

OFF DUTY

EATING & DRINKING

5 WAYS TO MAXIMIZE A MARTINI

1

Give Your Bottles an Upgrade

If you're a martini fan, chances are your personal preferences are already established. Great. The cocktail rewards those who know what they want. But if you're just discovering the drink or want to play the field a little, here are some gins and vodkas, many of them new, that will expand your palette.

**Classic and Elegant**

Stock up on these gins if you prefer a classic martini. Think crisp and subtly layered with typical gin flavors. To many, a London Dry gin is a must, and the newish No. 3 (46% ABV, \$45) presents an ur-version of the style—a harmonious blend of juniper, citrus and spice with just enough kick. St. George Botanivore, from California (45% ABV, \$40), brings a welcome brightness and freshness to the drink. And if you're looking for the martini gin that will impress everyone and offend no one, go for the delightfully smooth Plymouth (41.2% ABV, \$33). Try it in a 50-50 martini and you may get hooked.

**Modern and Distinctive**

These gins make martinis that are like navy tuxedos: a little cheeky yet 100% on point. The brand new Sipsmith V.J.O.P. (57.7% ABV, \$50) is a juniper explosion that will warm a gin lover's heart, literally (just look at that proof). Unfiltered Gin 22 (40% ABV, \$45) from up-and-coming Canadian distiller Dillon's surprises with every sip—is that coriander? lavender?—yet its creativity never gets in the way of drinkability. Bust out a bottle of Monkey 47 (47% ABV, \$45) for your guests who've tried it all. Weird, wild, mysterious and damn delicious, it makes a martini for a special occasion.

**Vodka With Character**

An easy-drinking vodka martini—that's why they're so popular, right?—doesn't have to mean a boring one. And you don't need a gimmicky flavored vodka to make things interesting, just one with texture and purpose. Aylesbury Duck (40% ABV) is wheaty with a mouthwatering dry minerality. Karlsson's Gold is made from Swedish virgin potatoes, giving the spirit an earthy flavor and more than enough body to hold a martini together. Try it with a garnish of cracked black pepper. Absolut Elyx (42.3% ABV, \$50) expresses a kind of terroir not often found in vodkas as it's made from a single estate's winter wheat. The result is creamy liquid velvet.

2

Don't Overlook the Vermouth

Without vermouth, you're just drinking ice-cold gin. Nothing wrong with that, but the magic of the martini happens when that spirit marries with the fortified wine. And there are so many new vermouths to choose from. If you have an aversion, chances are you've encountered one that's old and overly oxidized. The stuff should be refrigerated once open and ideally used within three months of purchase. Many vermouths now come in convenient half-size bottles. If you can't find one of these, simply start making more martinis, or learn to love vermouth on the rocks. It's an ingredient that deserves more respect.



American Beauty
Ransom Dry Vermouth, stellar on its own, makes an incredibly bold martini.

New Standby For the craft cocktail set, **Dolin Dry** has become a standard. Super light, with the perfect amount of dry bitterness.

Italian Twist **Carpano Dry** will add a delightful touch of spice and lemon

peel. It marries nicely with more citrus-forward gins.

French New Wave
La Quintinye Extra Dry tastes like a cousin of a fino Sherry. Think rosemary, white pepper and lemon zest.

Old Standby You can't go wrong with **Noilly Prat Extra Dry**. Period. A vermouth that happily stands in the background.

3

Assemble the Right Tools

Y Peeler
You might be tempted to forgo the lemon twist at home because you don't want to bust out a knife and cutting board. This tool makes obtaining a perfect peel segment quick and easy. \$9, oxo.com

Teardrop Barspoon
Plunge in all the way to the bottom of the glass and blend

smoothly in wide circles. Shaking over-dilutes a martini. \$18, cocktailkingdom.com

Yarai Royal Palm Mixing Glass
Classier than a pint glass for stirring up your drink. Instead of gripping the glass, you steady it by setting your thumb

on the rim, thereby ensuring secure mixing without transferring heat from your hand. Admire the glass as it gets frosty. \$80, cocktailkingdom.com

Koriko Hawthorne Strainer
Easily keeps the ice out of your coupe when you pour. You want your martini cold, not chunky. \$23, cocktailkingdom.com

Stepped Jigger
Because accuracy counts. \$40, cocktailkingdom.com

Victorinox Channel Knife
For those times when you want a fancy, pigtail twist. \$30, amazon.com



4

Try Some Tricks of the Trade

"Little affectations are what make the best martinis," said Derek Brown, bartender and president of Drink Company in Washington, D.C. Years ago at Washington's Columbia Room, which is scheduled to reopen in 2016, he made me a 50-50 martini using a chilled mixing glass and a thermometer to confirm the optimal 29 degrees Fahrenheit. It was one of the best martinis I've ever had. Mr. Brown shared some pro tips you can easily institute at your home bar—thermometer optional.

