

Understanding Vermouth?

Vermouth is most known as an ingredient in making cocktails like Martinis, Negronis or Manhattans. But what actually is it? In simple terms, vermouth is a fortified/aromatized wine. Yep a wine! It's made from a complex mixture of wine and infused botanicals, with the latter adding flavor, color and individual characteristics to this end delicious product. Originating from the romantic country of Italy, specifically Turin, in the 16th century, Vermouth was created and used for its medicinal purposes. (Side note: France claims it was first to bring forth vermouth.) Today, it hails from many countries, like Italy, France, Spain and the U.S., and is used in cocktails or served on its own over ice.

What Is It: Wine + Botanicals + Neutral Spirit

The vermouth formula is Wine + Botanicals + Neutral Spirit (+ Sugar, often in mass produced ones). Vermouth ranges in styles: Sweet Red, Dry White, Sweet White, and regardless of the style, the base wine to make vermouth is most often white wine. Most red vermouth is made from a base of white wine. The color comes from the varied botanicals that are used or caramel, large scale ones. The blend of botanicals (ie., Juniper, Wormwood, Ginger, Cinchona, Licorice, for example) and base wine is a closely held recipe of each producer. Rarely will we see the list of botanicals on the back of the label.



ARTEMISIA
Artemisia absinthium



CHINA CALISSAIA
Cinchona calisaya



ARANCIO AMARO
Citrus aurantium



RABARBARO
Rheum officinale

Courtesy of Cocchi

Artisanal or Large Production

Like anything, artisanal, local products are often hand-crafted, and their end vermouth products will have different tastes, aging abilities and of course quality than larger produced ones.

Large production vermouths are made in large quantities as the name implies. Producers usually start with a base wine that is a bulk wine and have a shorter window of time for infusing botanicals (often 1-4 weeks). The spirit used is of average quality, and the botanicals are often pre-processed.

Artisanal, smaller production (ie., Mancino, Axta, Mauro Vergano, Yzaguirre) vermouths begin with a base wine of which producers have control. They may even own or oversee the vineyard. The botanicals' raw herbs and spices are often processed in-house, and the botanical-infusion process is longer thus extracting richer flavors. Artisan vermouths age for 1-3 years in stainless steel tanks or barrel before being bottled, and because of this are often richer in flavor/body.

Storing and Life

Once opened like wine, vermouth has a certain period of time to live before their quality and flavors deteriorate. Once opened, vermouth should be kept in the refrigerator. Larger production vermouths last for just 1-3 weeks once opened. Artisanal vermouths last longer, up to 12 weeks. So expand your palate and enjoy these vermouth beauties on their own. That's how we love them.