

Bartales

Best of

N. 4 | APRIL 2016

SUPPLEMENT OF BARTALES



REPORT
METZCAL
**A SPIRIT'S
IDENTITY**



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COURAGEOUS CAPTAINS



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THE ELEGANCE OF VERMOUTH



TREND / ITALIAN GIN
**A SELECTION OF THE BEST
ITALIAN GIN**



LIQUID STORY / EASTERN EUROPE
**SAMOGON AND OTHER
HOMEMADE SPIRITS**



PALLINI
- ITALIA -

GOOD NEWS

We have a couple of reasons to be proud; two pieces of good news have reached us over the last few days.

The first being Campari's offer to purchase Grand Marnier, an offer which the great Italian brand has just made. It is basically the biggest acquisition (€684 million is the value placed on the French brand) made by the Campari group. More precisely, an agreement is in the pipeline to acquire this iconic, premium label of Cognac, with its orange essences, a liqueur that symbolises French taste. What to say? For once, Italians are making purchases in France. With all due respect to the French who reluctantly have had to admit that a monument of French gastronomic and cultural heritage is going to Italian hands. This we are proud of.

The second story: "Ci voleva" (*"Was needed"*), which is the name of the bar belonging to Fiesso d'Artico, found in the Venetian hinterland, which surprisingly has turned the dominant Spritz culture on its head. How? By becoming a bookcrossing venue, that good practice of donating and swapping used books. In fact, it is the modern version of the message in a bottle, an attempt to create a huge and mobile library that is free to all. In the case of "Ci Voleva", when new owners took over in 2013, the four slot machines on the premises were removed. A little bit of culture then in the place of those coin-guzzling machines that were promptly returned to the company which manages them. So gradually the customers started going to the library, leaving behind a Swedish detective story and taking in its place an American spy-story, leaving behind a Maigret in order to take home a Camilleri, all while sipping a Martini or a Negroni with a literary, poetic twist. A beautiful revolution.

BarTales
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DRINK RESPONSIBLY

A SPIRIT'S IDENTITY

SOS for agaves. Unsustainable farming places a Mexican spirit at risk

BY FABIO BACCHI



With its ceremonious rituals, Mezcal reveals ancient values that have been passed down by mezcaleros from generation to generation. Not everyone is able

to fully understand what lies behind every sip of Mezcal consumed in the many Mexican Mezcal bars or any western bar for that matter. The richness and depth of aroma and flavour that is released thanks



to the processing of the agaves, are often experienced in a rushed and casual way by the consumer. It is that same indifference that allows people to ignore how world-wide demand exceeding certain limits can cause the production of Mezcal to become unsustainable. Consumption in this case risks bringing about an unprecedented crisis for this ancient Mexican spirit.

To mezcaleros, Mezcal is so much more than just a product, it is an undertaking, an historical and unique process that is the fruit of their own interpretation and style. Mezcal tastes different in every city; every mezcalero adds their own secret ingredient, uses their own technique to cook the agave and their own favourite wood. These are differences defined by a familial DNA and that brings one back to each individual producer. Agaves are respected and cared for as members of the family thanks to their lengthy growing time, different forms, colours and sizes.

On the American continent, there



are about 170 species of agaves and as much as 75% of these are found in Mexico alone. The region of Oaxaca is home to at least 58 of these and they are endemic to specific areas. It is the most valuable production area and contains the rarest and most precious varieties of the plants: espadin or espadilla, tepepate, tobala, jabali, chuparrosa, pelon verde. Some of these are in serious dan-



ger of extinction.

The finest, wildest or semi-cultivated agaves take 15 to 20 years to grow to maturity. Time and history are sealed in a bottle of Mezcal and drinking it should lead to solemn experiential and intellectual contemplation. If man executes, time and the climate are responsible for the taste and aroma of each plant. The various climates that characterise and influence the Mexican highlands are the authors of that concept of terroir that

possibly finds its maximum expression in Mezcal.

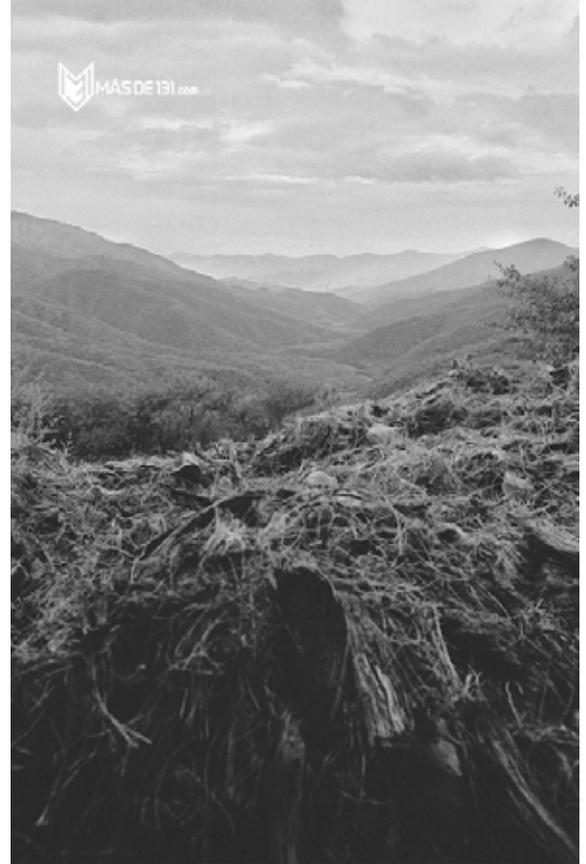
In a recent interview, Sosima Oliveira, master mezcalera of the Tres Colibris palenque in Sierra Chontal, beautifully expressed the meaning and ancestral values that Mezcal represents. Her palenque is found in the highlands of Chontal which go up to 2,000m. In its valley there is a river that enjoys the warm temperatures preferred by the aromatic agave tepextate. Rising up, the



climate becomes colder and at the higher altitudes we find the espadin in various colours and the pelon verde; at the top, chato, gavilàn, chuparrosa and other varieties of agave grow.

