

# Martinis: An old favorite makes comeback in '88

By Tedd Schneider  
staff writer

Put away the Perrier. The martini — with its raw alcoholic power, stylized accessories and yes, snob appeal — is back.

If the conspicuous consumption of the 1980s started the olive rolling, then last October's stock market crash opened the flood gates for a sudden resurgence of the potent concoction and one or two martini mutations. As the Dow Jones average fell, the fortunes of Stock (vermouth) began a rapid climb.

Experienced investors returned to an old favorite.

And a new generation realized that drowning sorrows in carbonated water just didn't cut it. Something with a bite was needed.

In metropolitan Detroit, those who make them and those who drink them are returning to the martini. The drink is catching on again in traditional, power-broker haunts and gaining popularity in younger, singles bars as well.

"This place is definitely a martini and Manhattan type of place," said Joe Murphy, bartender for the third-floor bar at the elegant Whitney Restaurant in Detroit. "We get a more upscale crowd and those people tend not to fool around with what I would say are less serious drinks."

Murphy said most martini drinkers at the Whitney are middle age, but he has noticed a few more people in their early 30s ordering them of late.

DIANE REEDY is one baby-boomer who has developed a fondness for what was once a social bastion of her parents' generation.

"I remember my mother and father throwing cocktail parties in our house when I was growing up," the 25-year-old computer systems analyst said while sipping an extra-dry martini at Carlos Murphy's in Southfield. "We used to sneak down the next morning and sample the leftover drinks. They tasted just awful."

"I guess it's an acquired taste."

Traditionally, martinis are made with gin and vermouth stirred, not shaken. A recent trend is the vodka martini, particularly with premium brands of vodka, like Absolut, which is imported from the Soviet Union and in high demand after the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, bartenders report. (Political and economic events seem to have an influence all their own on America's drinking habits.)

At the Steak and Ale Restaurant in Farmington Hills, bartender Karen Koenig said martini drinkers are still mostly "businessmen in their 50s and up." But, she said, younger drinkers are beginning to order Absolut straight, "which is pretty close to a martini."

Jim Barson, a former Birmingham attorney who now lives in Kissimmee, Fla., said whiskey drinkers in the sunshine state are changing their allegiance to the martini.

"It has a good taste and it's potent," Barson said. "Two martinis and you'll be comfortable for the whole evening."

Rejuvenation of the martini is definitely an American trend, according to the National Association of Beverage Importers. Sales of imported vodka jumped 32 percent in 1986, even as sales of other hard liquors continued to decline, the association reported.

THE DRINK'S comeback is yet another manifestation of a 1950s revival. From the success of "Peggy Sue Got Married" and "Back to the Future," to the return of neon and kidney-shaped coffee tables, '50s kitsch has returned as a force to be reckoned with in the '80s.

New Age martini drinkers are literally applying their own twists to the time-honored cocktail. The plain old olive is apparently out as today's martini garnish.

"A lot of people are asking for an anchovy olive

in their martini," Murphy said. "And a few will request cocktail onions."

Murphy also said the Pernod martini is a house special at the Whitney. The drink, which gives bartenders a chance to show off their skills with a flourish, is made by combining Pernod and vodka or gin and throwing the combination back and forth between two glasses.

## Martinis denote style, substance

Since it first zoomed to popularity in the jazz age, martini drinking has become a matter of style as well as substance.

Oh sure, opening a can of Bud has an elan all its own. But most people wouldn't dream of sipping the self-proclaimed "King of Beers" from a vintage Steuben glass, valued at \$360.

As long as the brew is cold, last year's plastic giveaway mug from 7-Eleven will do just fine, thank you.

Gin (or vodka) and vermouth demand something more though.

In fact, those elaborate and often pricey accoutrements may have helped in pushing the martini back into style among the "thirtysomething" set. So now that you've called your friends together for a drink and a little nosh after work, what will make the splashiest impression?

Try a Steuben crystal, double-lipped cocktail shaker and matching glasses. The shaker, if it dates from the 1920s and is in prime condition, will set you back \$500-\$700, said Margaret Basta of Dumouchelle Art and Auction Galleries in downtown Detroit.

THE GLASSES go for \$200-\$300 each, so you may want to limit the guest list to close friends and valuable business contacts. If push comes to shove, you can always drop the friends — they'll understand.



ART EMANUEL/Staff photographer

Whitney bartender Joe Murphy mixes up one of his special Pernod martinis.

