

TRY GIN

FIVE GINS TO TASTE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE FASCINATING DRINK



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Introduction

Edinburgh in autumn. After climbing down the steps into a vaulted cellar, I am led into a small, cramped room with three other people. This is not the beginning of a guided ghost tour through the underworld of the Scottish city, but the beginning of my gin making course at the Edinburgh Gin Distillery.

No question, Gin is hip. Everyone is talking about gin. And this has been going on for a few years now. This popularity is also evident at the Edinburgh Gin Distillery. In late summer, all courses until the new year were already fully booked.

My expectation of the course was to develop a real understanding of the composition of a gin and to get to the bottom of the soul of the gin. Unfortunately nothing came of it. A few hours just aren't enough to get to the bottom of the complex drink. The gin producer Fabian Rohrwasser calls these types of courses aptly "toy courses".

The popularity of gin can be seen in liquor stores these days. While 15 years, there were just a few gins, now there are dozens. When I talked to friends across Germany and Europe that I am working on a Gin Tasting Set, I received so many recommendations to include their local gin.

An amazing 700 different types of gin are said to be available in Germany alone!

With this huge selection, the question arises how to pick a good gin that you personally enjoy. Some gins are just products of savvy marketing professionals: fancy bottle and design but a gin made in anonymous distillery.

I wanted to find out what makes a really good gin. How is it made and how do I recognize it? Like many others, I like to drink Gin & Tonic, but I wasn't aware of this before this set the different flavors and the production of good gins. I wanted to get to know the character of a pure gin, without its congenial partner, the tonic. That's why I started tasting gins pure.

For my research, in addition to the Edinburgh trip, I embarked on further discovery tours and met the gin producer Fabian Rohrwasser in his distillery the gates of Hamburg. I went to the Berlin Bar Convention, where I spoke to the author Frédéric Du Bois (Gin & Tonic), interviewed the blogger Christian Kopp (formerly www.ginspiration.de) and visited the Berlin spirits dealer and organizer a Craft Spirits Festival, Thomas Kochan (Dr. Kochan Schnapskultur). And of course I also spoke to all five producers of the gins chosen for this set:

Henrik Hammer (Old English Gin), Mikko Mykkänen (Helsinki Dry Gin), Heiko Hoos (Hoos Reserve Gin), Fabian Rohrwasser (5 Continents Gin) and Georg Glitz-Ehringhausen (Jos.Garden Gin).



Yes, they are all men! It seems distilling gin is still a male domain. So we need more gin-producing women!

If you are interested in even more information about gin and TRY FOODS, you can go to: www.tryfoods.de.

There you can also buy your favorite gin(s) from this set in buy regular bottles. Have fun reading and tasting!

Yours

Jörn Gutowski

Set Notes

When selecting the gins, in addition to showing a variety of tastes and styles, I was particularly concerned with knowing exactly who made each gin. Gin brands that do not disclose who distills their gin were not considered at all.

While for many Gin & Tonic are a tight-knit team that should never be separated, my recommendation is to taste the gins pure first and perhaps afterwards mix them with some tonic.

 Jörn Gutowski (right) with Fabian Rohrwasser from Feingeisterei



GIN

STRY GINS

WHIS

INFORMATION

RUM

TRUY GINS

What is gin?

"Gin is light, gin is refreshing."

Fabian
Rohrwasser

Gin (and especially in combination with tonic) is the perfect summer drink for many. It is the epitome of a "sundowner", i.e. the drink at sunset. Gin tastes of summer, of sociable exuberance, or how the Belgium gin expert and author Frederic du Bois puts it:

"Gin dances on the tongue, pushing the boundaries of taste and letting passion triumph."

Frederic du
Bois

If we take a more sober approach to gin, we find that it is a juniper spirit to which other natural ingredients are added during the production process, depending on the recipe. An EU regulation from 2008 divides gin into the following categories:

Gin: Gin is a spirit drink made from ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin with a juniper flavor and min. 37.5% alcohol content. Natural and/or nature-identical flavorings may be used. (The ingredients do not have to be extracted from the respective plants and the gin does not have to be distilled.)

Distilled Gin: Ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin with at least 96% alcohol is redistilled with juniper berries and other botanicals. It is allowed to mix different distillates and add natural and/or nature-identical flavorings are used.

London Dry Gin: A subspecies of distilled gin with stricter regulations. Here the 96% alcohol may only be distilled once with juniper berries and other herbal substances. (Flavorings are not allowed.) After that, only water may be added. It is also stipulated that London Gin may only have 0.1 g of sugar per liter. That's why the suffix "Dry" is added. The maximum methanol content (= toxic alcohol) in London Gin is also specified. This may not exceed 5 g per hectolitre. London Gin is therefore a regulated production method and has nothing to do with geographical origin of a gin.

Dry Gin: Since other gins can also be "Dry" (in addition to London gin), the EU decided in 2014 that simple gin and distilled gin may also bear the addition "dry" if they also do not include more than 0.1 g contain sugar per liter.

In addition to these EU-defined terms, there are other categories (such as New Western, Old Tom, etc.) that gins are divided into. More on this in the chapter "Gin types".

So let's keep it short on the regulative level: In summary, according to the EU, juniper taste is absolutely fundamental for a gin and the London Dry Gin has the highest quality level, as it has the most regulations.

However, it is not the case that a London Dry Gin is automatically a premium product. You can already get one for well under ten euros at the discounter. Rather, London Dry Gin is a qualitative lower limit. That's why many distillers in the premium segment refrain from labeling their gins as such. They attach greater importance to regional affiliation and write: "Berlin Dry Gin" or "Helsinki Dry Gin" on their label.

So much for the EU regulation level. Much more exciting for me than the legal terms around gin is the question: what makes a gin a good gin? Of course I turned to the producers to learn from them:

"A good gin must taste of juniper. It must have its own profile and a distinct character. In terms of taste, it should be balanced."

