

Seven Secrets to Making Sensational Martinis



In the book *Casino Royale*, James Bond ordered a dry martini made with “*three measures of Gordon’s Gin, one of vodka, half a measure of Lillet. Shake it very well until it’s ice-cold, then add a large, thin slice of lemon peel.*” This famous cocktail is now referred to as the 007 Martini. What you might not know is that by the time Bond hit the big screen in the 1962 movie *Dr. No* the drink had slimmed down to a more svelte “*vodka martini, shaken not stirred.*”

The martini, the undisputed king of all cocktails, tops the short list of drinks that every bar must excel at making. It doesn’t have to be fancy and elaborate, just made well made and great tasting. Furthermore, in this day of heightened competition, the case can be made that every bar should adopt a signature martini, a drink that they can stake a claim to and build a reputation on as a worthy watering hole.

Fortunately, the martini is an easy drink to perfect. Chic, crisp, and thoroughly engaging, it ranks among the most versatile of the classic

cocktails. This latitude has prompted a wave of new and intriguing martini variations that rival the appeal of the original.

Get past the ritual and mystique, and you’ll find that all signature martinis are essentially comprised of three elements, namely the modifier, base spirit and garnish. Tweak one or more of those elements and you’re well on the way to creating a dynamic signature martini.

To that end, we’ve unraveled the secrets behind the great signature martinis.

- **Vermouth-ing** — The most frequently used modifier in a martini is dry vermouth. As an aperitif wine, the vermouth softens the edge of the liquor. Over the course of several decades the trend was to use increasingly less vermouth in the cocktail, thereby making progressively drier martinis. Early versions of the drink called for 3 parts gin and 1 part vermouth (3:1), however, over time, the 4-to-1 dry martini became the accepted norm. It’s said Winston Churchill made

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his martinis by pouring gin into a pitcher and glancing briefly at a bottle of vermouth across the room.

Today, mixologists are reverting to the classic style of using more vermouth when preparing martinis. This trend comes with a caveat. While vermouth is comparatively inexpensive, not just any brand of vermouth will do. Vermouth is a complex, sophisticated wine, one that is difficult and laborious to make. The difference between a great vermouth and one that's merely adequate is enormous.

One way to create a fabulous signature martini is to substitute a different aperitif for the vermouth. Top candidates include Fino sherry, Oloroso port, sake, Madeira and Dubonnet. Each does a laudable job of adding flavor and smoothing out the cocktail.

- **Modify With Liqueurs** — Liqueurs also make excellent modifiers. A splash of a liqueur or two adds a blast of flavor and an attractive hue. One of the hottest specialty martinis in the country now is the Appletini, a cool cocktail made with DeKuyper Apple Pucker and vodka. Other popular choices are Frangelico (Nutcracker Martini), Kahlúa (Martini Latte), Chambord (Martini Framboise), Godiva (Chocolate Martini) and black sambuca (Sicilian Martini). Consider also Grand Marnier, blue Curaçao, Amaretto and Benedictine.

- **Raise The Bar** — The widespread popularity of superpremium gins and vodkas has served to fuel the martini boom. The better the liquor, the better the martini. The cocktail is an ideal vehicle for showcasing the enhanced character and quality of top-shelf spirits, not to mention what these heavy hitting liquors do to the drink's profit margin.

The light, appealing characters and vivid colors of flavored vodkas are also frequently featured in signature martinis. Take advantage of the palate of flavors offered by Stolichnaya (including lemon, raspberry, strawberry, orange and vanilla), Absolut (Mandarine orange, current, citrus and pepper) and Vincent (chocolate, raspberry, pineapple, vanilla, orange and citrus) and create some unforgettable cocktails.

- **Paradigm Shift** — Why limit your martinis to just gin or vodka though? Tequila and rum perform beautifully in martinis. For example, the **Margarita Martini** is made with Sauza Tres Generaciones Plata, Cointreau, lime juice and a splash of sweet 'n' sour. The **Black Tie Martini** features Appleton Estate Jamaica Rum, while Fidel's Martini is made with a dose of Cruzan Banana Rum and Stolichnaya Vodka.