With the change in climate, soil and mineral composition, so too do the agaves; every single plant can differ. Chato grows spontaneously at the foot of pine and oak trees. Its sustainability is closely tied to the sustainability of these trees. Sosima confirms that in the last decade there has been a significant increase in demand for Mezcal abroad, which has led to over-farming of wild agaves. Added to this is the effect of the large companies, who by hoarding the wild plants, marginalise small artisanal producers in the villages, which are destined to close down due to a lack of raw materials. Nothing, or almost nothing, remains on the territory, taking away the only source of income from these small





communities that for centuries have been passing on to each other the social customs that revolve around Mezcal.

It is an appeal, a desperate cry towards understanding that before being a business, Mezcal is a treasure that must be preserved, because for the pueblos of the sierras it represents nourishment both for the body and the soul. There is a real risk that with it, the treasures of experience might also disappear, experience that has grown on the ground during centuries of empirical observation of artisanal Mezcal production. This is a concept not taken into account by the distracted and elite consumer who interprets Mezcal as a fad. According to mezcaleros, in order to drink Mezcal the

consumer must be in harmony with it, because only that way do you appreciate its real flavour.

Mezcal is the most identifiable spirit around and it cannot disappear in a few years. It can be compared to Tequila, which passively transformed from having an artisanal identity to an industrial one. The farming of agave in quantities that exceed what has been planted has brought about a crisis lasting some years now, and today, most of the Tequila brands are owned by foreign companies who try their 'best' to respect the cultural identity of the product. Many mezcaleros denounce the gravity of the current situation. The large companies use up all the Mezcal that they can find, mixing them together without any regard for the individual characteristics of the producers. They spoil the mixtures obtained with flavourants and aromas that appeal to the masses and they export it. There are no parameters to adhere to, and the product, which is of an inferior quality, is the only one that can be exported. And so ends 500 years of artisanal Mezcal production.



According to many locals, the federal government should meet with the real producers of Mezcal before making allowances for the interests of large industry that pushes for faster and more profitable production methods. The case of Zignum Mezcal, for example, caused quite a stir. The matter resulted in a number of debates on social media and the editor of mezcalphd.com was one of the first to speak out. “This is a product that is manufactured in a large industrial setting beyond the borders of Oaxaca, with security guards, no photography permitted, no signs of real Mezcal production. It is an insult to the culture of Mezcal, it’s embarrassing. Agave is not the only raw material used and one must also question the nature of the resource used.”

The point is: how much, and which agaves are used in this type of production? Agaves are a limited resource and it is clear that sustained production would be of benefit only to agave producers who cultivate the crop intensively, as they would see the value of their work increase. This would be detrimental to

the producers of real Mezcal. The protocol for designation of origin, that in some ways is regarded as very cunning and ambiguous, excludes those who cannot afford to be a part of the system and those who do not intend to conform to new production practices. One can imagine that the mezcaleros from the palenques would battle to afford even just the long trips from their isolated pueblos of the sierras to the Mexican capital in order to take part in meetings. And so, many small producers become ‘illegal’, and cannot make use of the term Mezcal, despite the fact that it is the only thing they have been producing for generations and centuries. This economic conflict becomes a social dispute between the parties, with the mezcaleros from the palenques regarding the term “Mezcal” as belonging solely to the

We must slow down consumption, ensuring that it becomes compatible with the lifespan of the agaves



population.

Now, the small producers who regard Mezcal as an essential part of their lives are trying to make their voices heard in an attempt to protect the artisanal nature of the product, the role of the mezcalero and related practices. Conviviality is at stake for them, rather than economics.

Entire villages create cooperatives of workers that involve entire communities from farming to processing of the agaves, with tasks divided among them. Some projects involve the creation of seed banks to preserve the species of agaves, nurseries, but these projects require large investments that are beyond the financial means of the palenque and a strong sense of community on the part of all small producers.

Awareness is now unavoidable: we must slow down consumption, ensuring that it becomes compatible with the lifespan of the agaves.

Sosima Olivera denounces the greed

that in many cases has replaced Tequila with a spoiled product, far from the original Mexican conception; she advises looking out for Mezcal made by independents, even if without certification, and cooperatives from the pueblos, or even individual producers. The good news is that the more attentive members of the bartending world have heeded this call, they are aware of it and consider themselves ambassadors of the product among consumers.

Defending and protecting the identity of traditional and artisanal Mezcal is one of the best practices that a bartender can assume. Now, when you drink Mezcal, think about what it represents and remember “para todo bien Mezcal, para todo mal también” (*“Mezcal is good for all, and bad for all too”*).

Fabio Bacchi

(photo: courtesy of Alfonso Florez
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and Victor Chagoya Cerezo)

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*Just relax and enjoy the extraordinary symphony of flavour
in a glass of Alpestre, brought to you by an orchestra of 34 medicinal herbs,
blended and aged in oak casks from an ancient recipe.
A small sip of this distilled spirit will delight both your heart and mind.*

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COURAGEOUS CAPTAINS

Luxardo, a story of challenges and daring achievements

DI MELANIA GUIDA

Dalmatia juniper, nine spicy and aromatic botanicals. It is no use asking more than that because Pietro Luxardo remains oppor-

tunely quiet. “The rest is a test, a courageous one”, he admits thoughtfully. This is the experiment of the gin, a London Dry Gin, that has just been launched on



BUSINESSES

ON THE PAGE ALONGSIDE, THE LUXARDO FAMILY. ABOVE, A VIEW OF THE PREMISES. BELOW, PIETRO LUXARDO.



the market that, I would imagine, could open up a new segment for this leading sweet liqueur company. “We’ll see”, says the president of Luxardo, cautiously, “but it must be said that it’s not a complete innovation. The first document that tells of the existence of a Luxardo Gin dates back to 1863. Then came the ‘Ginepro di Dalmazia (Dalmatia Juniper)’ which was produced from the start of the 1900s, with its transparent bottle and red label that we have reproduced in this new version.” Back to the future? “It was Nicoló’s idea, my nephew, seventh generation Luxardo, who is fascinated by the world





of mixology. He's the one who insisted we go with gin." Indeed, courage is the 'trademark' of the Luxardo business. Starting with Giorgio, "the only surviving brother from the fourth generation who had the courage to take up the old business once again and in 1947, together with young Nicoló III, fifth generation Luxardo, built the factory in Torreglia, at the foothills of the Euganei Hills. In so doing, they started a new chapter in the Luxardo story."

