

Cocktail Classic

From traditional London Dry styles to Western craft varieties, gin has all the drink bases covered

BY SALLY KRAL

Anyone with an appreciation for historic cocktail recipes and ingredients will argue that gin is an indispensable part of any drinks program. “Gin is a classic, and you need to have at least one gin-based drink on your menu,” says Salvatore Tafuri, bar director at the Times Square Edition hotel in New York City. “Gin is partly popular thanks to all the old cocktail recipes that include it, like the French 75 and Ramos Gin Fizz.”

There are, indeed, innumerable gin-based drinks that date back several decades, which has helped secure the spirit’s reputation as an ideal cocktail base. “The cocktail boom revived a lot of obscure gin classics and made them essential knowledge for cocktail bartenders—think the Last Word, Martinez, Hanky Panky, Army Navy, and Pegu Club, just to name a few,” says Patrick Halloran, bar manager at Nashville seafood restaurant Henrietta Red. “The reemergence of these cocktails has gone hand in hand with the U.S. distilling boom, and gin can be made quickly and relatively inexpensively. So as the cocktail boom brought gin back to the forefront, we’ve also seen an explosion in small-producer gins, all gunning to get on cocktail menus.”

Tafuri notes that with no shortage of brands on the market to choose from today, it’s easy to make gin cocktails that will please a wide variety of clientele with different preferences. “No two gins are the same, and different ones serve different



Gin’s place in the drinks canon is secure, with restaurants like The Pool in New York City featuring it in such cocktails as the Strawberry (above).

from ten botanicals that are sustainably sourced from around the world, giving it enough punch to stand up in the Negroni, enough freshness to make a Tom Collins riff come to life, and enough spice to dry out the house-made tonic I’m working with.” Pathak’s Little Finger cocktail (\$16) blends Bombay Sapphire, lemon and grapefruit juices, simple syrup, Ramazzotti amaro, and Peychaud’s bitters, while his East India Gin

purposes and profiles,” Halloran adds. “I like how a cocktail can be just fine, or even flat, with one gin and sing with another—that experimentation to find the right gin for a drink is always fun.”

Traditional And Timeless

A love of gin runs deep in the bartending community, where it’s embraced not only for its historical relevance but for its mixability. “Gin can speak to an era, a time, or a place; it’s a canvas for ideas and a backbone of flavor,” says Hemant Pathak, mixologist and bar manager at restaurant Junoon in New York City. “Gin can be the strong foundation or the whisper through the background; it’s truly the most versatile of spirits.”

Pathak adds that he favors the traditional juniper-forward London Dry style of gin because you can use it in different types of cocktails, from light and bright to deep and bold. “We often use Bombay Sapphire and Bombay Sapphire East, which features Thai lemongrass and Vietnamese black peppercorn,” he says. “It’s vapor-distilled



At The Pool in New York City, the Orange cocktail (pictured) features Plymouth gin, which dates back to the 1700s. INSET, TOP TO BOTTOM: The Astoria cocktail from Bar & Study in Chicago showcases Hendrick’s gin; the Valley of Gold from Nashville’s Henrietta Red uses Martin Miller’s London Dry gin; and the Final Word cocktail from Marlow’s Tavern in Atlanta uses St. George Terroir gin, which highlights California flavors.



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and Tonic (\$17) mixes Bombay Sapphire East with St-Germain elderflower liqueur, Pavan liqueur, and house-made tonic water.

“The classic big London Dry brands still reign supreme at our bar,” notes Alex Taylor, bar manager of Hank’s Oyster Bar in the Old Town neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia. “Tanqueray, Beefeater, and Bombay Sapphire are all specific call products that garner almost cult-like loyalty.” Taylor’s Absent Patchwork (\$13) features pink peppercorn-infused Beefeater gin, Pernod anise liqueur, house-made watermelon-verbena syrup, lemon juice, saline solution, and Q tonic water.

At Henrietta Red, London Dry gins are paired with citrus, honey, and other fruit-forward ingredients. Halloran’s Civil Service (\$12) comprises Gordon’s London Dry gin, lemon juice, honey, house-made orgeat syrup, and cracked black pepper, while bartender Lily Restenberger’s Valley of Gold (\$12) blends Martin Miller’s London Dry gin, lemon juice, Merlet Crème de Pêche de Vigne liqueur, Aperol aperitif, and honey.

“I love gin’s malleability and that it can be applied toward nearly any preference in cocktail,” says Daniel Zacharczuk, general manager at The Streamliner cocktail bar in Los Ange-

les. “If you want a dry Martini-style cocktail or a shaken cocktail with sweet and pine-forward flavors, you can use the same style of gin for both: two birds, one stone.” His Martini (\$9) features Beefeater gin and Dolin Dry vermouth, while his Gin Daisy (\$11) mixes Tanqueray gin, Grand Marnier orange liqueur, fresh lemon juice, and simple syrup. “I usually default to Tanqueray at home because I think it works particularly well in citrus-forward cocktails,” Zacharczuk adds. “It’s not produced with any citrus, but it has nice earthy and herbaceous qualities.”

