



GIN JOINT

Inside the distillery, gin lines the redwood sequoia table for which the company was named.

BOOZE

Keep Still

Vancouver welcomes Long Table Distillery, the city's first spirits-maker in 40 years

by Kate MacLennan

Portland's intoxicating influence is at play in Vancouver again, this time at Long Table Distillery Ltd., the city's first spirits-maker to open its doors in more than four decades.

The idea to open a distillery came to founder Charles Tremewen and his wife, Rita, during a tasting tour of the Oregon city's famous Distillery Row. "I've always wanted to run my own business," says Tremewen, a former

product manager at Nature's Path Inc. and director of marketing for Salt Spring Coffee. "Distilling was something I felt I could be quite passionate about and take the skill set that I had and some of the skill sets I'd learned as a boy in the brewing and distilling side—probably not overly legally, but the things that boys do—and that evolved into this business."

While Tremewen honed his →

skills in artisan distilling at Michigan State University, the couple began to look for a location in Vancouver to house a single still. When a small space on Hornby Street that had formerly been an art gallery and a condo display suite became available, the pair jumped.

As he answers questions in his newly opened location, Tremewen runs between the redwood sequoia table that's the distillery's namesake and the 300-litre, shiny copper German still, ensuring the batch of London Dry Gin he's crafting pans out as planned. "It's the business of alchemy: trial and error," he explains. "Gin is sort of the core of our business model because we love gin."

When possible, the couple plans to source local ingredients for their small batches of product. For example, 250 pounds of alpine juniper, which they foraged from the Coast Mountains, is currently drying for use in a future batch of West Coast gin. Of the 2,000 or so bottles of spirits that Long Table Distillery produced last year, about half were its London Dry Gin. The other half were a vodka filtered through limestone sourced on Texada Island. And Tremewen aspires to broaden his scope.

"An aquavit is something I want to make, but it depends on the flexibility we can get. We're very limited. I couldn't make rum right now, for instance, because we don't make sugar here in B.C. So how does that impact us in terms of creativity in our craft? It's challenging, very challenging," he says, before deferring the topic of the challenging bureaucracy in the province surrounding alcohol production and consumption for "another story."

What distillers can't get from the government, however, the community more than makes up for, Tremewen says. Referring to award-winning bartender Jay Jones, Tremewen says, "He tweeted about us yesterday, and I was like, 'Whoa, where did that come from?' His recognition is, for us, quite significant because we must be doing the right thing."

The distillery is open for tastings and all its products can be purchased on-site, as well as at a growing number of private bottle shops. The London Dry Gin and Texada Vodka are available at B.C. liquor stores (longtabledistillery.com). □