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The Right Way to Order a Martini? With a Snack

It's the height of cozy chic at top cocktail bars now. Simple recipes for caviar sandwiches, a 'dirty' shrimp cocktail and more make it easy to pull off this civilized ritual at home.

By Betsy Andrews

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TRIANGLE OF HAPPINESS At Madeline's Martini in Manhattan, you can order this caviar sandwich with your drink. The recipe is simple to pull off at home, too. PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

MARTINIS ARE once again the rage. And this time, they have backup.

"The Martini was comforting during the pandemic because it could easily be made in homes," said Robert Ceraso, owner of Endless Hospitality Group, which recently launched Madeline's Martini, a bar in Manhattan's East Village. "People were still looking for it when they came back." Only now, Martini drinkers expect something more than mere gin plus vermouth. At top bars around the U.S., the drink comes with an appetizing array of Martini snacks.

The palate-priming Martini snack is part of the "ritual surrounding the drink," said Linden Pride, co-owner of the Manhattan bar Dante. "Martinis do require a small bite to accompany them, much in the way Italians are sensible enough to provide cicchetti alongside their liquor."

At Dante, Pride serves Sicilian arancini with Martinis. Basque pintxos partner with the drink at many restaurants such as Miami's LEKU. At the Richardson, in Brooklyn, it's good old American pigs in blankets.

"Snacks are everything," said Sam Fore, chef-owner of Tuk Tuk in Lexington, Ky. In a forthcoming restaurant, Fore plans to include a backroom speakeasy she's calling a Snackeasy. "Snacks are about cultivating what you enjoy. I have them out as much as I can," she added.

This trend is easy to take home, too. Start with a spin on that bartop staple, roasted nuts. Fore's deviled cashews were inspired by a packaged snack from her native Sri Lanka. Warm, crisp and pungent with caramelized onions, curry leaves and cayenne, they take all of 15 minutes to prepare. "I'm a dirty Martini gal," Fore said. "I want something with pop and zing to stand up to the blue cheese-stuffed olive in my drink."



Find the recipe for Tuk Tuk's Deviled Cashews below. PHOTO: SAM FORE

Others move in the opposite direction, contrasting the drink's intensity with a snack that provides a subtle lift. "Martinis are so dry or salty that they shouldn't be paired with the rest of a meal past snacks," declared Don Gonzalez, executive chef at Brooklyn bar Thief LES. "But it's a perfect first course to wash down something cool, sweet and light with some boozy, briny liquor." He suggested a citrusy fluke crudo.

At the Ivy Room, the rooftop piano bar at Manhattan's Royalton Park Avenue hotel, chef Jonathan Rodriguez's riff on shrimp cocktail combines both approaches. Spiffed

up with a vodka-yuzu vinaigrette, salt-cured cucumber and marinated Martini olives, it might sound fussy, but it is actually a snap to make. The result mimics the strong taste of a dirty Martini, but with a breezy elegance.



Find the recipe for the Ivy Room's Dirty Shrimp Cocktail below. PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

A similar sense of casual chic prevails at Madeline's Martini, where a caviar sandwich on sliced white bread "brings the elements of caviar service into a hand-held bite," Cesaro said. Slathered in a silky egg-yolk sauce charged with horseradish to "cut through the brine," this deluxe tidbit is, according to Cesaro, "the perfect combination between high and low."

5 MORE MARVELOUS MARTINI SNACKS



PHOTO: ASHLEY SEARS

Bouquet of Pickles
PS at Pine & Polk, New York

At this “secret” bar in a culinary shop, the Martini Moment consists of the drink itself, plus an atomizer full of housemade “green goddess” vermouth, served in a crystal jewel box along with pickled vegetables such as sugar snaps, peppadews and wax beans in summertime, gooseberries, radishes and jicama in autumn.



PHOTO: MIKE COTRONE

Conservas
Saltie Girl, Los Angeles, Boston and London

This bar stocks 130 varieties of tinned fish to snack on. With the Saltie Martini garnished with olive, onion and caviar, the house recommends milder sardines with espelette pepper.

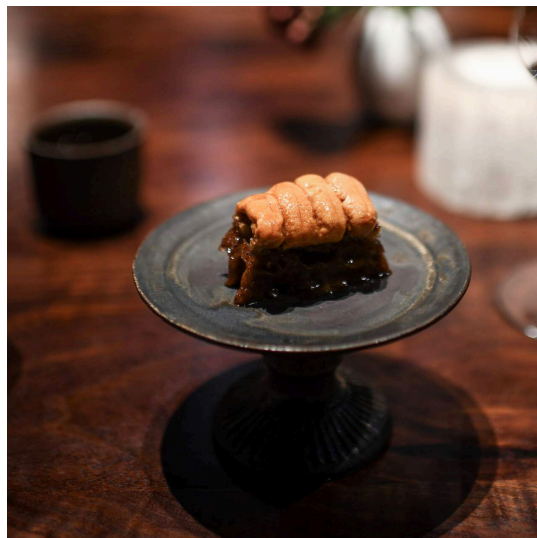


PHOTO: JOSHUA COPELAND

Sea Urchin Toast
Saison, San Francisco

Midweek walk-ins are welcome at the bar, where this snack—a generous lobe of uni dusted with dried sea lettuce, on brown-butter-soaked sourdough—stands up to the peppery nasturtium-and-anise Pillow Talk Martini.



