

Shaken not Stirred

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Layne Martin in 10-Bottle Bar, Bonal, Classic Cocktails, Cocchi Americano, Gin, Sweet Vermouth, Vodka, bitters, dry vermouth, maraschino

Since I am rolling with the **10-Bottle Bar** stuff - I may as well post a bit about the Martini. Yes - the mixologist's most hated cocktail does have a place here. Oh sure - it's easy for mixologists to hate on the martini. After all - America's taste in liquor has now reduced this drink down to nothing more than a glass of chilled vodka (a little cold, unflavored spirit, anyone???). Alas, if only the industry had stopped there in destroying this fine old cocktail - but **cotton candy martinis**? Perish the thought.

So yes, there is still a place at The Ace for a well-crafted martini. But I will focus only on versions that I find to be more interesting and that I would serve in my home (which luckily for me **also happens to be my bar**). I will assume that everyone reading this already knows how to chill the hell out of gin or vodka and pour it into an up glass - so I will focus on some more interesting, old-school versions of this classic cocktail. Here goes nothing..

Dry Martini

Adapted from *Savoy Cocktail Book* (1930) by Harry Craddock

2 oz. gin (**Old Tom** is historically appropriate here if you have it)

1 oz. dry (french) vermouth

1-2 dashes orange bitters

Place an up glass in the freezer to chill. Pour ingredients into a shaker with lots of ice and shake well for at least 30 seconds until the drink is well-chilled. Strain into the chilled up glass and serve with a long strip of lemon peel (be sure to express the oils from the skin into the drink before placing into the glass).



So its worth mentioning here that the Martini had evolved substantially by the time that Craddock included it in his seminal *Savoy Cocktail Book* in 1930. The drink started out in **Jerry Thomas'** era as a 1:1 ratio of Old Tom gin and sweet vermouth with a little orange bitters thrown in for good measure. This makes sense given that it is generally accepted that the Martini descended from the Martinez cocktail (see below). The use of sweet vermouth had fallen out of fashion by the 1930s (dry cocktails were "in" and sweet ones were gauche by then). But I kept the Old Tom gin (also out of fashion by this time) and the orange bitters in this version because I wanted to capture a slightly older-school version of this cocktail and because I like bitters.

This was actually a damned fine cocktail. Nothing like the bare-bones cold vodka or gin

special - the vermouth took the edge off the gin and added a pleasant smoothness to the drink. This is historically accurate - as vermouth was originally mixed with gin cocktails to mask the questionable character of the bathtub gins of the era. If I were to get picky, I guess that I could complain that the high ratio of vermouth robbed this drink of its boozy nature and left it just a tad on the bland side for my personal palette. But compared to a chilled vodka in a glass this drink has character to spare!

Next let's hop into the way-back machine and try the cocktail that spawned the Martini from way back in the 1800s.

Martinez No. 1

From *Imbibe!* (2007) by David Wondrich

- 1 oz. dry gin (Plymouth)
- 2 oz. Sweet Vermouth (Carpano D'Antica)
- 1 tsp Luxardo Maraschino
- 1 dash orange bitters

Place an up glass in the freezer to chill. Pour ingredients into a shaker with lots of ice and shake well for at least 30 seconds until the drink is well-chilled. Strain into the chilled up glass and serve with a long strip of lemon peel (be sure to express the oils from the skin into the drink before placing into the glass).



So as much as I wanted to like this, one of the oldest of old-school cocktails, I just could not. The high concentration of sweet vermouth makes this drink taste overwhelmingly sweet, or "raisiny" as Mrs. The Ace put it. There's not much more to say about this one. Let's keep trying...