A story within the story. It all started in 1821, when in Zadar, on the coast of Dalmatia, Girolamo Luxardo founded a Maraschino factory, that exquisite spirit (thanks to the marasca cherries, cherries from Illyria with a bitter flavour, a special variety of black cherries grown by the Luxardo family) that captured the 'favour' (read patent) of the Austrian emperor. This confirmed the superior quality of the Luxardo Maraschino (a world-famous liqueur that today is distributed to 77 different markets), to the point that even today the company includes in its official

1936

SOMETIMES...

LUXARDO

Luxardo London Dry Gin deriva da un'accurata selezione di 9 botanicals che restano in infusione alcolica per 24h nei nostri tradizionali alambicchi di rame a ciclo discontinuo prima della distillazione. Dopo un affinamento di circa 19 giorni e la successiva filtrazione il Gin è pronto per essere imbottigliato. La ricetta attuale risale al Ginepro di Dalmazia prodotto dalla Luxardo sin dagli inizi del '900.

2016

THEY COME BACK

LUXARDO

Luxardo London Dry Gin is the result of a very accurate selection of 9 botanicals which are left in alcoholic infusion for 24h in our traditional copper pot stills before distillation. After 19 days of refinement the product is filtered and ready to be bottled. The actual recipe goes back to the famous Ginepro di Dalmazia, produced by the Luxardo family since the beginning of the 1900's.

name the title of Privilegiata Fabbrica Maraschino Excelsior i.e. "Prestigious Producer of Excelsior Maraschino".

The years passed quickly, the factory grew and developed rapidly. "Just think that in 1939", continues Luxardo, who was a lecturer of contemporary Italian



literature at the University of Padua and president of the management committee of the Campiello prize, “the factory employed over 200 people and was considered the biggest in Italy, together with the Sarti business from Bologna.” Today the company employs 47 staff members and achieved a turnover of €20.9 million in 2015.

But the winds of the war were howling upon the horizon. “This brought about restrictions to industrial activity and later, in November 1943, the factory was almost entirely destroyed by heavy British and American bombing.”

Which brings us to the bloodiest pages of Italian history that sadly also coincide with the most woeful of the Luxardo family. What happened? “Following the withdrawal of the Italian and German troops from Dalmatia in 1944, the region was occupied by Tito’s communist partisans. The inhabitants of the city were forced to move to Italy as exiles, but many were killed: among them were Pietro Luxardo and his brother Nicoló, along with his

wife, Bianca, who drowned in the sea of Zadar. More precisely, according to witness reports received years thereafter, they were struck with oars by Tito’s partisans in the stretch of sea between Silba and the Dugi Otok island. And so with a destroyed factory, and a dispersed family, it seemed that – after over a century – the Luxardo business was destined to come to an end.”

And then what happened? “Thanks to his military leave in Bologna, Giorgio was the only one of the three brothers to survive. With great courage he started from scratch, and together with his nephew, Nicoló, set up a new factory in Torreglia.”

They needed to solve the problem of the marasca cherries, however. “Precisely. Thanks to his acumen, my uncle managed to get a few trusted individuals to send him some plants, and he planted them in ground at the foothills of the Euganei Hills, that thanks to its composition (hilly and rich in lime) is similar to that of Dalmatia.” Did he manage to grow the same marasca cherries? “In my opinion they were

Following Tito’s occupation, the factory was destroyed. Pietro, Nicoló and his wife, Bianca, were killed



even better. The Dalmatian soil wasn't as rich."

There is a unique connection between your family's affairs and your love for literature. Almost a necessary destiny? "My father studied history, and on my mother's side, when my great-grandmother got married, a little book of poetry was published that was signed, among others, by Ettore Schmitz, the registered name of Italo Svevo. My great-grandfather was his fencing teacher." Without taking into account D'Annunzio and the marasca cherries. "Grandfather Pietro, fourth generation of Luxardos from Zadar, was a member of the Fiuman legionnaires. He was involved in logistics and communication. The Luxardo liqueurs were never found lacking at the Commander's dinner table. D'Annunzio especially enjoyed the cherry brandy, also known as Ratafià (another historical Luxardo speciality) that he renamed 'Blood of Morlacco'."

Why was it called that? There is a piece of literature that documents the moment that it was 're-baptised'. Contrary to what was thought, the idea of a

new name did not only come from the dark red colour of the liqueur; there was a political and antiphrastic connotation to it too.

This is recorded in a book of memoirs from 1922 by Leone Kochnitzky, a Belgian poet who for a number of months was part of D'Annunzio's inner circle. Kochnitzky tells how "the Blood of Morlacco, a harmless Cherry Brandy, does not deserve such a name, if not because of a daily British newspaper that told how D'Annunzio was a 'barbaric tyrant who sucked the blood from the Morlacchi' (the people from the interior of Fiume). We found this quite entertaining, and the Commander gave this new name to the fake Cherry Brandy [sic]. Nothing more simple and amusing than 'Platypus's' meals; a few friends in jovial company gathered around the Commander." "In short", concludes Luxardo, "the 'dark liqueur' of Luxardo was the only Morlacchi 'blood' that D'Annunzio ever drank, casually mocking a presumptuous rumour sparked by an English newspaper."

Melania Guida

Maraschino Luxardo.

LUXARDO®

The essential
ingredient
for your
Cocktails.



