

The “Test of the Champion” comes this Saturday, when American Pharoah attempts to become the twelfth thoroughbred -- and the first since Affirmed in 1978 -- to capture the Triple Crown at the Belmont Stakes. But for all its high-toned gentility, the Sport of Kings has a surprisingly egalitarian streak. Crowds will swell at Belmont Park, as they do whenever there’s a Triple Crown contender, and they’ll be thirsty. Fortunately, it’s accepted practice to watch a horse race with a drink in hand, and all three of the Triple Crown races have a cocktail associated with them, though the recipes tend to vary depending on which liquor brands are sponsoring the races each year. The Kentucky Derby of course has the [mint julep](#), the Preakness has the [Black-Eyed Susan](#), and at Belmont, they serve up the [Belmont Jewel](#), so named for the Belmont Stakes’ position as the “jewel of the Triple Crown.”

It wasn’t always thus, though. In 1989, a New York *Times* article [mentioned the Carnation](#) (vodka, peach schnapps, and 7-Up) which later became the [White Carnation](#) (which added OJ, a splash of cream, and subbed soda for 7-Up). Both these drinks are named for the race’s official flower, a blanket of which drapes the winner after the race. (In Kentucky, of course, they run for the roses, and at the Preakness, the winner gets a blanket of Viking daisies painted to look like the out-of-season black-eyed Susan, Maryland’s state flower.) The situation got much more palatable in 1998, when master mixologist [Dale DeGroff](#) introduced the [Belmont Breeze](#).

As DeGroff states, the Belmont Breeze is kind of a cross between a [sherry cobbler](#) and a [whiskey punch](#). Though [the Times disagreed in 2005](#), saying that “it tastes like a refined trashcan punch”, I find it delectable, if a little fiddly to turn out in any large number. Here’s the [recipe](#):

Belmont Breeze (original)

- 1 ½ oz. rye whiskey
- ½ oz. Dry Sack sherry
- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- ½ oz. simple syrup
- splash fresh orange juice
- splash cranberry juice
- 5 mint leaves

Shake all ingredients with ice, strain into an ice-filled highball glass or chilled cocktail glass, and garnish with an orange wheel and mint sprig. Optionally, top with a splash of soda or 7-Up.



(Belmont Breeze at left, Belmont Jewel at right. Photo by Sam Meyer.)

As the years have gone by (and presumably the fine folks at Belmont Park got tired of batching a more complex drink), the Belmont Breeze has been replaced by the Belmont Jewel. The brand of bourbon specified has changed as the sponsorship has, but the recipe has remained consistent:

Belmont Jewel

- 1 ½ oz. Knob Creek bourbon
- 2 oz. lemonade
- 1 oz. pomegranate juice

Shake vigorously with ice, strain into an ice-filled rocks glass, and garnish with a cocktail cherry or lemon twist.

This recipe lends itself to tinkering, too: might it be a little more intense if you used, say, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. each of lemon juice and simple syrup instead of lemonade? What about trying a small dollop of pomegranate molasses instead of the juice? How about making it with rye?

This is a refreshing drink, suitable for watching a horse race, whether you swelter outside in a crowd or chill in front of the TV. To borrow a phrase from the name of a 2012 Triple Crown favorite, I'll Have Another.