

APERITIFS, DIGESTIFS & LIQUEURS

It is not known who made the first aperitif and when. Whether it happened in ancient Egypt or Greece, or as a result of some medieval monk's experiment, the history of aperitifs goes far back in time. Today's aperitifs may have an active, glittering and international image, but their complex, sometimes secret recipes are often those devised by their creators many decades or centuries ago. Typically an aperitif is a drink usually taken before a meal to stimulate the appetite.

The word aperitif covers a vast array of drinks, some well known all over the world, others popular only in their country of origin. Nowadays almost anything consumed before eating is considered an aperitif, including Champagne, Sauvignon Blanc, and even beer or a whisky! Most true aperitifs are relatively low in alcohol. Italy and France account for the majority of the world's aperitif production.

Aperitifs can be loosely divided into categories:

Wine Based - *Developed in Southern Europe, where many local wines were of poor quality. This was resolved by adding brandy, herbs and spices to provide fortification and enhance flavour. As this practise developed, other styles of aperitif emerged, including fortified natural wines with no added herbs and spices. Southern French Muscats, Spanish Sherry, Port and Madeira are amongst these. Vermouth, which is flavoured with secret recipes of herbs (including wormwood) and spices was one of the most important and well known wine-based fortified aperitifs to develop. Aromatized wines, such as Dubbonet, though these are based on quinine, not wormwood. Although the exact recipes of most of these famous branded wine-based aperitifs is guarded by considerable secrecy, known ingredients are thyme, cumin, nutmeg, coriander, cloves, cardamom, mace and myrrh.*

Spirit Based - *There are two main types of these - bitter and pastis, each of which have very different backgrounds. Bitters originated in the Netherlands, as the Dutch had access to many exotic herbs and spices through their colonies. The term "bitters" is self-explanatory as these spirit-based aperitifs are often flavoured with bitter tasting herbs and spices and usually consumed with mixers. Campari and Cynar are two of the best known varieties. Bitters are said to be good for settling the stomach immediately prior to or just after food - which is why some aperitifs can be used as digestifs. Pastis originated from two sources, the ancient Greek world and the Moorish-occupied Southern Europe. They existed long before the creation of spirits and in both instances, they were simple aniseed-based drinks diluted with water. Pastis covers a wide range of aniseed drinks, from Ouzo in Greece and Cyprus to the classic French Pernod.*

Digestif / Digestivo - *A digestif is an alcoholic beverage served after a meal, in theory to aid digestion. When served after a coffee course, it may be called pousse-café. Digestifs are usually taken straight. In certain areas it is not uncommon for a digestif to be taken before a main course. One example is the trou normand, a glass of Calvados taken before the main course of a meal.*

Liqueurs - *A liqueur is an alcoholic beverage made from a distilled spirit that has been flavored with fruit, cream, herbs, spices, flowers or nuts and bottled with added sugar or other sweetener (such as high-fructose corn syrup). Liqueurs are typically quite sweet; they are usually not aged for long after the ingredients are mixed, but may have resting periods during their production to allow flavors to marry. Some liqueurs are prepared by infusing certain woods, fruits, or flowers, in either water or alcohol, and adding sugar or other items. Others are distilled from aromatic or flavoring agents. Anise liqueurs have the interesting property of turning from transparent to cloudy when added to water: the oil of anise remains in solution in the presence of a high concentration of alcohol, but crystallizes when the alcohol concentration is reduced; this is known as the ouzo effect.*