A Steuben set has been in use at the White House since the days of Herbert Hoover, according to Basta.

Those on a budget may opt for a silverplated art deco style shaker, the kind popularized by William Powell in the "Thin Man" movies. They go for \$50-\$75, said Basta.

And for some fitting cocktail party conversation?

You might want to mention that two cocktail shakers are part of the Streamlining America exhibit at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn through 1988.

"Because it was usually a high society item, there are a number of cocktail sets that were designed more along artistic lines than purely functional ones," said Margaret Johnson, museum spokeswoman.

On display are a pitcher and six glasses, set on a revolving tray, made by the Chase Brass and Copper Co. and a circa 1955 cocktail shaker made from spun aluminum.

## Outlying Areas - a continuing story

by Ray Kosarin



## 'A Country Year': Nature at its best

By John Killeen  
special writer

Winter slowly releases its grip on the year. The world, once cold and forbidding, eases into the renewal of spring.

The hurried dashes from heated cars to heated homes and offices becomes more leisurely. Bird songs fill the air. Pale green shoots hump up damp earth and push through. Bare branches bud. A humming sense of fecundity permeates everything. One begins to notice nature instead of fight it.

Now is the time to sit down with a well-written book about nature. Now is the time to pause and take notice with an attentive guide.

"Over the past 12 years I have learned that a tree needs space to grow, that coyotes sing down by the creek in January, that I can drive a nail into oak only when it's green, that bees know more about making honey than I do, that love can become sadness and that there are more questions than answers."

Welcome to the farm of Sue Hubbell. Its 105 acres are at the center of "A Country Year: Living the Questions" (Perennial Library, \$6.95).

Hubbell is 50 years old, raises bees and lives on a peninsula between a river and a small creek in the Ozark Mountains.

Her father was a botanist and on weekends would point out plants, give their Latin binomials and tell her how they grew. That gift of knowledge inspired a curiosity that has served her well.

HER WORLD is filled with the wonders of a child's world. Her eyes are open to the details in the picture of nature.

Animals, plants, birds and insects wear friendly, everyday names along with their proper, formal names. Their habits, white lived out in the open, are puzzles to be fitted together.

Sitting one spring evening, reading the paper, she was suddenly aware that she was not alone.

"Looking up, I discovered that the three big windows that run from floor to ceiling were covered with frogs. There were hundreds of them, one-inch frogs with delicate webbed feet . . . I suppose them to be spring peepers. Ilya crucifer."

"Sure enough, each pinkish-brown frog had a back marked with the dark markings that give the species its scientific name. I had not known before that they were attracted to light."

If hundreds of frogs seem too biblical, consider the chigger.

Chiggers go through several transformations on the way from

## books missed or forgotten

egg to adult. During the larval stage, the chigger must feed on a host. For this, it needs a protected place. That is why on humans the bites are concentrated in spots where clothing fits snugly.

The body overreacts to the chigger bite. One has an allergic reaction that causes itching and discomfort. This serves neither party.

This is one of those biological puzzles that I find cheering — untidy, unresolved, a reminder that the results are not yet all in, that we do not have the final forms nor all the answers. We are still in process, chiggers, humans and the rest."

HUBBELL'S WORLD is not devoid of humans or human concerns. She delivers a wholly accurate and delightful passage on the conduct of business in the Ozarks. In search of a universal joint for her truck, she goes to a local junk car dealer. The transaction takes a humanly proper amount of time, interspersed with stories of once owned vehicles and their care.

For the stout of heart, and body, there is a vivid account of the desensitizing to bee stings of a nephew of hers. In the place, we learn not only the method, but the beekeepers' claim that bee stings protect against arthritis.

Ky, her nephew, in the course of a day spent collecting honey, is stung numerous times about the posterior. By the end of the day he informs his aunt that should he ever develop arthritis in that region he will know all the stuff you've been telling me is a lot of baloney."

There is also a touching account of a suicide that takes place on the banks of the river below her house. It is not the morbid account of a tragic death; it is the reaffirmation of life and its human content.

There are observations about raising chickens — cutting firewood, the maternal instincts displayed in animals and humans, the joy of fitting into the puzzle and the wonders that the puzzle holds. Her eye on the peculiar and the mundane with the same intensity, the same detail.

HER WORDS are as comforting and warm as the honey she coaxes from her bees. Nature is not something to be overcome. It is the house we all inhabit.

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