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MAKE OR BREAK GLASSWARE
When it comes to cocktails, the vessel is almost as important as what's inside

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A crystalline Martini effect by a plump green olive is the ultimate of swanky cocktails, whose status has as much to do with the taste of the drink as it does the vessel. Served in a cocktail glass also known as a Martini glass, it is cool and chic. Countless mixed drinks have since been created in the Martini's sites and the most successful ones are almost always served in the ubiquitous cocktail glass. What makes this stemmed, wide rimmed vessel so popular and is there another style of glass that can compete?

TRADE TIPS Tony Abou-Ganim offers the following tips for keeping your glassware in good condition:

- After being washed, glassware should always be buffed with a clean, lint-free cloth instead of with a paper towel.
- It's possible to use your glass head upside up.
- Storing in plastic bags can help protect on or without lids.
- Invest in the proper shelving racks that fit your glassware in order to prevent breakage.
- Service your glass washer daily and consistently check your chemicals.
- Always buff your cocktail glasses to enhance consistent finishing of a glass drink.
- Finally, invest a little extra on glassware because it will last very long.

If your establishment attracts a more sophisticated and older clientele that are likely to be seated while imbibing, the Martini glass remains classic for most drinks that are served without ice.

While a classic, the drinking vessel is subject to the whims of fashion. Whether it's a sleek, stemless martini glass or a classic, wide-rimmed coupe, the glass is a key element of the cocktail experience. The glass is a key element of the cocktail experience. The glass is a key element of the cocktail experience.

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The cocktail glass is undeniably one of the sexiest objects around. After all, it practically played a supporting role in *Sex and the City* and was every bit as desirable as Carrie Bradshaw's Manolo heels. We asked cocktail consultant Tony Abou-Ganim, founder of The Modern Mixologist, (a beverage consulting firm, geared towards the professional bartender and the home mixer alike), why he thinks the glass has seduced both consumers and beverage directors alike. "The cocktail glass is at once elegant, classic, contemporary and glamorous. A person's demeanor, their body language, their entire being is transformed when they hold the stem of a cocktail glass between their fingers. Many have said, and I am one of those, that the resurgence in classic cocktails is due in part to the elegance of the glass they are served in."

Other mixologists appear to express the same kind of affection for the same glass. Ryan McGrath, senior bartender at No. 9 Park in Boston is also one of them. "The Martini glass is certainly one of the most popular glasses to serve a cocktail in but, popularity aside, it is, in fact, a classic that has been around for a hundred years."

The original size of the cocktail glass (consider the days of the three-Martini lunch) held four ounces in volume but has since increased in size. Tony Abou-Ganim confirms, "I have seen twelve ounces, fifteen ounces, eighteen ounces and even larger cocktail glasses! Why are we a country of 'bigger is better'? In the words of Harry Craddock 'A cocktail should be short and snappy' and 'should be consumed quickly while it's laughing at you.' Tony's idea of the perfect cocktail glass comes from Riedel. He believes that a fine vessel is 'a work of art in the hands of the right professional bartender.' However, he also understands the cost budget of some bars and he highly recommends the glassware from Cardinal and Jude Crystal as excellent alternatives.

A new line of glassware - primarily stemware - made lead-free crystal. Though they concentrate on Martini glasses (short and long stem) and are a fraction where the stemless glass rests in a bowl when it is elegant presentation, not to mention gives the drinker without the lead, they are much lighter, cradling the

Despite the near landslide popularity of the Martini glass, Ross, owner of her lounge in West Hollywood, California, prefers to give her more open-ended options. "Anything served in a Martini glass is more of a sit down drink. It really is hard to maneuver with one in hand and you often end up wearing your drink. Perhaps it's more of an LA thing but tall, refreshing drinks like the Mojito are among our most popular libations. People like to move around here and check out the rest of the clientele, a Martini glass isn't practical for that."

Chris Johnson, the owner of Bar and Bar Noodles in New York, has opted for what he considers a successful compromise in the stemless Martini glasses that he purchases from Saiter Sales. "I decided to use them because they're different and they look interesting. I also bought them in because I was working a lot of split. These are much easier to manage too, for instance, we can wash them on the same rack as we do the rocks glasses."

"Drinking from (Ravenscroft) is a far more delicate, refined experience."

By Pamela Gowinda ■ Photography by Thomas Mangieri