

# Let the good times beGIN

The djinn of alcohol is popularly believed to have originated in England/Ireland. The truth is Gin was originally made by monks and alchemists all across Europe in the 11th Century. While Italian monks discovered its medicinal and disinfectant properties, it is Holland, where juniper berries were added to barley, which is the true birthplace of gin. The name comes from the Dutch word for juniper berries, genever. The Dutch doctor Franciscus de la Boa was the inventor of Gin in the 16th Century. It is now a distilled alcohol of 35% to 60% proof abv and there are hundreds of distilleries in Amsterdam alone.

In the beginning of the 19th Century, when the British occupied India, soldiers and the sailors in the Navy often travelled to destinations where malaria was prevalent. They carried with them quinine rations to prevent and fight the disease. To camouflage its bitter taste the British added water, sugar and lime. Erasmus

Bond was awarded the first patent for tonic water in 1858 and Johann Jacob Scheweppe's company first introduced its own more palatable quinine and lime infused mineral water to the market in 1870. 'Tonic water' was named keeping its medicinal properties in mind. It was mixed with Gin and thus Gin and Tonic was born – in India.

During these voyages, the sailors carried London dry gin as beer spoiled quickly. Limes were added for their anti-scurvy properties. Cordials were made to preserve the limes and this combined with Gin made the quintessential Gimlet. It was in the latter half of the 20th Century that Gin was re-embraced as a cult and craft cocktail ingredient. In 2008, after several years of lobbying, Sipsmith became England's first official small still distiller. Their facility on Portobello Road is a gin-lovers paradise with a working distillery, an interactive museum hosting gin history classes



and a small boutique hotel with guest rooms and restaurants.

There are over 6000 Gins in the world ranging from the classics to gins such as Ungava Canadian, Whitney Neill handcrafted, Botanist Islay, Gaorounn and multiple small batch productions. It is no wonder that there is one for every palate. India's first gin, Greater Than, sourced Macedonian Juniper and their more premium 'Hapusa' (Sanskrit for Juniper) uses Himalayan juniper and mango, coriander, turmeric and almonds.

One of my favorites – the 1st artisanal Japanese gin – KI NO BI (which translates to 'beauty of the seasons') is distilled, blended and bottled in Kyoto. It uses Japanese Botanicals like juniper, orris, yellow yuzu, Akamatsu (red pine) wood chips, bamboo leaves, green tea, kinome and sansho (Japanese peppercorn berries). At 45.7% abv, it uses a rice spirit base and pure ground water sourced from Fushimi, the famous

sake brewing district. Each category of ingredients is distilled individually and then blended in perfect harmony to get the distinctive KI NO BI flavor.

While Tanqueray is good for Martinis; Botanist is smooth to drink neat and Monkey 47 is used to make a Negroni – one of the finest gin cocktails of all time. This Italian cocktail is made of one part each of Gin, Vermouth Rosso and Campari, and garnished with orange peel. A traditional Negroni is stirred not shaken and built over ice in an old-fashioned rock glass.

Another quintessential gin cocktail is the Singapore Sling, developed around 1915 at the Long Bar in Singapore's Raffles hotel, by bartender Ngiam Tong Boon. Gin, fresh lime juice, a dash of angostura bitters, cherry liqueur and Grenadine, Cointreau, Benedictine and pineapple juice are mixed. With precise measurements, the Singapore Sling is tart, refreshing and delicious. Poured in a lightbulb glass, it is garnished with a pineapple slice and a maraschino cherry.





Photo: Sipsmith



Photo: Tony Hisget

In the last few years, I have also tried several small batch Dutch gins which, while flavorful on their own, when mixed with grapefruit or elderflower tonic water are taken to a subliminal level. Matching your gin and tonic is not just an art form but a necessity. You wouldn't fit local tyres on a Porsche, similarly a great gin deserves a quality tonic to go with it. Artisanal tonic waters are a lot less sweet than commercial tonic water, and are more natural flavors. Fever Tree and Sepoy & Co have a range of flavorful tonics such as Yuzu, Grapefruit, Elderflower, Lemon & Mint etc. that allow the botanicals in your premium gin to shine through.

While I love playing with flavors and experimenting with different combinations, last week's creative cocktail was one with St. Georges Terroir Gin (from the golden state of California), steeped with hibiscus brewed tea, some fresh nectarine juice – poured in a martini glass over crushed ice and topped with some grapefruit tonic, a dash of lime and a slice of nectarine as garnish - delightfully refreshing on a hot summer day! 🍹

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