The last word (classic)

- ¾ oz - 22.5 ml Luxardo Maraschino
- ¾ oz - 22.5 ml Luxardo Dry Gin
- ¾ oz - 22.5 ml Green Chartreuse
- ¾ oz - 22.5 ml fresh lime juice

method shake all ingredients with ice then strain into a chilled cocktail glass.

garnish fresh thin cut lime wheel or dehydrated one, which will float atop.

www.luxardo.it



THE ELEGANCE OF VERMOUTH

The unexpected versatility of Cocchi Vermouth has been rediscovered at the dinner table in Turin Palace

BY MELANIA GUIDA

Vermouth of Turin has reached a new milestone in its process of being recognised as a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) product. Thanks to its new product, the Cocchi 'Maison' has raised the bar in terms of the quality of one of the proudest ambassadors of Savoyard and Italian tradition.

In recent years, Giulio Cocchi has been promoting the rebirth of the Vermouth of Turin. First with the 'Storico Vermouth di Torino', and then the 'Vermouth Amaro Dopo Teatro', he has started off a new era for the category, relaunching it on a global level. The 'Riserva La Venaria Reale' Vermouth of Turin, presented at the 125th

anniversary celebrations of the house of Cocchi, opens up a new reality that other producers will find themselves up against.

1,891 bottles of the new Vermouth have been released in this first batch, which was the year that the company was founded and also the year that the collaboration with the Palace of Venaria was born. The recipe, selection of flora used, timings and the aging process were carefully considered in order to adhere to historical and geographic criteria. The essential role played by the House of Savoy in the distribution of Vermouth is celebrated with the exclusive use of Piedmont wine and alpine herbs. The collaboration



with the Palace of Venaria is based on the use of herbs gathered only from the Royal Potager (garden) of Venaria: Artemisia absinthium, rhubarb, Piedmont mint and other alpine herbs that make up the combination used for Vermouth. It is very interesting to note the step that Giulio Cocchi took with regard to the historical notion of Vermouth, interpreting the Riserva (Reserve) category in an innovative way, a term that is often associated with aging for longer or shorter periods in barrels. This is traditionally what sets the different Vermouths apart from each other.

In the Cocchi philosophy however, the term 'Riserva' does not necessarily mean aging in barrels, where the



delicate balance of aromas is subject to a process of oxidation and loading of tannins, but rather improving the recipe and its processing. The 'Riserva La Venaria Reale' is therefore a new type of Vermouth which favours the development of the aromatic richness and density of the flora used after a six-month aging process in glass. The base wine of the 'Riserva La Venaria Reale' is a dry Muscat wine, infused with rich botanicals. The Vermouth therefore develops an elegant structure, supported by an alcohol content of 18%, that protect and provide a certain tone to a complexity in constant flux, balsamic, then fresh and persuasive, with an acidity that clings to the palate in the most marvel-



lous way, together with a pleasant sweetness that is not caramelised.

The mixability of the 'Riserva La Venaria Reale' is remarkable, and it would no doubt be a great partner with aged brown spirits. In this way, Cocchi has contributed hugely to bartending across the world and now takes a step towards a new direction of Vermouth consumption: pairing with food and its use in cuisine. In this way, doors open for Vermouth to be used in restaurants and it would develop hugely in the market in terms of its image, diffusion and appeal. If the stars of international cuisine were to then play a role, its success would no doubt be a resounding one.

This Cocchi strategy is already unfolding with a series of concept dinners launched in Turin on 18 March. In the Sala Mollino of the renowned Turin Palace, a number of celebrities combined their talents and energy: Cocchi himself, chef Stefano Sforza of Les Petites Madeines, chef Enrico Derflinger, interna-



tional star and current president of Euro Toques, master chocolatier Guido Gobino, and cheese specialist Alberto Marcomini. The two chefs together developed a menu that complemented the taste profiles of Vermouth.

Guido Gobino and Alberto Marcomini searched for and found sensory parallels between Cocchi's aromatic wines

and artisanal chocolate in the first case, and types of cheese in the second, that came through in incredible explosions of flavour. In this way, one tries to highlight the essence of the Vermouth itself, which remains a wine at least 75% of the time. The bartenders from the American Bar of the Savoy Hotel in London were also present and they created a drink to mark the

TURIN

IMAGES FROM THE DINNER HELD IN THE SALA MOLLINO OF THE TURIN PALACE. ON THE LEFT, CHEFS STEFANO SFORZA AND ENRICO DERFLINGER. ROBERTO BAVA (ON THE RIGHT) WITH GUIDO GOBINO.



125th anniversary of Savoy. Cocktail 125 is made of gin, Barolo Chinato, Cocchi Rosa, grenadine syrup and fresh lemon juice. It provides a pleasant level of acidity and is well balanced with a fish dish.

The concept dinner was presided by Roberto Bava, the owner, together with the Cocchi family, of the Cocchi brand, who took on the role of grand master of ceremonies. He is a botanicals expert and a dedicated winemaker when it comes to singing the praises Of the products of the house of Bava. A presenter, no doubt, but in the end a great ambassador of the Vermouth of Turin. What more is there to say? A new golden age is dawning on Vermouth, and the first rays are shining down on the house of Cocchi.

Melania Guida

GIULIO COCCHI VERMOUTH DI TORINO COINCEPT DINNER

Savoy Cocktail 125 - Black cod,
peas and grapefruit

*

Dry Vermouth Cocchi Savoy accompanied by 'Queen Victoria' Risotto with sicilian red prawn, black truffle and Dry Savoy Vermouth, and Ravioli del plin in a Vermouth di Torino broth with its spices

*

Storico Vermouth di Torino Cocchi accompanied by Veal Cheek marinated in Storico Vermouth di Torino Cocchi and exotic spices and Soft Polenta with stone grinded flour and a crispy buckwheat

*

Vermouth di Torino Riserva La Venaria Reale accompanied by Ladyfingers Tiramisù made with Vermouth Riserva Reale

Cheese tasting

Robiola goat with Cocchi Rosa Americano
Taleggio with Storico Vermouth di Torino
Oro Piave DOP with
Dopoteatro Vermouth Amaro
Castelmagno Alpeggio with Barolo Chinato

Gobino chocolates tasting

Storico Vermouth di Torino
with Gobino Cocchi Vermouth praline and
orange peels coated with
Chocolate extra bitter blend

Dopoteatro Vermouth Amaro Cocchi
matched with Gianduiotto Maximo + 39

Giulio Cocchi Barolo Chinato combined with
septum Extra Bitter single
origin Chontalpa 70%

Cocchi Rosa Americano and blueberry jelly
coated with dark chocolate

1821

CHERRY

Unique.

