



Raising the Bar

Take a Trip to the Caribbean from the Comfort of Your Own Bar

// "I'll have a Sex and the City martini please," she tells the bartender. There's no denying that the cocktail revolution is in full swing; and no beverage has single handedly changed the way we view cocktail culture like the Cosmopolitan. While Carrie Bradshaw sipped reddish pink Cosmos in chic New York watering holes on television's popular "Sex and the City," the rest of us wanted to taste that lifestyle, and the Cosmopolitan takes you there...

Martini purists will insist that nothing other than vodka or gin and a dash of vermouth belong in a martini, but the quintessential symbol of the martini glass has transcended generations of drinkers and represents a kind of stylish elegance that so many of us yearn for. Today's cocktail martinis have come a long way from the time James Bond coined "Shaken... not stirred!" Following the trends of Smirnoff Ice and the RTD (Ready to Drink) caesar, Martini Brand recently launched "Bellissima," its version of the pre-packaged RTD cosmopolitan - no bartender required. However, whether you're making it yourself or having one made for you, there's no substitute for a handcrafted classic cosmopolitan. From its original classic formula made with premium vodka, cointreau, freshly squeezed lime and cranberry juice, to this month's featured cocktail, the rum based specialty Caribbean Cosmo, the options for creating a great tasting cocktail of your own are only limited by your imagination.

From cocktails traditionally served in tumblers, to frozen classics like the Strawberry Daiquiri, restaurateurs are jumping on the martini bandwagon, with "martini lists" rather than "cocktail menus." These days, it seems like nothing is sacred. Anything that can be served in a martini glass will be served in a martini glass. If you're one of the privileged few who gets the honour of designing your martini list, or if even if you're playing home bartender at your next party, for the love of all things boozy, have some fun with it! Try and stay away from the Hurricane-tini. In other words, try to be more creative than simply taking an existing cocktail and adding the letters T-I-N-I on the end of its name.

If you consider the basic elements of cocktail synergy, creating your own custom cocktail from simple ingredients is really quite easy. Like any good chef will tell you, the key to fine cuisine is balance. The same holds true for cocktails - balance is essential. If your cocktail contains an abundance of sweet liqueurs, add a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime juice, to cut the sweetness. If your cocktail is high in alcohol content, add a weaker element, such as juice, a mixer or maybe something as simple as ice to dilute your liquor and keep your drink both cold and palatable. In the case of savory cocktails like a caesar, the reason it's garnished with a celery stalk (bitter) is to balance the salty taste of the rim. Here are the simple rules of thumb.

- Balance sweet (sugar) with sour (citrus)
- Balance strong (liquor) and weak (juice or mix)
- Balance salty and bitter (savory cocktails)

The man's man has often avoided the martini because of the long stemmed glass and feminine appeal. Libbey's Glassware has made martinis more attractive to men by creating a hybrid rocks/martini glass with no stem and a heavy stable glass base (pictured in this month's cocktail of the month).

While braving the Canadian winter doesn't often inspire chilled cocktails, this year's record setting temperatures might have you thinking twice about heading south for warmer climates.

So if the Caribbean is calling your name for March break but your wallet is telling you to stay home, take a budget friendly vacation with this rum based twist on the classic cosmo.

In case you were wondering, Island Originals is the new brand name for the popular Island Oasis. The name was changed in September 2005, to create a buzz around their brand and to further dissociate themselves from their competitors. The brand remains Island Oasis south of the border and internationally, but in Canada they have a new name and new packaging and should be complete by fall.



Cocktail of the Month Caribbean Cosmopolitan

- 2oz Malibu Pineapple Rum
- 1oz Island Originals Passion fruit
- 1oz Island Originals Mango
- Splash of Cranberry Juice
- Top with Club Soda.

Method: Pour the Malibu Pineapple Rum, Island Originals Passion Fruit Mix, Island Originals Mango Puree and Cranberry juice into a cocktail shaker, half-filled with ice (never add a carbonated beverage to a cocktail shaker, you'll end up wearing the cocktail!). Shake vigorously 4-5 times to insure that the cocktail is properly mixed. Pour into a chilled martini glass, top with soda and garnish with a kiwi slice.



Gavin MacMillan is currently Canada's Top Ranked Flair Bartender. He trains, competes and performs all over the world and operates Canada's Premier Hospitality Training Facility, BartenderOne. You can reach him at gavin@bartenderone.com.