PHOTO: ZACH HORST

Deep-Fried Gordal Olive

MARCH, Houston

“We love the contrast of an ice-cold Martini and a warm, crunchy olive,” said chef-partner Felipe Riccio of this paeon to the signature snack of Italy’s Marche region. The filling, a seasonal surprise, might be duxelles, minty goat cheese or fennel-and-caper soffritto.



PHOTO: TWELVE

Chips & Dip

Twelve, Portland, Maine

The Yukon Gold chips are brined in salt and vinegar. The creamy onion dip is infused with bonito flakes. Gild the lily with the trout-roe addition, especially if your drink order is the kelp-and-dill-infused Coastal Martini.

Caviar Sandwich

For this riff on a classic served at Manhattan's Grand Central Oyster Bar, Robert Ceraso of Madeline's Martini uses black bowfin caviar. Whitefish, lumpfish and trout roe are all affordable stand-ins. Or, if you want to take things in a more luxurious direction: Ostera? Beluga? Why not?



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TOTAL TIME: 20 minutes

SERVES: 4

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons of crème fraîche
- 2 tablespoons prepared white horseradish, drained
- 2 tablespoons Kewpie mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 3 hard-boiled-egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon finely diced shallot
- Pinch of black pepper
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 8 thin slices white bread
- 6 ounces caviar

Directions

1. In a food processor, combine crème fraîche, horseradish, mayonnaise and lemon juice, and pulse until smooth. Add egg yolks, and pulse until smooth. Transfer to a bowl, and fold in shallots and pepper.
2. Butter one side of each bread slice. Heat a pan or griddle over medium-high heat. Working in batches, toast bread, butter-side down, without flipping, until golden on underside, 1-2 minutes.
3. Lightly spread egg-horseradish sauce on untoasted sides of bread. (Store remaining sauce in refrigerator up to 3 days.) Divide caviar among 4 slices, spreading evenly over sauce. Cover with remaining toasted bread. Slice sandwiches on the diagonal.

—Adapted from Robert Ceraso of Madeline's Martini, New York

[Click here to view this recipe in our recipes section.](#)

Dirty Shrimp Cocktail

There's tableside Martini service at the Ivy Room, the rooftop piano bar at Manhattan's Royalton Park Avenue Hotel. Chef Jonathan Rodriguez took inspiration from the establishment's signature Martini, the Dirty Vesper, to create this refined, refreshing, yet "dirty" play on the shrimp cocktail. It's simple to make, yet some of the elements need to cure first. Prep them in the morning, and they'll be ready by aperitif hour.



F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

TOTAL TIME: 4 hours (includes curing)

ACTIVE TIME: 20 minutes

SERVES: 4

Ingredients

- 1 medium cucumber, peeled
- 3 tablespoons plus $\frac{2}{3}$ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 6 tablespoons chopped green Martini olives
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plus $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- $6\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons canola oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup yuzu juice
- 1 tablespoon vodka
- 1 pound jumbo (10/12) shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 teaspoons Old Bay seasoning
- Maldon salt, for garnish
- Crushed chile flakes, for garnish
- Freshly ground black pepper, for garnish
- Small dill sprigs, for garnish

Directions

1. Coat cucumber in 3 tablespoons kosher salt, and wrap in wax paper. In a lidded container, combine olives, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil and lemon juice, stir and cover. Refrigerate salted cucumber and olive mixture at least 4 hours. When ready to serve, rinse cucumber well, pat dry and dice. Bring olives to room temperature, and stir well.
2. Prep an ice bath. In a large pot, bring 2 quarts water and Old Bay to a boil. Add shrimp and cook 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer shrimp to ice bath to halt cooking and chill.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining salt and olive oil, canola oil and yuzu. Drizzle over a serving platter. Halve shrimp lengthwise and arrange on platter. Drizzle with more yuzu vinaigrette. Sprinkle on Maldon salt, chile flakes and pepper. Garnish with cucumber, marinated olives and dill sprigs.

—Adapted from chef Jonathan Rodriguez, the Ivy Room, New York

[Click here to view this recipe in our recipes section.](#)

Deviled Cashews

Sam Fore, chef-owner of popular Lexington, Ky., pop-up Tuk Tuk, makes this snack-mix twist on a traditional Sri Lankan cashew curry. With an aromatic boost from fried curry leaves, it's a Martini companion to keep you sipping, at once spicy, salty and crunchy.

TOTAL TIME: 15 minutes

MAKES: 2 cups



SAM FORE

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons vegetable or grapeseed oil
- 15 curry leaves
- Half a medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cups raw cashews
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon cayenne

Directions

1. In a large pot or wok, heat oil over medium-high heat. Fry curry leaves until crisp, about 15 seconds. Transfer leaves to a paper towel-lined plate. Fry onions until golden brown, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Remove to the plate. Fry cashews, stirring, until golden brown with char in some places, about 5 minutes.
2. Strain nuts with a slotted spoon, and place them in a medium bowl. Stir in curry leaves, onions, salt, pepper and cayenne until the nuts are well-coated. Serve in little bowls, ideally with little spoons.

—Adapted from Sam Fore of Tuk Tuk, Lexington, Ky.

[Click here to view this recipe in our recipes section.](#)