

THE PLAYBOY BAR: GIN

THE JUICE ON THE JUICE

Picture a small London laboratory in the early 1800s. Inside, a pharmacist is at work. His name is James Burrough, and he's known to locals for bizarre elixirs like "artificial asses' milk." Burrough is making gin. It's a new idea in London. By steeping grain alcohol with exotic botanicals available in the city for the first time—juniper berries from Italy, citrus peels from Spain, almonds from Eastern Europe—a distiller could make a marvelous potion. Juniper berries were believed to ward off worm infestation and hemorrhoids. Other distillers, like Charles Tanqueray and Alexander Gordon, were also perfecting recipes for what is now known as London dry gin. Burrough named his gin Beefeater after the fat men who guarded the Tower of London. Nowadays when you walk into a liquor store and buy Beefeater, Tanqueray or Gordon's London dry gin, you're buying the exact recipes those tinkers perfected so many years ago. They won't cure hemorrhoids, but they'll do wonders for your disposition.

FOR HIM: GIMLET

We use the recipe from Raymond Chandler's novel *The Long Goodbye*: "A real gimlet is half gin and half Rose's Lime Juice and nothing else."

1 shot gin
1 shot Rose's Lime Juice
Shake with ice, and strain into a chilled cocktail glass.

FOR THE PARTY: NEGRONI

Anyone who has traveled in Italy knows how well this cocktail works as an aperitif. It's also great for parties because it has three equally matched ingredients—easy to make by the glass or the pitcher.

1 part gin
1 part Campari
1 part sweet vermouth

Shake with ice, and dump with the ice into a rocks glass. Garnish with a slice of orange peel.

FOR HER: MARTIN MILLER'S GIN REVOLUTION

Created by Niccole Trzaska of the Stone Rose Lounge in New York.

1½ oz. Martin Miller's gin
1 oz. Cointreau
½ oz. fresh lemon juice

1 egg white

Regans' orange bitters

Shake all but the bitters vigorously with ice, and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Add a dash of the bitters on top.



TASTEMAKERS

Gin is basically vodka infused with the flavor of eclectic botanicals harvested from all over the globe. To wit, the 10 flavoring agents distilled into a bottle of Bombay Sapphire: almonds and lemon peel from Spain, licorice root from China, juniper berries (gin's most characteristic flavor) and orrisroot from Italy, angelica root from Saxony, coriander seeds from Morocco, cassia bark from Indochina, cubeb berries from Java and *aframomum melegueta* ("grains of paradise") from west Africa.

MIXED DRINKS

The prevailing wisdom with mixed drinks is to combine cheap mixers with cheaper swill. But there's no reason you can't raise the level of a simple gin and tonic. We recommend a strongly flavored gin, such as Beefeater, so the botanicals come through, and quality mixers. Juice can be freshly squeezed. Always go for bottled tonic water, not the junk they shoot out of a gun. Try Q Tonic (pictured), made with quinine from bark handpicked in the Andes mountains and sweetened with agave rather than high-fructose corn glp.

GIN BY ANY OTHER NAME

Not all gin is London dry gin. There's old tom gin, a sweetened version popular in the 19th century that you can still buy in England. Sloe gin is a completely different beast—a reddish-brown liqueur made with sloe berries and used in cocktails like the corvette and the fast buck. You can still find some Dutch gin, or *genever*, in American bars—look for the brands Damrak and Van Gogh. Here in the States we have a few boutique gins: Try the wonderfully crisp Distillery No. 209 (pictured), made at a Napa Valley winery.

ON THE MARTINI

It has been called "the only American invention as perfect as the sonnet" (H.L. Mencken) and "the supreme American gift to the world" (Bernard DeVoto). Legend has it the martini dates back to the 19th century, when a bartender named "Professor" Jerry Thomas mixed old tom gin with sweet vermouth and some other ingredients. He called the drink the martinez

cocktail. The martini didn't resemble today's "see-through" until the 1930s. What we love most about the martini is its simplicity (chilled gin with how-ever much dry vermouth you wish) and its flexibility. Like a good set of tires, it performs beautifully whether it's dry, moist or sopping wet. Twist? Olives? Up? Rocks? Dirty? We love them all. Our favorite martini gin is

Plymouth because of its complexity and balance; no single botanical jumps to the fore. If you can't taste the vermouth, in our opinion you're not drinking a martini. We keep glasses and a shaker of ice in the freezer at all times—at home and at the office. And we embrace the vigorous shake, which leaves shardlike chips of ice atop a freezing-cold glassful.

"I LIKE TO HAVE A MARTINI. / BUT ONLY TWO AT THE MOST. / AFTER THREE I'M UNDER THE TABLE. / AFTER FOUR I'M UNDER MY HOST."

—Dorothy Parker