

Decorated with maraschino cherries, the bubbles of ginger ale are painted a pink-red tint of grenadine.

If you ask for an iconic drink, the first to come to mind might be a drink named after a child actress that strongly rejected it from time of creation until her death. Not to mention the drink is deliciously sweet, bubbly and refreshing.

“I will fight like a tigress,” Temple said, “All a celebrity has is their name.”

It was 1932, and the charming child actress Shirley Temple was celebrating her tenth birthday. Dining in Beverly Hills, Shirley set eyes on the colorful cocktails the adults were drinking and requested one of her own.

This version of the story is from the website Make Me a Cocktail and is similar throughout many publications. However, many restaurants from all around today claim to have been the birthplace of the Shirley Temple.

The bartender might have had an adverse reaction when Shirley used the word “icky” in response to them creating her this special drink. However, they couldn’t have been as annoyed as Shirley, who took a company to court years later in 1988 for the use of her name on a drink she didn’t even like.

According to The Takeout, an online publication covering all things food, explains that the company Soda Pop Kids moved to create a bottled Shirley Temple drink, which immediately caught Shirley Temple’s attention. She filed a lawsuit for the use of her name and ultimately won.

Despite her distaste for the Shirley Temple drink, her legacy is now attached to the drink, with modern adaptations being made and fans of the drink all around the world.

Many enjoy a “Dirty Shirley” by just adding a shot of vodka or rum to the ginger ale and grenadine mixture. Some choose to change the base of the drink to make it more citrusy, tangy or fruity by using lemonade, soda, orange juice and more.

Even after she adopted her married name, Shirley Temple Black, she couldn’t escape her connection to the drink. “Shirley Temple Black” is a distinct variation of the original drink using grenadine, lemonade and Kahlua.

When I was 10 years old—the same age Shirley was when the drink originated — I was on a cruise with my family. My family didn’t often keep sodas in the house growing up, and especially not syrups such as grenadine.

You can imagine my excitement when I had the option to have an all-inclusive drink sitting next to me by the pool on the ship deck. Given the opportunity, I knew I had to think of the sweetest summer drink I could.

My mom ordered me a Shirley Temple, and after that I had the vibrant drink at least once a day on that trip. I had met my sugary match. Eating the cold, maraschino cherries once the drink was finished felt like Christmas morning to 10-year-old me.

My friend Kate Connolly shares the same sentiment for the drink.

“It reminds me of childhood,” Connolly said, “specifically of being sunburnt napping on the beach after a long day of jumping over waves.”

Although many people of all ages enjoy variations of the drink just like I do, even as an adult Shirley declared her distaste for the drink, calling it a “saccharine, icky drink” and made it clear that she “had nothing to do with it.”

Even at this age, I would choose to enjoy the drink —although now, I may be more likely to opt for a Dirty Shirley. My love for the iconic drink has been shared with my family and

friends as well. Over the summer, I shared a family dinner with my friend Sam Spencer and served everyone a post-dinner Dirty Shirley.

“I had never had a Shirley Temple, let alone a Dirty Shirley,” Spencer said, “but when Mary offered to make us all one of her favorite drinks, I was pleasantly surprised.”

Now, my parents make sure we are stocked with ginger ale and grenadine for when I visit home.

Despite the pushback Shirley Temple gave Soda Pop Kids when the company tried to bottle the drink in 1988, many versions of the drink are available for purchase in grocery stores today. Most recently, in 2024, 7UP released a Shirley Temple soda.