HENRI BARDOUIN (France)	45%	\$10
A cracking pastis - stylish and complex with lifted lemon, dried herb and dominant anise coming through at the end. Both this and the Ricard below are made by the maceration of herbs, roots and spices. Traditionally you drink them with 5 parts chilled water to one part pastis. When you add water to all pastis, they "louche", which means the clear spirit visually becomes milky.		
RICARD (France)	45%	\$9
Quite a strong flavoured pastis, with a firm backbone and , expressive nose, and licorice dominating. I prefer this on ice with equal parts water to pastis.		
LILLET BLANC (France)	17%	\$12
Known around the world as the "Aperitif of Bordeaux". A brilliant feminine wine based aperitif - though you'd never guess the base was wine. Traditionally served with tonic or soda - we prefer it simply cold and neat rocks in a nice big glass so you can take full advantage of its unique flavours of candied lime, orange blossom, honey and white peach. 45ml pour. Brilliant starter.		
CAMPARI (Italy)	25%	\$14
The worlds best know aperitif...and for good reason. May well be one of the finest drinks ever invented. Campari must be served as a 60ml pour - not 30ml. If you ever go somewhere and they give you 30ml - walk out. They clearly do not understand or appreciate the drink. Campari can be served several ways , but the bittersweet elixir is best served with lots of ice and an equal measure of soda water. Simply the best. Ever.		
PICON (France)	18%	\$13
A delicious orange based drink that the French traditionally drink with beer - often adding it to their beer. We prefer it on ice with soda. Kind of a sweeter version of Campari and soda. 60ml pour.		
TEMPUS FUGIT - Gran Classico Bitter (Switzerland)	28%	\$15
This a bitter apéritif liqueur created following the "Italian Bitter of Turin" recipe dating from the 1860s. It was originally produced in Turin, Italy under the name Torino Gran Classico; the recipe had been purchased in 1925 by the small Swiss distillery E. Luginbühl and a version has been produced for mostly local consumption ever since. Gran Classico was developed by reverting back to the original recipe; it is made from a maceration of a mixture of 25 aromatic herbs and roots including wormwood, gentian, bitter orange peel, rhubarb, and hyssop. The maceration also creates a naturally attractive, golden-amber color, and no additional coloring is added. Gran Classico Bitter stands alone on ice or with soda water, but has amazing range as a modifier for many recipes and spirits. It has offered the cocktailian culture a more complex, non-red alternative Bitter ingredient for the world-famous 'Negroni'. Campari drinkers take note: the ultimate expression of Bitter. 45ml Pour.		
LE BIRLOU - Chestnut & Apple (France)	18%	\$10
A lovely French apéritif - perfectly blended harmony of chestnuts and crisp apples. Tres Chic!		
APEROL (Italy)	11%	\$11
Nearly 100 years old and still a brilliant entry styled aperitif. If you have never had a true aperitif - start here. Very easy going mildly sweet with spiced orange flavour. On ice or with soda. 45ml Pour. Or ask for a spritz!		
ST. GERMAIN - Elderflower liqueur (France)	20%	\$9
Once a year the Elderflower tree blossoms for just a few days. That rare blossom is collected and distilled into this striking drink. We serve it in cocktails as it has a beautifully lifted lychee type fragrance - but it works perfectly as a starter on crushed ice. We add a little lime wedge to cut the sweetness a touch.		
RINQUINQUIN - a la peche (France)	15%	\$10
A gentle and alluring aperitif made from peaches. A very sophisticated tippie, but mainly we stock it cause its name is really really cool. Say it out loud and you sound like your revving a motorbike.		
JEAN LUC PASQUET Marie Framboise (France)	16.0%	\$10
Clear. Dark pink appearance. Appealing, fresh aroma includes very ripe, fresh raspberry, earthiness combined with suggestions of manuka honey and crushed grapes. Light and silky entry builds with excellent concentration.		