Let this unique liqueur obtained by the marasca cherries sourced from the Luxardo orchards seduce you with its intense aroma. Enjoy its inebriating perfume of marasca neat, in famous cocktails or with pure dark chocolate. Luxardo Cherry Liqueur Sangue Morlacco: taste the inimitable.



LUXARDO

Drink responsibly

THE ITALIAN TOUCH

A selection of the best Italian Gin

BY DARIO D'AVINO AND FABIO BACCHI



Gin is enjoying a second youth thanks to renewed interest that is making it the centre of attention for many manufacturers. The new 'Gin Craze' which is being supported by demanding bartenders attracts and rewards enthusiastic consumers who are fascinated by one of the richest spirits, both in flavour and history. And when the world of gin and juniper meets the experience and professionalism of all those distillers who over decades have been honing their techniques and their art form, it is natural that a new and interesting experience be born, enriched by knowledgeable hands.

Of course, Italy could not just stand by and watch. It has always been home to what is considered to be one of the best plants used for gin production: juniper, that grows on the Apennines in the area between Emilia, Tuscany and Umbria. Italy is among the foremost nations when it comes to other flora used in the production process: the peels of citrus fruit hail-

ing from Mediterranean regions, including the very famous bergamot from Calabria, the liquorice from Abruzzo and a multitude of herbs and roots from the Alps. The experience and the raw materials of Italy placed at the service of a spirit that lends itself to being reinterpreted has meant that a series of products have resulted with characteristics that are very different from each other, but that all come together in the name of an Italian gin.

BarTales has tested what is on offer among Italian gins and has chosen those that thanks to an appropriately subjective sensory journey, it ranks as deserving to stand on a bars' shelves. They are all great products that are highly mixable and versatile. Some are youthful, impetuous and festive, while others are more classic and serious, authoritative when mixed, and all have a unique complexity about them. All of them express traditional values based on their terroir, both in concept and spirit. No doubt the best within the Italian 'Gin Craze'.



VALLOMBROSA GIN DRY

Between the Diocese of Arezzo and Florence, in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, one finds the Abbey of Vallombrosa. Built in 1028 by St Giovanni Gualberto, founder of the Benedictine Congregation of Vallombrosa, the abbey was built in order to provide a location that was as isolated as possible so as to gather oneself and put into practice the precept of St Benedict 'ora et labora' that the monks aspired to. It is this dedicated and meticulous work that made what was produced by the abbey famous: honey, chocolate, herbal preparations, liqueurs, bitters and spirits made from many herbs. The product that attracted the most attention was the Vallombrosa Gin Dry, obtained thanks to the exclusive use of a single type of wild juniper berry that grows on the hills between Sansepolcro and Pieve Santo Stefano, in the province of Arezzo. Heading up production and guardian of the monastic secrets was Father Roberto Lucidi, whose secret it seems was crushing the berries by hand in old mortars, something that is still done today. The result is a clear gin with a high alcoholic content, 47% and a high concentration of aromas. The notes of juniper are noticeable, initially subdued by the strong alcoholic element that explodes in the mouth on the middle palate, with spicy notes that can be interpreted as not very fresh. It has a serious and authoritative character that recalls the most classic of London dry gins.



GILBACH GIN

Alessandro Gilmozzi is a chef, born in 1965. Trained by names such as Adrià and Ducasse, and heading up the El Molin restaurant in Cavalese in Val di Fiemme in Trentino, day after day Gilmozzi perfects his cuisine that is characterised by innova-



tion and a deep passion for those gifts, those raw materials, that the surrounding mountains provide him with. With the help of his sous chef, Andreas Bachmann, Gilmozzi decided to transfer all his passion for his region and its ingredients from the kitchen to a new project: gin. Alessandro and Andreas started with juniper berries, elder and wild plum to create what in their mind is a gin from the mountain, whose ingredients, being completely natural, are personally selected and gathered. Thanks to the collaboration with the Pilzer Gilbach distillery, the gin became a reality. It has an alcohol content of 40% and presents fruity notes of prunes, cherries and hazelnut, hints of lemon and elder, with juniper, rosin and rosemary standing out. Overall it is balanced, fine and persistent. It has a certain freshness that softens the noticeable aromas, its evolution in the mouth comes with a long finish that continuously evolves.

DOL GIN

There is a man's passion for his region, South Tyrol, with its mountains, the Dolomites, in that western part that extends between Val Gardena and the Schlern and that



goes by the name of Alpe di Siusi. Here the mountain is harsh but beautiful and forges characters and friendships. Like that which ties Florian Rabanser, master distiller at the Zu Plum distillery, to the pharmacist in the town of San Valentino. And so the idea to transform a common passion for gathering wild herbs and indigenous aromatics into a gin that captures the essence of what makes up their region. After two years of continuous work, Dol Gin was born, where 24 different flora are used, including gentian root, mountain yarrow, wild anise, elder flowers and even angelica roots, cumin and rose hips, all ingredients that come from the Do-

lomite region, with the only exception of the lemon peel from Garda Lake. The gin is rather complex on the palate, with hints of spice and a slight heat to it. The evident and sustained presence of the juniper is followed by the fresher notes of the lemon peel and the bitter hints of gentian. It has an ABV of 45%.

Z44 DISTILLED DRY GIN

Gottfried Roner started distilling in 1946. After obtaining his first successes with grappa, during the mid-1960s, his sons Andreas and Guenther Roner took over from their father and led the company to various commercial successes within the world of fruit distillates and spirits. In 2007, Karin Roner entered the company and as CEO marked the start of the third generation. She concentrated on qualitative improvement, but also a growth in philosophy that finds its expression in a number of projects, including its own Gin: Z44. The idea is that of a gin flavoured with the fresh pine cones of Pino Cirmolo, a characteristic conifer belong to the Pinaceae family found in the Alps. The pine cones, which reach maturity after three years and are harvested by hand in the summer in order to preserve the richness of the red sap, are processed by infusion, and thereafter the extract is distilled in a small alembic. The result is a distilled dry gin combining the freshness of the herbs and balsamic notes of the pine to those of yarrow, violet root and gentian root. The resulting product is pleasant, balanced, with a lovely citrusy tone, slightly floral, and very well executed. It has an ABV of 44%.