Mikko
Mykkinen

"A good gin is complex and multi-faceted."

George Glitz
Ehringhausen

Complexity, character and balance depend above all on the correct use of botanicals and careful production. Let's therefore take a closer look at the botanicals on the following pages.



The botanicals

"Thanks to the botanicals, you can experiment a lot more with gin than with other spirits like vodka or schnapps. Gin is practically limitless."

George Glitz
Ehringhausen

Okay, but what exactly does the term "botanicals" encompass? For a long time, I wasn't sure. So, here is the quick explanation: Botanicals are groups of plants (or plant components) found in gin: herbs & leaves, seeds, roots & bark as well as berries & fruit. Here are some of the most important botanicals:

Juniper: No gin can do without juniper as the EU regulation already provides for. Juniper grows throughout the northern hemisphere. It is a very hardy bush, of which there are around 50-70 varieties worldwide. By the way, strictly botanically speaking, the blue juniper berries are not berries, but cones.

Juniper tastes woody, resinous, lemony and combines "lightness and heaviness" in a distinctive way according to Fabian Rohrwasser). It has been used since ancient times as a versatile medicine (eg for digestive problems or rheumatism).

The two classics, which also appear in almost every gin, are:

Coriander: The seeds give the gin a tangy and citrusy flavor.

Angelica root: The root is primarily responsible for the dry taste of a gin.

Other important botanicals are:

Orris root (as a binder for the botanicals), ginger, cinnamon, citrus peel (lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit etc.), nutmeg, cardamom, licorice, cumin and many more.

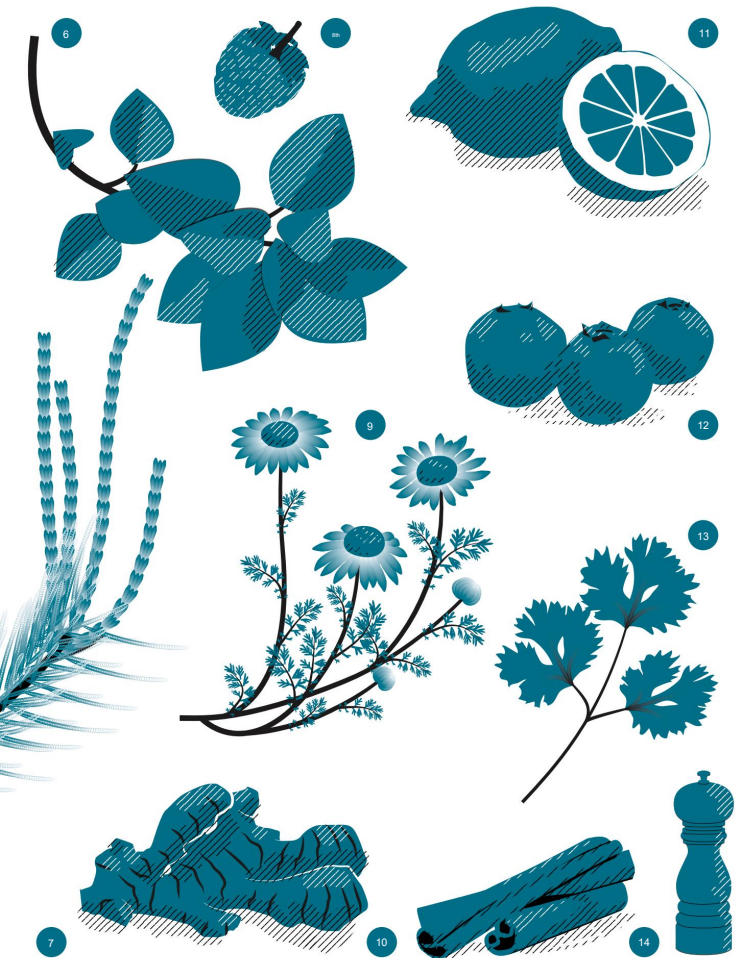
This is just a very small selection as there are hundreds. The botanicals are like a big playground where gin producers can have some fun. But the art is to find the right mix of botanicals for the perfect gin. In recent years in particular, many producers have been trying to experiment with regional botanicals in order to give the gin its own character.

Back to my short gin-making course in Edinburgh: Here the course leader sets up around 20 small glasses in front of us, from which we are to choose 4-6. I choose winter botanicals (cinnamon, star anise and orange), without knowing whether they harmonize with each other in the gin.

Botanicals of the five
gins in a set (excerpt)

1. bitter orange
2. sloe
3. poplar bud
4. eucalyptus
5. pine buds
6. marjoram
7. ginger
8. raspberry
9. chamomile
10. cinnamon
11. lemon
12. cranberry
13. coriander
14. pepper





TRY GINS

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How to proceed to get the right mix I learned from Heiko Hoos and others:

"I took the ingredients of the botanicals as a starting point. The chemical limonene* is found in juniper as well as many others. So I chose a total of 15 botanicals that all contain limonene, such as marjoram or pine buds."

Heiko Hoos

My attempt to create a wintry gin definitely does not really work out. When I sip the finished gin, it doesn't put me in a cosy room at the Christmas time. It rather simply tastes like a classic gin. This is because we received a prepared "base gin" as the starting alcohol, in which juniper, coriander seeds, angelica and orris root were already macerated. Our selected botanicals were put in a tea bag, which is hung into the small pipe of a still, through which the steam of the heated gin passes. As I learn later, it's not just about the combination of botanicals, but also on the length of the maceration (soaking in alcohol) and the distillation. We will look at how this works in the next chapter.