- TEMPUS FUGIT - Creme de Noyaux** (Switzerland) 30% **\$11**
 Tempus Fugit Spirits Crème de Noyaux is a classic 19th century French liqueur craft-made by distilling apricot and cherry pit kernels, combined with bitter almonds and other botanicals, creating a complex, nutty, pit fruit-sweet aroma and flavor, with a slight touch of balancing bitterness on the finish. Many years of research and tests were needed to finalize the production techniques and secure local Swiss sources of the natural ingredients indicated in the original protocols. Its garnet-red color comes from the addition of the natural coloring cochineal, following historic directives. This represents the classic lost Crème de Noyaux, prized by the best bartenders of the Golden Age. It is a perfect addition in many classic cocktails (especially those that call for nut or cherry liqueurs).
- SUZE** (France) 15% **\$11**
 Suze was invented in Paris by Fernand Moureaux in 1885, but was not put on the market until 1889. It is still in production, now under the ownership of the Pernod group, although it is not widely known outside France. In 1912, the artist Pablo Picasso depicted a bottle of Suze in his collage "Verre et bouteille de Suze". It is made from root called Gentian...it reminds me a lot of tonic syrup with a herbal, almost sweet lemon flavour.
- BYRRH** (France) 17% **\$10**
 Byrrh is a wine-based apéritif made of red wine, mistelle, and quinine. Its best on ice with a twist of lemon, or as a great alternative to Vermouth in a Negroni. 45ml pour.
- MAIDENII Sweet Vermouth** (Victoria) 16% **\$13**
 A triumph of ingenuity. Gilles Lapalus is one of our favourite wine makers - from The Sutton Grange winery, and he has crafted this gem from native botanicals, including strawberry gum, wattle seed, sea parsley, and river mint. Its now our go to vermouth. 60ml pour.
- MAIDENII Dry Vermouth** (Victoria) 16% **\$13**
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- TEMPUS FUGIT - Liqueur de Violettes** (Switzerland) 22% **\$10**
 This unique and rare liqueur is based on a mid-19th century French recipe and is made only in micro-batches by Swiss distiller Oliver Matter for Tempus Fugit Spirits. The protocol uses the finest French violets, traditionally hand-harvested in the sunny and historic Côte d'Azur, along the Mediterranean Sea, amongst the myriad of precious flowers cultivated in the region for the world's finest perfumes. This elegant elixir has a lower sugar content than the heavier 'crème'-style violet cordials, which more intensely highlights its delicate floral aromatics. Tempus Fugit Spirits Liqueur de Violettes is your ideal ingredient for both historic and modern cocktails, especially the Aviation, drizzled into a flute of champagne or simply chilled on rocks and sipped on its own. It is deep fuchsia-pink with purple reflections. Intense floral nose with a powdery tinge. Sweet but not sticky, intense violet flavor and aroma, balanced finish and length.
- AMARO MONTENEGRO** (Italy) 23% **\$10**
 Amaro Montenegro, 'the liqueur of the virtues', was created in 1885 thanks to the lengthy, impassioned experiments of a famous distiller and herbalist, Stanislao Cobianch. It is similar to Averna, but with a greater emphasis on the bittersweet orange character. On ice with a slice of orange it is absolutely delicious.
- DISARONNO - Amaretto** (Italy) 20% **\$10**
 Amaretto is a traditional sweet Italian almond flavoured liqueur. Disaronno is flavoured by a combination of herbs and spices that are then soaked in apricot kernel oil. The final product is delightfully rich yet delicate.