GINIU

This charming Sardinian product is rooted in the tradition of the underground distilleries that developed in Sardinia after the second World War. At that time distilling juniper galbuli was quite common and the juniper plant was called 'Giniperu' in dialect, while the spirit produced was known as 'Giniu'. This traditional but illicit form of distilling continued until it vanished in the early sixties, but when the Silvio Carta company started distilling juniper galbuli in 2013, the choice of name seemed obvious. And so Giniu was born. Today, as it was then, the galbuli of only five indigenous varieties of juniper are selected and hand-picked to create, along with seven other herbs (strictly kept secret) from the shrublands of the Sardinian Mediterranean, the group of plants that following batch distillation in copper stills, give Giniu its characteristic flavour. Hints of herbs, and Mediterranean shrubland combined with traditional gin flavours create a fairly delicate and rounded product, which presents some interesting flavours, combined with hints from flora and rosin.



GIN DEL PROFESSORE MADAME E MONSIEUR

The inspiring concept behind these two products is the underground production of Bathtub Gin in speakeasies during the Prohibition. It is a tribute to this fascinating period that defined craftsmanship, combined with the great and ancient herbal traditions of the Mediterranean basin. The product comes in two versions, Madame and Monsieur. The first has an ABV of 42.9%, the second is slightly more at 43.7%. Although they both have the same alcohol base, they differ in flavour due to a different plant used. Madame has as its basis a distillate of Italian juniper produced using only wild juniper from Umbria and Tuscany. The botanical is composed of 14 herbs and



spices that are infused with fresh citrus peel and another ingredient that is a strict secret. Great attention is given to the long period of cold infusion in order to respect the freshness of the spices. The next step is careful, very delicate filtration, in order not to lose any aromatic notes provided by the natural infusion. The result is a complex product and one that is very different from any other Gin in circulation, where the notes of juniper are very delicate but the very spicy flavour profile is perceived by the mid-palate, with hints of cinnamon, vanilla, nutmeg, pepper, honey and ripe peaches. On the tongue, one immediately tastes a sweet and dense note that is immediately softened

and balanced by the orange and lemon peel. These citrus flavours merge with a slight balsamic hint at the end, releasing a pleasant long and persistent freshness. Monsieur has a more spicy flavour profile, including cardamom, lavender, chamomile, orange, with the juniper coming through more dominantly compared to Madame. The natural sweet note is less accentuated and more harmonious. Altogether very rounded and it too has a long finish with a smooth and pleasant aftertaste.

THE GREEDY GIN

English tradition and Italian invention combine to create this gin, which is Italian in its recipe and English by distillation. There are 13 declared flora but in reality 18 are used. The declared ones are: citrus fruit of Italian origin such as mandarin, orange, lemon and bergamot peels that have the task of refreshing and sweetening the product, clary sage and angelica from mid-Europe, Ceylon cinnamon, Litsea cubeba (belonging to the same family as cinnamon, its fragrance is sweet, spicy, citrusy with notes similar to lemongrass but more floral), juniper and Balkan coriander, lavender, cardamom, green tea. Those not declared were revealed to us but we will omit them here to safeguard the recipe. Distillation of Greedy Gin takes place in discontinuous copper stills. The infusion is done using the stepping method where for each botanical infusers are inserted together and then extracted at different times. The alcoholic base is made of two pure grain spirits managed separately for the infusion of the plants and then mixed together after distillation. Production is done in 4 batches of 500 liters at a time and is repeated four times a year. Distilling to bottling takes 3 months. Greedy is a gin that is exuberant, sparkling and generous. On the nose it reveals floral, citrus and balsamic aromas. On the tongue it releases its strength, softened by fragrant lavender notes that tries to make its mark on the body of the product, a little cheekily. The spiciness is balanced and extends pleasantly throughout the palate. The base alcohol used is of great quality and is very pleasant on the palate. An extremely elegant product that deserves to be properly combined with quality tonics that are never dull, with good effervescence and degree of bitterness. It has an ABV of 43%.



BORDIGA

The story of this distillery starts in Turin where Cavalier Pietro Bordiga ran a small bar. He was also an expert in herbs and essential oils, and so Pietro Bordiga decided to open a distillery in Cuneo, in the middle of the Alps that were rich with flora. All production up to the bottling takes place in the factory and the distillery still uses wooden stills, in a Bain Marie, and the entire production of distillates is affected by the seasons. Bordiga's products range from bitters to the classical Genepy, from aperitifs to Pastis and as many as 4 gins. We tried the Bordiga Dry Gin. It is an interesting small batch that uses a type of juniper from the Maritime Alps that is particularly rich in essential oils. Production of the dry gin includes 4 distillations and its eight plants include angelica, coriander, orange, thyme, Juniper and three secret ingredients. The character of this Gin reminds one of the London classic, serious and elegant, with a noticeable spiciness that is tempered by the freshness of the orange. It makes its mark on the tongue and unfolds into a final effect in which the juniper retains its dominant note from the first taste. The aftertaste is rather bitter and aromatic. The distiller manages to bring together the eight botanicals very successfully. It has an ABV of 42%. This is our favourite used in a classic G&T.



Dario D'Avino e Fabio Bacchi



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SAMOGON AND OTHER HOMEMADE SPIRITS



The history and escapades of Vodka's forefather

BY ALEKSANDR AL'TOV

The historical study of distillation in Eastern Europe is an important aspect of bartending philology that researches and disseminates, but also in order to better understand the consumption of alcoholic drinks in a relatively close geography, important in terms of its history, development and the diffusion of distilling practices that are most distinctive of the region. Some documents lead us to the hypothesis that the first European distillations date back to this area.