Keep everything super cold. That means gin in the freezer, vermouth and glasses in the fridge.

Try the olives on the side. Olives served in a martini can overpower the drink. Instead, serve them on a plate as a snack.

Think small. A barely cool martini is a fail. Make smaller drinks—under 4 ounces. And drink fast.

5

Master These Martini Recipes, From Old-School to Innovative

The Classic Martini

Consider this recipe a happy middle ground. Not too wet, not too dry. Prefer more vermouth or a semi-responsible drink at lunch? Try a 50-50 martini with equal parts gin and vermouth. Hard day at work? Keep it to just two dashes of vermouth and go extra-dry. The beauty of the martini is that it suits everyone and a multitude of occasions.

Add 2 dashes orange bitters (optional), $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce dry vermouth, and 2½ ounces gin to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Twist a strip of lemon peel over top and drop into drink or discard. Olive garnish optional. Garnish with a pickled cocktail onion and you have yourself a Gibson.

The Vesper

For those who can't decide between gin or vodka.

Add 2 dashes orange bitters, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Cocchi Americano, $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce vodka and 1½ ounces Tanqueray No. Ten to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Light a match or lighter over glass, express oil from a strip of orange peel over the flame to lightly caramelize oil and then drop orange twist into drink.

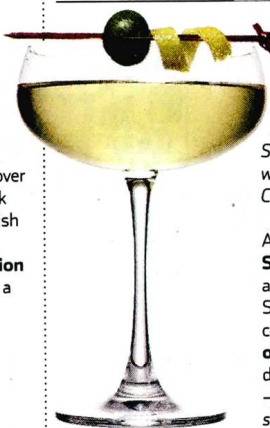
—Adapted from Charles Joly of Crafthouse Spirits, Chicago



Straight Law

A super light and food-friendly inverse martini with vermouth swapped out for Manzanilla Sherry, which marries nicely with a vegetal gin like Rutte Celery or Hendrick's.

Add 1½ ounces Manzanilla Sherry and $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce gin to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Twist a strip of lemon peel over drink and drop in. Add olive garnish. —Adapted from Will Thompson of Yvonne's, Boston



Upside Down Dirty Gibson

Love dirty martinis? This will be your favorite. Hate them? This will still be your favorite.

Add 3 dashes lemon bitters, 2 dashes wormwood bitters (optional), 2 teaspoons pickled onion brine, 2 ounces dry vermouth and 1 ounce gin to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Twist a strip of lemon peel over glass and discard. Garnish with a pickled cocktail onion. —Adapted from Naren Young of Dante, New York

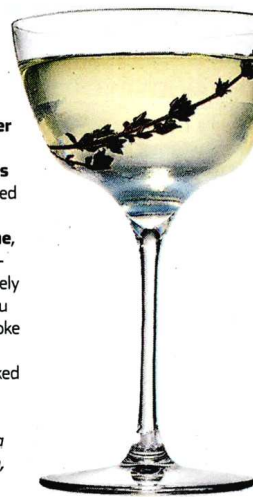


Savory Martini

A martini that drinks like a steak.

Add 3 dashes cucumber bitters, 1 ounce dry vermouth and 2 ounces gin to a mixing glass filled with ice and stir. Dip a thyme sprig in absinthe, light sprig on fire and invert a coupe approximately 6 inches over flame. (You want to capture the smoke but not heat the glass.) Strain cocktail into smoked coupe and garnish with charred thyme.

—Adapted from Cristiana DeLuca of Maple & Ash, Chicago



Astoria Bianco

Bianco vermouth brings more sweetness to this drink than dry vermouth would.

Add 2 dashes orange bitters, 1 ounce bianco vermouth and 2½ ounces gin to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Twist a strip of orange peel over glass and drop in. —Adapted from Jim Meehan of PDT, New York



Old King Cole Martini

Proof that a specific gin can really shape a martini. The very vegetal Old Raj has a slight saffron color. This is what a mean dry martini would be like in the '40s.

Add 2-3 dashes orange bitters, $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce dry vermouth and 3 ounces Old Raj Gin into a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with skewered Castelvetrano olives and a lemon twist.

—Adapted from Will Elliott of Maison Premiere, Brooklyn

Normandie Club Martini

A complex yet easy-drinking martini variation that showcases the versatility of vodka. Yeah, it takes a bit more work, but it's worth it.

Make raw white honey syrup: Stir 3 ounces raw white honey into 1 ounce filtered water. Stir until dissolved. // Make sel gris water: combine 3 parts water with 1 part grey sea salt. Stir until salt dissolves, and transfer to an atomizer (available at specialtybottle.com). // Add 1 teaspoon raw white honey syrup, 2 ounces vodka and 1 ounce fino Sherry to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Spray three generous mists of sel gris water over drink. —Adapted from Devon Tarby & Alex Day, The Normandie Club, Los Angeles