DOM BENEDICTINE (France)	40%	\$11
Dom Benedictine has as its basis the blending of 27 different plants and spices from five continents. These include a blend of herbs, spices and an infusion of saffron, honey, thyme, tea and caramel. The delicately herbal bouquet is an unusual combination of earth and flowers; one of the more seductive, unique and piquant liqueur perfumes in existence. In the mouth, the full texture coats the tongue as sweet flavors of honey, citrus peel, rosemary, sage & basil.		
GIORI ORI DI - Grappa (Italy)	40%	\$10
The flavour of grappa, like that of wine, depends on the type and quality of the grapes used, as well as the specifics of the distillation process. Grappa is made by distilling the skins, pulp, seeds, and stems (i.e., the pomace) left over from winemaking after pressing the grapes. This is a very dry and fruity style of Grappa.		
LUXARDO - Limoncello (Italy)	27%	\$10
Good clean lemon zest nose with a hint of white pepper . Syrupy but not sickly-sweet palate with balance provided by fresh, zesty lemon zest notes. Citrus zing lasts through the long silky finish, again well balanced by citrus acidity.		
CYNAR (Italy)	16.5%	\$11
The artichoke liqueur known for its versatility and taste, Cynar is an artichoke based bitter. Its distinctive flavour is enriched from an infusion of 13 herbs & plants, making it a completely natural drink, rich in scents and a unique taste .		
FERNET BRANCA (Italy)	37%	\$9
A household name in Italy, Fernet-Branca is an unusual drink. Its thick, bitter flavour, once famously described as “black-licorice flavoured Listerine” makes it something of an acquired taste, but those who do like it, love it. Said to contain more than 27 different herbs and spices including aloe, rhubarb, and saffron, sourced from four continents.		
FERNET BRANCA - Menta (Italy)	37%	\$9
The mint version of the Fernet Branca. Reminiscent of mouthwash or toothpaste...if that’s your kinda thing!		
FRANGELICO (Italy)	20%	\$9
This northern Italian hazelnut liqueur has only been around for 30 or so years but in that time it has become an icon. Used in a number of exotic cocktails it is a valuable addition to any sweet and nutty after dinner desire.		
DRAMBUIE (Scotland)	40%	\$10
Drambuie is a sweet, golden coloured 40% ABV liqueur made from malt whisky, honey, herbs and spices.		
AVERNA (Italy)	29%	\$9
For my money this is the greatest digestif in the world. A 150 year old Sicilian recipe of herbs and roots. A full and rich bitter flavoured drink with remarkable depth. Have it on ice with a big slice of orange.		
TEMPUS FUGIT - Liqueur de Violettes (Switzerland)	22%	\$10
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VEDRENNE - Liqueur De Paris (France)	18%	\$11
Made from the stone of a little wild berry, ‘la prunelle’. The stones are first macerated with neutral sugar beet alcohol. Distillation takes place in a small traditional pot still, before being blended with other ingredients. First nosing reveals amaretto / marzipan combined with a maraschino-like note. Entry is light and sweet. Mid palate is broad, sweet and delivers moderate concentration with the marzipan and maraschino notes.		
DOMAINE DE CANTON - Ginger Liqueur (France)	28%	\$12
Domaine de Canton is made from only the finest ingredients; hand-cut young Vietnamese ginger macerated with herbs and spices, honey from Provence, Tahitian vanilla and Tunisian ginseng. Domaine de Canton is eau de vie based, enhanced with 10% VSOP and XO Grande Champagne Cognacs.		

PAVAN (France)	18%	\$ 11
Named after the European 16th century dance of the peacock, Pavan liqueur is made with small Muscat grapes from the Appellation d'Origine Controlee region of Frontignan, aged in oak casks and blended with Muscat eau-de-vie and orange blossom water. Clear, very pale straw and gold in colour. The perfumed bouquet is floral yet curiously fruity; Moscato gelato with a dose of orange peel combined with something more exotic. Feijoa peel? Or is it Kiwi fruit? Either way it's fruits, sweetly grapey and delicious.		
STREGA (Italy)	40%	\$ 10
Liquore Strega is bright yellow drink which is soft, smooth and bittersweet with herbs & vanilla in a delicate balance.		
CHARTREUSE - VEP Green (France)	54%	\$ 17
VEP means "exceptionally prolonged ageing" in English. It is made using the same processes and the same secret formula as the traditional liqueur, and by extra long ageing in oak casks it reaches an exceptional quality. Incredible.		
GRAND MARNIER (France)	40%	\$ 11
A liqueur made from fine French Cognac and flavoured with the essence of bitter orange.		

"Oh sir... it's only wafer thin."
- Monty Python