowls in the freezer. Pour the cold brew and Licor 43 into a dish, glass or ceramic, like a square 8"x8"x2" baking dish. Whisk in the sugar and a small pinch of salt to dissolve then cover and place in the freezer until firm and frozen, about 3 to 4 hours.

Take the frozen Carajillo out of the freezer. Working quickly (it will melt!), start scraping from the top end of the dish to the bottom by pressing a fork into the ice, and pull towards yourself. Keep doing this until you've scraped all the way across. Turn the pan and repeat this process until the treat starts to hit the bottom of the dish. Any chunks at the bottom should be smashed and broken into very small pieces with your fork.

Serve in the chilled bowls or glassware with whipped cream spooned over the top.