**Lemon-like liquid hydrocarbon*



At the distillery

Fabian
Rohwasser

“Gin is the only spirit with a recipe, apart from liqueurs that were mixed together. If you make a rum, you are dependent on the molasses and the cask. If you make a pear schnaps, you are totally focused on just the pear. I only have one ingredient of which I try to get as possible of the aroma into the distillate.

I have to think more about the gin – apart from juniper as a basic ingredient. Which of the many botanicals should I add? There is no requirement that it must be 5 or 47. As an enthusiastic cook, it was a fun challenge for me to find out what matches well together. I found that very attractive. ”

It's warm in here, just like in a restaurant kitchen! No wonder, because Fabian Rohwasser puts a few logs of wood in the furnace of his distillery. We are right next to the oven as he tells me about the production of his gin.

I'm here for a day at Gut Basthorst, where Fabian produces his 5 Continents Gin in his small distillery, along with other spirits.

Gin production can be explained in five simplified steps.

1. The base alcohol

The starting point for the gin is an alcohol that is almost pure at 96%. It is often made from grain, but it can also be made from pomace (brandy), potatoes or other agricultural raw materials. The producers and gin experts I interviewed, have different opinions as to whether you can taste the differences in the raw material used for base alcohol. However, everyone agrees that it must be a clean and high-quality alcohol.

2. The maceration

The botanicals are placed in the base alcohol so that the aromas (the essential oils) can be dissolved and transferred to the alcohol. Each distiller has his own – often well-guarded – recipe for how long he soaks the various botanicals in the alcohol.

“For us, the longest maceration time is 48 hours. Cinnamon, for example, takes a long time to release the aroma, but if you wait too long it becomes too strong. Gradually, we add the different botanicals. The botanicals with the shortest duration are only macerated for about three hours.”

Fabian
Rohwasser

Some distillers do not allow certain botanicals to macerate in the alcohol, but percolate them instead: they place the botanicals in a kind of tea bag and let the vapor produced during the distillation pass through them (which we did in the workshops in Edinburgh).

3. Distillation

After the botanicals have released their flavors into the alcohol, it is distilled, (which means, it is heated until it evaporates.) The steam rises into the still, cools down and becomes liquid again.

When it comes to distillation, the distiller has to separate the "the forerunnings and and the tailings" from the good middle. In the lead there are often fusel alcohols or substances from the previous distillations that are still stuck in the pipes. The tailings often taste too bitter and too intensive.

Only the middle part provides the flavor and the composition that the quality-conscious distiller wants. Aside from this general practice, there are different ways in the distillation process to produce a great gin.

Depending on distiller's philosophy and the nature of their distillery, gin distillers distill once or several times. There are distillers that, in the traditional London gin fashion, distill all botanicals in one turn, while others distill botanicals individually:

"I prepare a total of nine different distillates, which I distill individually.

George Glitz
Ehringhausen

This way, I can best control the desired taste in the gin.”

George Giltz
Ehringhausen

4. Depreciate

After the distillation, the gin is reduced to the desired alcohol content by adding water to mostly 40%-50%.

5. Storage

In order for the different flavors to mix properly in the alcohol-water mixture, the gin should be stored before it goes on sale. The duration differs between different producers. The Helsinki Dry Gin is stored for about four weeks, while the Jos. Garden Gin rests for three months.

Even if there are very different approaches among distillers, there are some commonalities for good gin. This includes: careful selection of high-quality raw materials (botanicals and base alcohol), precise study of the right maceration for the individual recipe, clean manual distillation and a storage time that enhances the aroma profile in the gin.

Types of gin

There are different ways gins can be categorized in. In addition to the categories of the EU regulation mentioned, which primarily consider production, you can also classify gin according to their style of taste.

Sometimes the categories blur together a bit. The important thing is that you shouldn't take them as the only valid truth, but rather as a starting point. The following styles make sense to me when classifying gins:

London Dry Style: The London Dry Gin is the classic among gin flavors: clear juniper note and dry, straightforward taste. (The term "London Dry Gin" is both used in the EU regulation as well as in describing a gin with a classic taste profile.

New Western Style: This name is used to summarize gins in which other aromas (aside from juniper) can be primarily tasted. These are often experimental gins where, unusual botanicals (like seaweed, pickles) are added or where other botanicals play the leading aromatic role.

Old Tom/Old English Style: In this traditional style from England, sugar is added to the gin. In the past, this was done to cover up the often poor quality of the alcohol and/or to drink

the gin straight, which was the usual way to enjoy the drink in the 18th century.

Sloe Gin: The “sloe gin” is actually a sloe liqueur. For this, the finished gin is mixed with sloe berries mixed in sugar and stored together for months. The slightly sweet and fruity liqueur has approx. 28% alcohol.

Genever: The Dutch and Flemish is a juniper schnapps and the father of today' s gin, which is why, strictly speaking, we should say that gin is a genever variety.

The difference is that the alcohol for Genever is always made from malt. There are barrel-aged, sweetish-lush Genever and young, dry Genever. Also in other countries (like Germany) a long tradition of juniper schnapps can be found.

In recent years, many distillers have become very open for experiments. This was fueled by the fact that in a market flooded with umpteen gin brands, attempts had to be made to attract attention by standing out (e.g. using more and more botanicals). Others boasted very unusual ingredients.

“There are a lot of crazy gins these days like for example, a gin from Belgium where real lobster is cooked during the distillation.”

Frederic du
Bois

Experimentations sometimes went overboard to the effect that that some gins did not show any juniper flavor whatsoever.

“Some producers of so-called 'innovative' gins say their gin has a juniper note - which is what they are required to say by law, but I'm wondering: Where the hell do you taste that?”

Frederic du Bois

Although experiments are good and important, there is a great danger that – if you go too far – every flavored spirit will end up being a gin and thus gin will become completely arbitrary.

