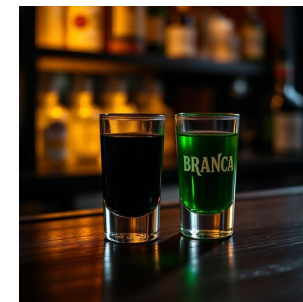


The Hard Start

Fernet-Branca and Branca Menta, side by side. The international bartender handshake.



TIME	DIFFICULTY	GLASS	METHOD	GARNISH
1 min	Effortless	Two shot glasses	Built	None

INGREDIENTS

½ oz Fernet-Branca

well-chilled

½ oz Branca Menta

well-chilled — both bottles live in the freezer at a serious bar

METHOD

1. Pour ½ oz of Fernet-Branca into a shot glass.
2. Pour ½ oz of Branca Menta into a second shot glass — or combine them into one.
3. Drink them together, or alternate sips. Either is correct.
4. Nod to the bartender. They will nod back.

BARTENDER'S TIP

Both bottles must be ice-cold. Room-temperature Fernet is medicinal; freezer-cold Fernet is silky. If you only have one bottle in the freezer, this drink isn't ready.

THE STORY

Coined by Damon Boelte at Prime Meats in Brooklyn around 2010, the Hard Start codified a ritual bartenders had been doing for years: Fernet on its own is too bitter for a casual shot; Branca Menta alone is too sweet; combined they're perfect. The drink became the unofficial bartender handshake of the 2010s and is now poured in serious cocktail bars from San Francisco to Singapore.

Full recipe, variations and bottle notes: amaroafficionado.com/recipes/hard-start