One of the very first European spirits is Samogon. The word Samogon, although Russian, is actually a common term used in Poland, the Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania. Samogon means “homemade alcohol”, and comes from the Russian term

SAMO (to make alone) and GON (from the verb Gnat, to distil) and is pronounced SAMAGÒN. The history of Samogon is inevitably linked with that of Vodka and the laws that have historically regulated its production. Over the centuries, Samogon has influenced the lives and customs of populations which have adapted it for their own use.

The long dispute between Russia and Poland about the first use of the word Vodka to describe an alcoholic drink is far from over. A first written instance of the word Vodka dates back to 1405-1406, tying it to the Polish territory of Sandomierz Voivodeship (Palatinatus Sandomirensis), a region that existed administratively until around 1700. Here, in court documents that are difficult to



HISTORY
 A FIRST WRITTEN INDICATION OF THE WORD VODKA DATES BACK TO 1405-1406, TIED TO THE POLISH TERRITORY OF SANDOMIERZ VOIVODESHIP (PALATINATUS SANDOMIRENSIS).

find and understand, the records of the Palatinate of Sandomierz called “Akta Grodzkie” dating from 1405 to 1437 make important reference to the distillate that, should future studies confirm it, would move back the date of the first European document that speaks of a distillate for recreational use. Currently we have the writings of the monk John Cor concerning whisky dating back to 1494, and some documents relating to Armagnac, understood as a distillate, possibly dating back to 1411.

At the time, no column stills were used and this certainly makes it difficult to

judge the type of distillate that was produced. Although commonly called “vodka”, Samogon is an ancestor that does not reflect the current commodity classifications and taste tests of vodka. A key date in the history of ‘home’ distillation is that on which a central government tried to regulate the production of a distillate. In Russia this date is 1474, when the Grand Prince of All Russia, Ivan III, approved the first law regarding a monopoly in the production of alcohol. Under that law, no one could sell alcohol beyond the government’s control. The law came into effect at first in certain major cities,



ARTS AND CULTURE

ABOVE THE OPRICNIKI, PAINTING BY NIKOLAY NEVREV. ALONGSIDE, ABOVE THE BARON SIGISMUND VON HERBERSTEIN AND HIS BOOK RERUM MOSCOVITARUM COMMENTARIJ. BELOW, IVAN THE TERRIBLE.

and was later extended to entire regions.

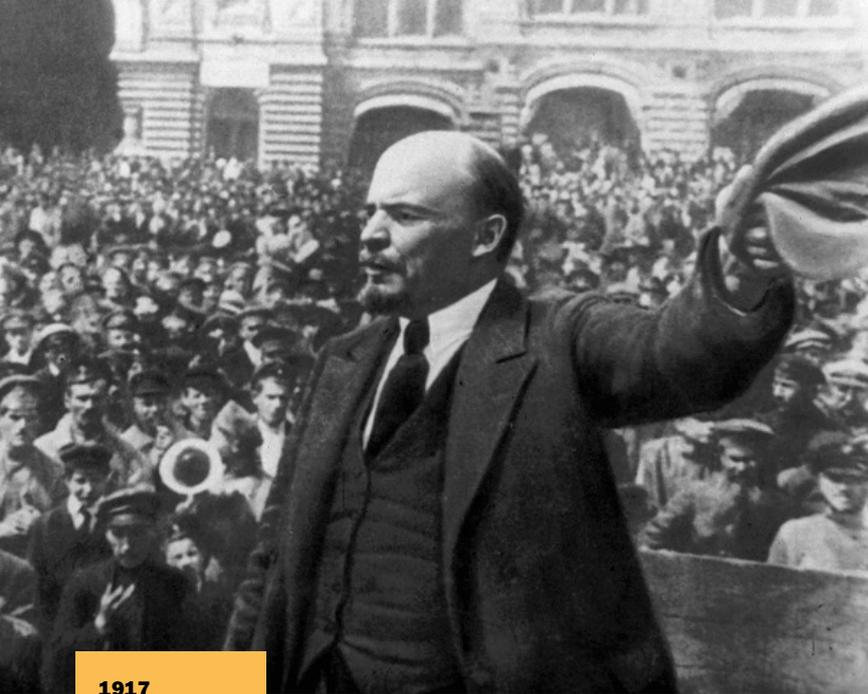
The sale of Samogon, which at that time could be defined as what we would now call “bread wine”, was prohibited in private shops and taverns (korchmas). But this repressive action, aimed primarily at safeguarding the Tsar’s income, did not systematically affect the Samogon that was being produced for personal use. The result was thriving home-production and smuggling of alcohol made from any raw material, be it sugar or starch, which the people had at their disposal: honey mainly, but also fruit, rye, wheat, beets and more. Depending on the area there was a preference for using one ingredient rather than another.

Starting from 1474, there are records of the use of the Russian word “korchemstvo”, which indicated the homemade distillation of alcoholic substances. The

custom of the Russian people to produce and consume alcohol regularly during the day can be found in an authoritative historical source, the writings of 1517 of Matvey Mekhovskiy, “Traktat or dvukh Sarmatiyakh” (trans. “Treatise on the two Sarmatia”). It tells of how from a mixture similar to “porridge” (i.e. a cereal mixture combined with water) Russian citizens made a “liquid that burns and that they drink to escape the intense cold of those regions.”

In a note from 1517, the Baron Sigismund von Herberstein reports in *Rerum Moscovitarum Commentarij* (published in its entirety in 1548) his study of the practices of the people in the Russian region (at the time called Muscovia): “the waiter brought spirits that Muscovites usually drink from the afternoon”.

For the first time in 1533, we have a



1917
LENIN DURING
THE OCTOBER
REVOLUTION.

were extremely loyal to the king, dressed in black and with a dog’s head and a broom as symbols. The dog’s head symbolised their loyalty to the tsar, the broom their willingness to “sweep” away the enemies. They were also provided with a special ladle. At the kabaks, the Tsar’s dogs could drink a ladle of Samogon free

of charge (a ladle held about 500ml).

