

James Bond first appeared in Ian Fleming's 1953 novel *Casino Royale*, where he created the Vesper.

#TRENDING:  
**APÉRO HOUR**



Have fond memories of happy hour but not the '80s when you may have overindulged in it? Margaret Swaine has just the thing

# APRÈS WORK

**C**ANADIANS ARE DISCOVERING THE ALLURE of the *apéro*, a long-held popular ritual in the south of France. The *apéro* is an hour-long, post-work get-together with friends spent conversing, sipping cocktails and nibbling hors d'oeuvres.

ApéroChic, The French Touch in Toronto was created in October 2011 by Peggy Harvey (a.k.a. La Parisienne). Her idea was to initiate a monthly informal evening starting just after work hours where one could share a glass while meeting with friends and making new acquaintances. Estelle Saint-Martin joined Peggy a few months after the creation of the club to help her further develop this new "rendezvous."

Attendance has grown steadily and now numbers 3,000 members. More than 350 people meet every month to socialize at a variety of venues. (Brassaii and the rooftop of the

Thompson were two of them.) ApéroChic evenings are open to all, not just to the French. But it's true: ApéroChic has a French touch and wants to bring a little French culture and flavour like the traditional aperitif hour to the city of Toronto.

Bring the tradition into your house and host an early evening get-together with cocktails and nibbles before people head home or out to dine. Lillet (named after the family who created it) is an easy and appropriate drink to serve. Lillet Blanc, made since 1872 in Podensac 30 kilometres south of Bordeaux, jazzes up Bordeaux white wine with a 15 per cent addition of special liqueurs made from fruits and citrus peels macerated in brandy. Intense with tangy fruit and candied orange peel flavours, it finishes with bitter sweet notes – a stimulant to the palate. Served ice-cold in a wine glass it makes a classy and classic aperitif.

In the 1920s and '30s, it was served

at official receptions and special occasions, soon becoming in vogue around the world and the star drink of trendy bars in New York. It inspired the creation of James Bond's famous Vesper Martini. In the 1953 novel *Casino Royale*, Bond orders the drink by saying "Just a moment. Three measures of Gordon's, one of vodka, half a measure of Kina Lillet. Shake it very well until it's ice-cold, then add a large thin slice of lemon peel. Got it?"

I made a Vesper Martini based on the recipe Lillet sent me but using my choice of gin and vodka: The Botanist gin and Ménage à Trois Vodka. Then I added two dashes of Dillon's Bitter Lemon (bitters created in Beamsville, Ont., using local wine and fruit plus botanicals and lemon). The drink was potent and seductive.

The Botanist, made on Scotland's island of Islay using 22 foraged island herbs and flowers along with the nine classic gin botanicals, is wonderfully aromatic and packed with flavours. Ménage à Trois Vodka, the newest product from Napa's Trinchero Family Estates winery, is a global first for the company and right now an Ontario exclusive. Distilled six times and crafted using American grains

## THE VESPER MARTINI

My version of James Bond's cocktail of choice in the 1953 novel *Casino Royale*.

- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| <b>3 oz</b>       | The Botanist gin       |
| <b>1 oz</b>       | Ménage à Trois Vodka   |
| <b>½ oz</b>       | Lillet Blanc           |
| <b>Two dashes</b> | Dillon's Bitter Lemon  |
|                   | Lemon peel for garnish |

Put all ingredients except the lemon peel in a cocktail shaker filled with ice and shake until ice cold. Strain into a martini glass and garnish with a lemon peel.

## THE LILLET SANGRIA

A fuzz-free way to entertain (when making individual cocktails will take too much of your time).

1	apple, chopped
1	peach, chopped
1	orange, chopped
2 bottles	dry white wine (simple French wine such as Entre-Deux-Mers)
1	bottle Lillet Blanc
4 cans	San Pellegrino Aranciata Rossa

Put fruits into the bottom of a pitcher, add one bottle of the wine and half the bottle of Lillet. Refrigerate for at least two hours to allow the fruits to soak in the liquid. When ready to serve, top up with two cans of the soda and stir. Serve over ice in a wine glass with some of the fruit. Use the remaining Lillet, wine and soda to refill the pitcher for a second round.

and California mountain spring water, it has a soft and gently floral nose. It's creamy smooth with subtle vanilla notes on the palate.

