

## OFF DUTY

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### Master These Martini Recipes, From Old-School to Innovative



#### 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, ¼ 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

# Have You Met Your Martini?

This relatively simple drink presents plenty of room for experimentation. With so many new gins, vodkas and vermouths on the market, you can keep it classic (and classy) and still find a formula just right for you

BY KEVIN SINTUMUANG

**S**URE, a martini can make you feel like you're in a tuxedo even when you're wearing golf shorts. But the true reason this cocktail has endured since its birth at the turn of the last century lies in its capacity to be highly personalized.

The basic framework is simple—just gin and vermouth—yet each of us can lay claim to “my martini.” Maybe it's the 3.7-to-1 gin-to-vermouth ratio Bernard DeVoto recommends in his 1948 cocktail manifesto, “The Hour.” Or perhaps you're a fan of the 50-50. Or an onion garnish, which makes the drink a Gibson. And while a vodka martini is sacrilige to purists, when it comes to this drink, personal preference rules. Plus, it's great with oysters.

While all those variations are deservedly classics, we've entered a new era of riffs and refinements to the king of cocktails. I know what you're thinking: Is this like the 1990s, when the -tini suffix was slapped on anything in a V-shaped glass? God, no. One very good reason for the new wave of martini experimentation is that hundreds of new gins have entered the

market. At Chicago's Maple & Ash and New York's Slowly Shirley, several martinis are crafted around new, highly distinctive bottles.

Bartenders are pairing gins and vermouths with the vigilance typically applied to finding the perfect tie for a suit. Michael Neff at Holiday Cocktail Lounge in New York likes Beefeater and Maurin dry vermouth in a classic martini. At Washington, D.C.'s Columbia Room (soon to reopen), Derek Brown swears by a 50-50 made from Plymouth gin and Dolin dry vermouth because of “the way the juniper unravels toward the end.”

The proliferation of quality vermouths also makes

ordering a reverse martini, which flips the gin-to-vermouth ratio, a very good idea.

Even the dirty martini, made with extra olive juice, has been upgraded. Naren Young of New York's Dante describes the standard iteration as “devil's urine.” His Upside Down Dirty Gibson is a beautifully balanced take using an onion and a scant splash of high-quality brine. The Filthy Martini created by Richard Woods at London's Duck and Waffle involves two vodkas—one infused with mustard, the other with pickles—plus vermouth dripped through crushed oyster shells and a freshly shucked-oyster garnish.

Often the innovation is subtle. The Silverstone, a Gibson variation at Midnight Rambler in Dallas, uses highly alkaline local mineral water and a hint of chipotle in the onion brine to reflect Texas terroir. The martini at London's 69 Colebrooke

Row contains vermouth amped up with tannins from grape seeds. The result plays on the palate like a dry wine.

You may remain a Beefeater and Noilly Prat kind of drinker, and that's OK. It really is about personal preference. But read on, and you might just find yourself a new “my martini.”

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