The Times Square Edition’s Tafuri prefers classic London Dry gins as well. At the hotel’s Terrace restaurant, his The Gin Game (\$18) comprises Bombay Dry gin, John D. Taylor’s Velvet Falernum liqueur, cucumber and lemon juices, honey syrup, and a mist of Vieux Pontarlier absinthe. “I also like to use Old Tom gin for a nice Tom Collins because it’s a little bit sweeter than a classic London Dry, but perfect when balanced with fresh lemon juice,” Tafuri adds.

As interest in gin has grown, Old Tom—a style dating back hundreds of years—has made a comeback. At Gabriel Kreuther restaurant in New York City, the Now and Then (\$20) features Greenhook Old Tom gin, Meletti amaro, Dolin Rouge sweet vermouth, and Yellow Chartreuse liqueur. Meanwhile, at Brim House restaurant in the Renaissance Toledo Downtown hotel in Toledo, Ohio, beverage director

John Onsa’s the Black Magic Voodoo (\$12) blends Ransom Old Tom gin, fresh muddled raspberry, pineapple purée, and Chloe Prosecco.

Also dating back to the 1700s, Plymouth gin has reemerged in the modern drinks scene. At The Pool in New York City, beverage director Brad Nugent’s Orange cocktail (\$20) comprises Plymouth gin, Aperol, clementine and lemon juices, and a passion fruit blend containing cane syrup, passion fruit purée, and Mandarin Napoléon orange liqueur. At Hank’s Oyster Bar, Taylor’s Oh My Godzilla (\$13) mixes Plymouth gin, Midori melon liqueur, Salers gentian liqueur, Contratto Bianco vermouth, lemon juice, simple syrup, egg white, The Bitter Truth celery bitters, and atomized Angostura bitters.



Classic London Dry brands are holding strong, appearing in such cocktails as the Bombay Sapphire-based East India Gin & Tonic (top) at Junoon in New York City and Beefeater-based Absent Patchwork (above) at Hank’s Oyster Bar in Alexandria, Virginia.

Botanical Bounty

Though gin styles with rich histories are undoubtedly experiencing reaffirmed popularity, newer Western and international gins are gaining traction and broadening what gin can be and how it’s used in cocktails. “In this day and age, gins are being made from sugar beet molasses, sugar cane, agave, and much more, and while the juniper berries are always there, the plethora of aromatics is extensive,” Taylor notes. “It’s difficult to replace one of these gins with another and



Gin's versatility complements a wide swath of flavors. FROM LEFT: The Little Finger from Junoon blends Bombay Sapphire with grapefruit and lemon juices; the Poseidon from 701 West in the Times Square Edition hotel in New York City focuses on salty and savory flavors with Gin Mare Mediterranean gin; and the Afternoon Delight from Chicago's Bar & Study mixes lemon juice and cucumber with Prairie organic gin.

expect the same result in a cocktail. And this is where the beauty lies: with the variety that the category affords from product to product."

Taylor adds that new Western gins, with their de-emphasis on juniper and embrace of a wide range of botanicals, offer many routes to explore different cocktail applications. "When developing drinks with gin, one should explore the inherent flavors, both dominant and latent," he explains. "A floral-forward cocktail would do well with Aviation gin,

while earthy and savory would be a knock-out with Hendrick's, and something citrus-forward would benefit greatly from Malfy Con Limone," he explains.

Looking to the base spirit's source material is a common practice for bartenders aiming to complement the spirit and enhance the overall drink. At the Times Square Edition's 701 West restaurant, Tafuri's Poseidon cocktail (\$22) is a salty and savory concoction comprising Gin Mare Mediterranean gin—which features dominant flavors of olive, rosemary, thyme, and basil—

Gin-Based Cocktail Recipes

LITTLE FINGER By Hemant Pathak

Ingredients:

1½ ounces Bombay Sapphire London Dry gin;
½ ounce Ramazzotti amaro;
¾ ounce lemon juice;
¼ ounce freshly squeezed grapefruit juice;
½ ounce simple syrup;
Two dashes Peychaud's bitters;
Thin cucumber spiral;
Micro cilantro sprig.

Recipe:

In a cocktail shaker, combine gin, amaro, juices, simple syrup, and bitters. Shake vigorously with one ice cube and strain into a Collins glass filled with pellet ice and cucumber spiral. Garnish with micro cilantro.

¹Dissolve 6 grams kosher salt in 400-ml. water.

