



The martini has come a long way in the past few years. As well as being shaken and stirred, the old dame has been tinkered with and tweaked, interfered with and infused. And while no variation on the original could ever eclipse the time-honoured allure of a shaken martini with a twist, there is a lot to be said for its newer incarnations. Among the best of the best are martini variations – or nearly martinis – made with clever combinations of fruit and herbs, such as basil and strawberry, pomegranate and mint or elderflower and apple. And the innovation goes on, with rumours of a cheese martini in France and an anchovy martini in Melbourne. Thankfully, here in Sydney, there is no need to assail your tastebuds with quite such exotic concoctions. But if you do feel like something new, but not too unfamiliar, there is a world of exploring to do.

Where to drink it

Lotus Bar & Bistro

22 Challis Avenue, Potts Point. Ph: 9326 9000.

It's worth edging your way between tables of diners to reach the bar, tucked away behind a sliding door at the back of the eponymous Potts Point restaurant. Small but perfectly formed, it is beautifully fitted out, but in the end it's the drinks that demand the most attention. For a unique martini variation, try the stiletto martini (\$16), created by now-departed Marco Faraone. Made with Wyborowa pineapple vodka shaken with fresh pineapple, ginger, coriander, a dash of orange bitters and a dash of orgeat, it goes down a treat.

Vanilla Room

153 Norton Street, Leichhardt. Ph: 9569 9411.

Boasting the Martini Bar, The Leichhardt Hotel and Castalino's, this little slice of Italy knows its drinks. The Vanilla Room itself has a range of martini variations, including the tart sour apple martini (\$12, pictured above) made with three types of apple schnapps, Absolut Citron, lemon, lime and apple juice.

The Victoria Room Restaurant

Level 1, 231a Victoria Street, Darlinghurst. Ph: 9357 4488.

For an Asian-inspired nearly martini, you don't have to travel any further than this first-floor Darlinghurst haunt. Filled with mementos of days gone by, the Victoria Room is the perfect place to pay homage to a classic cocktail. Try their ginger and lemongrass martini (\$16) with Wyborowa vodka, sugar, fresh ginger and lemongrass, or, if you're feeling romantic, the subtle but delicious rose petal (\$16) with Bombay Sapphire gin, lychees and rose water.