

Shaken, Not Stirred

Consider the Humble Martini

There was a time, thanks to a certain British Secret Service agent, when the only thing you might have to decide about your martini is whether it was to be shaken or stirred.

The world of this deceptively simple cocktail, however, can be a diverse, broad and multifaceted place. Take, for example, its most basic building blocks.

Gin or Vodka

The classic martini is crafted with gin — in large part because it pairs so well with vermouth. And because different styles and brands of gin use different recipes and combinations of botanicals, each martini made with gin can have vastly different flavors and character. A more contemporary option, however, will get you a martini made with vodka. After all, if it was good enough for Bond (who famously included both gin and vodka in his preferred version,) it's good enough. Just ask Daniel Craig, one of the more recent actors to portray Bond: "I love vodka martinis. I know, it's a cliché."

In the end, it just comes down to personal taste.



Classic Dry Martini

courtesy Epicurious.com

1½ ounces London dry gin (such as Beefeater)
 ½ ounce dry vermouth
 Green olive (or a lemon twist) for garnish
 Cracked ice

In a mixing glass or cocktail shaker filled with ice, combine gin and vermouth. Stir well, about 30 seconds, and then strain into a martini glass. Garnish with olive or lemon twist and serve.

From there, the options begin to expand: wet, dry, dirty or filthy. And that's without even getting into a menu of flavors limited only by the bartender's imagination.

Dry, Wet or Perfect

You'll often hear someone order a martini 'dry.' A dry martini has less vermouth in it. A very dry martini would have very little vermouth. A skilled mixologist creating a very dry martini may roll the vermouth in the glass, just coating the inside (also known as the 'in and out' martini, apparently favored by Lyndon B. Johnson.) A wet martini will use more dry vermouth, and a perfect martini will be made with equal parts dry and sweet vermouth with your gin (or vodka.)

Dirty, Filthy, Gibson or Vesper

Most bartenders are prepared to make your cocktail in a few different styles, including dirty, Gibson or Vesper. A dirty martini will have a splash of olive juice in it. To make the jump from dirty to filthy, simply replace the olive juice with caperberry and brine. Caperberries are the size of peppercorns, look like small green olives with a stem and come packed in a vinegar brine or salt.

A Gibson, as with any martini, can be made with gin or vodka, leaving out the olive or the twist and instead serving it with a pearl onion. A Vesper, a style made famous by James Bond, was originally described as being made with gin, vodka and Kina Lillet — a bitter wine aperitif.

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— 1910 —

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The only way to make
a martini is with ice-cold
gin and a bow in the
direction of France.

Winston Churchill

To Ice, or Not to Ice?

You can order your martini up or on the rocks. Request it 'up' and it'll arrive in a traditional martini glass, having been shaken (or stirred) with ice and then strained before pouring. Get it on the rocks and you'll have a drink with ice, which will dilute it as the ice melts.

Shaken or Stirred

The enduring image of a tuxedo-clad, dashing secret agent cradling a martini has certainly added to its sophisticated, civilized reputation — one that got its start in the pages of Ian Fleming's novels beginning in the early 1950s. Although the on-screen version of James Bond didn't actually order himself one until 'Goldfinger,' in 1964, the beverage was part of Fleming's character starting in the 'Casino Royale' novel in 1953. In chapter seven, he orders it dry, in a deep Champagne goblet — three measures of Gordon's Gin, one of vodka and a half measure of Kina Lillet, shaken until it is 'ice cold,' and then served with a thin slice of lemon peel.

The Bond Martini (aka The Vesper Martini)

courtesy thespruceeats.com

3 ounces gin
1 ounce vodka
½ ounce dry vermouth
Lemon peel for garnish

In a cocktail shaker, combine the ingredients. Shake well and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a large piece of lemon peel and serve.



Alternately, many people prefer to stir it (a fine detail, but Bond may not approve.) According to the pros, the shake is good because it dilutes the drink, which can have a strong alcohol flavor, a bit more.