“Diversity is going in the wrong direction. At the moment, gin is the new vodka. You remember when the big brands added all these flavored vodka like citrus vodka, cranberry vodka, etc?”

Christian Kopp

No wonder that most recently, there is now a trend towards a return to classic gin styles after so many experimental "New Western" gins have hit the market in recent years. During my conversations with the experts, I sensed that it is important to all of them that a gin distiller knows and appreciates the classic character of a gin. Taking it as a basis for an individual interpretation.



TRY GINS

History of gin

In order to better understand the development of gin as an omnipresent bar drink, it is worth taking a look at the very turbulent history of gin. You could say it's a story with nine chapters and a happy ending.

Chapter 1: All beginnings are in the juniper

Like many other spices that are used for pleasure today, juniper is also originally a medicine. The first records of its use come from what is now the Netherlands and go back to 1269.

Chapter 2: Genever, the big brother

It is to no surprise that a few centuries later, in Holland of all places, schnapps was first made from juniper. It is then called "Genever" (or "Jenever" - as the Flemish people of Belgium say) after the Dutch word for juniper.

Chapter 3: "Dutch Courage" turns into gin

During the Thirty Years' War, English soldiers fight alongside the Dutch in Holland against the Spanish. The story goes that they get to witness Dutch troops get a glass of genever in the morning, apparently turning them into brave soldiers on the battlefield. Hence, the English call the drink "Dutch Courage". A nickname that is used for gin until today.

The "Dutch Courage" is becoming increasingly popular with the English. As it is hard to pronounce Genever for an English person, they shorten the name to gin. The growing popularity of the drink in England is accelerated by the accession of William III to the British throne. William, who is Dutch, lowers taxes on liquor distilling and increases taxes on beer brewing and importing foreign goods and spirits such as the then popular Cognac.

Chapter 4: The "Gin Craze"

In the 17th century water was too unhygienic to drink, which is why people across Europe drank beer (thanks to the fermentation it was much more safe to drink). However, The English, who previously drank 3-4% alcohol beer for breakfast, lunch and dinner, were now switching to gin with 40-50% alcohol in droves, with disastrous effects on their health. At the beginning of the 18th century, a true horror picture of London emerged: the death rate exceeded the birth rate by far and 75% of all children died before their 5th birthday, because they were neglected, drank gin themselves or suffered from defects caused by their mothers drinking gin while they were still in the womb.

Chapter 5: Laws and Palaces

In order to get the catastrophic situation under control, laws were passed to curb the amount of gin and improve its quality. So were previously z. B. often poisonous substances like turpentine mixed into the gin. The now high-quality gin ("London Dry") became popular with high society. So-called "gin palaces" were established, where the high society knew how to celebrate glamorous gin parties.

Chapter 6: Gin & Tonic - The love affair begins in India

Curtain up for one of the most important developments in the Gin story: The tonic appears. In the 19th century quinine (an ingredient in cinchona bark) was a widespread malaria prophylactic, particularly among members of the British East India Company. Since the bitter taste was anything but pleasant, they mixed it with water, sugar, and lemon. The tonic is born! When someone recognized that tonic goes very well with gin, the motivation of seafarers to take their malaria prophylaxis increased immensely.

Chapter 7: Prohibition promotes cocktail consumption

At the beginning of the 20th century, the U.S. government imposed a prohibition on alcohol. In the so-called speakeasy bars, the exorbitantly expensive illegally imported gins from England were still drunk, but many American bartenders were leaving their homeland and took their highly developed cocktail culture with them. In the "Golden 20's" were strong years for gin cocktails in Europe.

Chapter 8: Vodka displaces gin

Up until the 1960s, gin was the top dog. Then thanks in part to clever marketing, the Smirnoff company managed to gradually introduce vodka to become the number one go-to drink. A brilliant move was the product placement in the "James Bond" films. So the English master spy stopped drinking

no longer gin (as he did in the original novel), but rather a vodka martini - shaken and not stirred.

Chapter 9: Gin fights back

Gin slowly managed to fight back at the end of the 20th century. Bacardi is the first to launch the Bombay Sapphire, a stylish and higher-priced gin.

“In 1987, Bacardi representatives looked around liquor stores and only saw Gordon's or cheap copies of Gordon's that looked almost exactly the same. They said we could do better, so they came up with the Bombay Sapphire. While Gordon's only had three to four botanicals, Bombay took twelve from all over the world and the first 'upscale gin' was born.”

Frederic du
Bois

The next gin that was trend-setting is Hendrick's - a gin that, with its cucumber note, was referred to as the forefather of the "New Western style" and which broadened the market potential for gin in the early nineties. Sipsmith Gin from London was the pioneer of small, artisanal working distilleries that successfully started selling high quality and expensive gins. Especially in Germany, the Monkey 47 can be seen as a pioneer for fine gins, which many other gin producers take as an example.



A man with a receding hairline and a light beard is shown in profile, looking towards the left. He is wearing a blue button-down shirt. In the background, there is a dark, industrial environment with a prominent glowing circular light fixture. The overall lighting is warm and focused on the man's face.

DISCOVERY

TRY GINS

Tasting gin

"I try every gin neat first. What I like is when it has different flavors. If it tastes different on first contact with the tongue compared to the finish. I am looking for little aromatic journeys on my palate."

Christian
Kopp

Okay, I've never drank gin straight before. Somehow the tonic or another mixed drink was always part of it. But in order to really get to know the character of a gin, a pure tasting is exactly the right idea. You can of course also try the gins with tonic afterwards (more on this from page 48).

A few tips for tasting: A so-called digestif glass is particularly suitable for tasting a gin. If you don't have a digestif glass at hand: A small wine glass or even a water glass can do.

