

# BACK TO THE FUTURISM

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For an acutely Italian, unashamedly iconoclastic alternative to the traditional aperitivo, look no further than the Futurist movement - currently capturing the imagination of modern mixologists more than a century after it first emerged.

Unleashed in 1909, Futurism was a vibrant, disruptive and troublesome movement underpinned by the deeply held belief that art, in varied forms, could transform Italian society. Led by founder Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Futurism's followers were passionately patriotic, rebellious modernists that despised Italy's pre-occupation with its past and instead rejoiced in the new industrial age.



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Consumption was a core pillar of Futurism – it was felt that ‘men think, dream and act according to what they eat and drink’. Driven by distaste for age-old culinary Italian customs, Marinetti set about revolutionising the Italian culinary scene, culminating in the publication of *Futurist Cookbook* in 1932 – a book which saw knives and forks abolished, pasta disregarded and coffee served as an aperitivo while vermouth was served as a digestif.

Marinetti preceded the likes of Heston Blumenthal in his celebration of multi-sensory dining and drinking. Between courses at Futurism banquets, perfume would be sprayed, music would be played, different fabrics would be felt, poetry would be recited and appetites excited by the fleeting presentation, beneath the guests' nostrils, of dishes that would either be eaten later or never be seen again– ‘to increase curiosity, surprise and imagination’.

The *polibibita*, or cocktail, felt the force of Futurism too. Wine was drunk from petrol tanks, absinthe – officially banished from the country – was created in secret and Italian concoctions hitherto enjoyed neat would be used as mixers.



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The traditional sweet-bitter premise on which the Italian aperitivo had been built was abandoned and eschewed in favour of sweet-savoury and sweet-spicy. The drinks were multi-sensual experiences in which ice, particularly ice made with machines, was crucial. Visually, it changed the colour of the cocktail as it melted. The click-clacking around the glass also created all-important sound, and produced a tactile sensation on the lips. Instead of drab lemon and orange zests, Futurist cocktails were decorated with hugely gregarious garnishes – dates and anchovies, honey and meat, bananas with chicken or spicy chilli sauce and lemon ice cream – eccentric, edible works of art.

Surprise was a central ingredient and details of ingredients and approach were intentionally removed to give the cocktail maker the utmost freedom of interpretation. In his book *Futurist Mixology*, author and bartender Fulvio Piccinino writes: 'In reading these *polibibita* recipes, without quantities or descriptions, they almost all seem bizarre in their combinations and, apparently, undrinkable. But the flavours and garnishes of most of them are absolutely surprising, pleasing to the average palate and balanced without any kind of excess.'

This article was created by [The House of Peroni](#).

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