

# Imbibe

**BRIDIE CHETWIN-KELLY** explores the rising popularity of gin and its new, sophisticated varieties... a Mother's Day gift perhaps?



## The juniper tippie

Gin and tonic has been a classic cocktail since colonists used it to ward off malaria. Tonic contains the anti-malarial quinine; gin was added to combat its bitter taste. Gin, like many alcohols, was originally used medicinally and is said to be at the root of the expression "Dutch courage" when soldiers in the Anglo-Dutch Wars drank it to boost their confidence. There's now a resurgence in the juniper berry-based spirit, with gin bars popping up and new distilleries opening to produce gins

with a surprising range of subtle flavours. Jason Rosen (above), owner of Auckland bar Parasol and Swing, describes gin as a palate opener and the best spirit for cocktails because of its dryness. (The bar's Crimson & Clover cocktail includes dry gin, raspberry jam, grenadine, vermouth, lemon and raspberry dust.) New Zealand gins are making a name for themselves on the world stage. Even Irish talk show host Graham Norton has launched his own gin in partnership with Kiwi company Invivo.

## Sip a special gin here



### GIN GIN, CHRISTCHURCH

With upwards of 50 gins, Gin Gin is a recent addition to the Christchurch entertainment landscape. Bar manager Luke Dawkins has witnessed a gin renaissance: "It has started to be in vogue and setting trends with new younger gin lovers around the world." The bar serves a Mediterranean menu that changes seasonally; the idea being to match the food to the botanical flavours in the gins.  
*92 Victoria St, Christchurch*



### THE PORTLAND, AUCKLAND

At first glance The Portland Public House in Kingsland seems like a busy run-of-the-mill music venue and sports bar. However, general manager Ashish Negi is intent on making gin cocktails a highlight, with an extensive cocktail list that includes house-infused gins and a beautifully presented apple and cinnamon cocktail (with ice globes rather than cubes). Ashish is a fan of Scapegrace gin (see right).  
*463 New North Rd, Kingsland*

### FROM THE COAST

Patsy Bass opened the Reefton Distilling Co in late 2018, creating much needed jobs for the small West Coast town. The area's plentiful rainwater is a key ingredient and botanicals like kahikatea tips, toatoa and watercress are foraged locally. The distillery's Little Biddy gin (it just won two global awards) comes in three styles including West Coast Botanical Dry gin (left). \$79.99, [reeftondistillingco.com](http://reeftondistillingco.com).



### A TOUCH OF RHUBARB

Blush is a pretty gin that would make a welcome Mother's Day gift. In 2018, Aucklanders Elliot McClymont and Chris Thomas set out to make a gin that could be drunk neat over ice. It was by pure accident that when they added rhubarb, the gin went a pleasant shade of pink. A touch of liquorice gives it a sweeter, smoother taste. Blush gin \$79-85 from liquor stores nationwide.



### IT'S A WINNER

It may not be made in the UK but Scapegrace (formally Rogue Society) was recently named the world's best London dry gin at the London International Wine & Spirit Competition. Launched five years ago by Mark Neal and brother-in-law Daniel McLaughlin, it's made with New Zealand water, 12 botanics from across the globe and three layers of citrus to give a modern twist on a classic drink. The bottle took three years and five designers to create. \$79.95-124.95, [scapegracegin.com](http://scapegracegin.com).

