

Thames Distillers 'Fifty Pounds' London Dry Gin

£50 and Gin

In the early part of the 18th century, London saw the start of a period known as the 'Gin Craze', when the consumption of Gin became increasingly popular in the lower classes, with bootleggers distilling and selling gin of dubious quality. As a measure to curb the excesses of this situation, a tax of £50 was imposed on every distiller under the 1736 "Fifty Pounds" Gin Act. After 6 years only two distilleries paid the tax.

Leaping ahead to the early part of the 21st century, a small, south-east London based distillation company, Thames Distillers, has privately maintained an original 'London Dry' recipe. This recipe, despite the hard work required to produce its high quality, was ironically known as 'Fifty Pounds' amongst its distillers in honour of the 1736 Gin Act. The distillery at Thames Distillers has been distilling Gin for more than two centuries, and belongs to a family with an extremely long history of distilling. Their master distiller is in fact president of the English distillers' association.

'London Dry' Gin

'London Dry' is a term recognised by the EU as a method of producing Gin which consists of distilling a neutral alcohol (from molasses or grain), with only natural botanicals, without adding flavourings or colourings. The resulting Gin is a colourless liquor and is only produced from natural ingredients. Some Gins available on the market, due to their colour or due to added flavourings, can only be labelled as 'Gin'.

Fifty Pounds' distillation process

To produce Fifty Pounds, a neutral flavoured grain (wheat) spirit is used as the base and the botanicals are steeped in this alcohol for at least two days. After this time the spirit is again slowly distilled in a hundred-year-old John Dore & Co still (known as the Rolls Royce of stills). The master distiller subsequently throws away the heads and tails and saves just the heart; after this, the fundamental step of letting the liquid rest for at least three weeks takes place which allows the resulting alcohol and flavour to integrate properly.

The base grain spirit has been distilled 4 times, to make it as neutral as possible, but Fifty Pounds Gin is then distilled just once, in contact with distilled botanicals. If the resulting liquor was distilled a second time the natural botanical oils would be lost, making it more difficult to recognise their characters in the Gin.

Fifty Pounds incorporates '8+3' botanicals. The first eight are the classics: juniper, angelica root, coriander, liquorice root, grains of paradise, lemon and orange rind, and the herb savoury. The remaining 3 form the Fifty Pounds 'secret recipe'. They are botanicals from across several continents, but if Thames Distillers told us any more, they'd have to kill us!



Fifty Pounds London Dry Gin

'Fifty Pounds' is a super-stylish gin, with smooth botanical and citrus floral notes rounded by a subtle tightness of palate, slight sweetness and gentle alcohol. It lands softly and at mid-weight in the mid-palate; there are no sharp edges save for little licks of herbal light and shade. Ideal as either a G+T or as a Martini base. It has enough character to keep even the most discerning Gin drinker interested.