The south of France is also famous for pastis, an anise-flavoured aperitif made with the addition of liquorice

root, sugar and other local herbs and spices. I developed a love of it the year I spent at Aix-Marseille University in Aix-en-Provence. Everyone drank it there and defended their favourite brand like it was a crucial aspect of life itself.

**Pernod**, created in 1805 by Henri-Louis Pernod based on star anise, plants and aromatic herbs, was much loved in Parisian cafés then and is a popular favourite pastis around the world today. It's the oldest French anise-based brand and in its earliest days included extracts of absinthe.

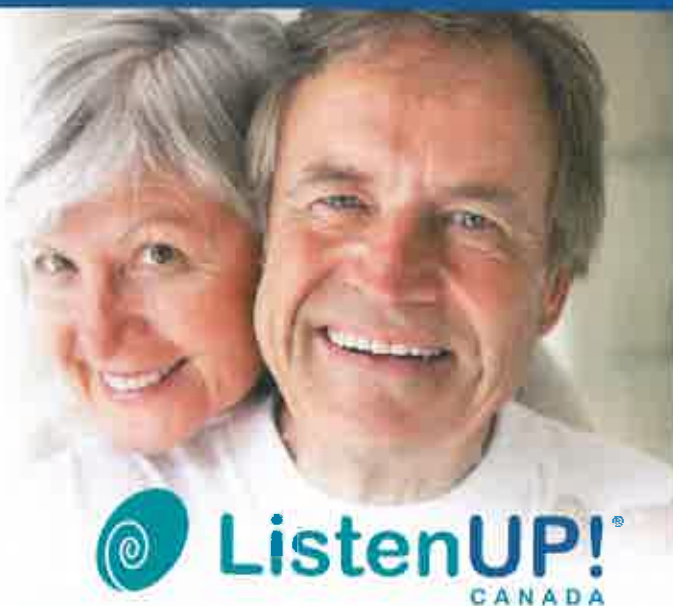
The word pastis first emerged in 1932 when Paul Ricard made a recipe based on green anise, star anise and liquorice. **Ricard Pastis de Marseille**, at 45 per cent alcohol with a brown amber colour that becomes cloudy beige with water added, has a distinct liquorice flavour with earthy masculine tones and brawny power much like the Marseille sailors of past.

More complex and different pastis emerged at the end of the 1980s based on aromatic mixtures created by maceration. **Henri Bardouin** was a pioneer in this regard reviving the category with panache. His pastis ►

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is truly complex with about 65 different herbs and spices. Yes, there's star anise and liquorice but also mugwort, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, thyme, lemon verbena, St. John's wort, oregano, kidney vetch and much more. It's a multi-layered, multi-flavoured pleasure to sip.

Pastis is normally served one part pastis to a recommended five to seven volumes of water, no ice. However, I like it with ice and less water.

Invite some friends, set out the nuts, olives, paper-thin slices of dry saucisson, bread and paté. Pour Lillet, pastis or cocktails and have yourself an apéro party. ☑



## GO WEST

Another *cinq à sept* (5 to 7, or traditionally "happy hour") spot opened up earlier this summer, West Bar, on King Street West, with a side-alley patio and a subterranean tapas bar with a modern take on the *au courant* speak-easy feeling. Partners Glen Baxter, Gil and Nina Huber, Scott Shallow and Steve Doussis, who brought the Soho House to Toronto, liken the crowd to a more sophisticated, mature set, looking for a place to go for after-work drinks or later for a light supper and dancing. Here, their take on the classic martini.

## WESTINI

Shake 3 oz fresh lemonade and 1 oz vodka (shaken, not stirred) with fresh strawberries. Serve over ice in a collins glass.



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