Steps for tasting gin:

1. First smell the gin. Don't be alarmed if at first you smell some notes of alcohol up your nose. Sniff calmly 2-3 times. You will get more of the aromas of the botanicals.
2. Take a small sip, move the gin consciously around your mouth.

3. Try each gin more than once. Sometimes the sense of taste changes.

Describing the flavors

It may not be easy at first to put the flavors of the gins into words. Pay attention to how strong the juniper taste is and what additional aromas you might perceive: maybe some notes reminding you of fruits, herbs or spices?

During my research I have seen different approaches how to describe and how to organize the flavors in a gin. In addition to aroma wheels (e.g. www.ginfoundry.com), there are various scale/axle models. What they have in common is that they look at the following areas and compare their intensity. I find it helpful to look at the same flavor categories in a gin:

Fruit: Sometimes a distinction is made between "normal" fruit notes and citrus notes.

Juniper: Juniper is the core of the taste. However, there are big differences in intensity.

Spicy: This is primarily about the spiciness that can come from ingredients such as pepper, ginger and cinnamon.

Sweetness: Even if no sugar is added, sweetness can come from ingredients such as liquorice or other spices.

Mildness: This is about how smooth the alcohol appears in the mouth. This is particularly important when you drink a gin neat.

The five gins in the set

When choosing the gins, I was concerned with the following things: I want to know who makes the gin, and not just who markets and sells it. That's why I don't have "agency gins" in the set. I also didn't want any big gin brands, but rather artisanal distillers that make small batch gins.

And then it's all about variety: I am combining different types of distillers (trained distillers, career changers), different origins (Germany, England, Finland), production processes and flavor types (classic juniper to fruity/flowery or barrel aged).

Name	Vol %	Style
Old English	44%	Old Tom style with a touch of sweetness
Helsinki Dry	47%	London Dry with Scandinavian twist
5 Continents	47%	London Dry with a spicy kick
Jos. Garden	44%	New western style
Hoo's reserve	44%	barrel-aged London Dry

On the following pages I present the individual gins. Since some gins have more than 20 botanicals, I only mention the most prevalent ones. In addition, many manufacturers don't reveal all of their botanicals in order to keep their recipe protected.

I'm showing the respective characteristics of main flavors with the help of a grid for each of the five gins (from 1 = weak to 5 = very dominant) on the following pages.

The tasting notes "tastes like" are my very subjective impressions of the gins. The recommendations "fits to" come from the respective producer or from other sources such as blogs or books. Here I also list a cocktail and a matching tonic.

Make your own experiences while tasting, try the gins with others and exchange ideas about your taste sensations. Further information for your tasting can be found on the enclosed leaflet.

Old English Gin

Hammer & Son, Langley Distillery (Birmingham, UK)



Tastes like

clear juniper on the nose, velvety texture and fine sweetness in the mouth

Matches with

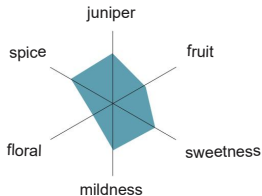
classic cocktails from the 18th/19th century like Tom Collins; more of a light tonic

11 botanicals

e.g. coriander, cinnamon, lemon, liquorice, cardamom

Own tasting notes

PROFILE



I meet the producer Henrik Hammer at the Bar Convention in Berlin, one of the largest fairs for spirits in Europe. Our conversation is repeatedly interrupted by people greeting Henrik. No wonder, he is a world-renowned and valued gin expert. When he talks about gin, you can tell he's a true gin nut. He travels the world as a judge for gin competitions, he opened one of the world's first gin bars and is now producing two extraordinary gins (Geranium and Old English) in collaboration with the traditional distillery Langley's in Birmingham. The Old English Gin is made in the oldest commercially operated still in the world. It's called "Angela".

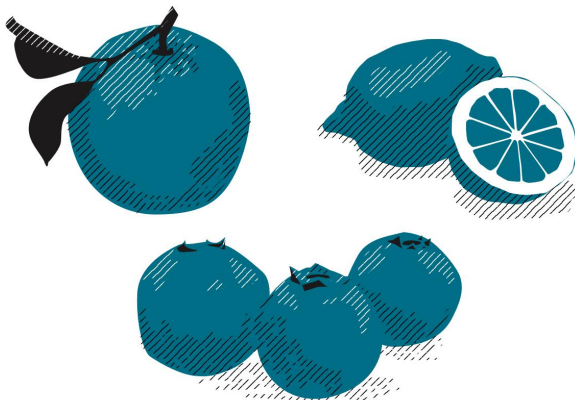
The Gin is based on a recipe from 1783. Henrik only changed two things: he added cardamom and left out turpentine. The poisonous oil was often mixed in gin back then. In the 18th and 19th centuries there were only two types of gin in England: Holland's Gin (Genever) or English Gin, also known as Old Tom. The latter was filled in Champagne bottles and sugar was added, since gin was mainly drunk neat at the time. In the Old English Gin the sweetish sugar note is very reserved and pleasant though.

Why did I choose the Old English?

I was dying to have a gin made in England in the set. At the same time, I find it exciting that the old, classic recipe builds a bridge to the distant beginnings of gin and to showcase one gine that is not considered "dry".

Helsinki Dry Gin

Helsinki Distilling Company (Helsinki, Finland)



Tastes like

subtle, slightly sweet berry note on the nose, fennel, fresh citrus notes, slightly herbaceous in the mouth

Matches with

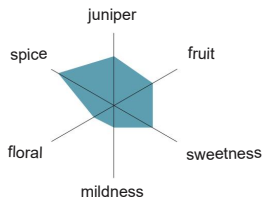
Martini or fruity Negroni; classic tonic

9 botanicals

e.g. B. Cranberry, lemon, bitter orange, rose petals, fennel

Own tasting notes

PROFILE



Gin from Finland - what's that? Yes, really good ones! When you try the Helsinki Dry Gin it may come to no surprise that it has won numerous international awards in its comparatively short history. I became aware of the makers during the Craft Spirits Festival DESTILLE BERLIN fair. The three robust and feisty guys behind the Helsinki Distilling Company make sure that their extremely balanced gin is remembered.