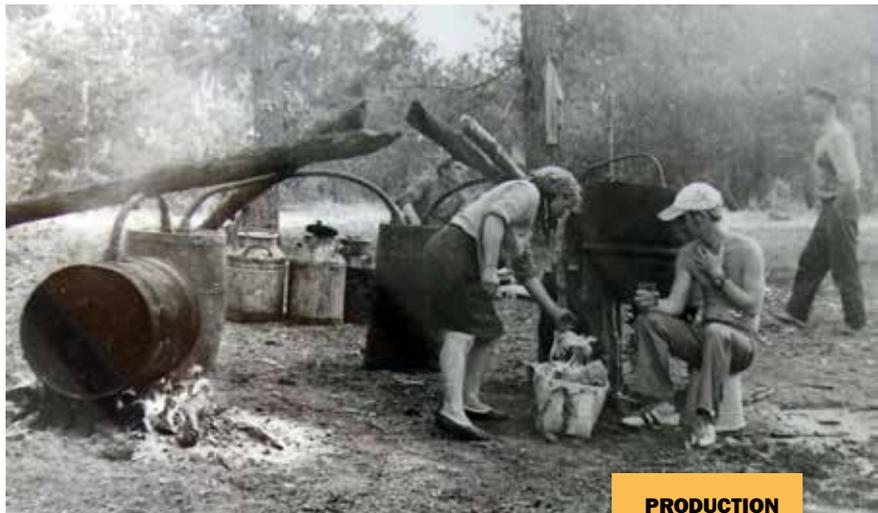
In the years that followed, kabaks were opened in each city. They were very well frequented and in some chronicles it is reported that by 1648, one-third of the adult male population had debt at a kabak. At that time, legal production of Samogon was concentrated in the hands of a few people where there was relative control, and out of this monopoly came a wave of corruption involving local government bodies and the tavern owners.

Historically Samogon had four different names that only starting from 1917, with the October Revolution, were combined under the name of “Samogon”, all indicated at the time with the word “wine” that in this case meant “distillate”. They were all initially ascribed to the bread wine category:

SPIRT DVO’NOE	High quality product, made from prized raw materials and produced via double distillation. ABV of around 74-76%.
BOYARSKOE WINE	Product characterised by double distillation. Mainly from distilling Dobroe wine. ABV of about 57-58%. The distillation equipment was instrumental in the creation of a product rather than another.
DOBROE WINE	It was most likely Prostoe wine diluted with water and redistilled or produced from the distillation of Raki.
PROSTOE WINE	“Simply” distilled – obtained from the distillation of a fermented mash with the addition of water to lower the alcohol content and increase the volume. ABV of approximately 38% and never above 40%. Polugar was also part of this category.

Year after year, the government’s repression of underground distillation grew more and more. Sanctions and penalties, however, were almost exclusively

reserved for those who illegally traded spirits. In fact, the vastness of the Russian empire made widespread checks almost impossible, guaranteeing in this



PRODUCTION
THE PHASES OF
CLANDESTINE
PRODUCTION.
TO THE LEFT,
TESTING THE
ALCOHOL
CONTENT OF
SAMOGON.



way the continuation of the tradition of distilling for personal use. The quality of the Samogon, therefore, was variable depending on the type of production. A striking example comes to us from the tradition of Queen Elizaveta I of Russia. Certain documents show that in 1741 she used to give her most important guests the best quality Samogon in her kingdom as gifts.

An interesting fact is that when at the end of the nineteenth century column distilling became a reality, the quality of the Samogon dropped drastically. This also coincides with a major reform at a social level, the abolition of serfdom in 1861, which resulted in a dramatic increase in the production costs of Samogon and therefore helped to undermine its quality.

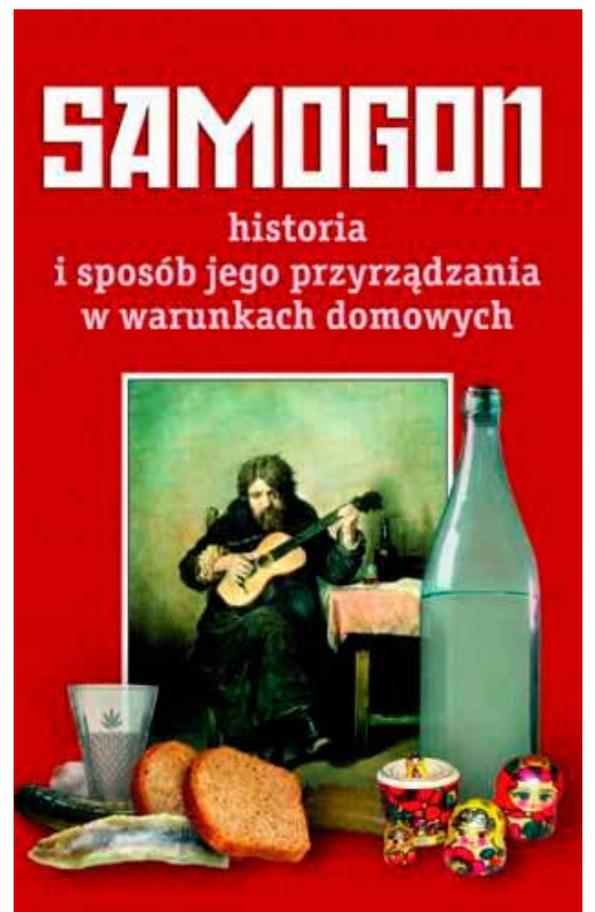
During the First World War, a form of prohibition came into effect in Russia. Consequently, with the October Revolution of 1917, all types of bread wine and distillates that could be produced at home were officially grouped under the term “Samogon” and declared to be illegal. The prohibition ended in 1925, when Vodka returned to stores but for different reasons. Among these was the need to ensure an average quality standard in the production of distillates and in so doing prevent diseases

*It was a tradition
of Queen
Elizaveta I of
Russia to give her
most important
guests the best
quality Samogon*



resulting from the consumption of harmful products that were manufactured in homes without any checks and controls in place.

From 1 July 2015, it became legal once again to produce Samogon at home



thanks to a law that has made it possible to distil for personal consumption.

By Aleksandr Al'tov

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