There are many different types of spirits that can be used in your signature martinis. The **Dark Crystal Martini** is constructed with Stolichnaya Gold, a healthy splash of Courvoisier VSOP Cognac and a lemon twist. Other specialties include the **French (Paisley) Martini**, made with gin, dry vermouth, and a dash of Scotch whisky, the Copper Illusion Martini, equal parts of Cointreau and Campari, and a hefty portion of Beefeater gin, and the **Cajun Martini**, made with vodka, horseradish and chilies.

- **Infused And Enthused** — Infusion jars are unrivaled at creating something singular that the competition can't duplicate. When you create a winning infusion, there's only one place to get it. You can turn virtually any spirit into something extraordinary by infusing it with everything from kiwis to sun-dried tomatoes. Steeping spirits is straightforward and uncomplicated. The process involves marinating fresh fruit, among other things, in large containers filled with spirits. Several days to a week later, the fruit will infuse the chosen spirit with flavor, color, aroma and loads of appealing character.

Consider promoting a signature martini made with lemon-infused Beefeater, pepper-steeped tequila, cherry-infused rum or pineapple vodka. The possibilities are endless.

- **Improving On Perfection** — The crowning touch to any great martini is an equally fitting garnish. Pimento-stuffed olives do not circumscribe all the garnishing possibilities. Popular options include prosciutto-stuffed olives, orange peels, anchovy-wrapped olives, fresh strawberries, bleu cheese-stuffed olives, and tomolives (pickled green tomatoes). The Chesterfield Hotel in Palm Beach, features the Lobster Martini, a cocktail served in an oversized

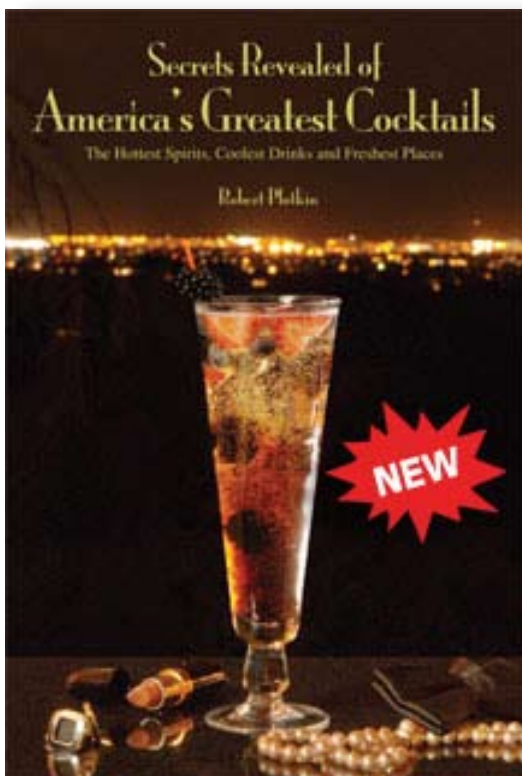
martini glass garnished with lobster meat and a lobster claw. Almond-stuffed olives are used to embellish the Boston Martini.

• **Enhanced Presentation** — The final act entails the cocktail's presentation. One of the most interesting martinis devised is the Smoked Martini, a premium gin martini. The twist is the bartender lights a match, blows it out and lets the smoke swirl on the inside a chilled snifter. The effect is dramatic, imbuing the drink with a captivating smoky flavor.

A more traditional approach is to present the guest with a large chilled cocktail glass and a tray with the ingredients needed to build a martini perfectly suited to his or her own personal preferences. A small water carafe resting in a larger, iced glass contains the chilled liquor, while another is filled with vermouth. There are containers with olives, onions and lemon twists. It's an elegant presentation that nearly eliminates any possibility of the martini being returned due to bartender error.

Robert Plotkin is a judge at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition and the author of numerous books including *Secrets Revealed of America's Greatest Cocktails*. You can reach him at BarMedia—
robert@barmedia.com.

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