During our conversation, Mikko Mykkänen, the "Master Distiller", explains to me that he tasted over 300 gins before developing the recipe for the Helsinki Dry. The attention to detail is noticeable in the distillery in every step of the production. All bottles are filled by hand and personally signed by Mikko.

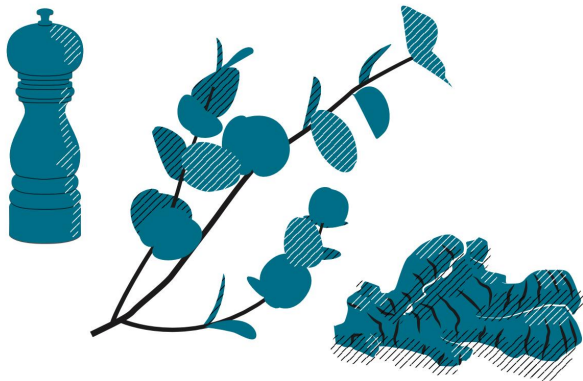
The gin is traditionally distilled in one go according to the London Dry style. Since the makers of Helsinki Gin didn't just want to make a faceless gin, they gave it a regional, "Scandinavian" note by adding arctic lingonberry. It provides a fruity, slightly bitter acidity.

Why did I choose the Helsinki Dry Gin?

The Helsinki Dry Gin is an extremely clean gin. It has a crystal-clear aroma that actually reminds me of Scandinavia: woody aromas paired with fruity-tart notes: a strikingly fresh gin!

5 Continents Gin

Feingeisterei, Gut Basthorst (Germany)



Tastes like

strong juniper and citrus on the nose, in the mouth slightly sweet and fruity at first and then spicy and peppery

Matches with

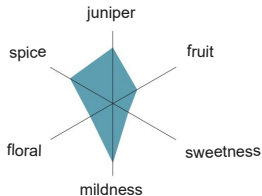
hanky panky; strong and spicy tonic

22 botanicals

e.g. blackpepper, ginger, eucalyptus, lemon, mate

Own tasting notes

PROFILE



Fabian Rohrwasser has been running his distillery since 2013 at Gut Basthorst just outside Hamburg. After the trained distiller first specialized in fruit distillates, he has been producing his own gin since 2014. The gin was developed based on the home of Hamburg. Fabian wanted to do everything differently here than with his brandies, where he solely uses regional fruit .

For his gin, he was inspired by the port of Hamburg, which has been a major trading hub for spices from all over the world. He visited the Spice Museum in the Hamburg port and researched many spices to pick the ones that were particularly suitable for a good gin.

This is how the 5 Continents with 22 botanicals came about. The spices are imported from five different continents: juniper and lavender from Europe, cinnamon and ginger from Asia, three pepper varieties from Africa, cranberries from North America, mate from South America and eucalyptus from Australia.

The 5 Continents Gin is also distilled as a classic London-style, with Fabian macerating his botanicals for up to 48 hours.

Why did I choose the 5 Continents Gin:

The name says it all. It's a gin that takes me on an aromatic journey, showing how complex a gin can taste: First I sense fruity citrus aromas, then eucalyptus and mate tea join in and finally a warm, spicy-peppery note lingers on.

Jos. Garden

Distillery Ehringhausen, Werne (Germany)



Tastes like

fruity on the nose, sloe and other fruity flavors in the mouth, with a fennel note on the finish

Matches with

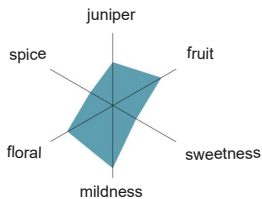
gin fizz; light tonic with herbal notes

28 botanicals

e.g. raspberry, sloe, poplar bud, coriander, cinnamon

Own tasting notes

PROFILE



Thanks to its proximity to the Benelux countries, Westphalia is the cradle of juniper schnapps in Germany. It is also home to the Ehringhausen distillery, which has been producing high-quality grain schnapps (like whiskey) for generations. Georg Glitz-Ehringhausen worked on his gin for over a year. The basis is his own certified organic grain alcohol. The botanicals are prepared in a total of nine macerates and distilled individually before getting married and stored together for three months to round off the aromas.

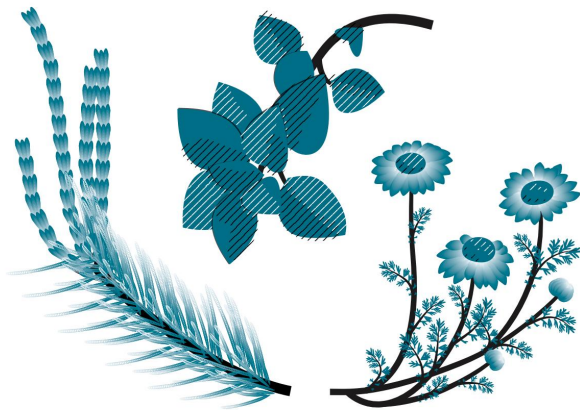
Georg's goal was to produce a gin that can particularly be enjoyed pure. It is therefore important to him that the gin is mild, has a "body" (= oily, creamy viscosity) and a complex taste. In addition to classic botanicals, such as lemon zest, he uses regional fruits like plum, raspberry and sloe. Because of its fruity/floral aroma instead of a dominant juniper note, Jos. Garden Gin belongs to the category of "New Western Style".

Why do I have the Jos. Garden Gin?

