

# CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

July 25, 2007

## Drink of the Week

### A Cherry Park Martini

BY DANA KAVAN  
talk2us@CenterstageChicago.com

Where you can find it: Martini Park, 151 W. Erie

The damage: \$10

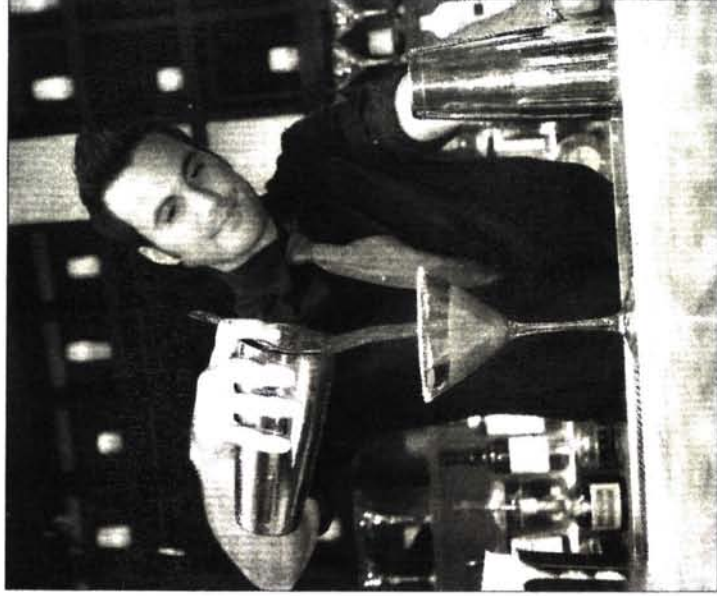
**Thousands of bars in Chicago, why this one?** My playground days began with acting horrified as icky boys chased my friends and me around the jungle gym, but by the time I could write in cursive, I considered myself way too cool for swings. But now that Martini Park, which bills itself as a playground for grownups, has opened, it's time we adults descend on a spot that trades slides for sliders (made with Kobe beef, pulled pork or filet mignon, of course) and recess for happy hour.

**How it went down:** While fruit concoctions dominated the offerings, plenty of unexpected options caught my eye, like the Modern Ward, a blend of bourbon, pomegranate molasses and ginger ale. For bargoers devoid of that youthful exuberance, the Energizer, with Bacardi and Rockstar energy drink, would surely put them back in play mode.

I settled on the Cherry Park Martini and watched the bartender pour a thick burgundy liquid into a chilled glass. A mix of Snow Queen Vodka and cherry puree with a champagne float, sugar rim and maraschino on top, the bubbly blend tasted like a red popsicle with the sweet tang of Laiden's wild cherry cough drops. Satisfied with my first fruit-based pick, I scanned the menu and landed on a pear-flavored concoction for round two.

**Would I want to become a regular?** When I was in elementary school, rocks lined the floor of playgrounds, not the bouncy rubber material that protects kids today. Like those squishy floors, Martini Park's ambience has a comforting effect, its glowing amber bars and stone walls casting a relaxing, almost lodge-like feel. With a River North location and cocktail focus, it could easily skew toward pretension and exclusivity, but it doesn't.

*Every week Dana Kavan scours the city for drinks so good you'll offer to buy your buddies a round. For more, visit [www.centerstagechicago.com/bars](http://www.centerstagechicago.com/bars).*



Martini Park bartender Jonathan Hunter pours the tart Cherry Park Martini. | CLIFTON HENRI—FOR THE SUN-TIMES