Next I decided to turn to my [The Art of the Bar](#) (2006) book by Jeff Hollinger and Rob Schwartz. Mr. Hollinger runs [Comstock Saloon](#) in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood, where he serves my favorite old-school cocktails with a smile (and sometimes with a handlebar mustache). Mssrs. Hollinger's and Schwartz's Martinez cocktail recipe is as follows:

Martinez Cocktail No. 2

From *The Art of the Bar* (2006) by Jeff Hollinger and Rob Schwartz

- 2 oz. Plymouth gin
- 1 oz. Dolin dry vermouth
- Splash of maraschino liqueur
- 1-2 dashes orange bitters

Lemon twist for garnish

Olive for garnish

Combine all liquid ingredients in an ice-filled cocktail shaker. Stir gently for 20-30 seconds, until, cold, then strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with the lemon twist and olive.



This is a nice improvement on the original Martinez cocktail, recognizing the change in American tastes toward drier spirits alongside their white spirits like gin. Note that this cocktail ends up being pretty similar to the Martini cocktail above - with the addition of maraschino liqueur and a more modern gin like Plymouth to the mix. But similar to the Martini cocktail above, in my opinion this cocktail is still missing that little something special to take it over the top.

I tried changing up the drink by substituting the dry vermouth in this Martinez with a mix of 1/2 ounce dry vermouth and 1/2 ounce of Bonal Gentiane-Quina. Winner winner chicken dinner!

Martinez No. 3

2 oz. No. 209 gin (could also be Plymouth)

1/2 oz. dry vermouth (I used Sutton Cellars Brown Label but Dolin is just fine too)

1/2 oz Bonal Gentiane-Quina

Splash of maraschino liqueur

1-2 dashes orange bitters

Lemon twist for garnish

Place an up glass in the freezer to chill. Pour ingredients into a shaker with lots of ice and shake well for at least 30 seconds until the drink is well-chilled. Strain into the chilled up glass and serve with a long strip of lemon peel (be sure to express the oils from the skin into the drink before placing into the glass).



I really liked this version of the cocktail. The **Bonal** adds a little bit of extra dryness and a little bitter to the mix of flavors in the drink. The drink is transformed into a complex little drink with lots of things going on in there. This is no Manhattan - but it does have enough character and charm to be approachable but still be interesting to modern cocktail drinkers.

But no discourse in martinis would be complete without a crack at the Vesper - popularized by James Bond in the novels of the 50s and the movies since then. What could be cooler than ordering a martini "shaken not stirred"? Well, actually lots of things, but that's beside the point. James Bond's martini is very alluring to lots of drinkers - so much so that it has been shamelessly stolen by vodka makers as their own. In reality, vodka is the stepchild to gin in James' drink. Here is how Ian Fleming's introduced us to Bond's **favorite quaff** in his 1953 novel *Casino Royale*.

"A dry martini," [Bond] said. "One. In a deep champagne goblet."

"Oui, monsieur."

"Just a moment. Three measures of Gordon's, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it's ice-cold, then add a large thin slice of lemon peel. Got it?"

"Certainly, monsieur." The barman seemed pleased with the idea.

"Gosh, that's certainly a drink," said Leiter.

Seems pretty simple, eh? So let's try it.

Vesper Martini

Adapted from James

2 oz. No. 209 gin (or Plymouth)

1/2 oz. vodka (I cut down Bond's proportions so as not to interfere with the gin)

1/2 oz. Cocchi Americano

Place an up glass in the freezer to chill. Pour ingredients into a shaker with lots of ice and shake well for at least 30 seconds until the drink is well-chilled. Strain into the chilled up glass and serve with a long strip of lemon peel (be sure to express the oils from the skin into the drink before placing into the glass).



A nice drink here. Simple and clean, this drink most resembles the Don Draper martini. But the addition of the **Cocchi Americano** gives this drink the little zip that Bond called for when he asked for the Kina Lillet. As you can read [here](#), Cocchi Americano is a new spirit imported from Italy by **Haus Alpenz** that nicely impersonates what Lillet used to taste like before the quinine was stripped from the recipe in the 80s.

For those raised on modern martinis (I mean ones without Midori or apple sour mix) this is likely to be your favorite cocktail in this post. If this is you, then use this drink as your gateway drink toward the **Corpse Reviver No. 2** and the **Aviation**.