



RESURRECTING THE CLASSICS



BY BETH SCHWARTZ | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM K. DECKER
FASHIONS FROM SAKS FIFTH AVENUE, FASHION SHOW MALL | SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE ARTISAN

Don Draper, Roger Sterling, Pete Campbell and the rest of the “Mad Men” cast of characters have spent the last three seasons reminding us what cocktailing in the early ’60s was all about. Not only do the Madison Avenue advertising men of this Emmy-winning TV drama regularly exercise the three-martini lunch, these cocktailers engage in the most copious liquor consumption of anyone on the small screen – bar none.

With that as our inspiration, we decided to take a trip down memory lane to the land of lost and forgotten cocktails. Although not one of them, most people automatically think of the Classic Martini as the quintessential ’60s cocktail. Modern mixologist Tony Abou-Ganim couldn’t agree more. “The martini was more than a cocktail, it was a symbol. There was never a cocktail that better represented a nation than the ‘perfect dry martini.’”

Beyond the libation enjoyed by Original Martini Man Dean Martin, Tony had plenty of more obscure choices from that era to share. He took us on a tour of cocktails including such old-school stalwarts as the Old Fashioned, the Gibson, Bobby Burns, Daiquiri and Tom Collins.

“During that period it was a pretty sad time behind the American bar as far as innovation goes. The craft of bartenders was in a destitute state. We had gotten away from crafting fresh cocktails. Instead we were drinking straight spirits that were fairly easy to compound like Manhattans, Greyhounds, and Vodka Gimlets,” he allowed.

But it wasn’t just uninspired bartenders causing a hangover for the cocktail scene – as it were. “After World War II everything was processed foods, and that bled over into the bar. Mixes and canned juices were prevalent and caused a downhill slide,” said Tony of the erosion of the libation landscape.

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THE OLD FASHIONED

INGREDIENTS

2-½ ounces Old Grand-Dad 100 proof
“Bottled in Bond” bourbon whiskey
2 sugar cubes
3 dashes Angostura bitters
Teaspoon of water
Lemon twist



DIRECTIONS

Using an Old Fashioned glass, muddle the sugar cubes with water and bitters until completely dissolved. Fill glass with large cube ice and slowly add whiskey. Stir well to mix and garnish with a twist of lemon.

THE BOBBY BURNS

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces Dewar's
12-year Scotch whisky
1 ounce Martini &
Rossi Italian vermouth
1 dash Peychaud's bitters
2 dashes Benedictine



DIRECTIONS

Stir with ice and strain into a cocktail glass; twist a piece of lemon peel over the drink, and add the twist as garnish. Serve with a plate of shortbread cookies.

THE DAQIRI

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces Bacardi
Superior rum
1 ounce hand extracted
fresh lime juice
1 ounce simple syrup (1 part
water / 1 part sugar)



DIRECTIONS

In the mixing glass of a Boston shaker, add lime juice, simple syrup and rum; shake with ice until well blended. Strain into a chilled cocktail cup and garnish with a thin slice of lime.

THE GIBSON

INGREDIENTS

2-½ ounces Plymouth gin
¾ ounce Noilly Prat dry vermouth
1 dash Angostura orange bitters
Cocktail onions



DIRECTIONS

Stir with ice and strain into a chilled cocktail glass; garnish with 2 cocktail (pearl) onions.