Here is a gin where the juniper note moves into the background without completely disappearing. In addition to the special sloe aroma, I find the story of the distillery and the fact that they control the entire value chain (from growing the grains for the base alcohol to the bottling of the gin) in a very artisanal way, very impressive.

Hoos Reserve Gin

Heiko Hoos, Karlsruhe (Germany)



Tastes like

vanilla wood notes on the nose, slightly sweet, wood notes and fresh, woody notes in the mouth

Matches with

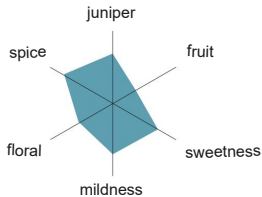
Old Fashioned; dry, light tonic

15 botanicals

e.g. pine buds, marjoram, chamomile, sweet fennel, lemon

Own tasting notes

PROFILE



Heiko Hoos has had very different jobs in his life so far. He started his career as a trained butcher, shifted over to becoming a graphic designer and is now a gin and vermouth producer. He came up with the idea of making gin thanks to a "crazy idea" in his favorite gin bar in Karlsruhe. After extensive study of books from the 19th century, in which "[the herbs, the maceration and the distillation are explained very precisely](#)", Heiko developed his own gin. He pays particular attention to ensuring that all botanicals used match on an aromatic level. All of his 15 botanicals contain the aromatic component "limonene".

Since his gin was very well received first among friends and then also in bars in Karlsruhe, the fun project turned into a serious gin production. Nevertheless, Heiko Hoos continues to produce in very small batches and the hand-numbered bottles continue to show a very personal touch. The production of the gin takes place in the distillery of Heiko's brother-in-law.

In terms of taste, the gin is intended to bridge the gap between the London Dry and the New Western styles. Heiko distills in the classic London Dry style. The gin gets a regional and woody note through the use of young pine buds. On top of that, Heiko ages this "Reserve" gin in oak barrels for four weeks.

Why did I choose the Hoos Reserve Gin?

Barrel aged gins are a new discovery for me. Heiko Hoos does a great job incorporating the aromas of the wood barrel nicely into the gin's flavor profile.



TRY GINS



TIPS

TRY

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Tonic water

Tonic water is actually a medicine, invented to make the malaria drug quinine (an ingredient in cinchona bark) palatable. In addition to the basic ingredients (quinine, sugar, lemon and water), many tonic waters today also include spices or herbs, like lemongrass or allspice. Basically speaking, tonic is a bitter lemonade with botanicals.

The botanicals are also the bridge to the gin. They could explain why the two have become such an inseparable couple. But there is another explanation as Frédéric Du Bois tells me:

"The bitter note of the quinine goes very well with the juniper. This is the basic connection. Everything else builds around it."

Frederic du
Bois

At first glance, the world has become complicated. In the past, people simply ordered a gin & tonic. Today, you are no longer only asked which gin you like to order, but also which tonic to go with it. That can be overwhelming!

"Mixing gin & tonic properly is like cooking. The two parts should complement each other."

Frederic du
Bois

I hear the comparison to cooking very often when researching the world of gin. As with the production of gin, the goal when mixing gin and tonic is to get the right combination of flavors. Perhaps this is also one of the reasons why I, as an enthusiastic hobby cook, find the subject of gin so appealing.

I ask Thomas Kochan how I best proceed to find a suitable pairing of gin and tonic water:

"While there are a few tonics that go with almost all gins, it's best to have a dry tonic for a dry gin and a bit sweeter tonic for more fruity gins."

Thomas
Kochan

A possible categorization of gins can be found on page 31. For the taste categories of tonic waters. I use Christian Kopp's approach:

Classic/neutral: bitter with subtle citrus notes; it provides characterful, classic gins room to shine

Floral/fruity: fruity notes give the gin some freshness, floral notes give a soft feeling.

Spicy/tart: bitter-fruity notes recede, spicy notes enrich the original components in the gin.

Dry: very dry and bitter with little sugar

Light: restrained taste, less bitter, slightly sweet and finely fruity

I follow Thomas Kochan's approach and try the five gins from the set with different tonics.

My Gin & Tonic recommendations:

Old English with a light, sweet tonic (Fevertree Naturally Light)

Helsinki Dry with a Classic Tonic (Yellow Aqua Monaco)

5 Continents with a Spicy Tonic (Fevertree Mediterranean)

Jos. Garden with a fruity tonic (Fevertree Elderflower).

With the **Hoos Reserve**, it is a bit more difficult to find the right counterpart due to the barrel maturity. I opt for a light, herbal tonic (Green Monaco). The combination of similar gins and tonic waters can be described as the basis. Building on that, you can start experimenting. When Christian Kopp tastes for his blog, he mixes three different gin & tonics:

"I usually take two tonics that I think go well with the gin, as they match similar aromas. As the third, I take one that doesn't seem to fit at first glance. But that way you get a lot of nice surprises."

Christian
Kopp

Usually Gin & Tonic is not just served on ice, but with garnish. While it is traditionally a lemon slice, today a wide variety of garnishes, such as cucumber or rosemary, are often used. However, the gin experts advise caution:

“Because the garnish is at the top of the glass, you smell it first. It can be refreshing, but for instance rosemary can be so dominant that the gin taste doesn't come out. That way, a lot of Gin & Tonics might all taste the same.”

Christian
Kopp

With very strong tonics and sophisticated garnishes, the taste of the gin can be concealed particularly well. But when you have a great gin, it makes sense that you keep the character found in both the gin and the tonic. Frédéric seems to agree with this, when he says:

“Calm down on the garnish experiments and look at the DNA of the gin. Take a maximum of 1-2 different pieces for the garnish and very important: use dry ingredients, for instance only the lemon zest instead of the whole slice.”