POSEIDEN By Salvatore Tafuri

Ingredients:

1¼ ounces Gin Mare gin;
½ ounce Lustau Fino Sherry;
3 dashes saline solution¹;
1 raw oyster, dressed according to preference.

Recipe:

In an ice-filled mixing glass, combine gin, Sherry, and saline. Stir and strain into a Nick and Nora glass. Serve with an oyster on the side.

AFTERNOON DELIGHT By Jean Tomaro

Ingredients:

1 ounce Prairie Organic gin;
¾ ounce Lillet Blanc aperitif;
½ ounce Nuit Blanche vodka;
½ ounce lemon juice;
¼ ounce simple syrup;
4 cucumber slices.

Recipe:

In a cocktail shaker, combine gin, aperitif, vodka, lemon juice, simple syrup, and 3 cucumber slices. Shake with ice cubes for 10-15 seconds. Double strain into a Nick and Nora glass and garnish with remaining cucumber slice.

PHOTO BY (CENTER) LIZ CLAYMAN

PHOTO BY (TOP) NICO SCHINCO

along with Lustau Fino Sherry and saline solution, served alongside a dressed raw oyster. "Gin is so unique because it can be produced in any part of the world, and with so many new craft gins you can experience a variety of incredible botanicals that bring extra character to your cocktails," Tafuri notes.

Daniel Osborne, beverage director at both Bullard restaurant and Abigail Hall bar in Portland, Oregon, appreciates that he can make the same cocktail with five different gins, with each one being distinct. At Abigail Hall, his Silver Harvest (\$11) blends New Deal No. 1 gin—a locally produced brand with herbaceous qualities—as well as Hayman's Old Tom gin, Escubac botanical liqueur, and cucumber, while the Child's Play (\$11) at Bullard features Freeland gin—also herb-forward and local—and Carpano Bianco vermouth.

"Western and international gins with a unique story or sense of place that break the traditional mold of London Dry are our most popular," says Jean Tomaro, executive beverage director for Chicago-based restaurant group Hogsalt Hospitality, which operates the Aster Hall food hall. Tomaro crafted the cocktail menu for the hall's Bar & Study venue. Her Astoria cocktail (\$15) comprises Hendrick's gin, Lillet Rosé aperitif, and Regans' No. 6 Orange bitters, and her Afternoon Delight (\$12) features Prairie Organic gin from Phillips Distilling Co. in Minnesota, Lillet Blanc aperitif, Nuit Blanche vodka, lemon juice, simple syrup, and cucumber.

"My two personal favorites right now are Neversink Spirits gin from Upstate New York and Nikka Coffey gin from Japan,"

Tomaro adds. "These two gins truly speak to where they come from and have a sense of terroir. Neversink gin is incredibly fragrant with notes of cardamom and star anise; I love using it in an Aviation cocktail. Nikka is bold and spicy with notes of sansho pepper and yuzu; it's excellent in a classic gin Martini."

Tomaro also has a love for the Alameda, California-based St. George Spirits line of gins, specifically its Terroir expression, which features northern California ingredients like Douglas fir, California bay laurel, and coastal sage, among other botanicals. At the Marlow's Tavern chain in Atlanta, Orlando, and Tampa, the Final Word cocktail (\$10) mixes St. George Terroir gin, Green Chartreuse liqueur, simple syrup, fresh lime juice, and sage.

"Today's distillers seem free to play with ratios, and they've incorporated local and regional botanicals such as seaweed and other geographically specific ingredients to put their stamp on the category and to give imbibers a sense of place," says Xania Woodman, bartender at the Alpine Pie Bar within Alpine



The Time Square Edition hotel's Gin Game (top) layers citrus, spices, and absinthe, while Alpine Distilling's Alpine Pie Bar in Park City, Utah highlights its own Summit gin in the Cardi Bee (above).

Distilling in Park City, Utah. In this capacity, she creates cocktails featuring the distillery's portfolio of spirits, including its Summit gin, which has dominant flavors of juniper, coriander, angelica root, ginger, cardamom, and citrus. Her Thyme to Summit cocktail (\$13) blends the gin with Alpine Distilling Preserve liqueur, fresh lemon juice, cane sugar, brut Prosecco (brand varies), and fresh thyme, while her Cardi Bee (\$13) mixes the gin with fresh Meyer lemon juice and cardamom-infused local honey. "Distillers today are crafting high-quality gins, and in such variety as to retain existing devotees and attract new fans," Woodman adds.

Junoon's Pathak agrees that the category's growth has introduced gin to a broader audience, and for long-time gin drinkers and cocktail

makers, it's opened up more possibilities. "Gin is becoming more and more playful and the drinks are following suit," he says. "Gin is a drink for the adventurer and the cocktails show that."