



Endeavour Gin (\$50) An excellent every-day gin: equal parts masculine and feminine in the Tanqueray No. 10 mould.

Long Table Cucumber Gin (\$50) Long Table's London Gin is already a hit. This new cucumber offering is poised to replace Hendrick's in your liquor cabinet.

Wallflower Gin (\$44) Very floral, very sexy. Nice on its own, but could shine in an Aviation or other classic cocktail.

JUMPING JUNIPER!

» The first time I tasted gin, it was in a tomato gin soup at the Mayfair Golf and Country Club. I was five, and the two tastes have been married in my mind ever since—and with this issue's feature on soup, there seemed no better time to talk about the craft distillery boom here in the West. The first wave of vodkas were swell, but how excited can you get about a spirit that by definition has no colour and a neutral taste? Gin, on the other hand, separates the winter wheat from the chaff as far as distilling goes. There are the botanicals that go in the mix. Juniper berries, of course, but they can be joined by any number of creative options: liquorice, various types of citrus peel, cucumbers. Then, there's how to get the essence into the spirits: do you add extracts (yes, if you're a cheapskate or a bootlegger), or do you have the vapour gently pass through a botanical basket to pick up more subtle essences? Finally, at what strength do you bottle? The key is to understand that gin has a lot of choices, and a single wrong one will turn the spirit in entirely the wrong direction. Luckily, these three pioneers (soon to be joined by Turner Valley's Parlour Gin) made nary a wrong step.—Neal McLennan