THE TOM COLLINS

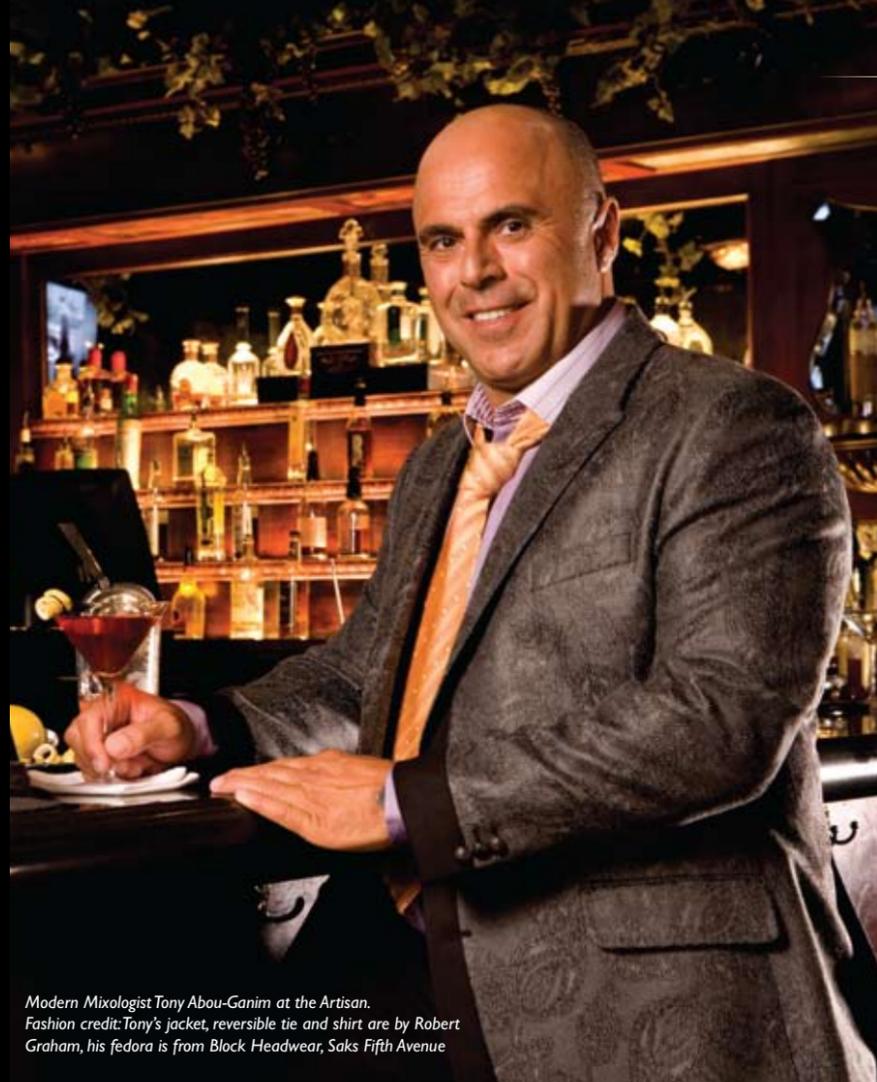
INGREDIENTS

1-½ ounces Bombay Sapphire gin
1 ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
¾ ounce simple syrup
(1 part water / 1 part sugar)
1 teaspoon egg white (optional)
Chilled seltzer water
Maraschino cherry and an orange slice



DIRECTIONS

In the mixing glass of a Boston shaker, add egg whites, lemon juice, simple syrup and gin; shake with ice until well blended. Strain into an ice filled Collins glass and spritz with chilled seltzer water. Garnish with an orange-cherry pinwheel.



Modern Mixologist Tony Abou-Ganim at the Artisan. Fashion credit: Tony's jacket, reversible tie and shirt are by Robert Graham, his fedora is from Block Headwear, Saks Fifth Avenue

Vodka was another factor. "As for the whole vodka thing, it's relatively new in the big picture of cocktails," explained Tony. "Vodka didn't even exist in the United States until 1934, and really didn't surpass gin in usage until 1967."

The growing popularity of vodka in the '50s and '60s can be explained by its attractive quality of leaving no smell on your breath, as cemented by Smirnoff's legendary "It Leaves You Breathless" advertising campaign.

But getting back to the standards, all old cocktail books would have only gin-based cocktails so Tony crafted two for us. One of the most popular sweet and sour styled gin drinks ever created is the Tom Collins, according to Tony. While the origins of the Tom Collins are a mystery, some believe the cocktail was originally called the John Collins, after the head bartender of the Limmer's Hotel in London, who served a Gin Punch - not unlike the classic Collins recipe.

Tony prefers to add an egg white to his version of a Tom Collins because of the frothy feel it provides. Although not unheard of, egg is not ordinarily a staple of this drink. "I like

the collar of froth the egg white provides as well as the color and the texture it gives the drink." Tony also likes to shake his Tom Collins during preparation.

Next up is the Gibson. There have been many theories about its genesis. History seems to favor illustrator Charles Dana Gibson, famous for his "Gibson Girls" illustrations, as the drink's namesake.

"For the Gibson, I went back to when we used much more vermouth in our martinis and Gibsons. Vermouth is an important ingredient. You need to use quality vermouth," admonished Tony. "I am convinced that's why martinis got more and more dry because of bad vermouth."

Tony noted that gin is now making a resurgence and that bitters are also back in vogue. At one time he notes, orange bitters were the most used bitters in the United States. "But when I opened Bellagio in 1998, I couldn't find them in the entire state of Nevada," he explained.

The Bobby Burns is another drink that calls for bitters. "A Bobby Burns is basically a Rob Roy with the addition of Benedictine,"

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explained Tony. Most people associate the drink with Robert Burns, the famed Scottish poet of the 1700s. However, according to Albert Crockett author of "The Old Waldorf-Astoria Bar Book", it may have been named after a cigar salesman who was a regular at the bar.

"Unfortunately, no one does this drink anymore," Tony said of the Bobby Burns. "It's one of those drinks that needs to be resurrected. It's a drink worthy of experimentation." As for its unique garnish, Tony is not sure how it came to be shortbread cookies.

Sharing its name with a beach near Santiago, Cuba, the Daiquiri was supposedly invented by a group of American mining engineers in 1898. It is believed that it was invented when they ran out of gin, although most likely the drink evolved naturally due to the prevalence of lime, sugar, and the nearby Don Facundo Bacardi distillery.

"In my humble opinion, the Daiquiri is one of the top 10 cocktails of all time. Unfortunately, it's been bastardized, especially in this town. It's masquerading behind artificial colors and flavors and is being dispensed out of frozen drink machines," offered Tony. But in its classic state, it's both simple and sophisticated as well as elegant and swank, and was a favorite of Mr. Ernest Hemingway."

For the Old Fashioned, which was allegedly first created in the 1880s by a bartender at the Pendennis Club, a gentlemen's club in Louisville, Kentucky, Tony favors a classic recipe sans fruit. "Somewhere along the way we started muddling maraschino cherries and orange slices in the drink and topping it off with soda. I prefer a cleaner version with the only garnish being the oils from the lemon twist," said Tony of the delicious tippie. "That and I use a really fabulous whiskey called Old Grand-Dad in it."

But it's just not the classics that have long been overlooked, it's also cocktail etiquette. "I think we have kind of lost the art of drinking. Like in my aunt's day, you grew up drinking cocktails. You knew how to order them and make them properly. Enjoying a fine libation is about the journey, not the destination," he persisted. "And things like the Green Apple Pucker Martini and Vodka & Red Bull have not helped our case either.

"We are circling back to embrace these lost and forgotten cocktails," a gratified Tony explained of recent trends. "Now between the resurrection of these classics as well as professional bartending -- it's once again respected as one of the culinary arts." □

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