

Vermouth

While, I myself prefer a Vodkatini straight up with 4 caper stuffed olives and no vermouth, I am certainly in the minority. Because of this, I thought I would give a brief history of the silent partner in a martini.

Vermouth comes from the German word “vermud” meaning wormwood. Yes, wormwood the cult-like ingredient in Absinthe.

Wormwood was used to cure illnesses, as a digestive and to even clear worms from patients. Various other bitter herbs were added to make medicines more palatable and these transferred themselves to the flavouring techniques that people were using and presto! Vermouth!

The Greeks and Romans often added tips of flowers, roots, herbs and various other ingredients to sweeten or enhance the flavour of their wines either for drinking or for medicinal purposes.

The vermouth that is commonly consumed today was created in the 18th century. The Sweet Vermouth (or Red) was created in Italy where as the Dry variety was mainly produced in France. The French and Italian side of the Alps, where vermouth was commonly made had a plethora of herbs and flowers that lent themselves nicely to flavour the now fortified wines to make vermouth.

Today few recipes for sweet vermouth use red wine. Most use a white wine and add caramel to get the darker colour and sweetness. French vermouth is usually aged in oak casks to build its spicy aroma after fortification (increasing the alcohol content).

That is your vermouth lesson for the week now go to your liquor cabinet and make a nice wet vodka martini and a great Manhattan from the recipe provided last week!