Frederic du
Bois

In the meantime, more and more tonic waters are coming onto the market. For Christian Kopp, however, there are a lot of disappointments:

“Out of the last ten tonics I've tried, I've liked at most two. A lot of people don't get the right balance.”

Christian
Kopp

They often pack too little quinine into it, so you can't taste it at all. From my point of view, you don't drink tonic, but lemonade. If the tonic has a chemical note, it's out for me."

Christian
Kopp

By looking at the ingredients in the Tonic Water you can gauge the quality: Is the manufacturer using natural products (like real quinine) or does he resort to chemical, unnatural ingredients?

So the question remains as to which tonic waters are recommended. During my conversations with the experts, two brands come up particularly often, namely Fevertree from England and Aqua Monaco from Germany. According to Frédéric Du Bois, Fevertree is the pioneer as it was the first premium tonic the market. Both brands now offer different Tonic waters with various flavors so that they harmonize with as many gins as possible. Ultimately, everyone has to find their favorite tonic(s). The best way to do this is to follow Frédéric's advice:

"What to do to find the best gin & tonic pairings? Quite simply: experiment!"

Frederic du
Bois



Gin cocktails

“In my opinion there are only two
Gin cocktails that preserve the
taste of gin the best: Gin & Tonic
and Gin Martini.”

Frederic du
Bois

Before James Bond told the world that he drank his martini with vodka, gin was primarily used for the classic martini. The cocktail was invented in New York at the beginning of the 20th century. The classic martini cocktail actually consists almost entirely of gin and vermouth (in a ratio of 2:1). Vermouth, a herb-flavored and fortified wine, is also a connection to the early days of gin cocktails. Because in the 18th century, cocktails were very simple according to Henrik Hammer:

“Cocktails were very simple back then.
You took a gin and when you did not drink it
straight, it was mixed with a little fortified wine
like vermouth.”

Henrik
Hammer

Especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, more upscale cocktails became popular. Classics of this time include: Flip (whipped egg white, warm beer and gin), Sangaree (gin and port wine), Tom Collins (sugar syrup, lemon juice and gin) or the punch, which was already known in the Middle Ages (alcohol is preserved in fruit and fruit juice).

So when I get to the beginning of the history of cocktails, I asked myself where the name "cocktail" actually comes from. I read on the BBC's website that it derives from cock's tail. Sure, "cock" and "tail" but I was never aware of that before. There are various stories about how a mixed alcoholic drink came about from the tail of the fowl. One is that in the 18th century after cockfights, the feathers of the defeated rooster were torn out and put in an alcoholic drink that was served to the winner.

For the history of the cocktail, the early 20th century was particularly important, when many creative bartenders came up with new cocktails in the USA and brought their creations out into the world. Classic gin cocktails from this period include Gimlet, Old Fashioned, Negroni, Sour and Fizz.

The past few years have also brought many innovations to the cocktail world. The number of bars specializing in high-quality cocktails is increasing around the world. They are a strong contrast with bars that used to serve mixed drinks in huge glasses or in buckets with straws. On the topic of straws, Frédéric Du Bois actually also has an opinion:

"Very important: Drop the straw! Otherwise you'll miss out on all the flavor of the drink."

Frederic du
Bois

Want to make gin cocktails at home? Here are two Gin cocktail recipes from Christoph Kopp.

Gin Gin Mule

Ingredients:

4.5cl gin
6-8 leaves of mint
2.5 cl lime juice
3 cl sugar syrup
3cl ginger beer
ice cubes

Preparation:

1. Put the mint, lime juice and simple syrup in a shaker
2. Add ice and gin and shake vigorously.
3. Strain into a highball glass.
4. Top up with ginger beer and garnish with the mint.

Negroni

Ingredients:

3cl gin
3cl Campari
3 cl red vermouth
ice cubes

Preparation:

1. Mix gin, Campari and red vermouth in a wide glass
2. Add some ice and stir.
3. Garnish with an orange zest.



My conclusion

Gin is fascinating to me. I learned so much during my research, but gin also keeps some secrets. Nobody can answer exactly why it is so popular right now. And the question of why I have the feeling that the (even moderate) consumption of gin emphasizes a refreshing and positive mood in me remains open as well.

As a passionate taster, gin appealed to me right away as there are so many different different flavors waiting to be discovered.

Getting to know gins and finding out that there are many similarities between gin making and cooking was fascinating as well. So, gin is actually an easy-to-make spirit that anyone could make at home. But you can also bake a pizza at home or roast a steak. The only question is: How good is the result?

The right flavor composition separates the wheat from the chaff. When trying cheap gins pure, I realized that these can only be tolerated with a strong tonic. The pungent alcohol note and the extremely resinous juniper taste are anything but pleasant.

And there are no traces of aromas from other botanicals.

I'm always excited when developing a tasting set like this one doesn't mark the end of the discovery journey. Gin is so diverse that I look forward to finding out more in the future. For instance, I've only scratched the surface of the world of cocktails and there are many more gins from all over the world to try. Well then, cheers!

Thanks for going on this journey with me! I hope you enjoyed the gins in the set and learning a bit about this fascinating spirit.

Best

Jörn Gutowski
Founder, TRY FOODS

More information about gin

BOOKS

Gin and Tonic

by Frederic Du Bois and
Isabel Boons
A comprehensive manual
for gin (& tonic) fans.

Gin Atlas

by Joel Harrison
and Neil Ridley
A very extensive book for all
gin lovers

Feed your curiosity - about TRY FOODS

TRY FOODS was born out of my passion for eating and discovering new things. As a hobby cook, connoisseur and globetrotter, I have always been fascinated by the stories and diversity associated with good food.

TRY FOODS offers tasting sets that make high-quality food accessible both in a sensual and informative way. All products are sourced exclusively from artisanal producers who also just as passionate about good food and drinks.

Jörn Gutowski, TRY FOODS

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