

# BarTales

## Best of

N. 26 | MAY 2020

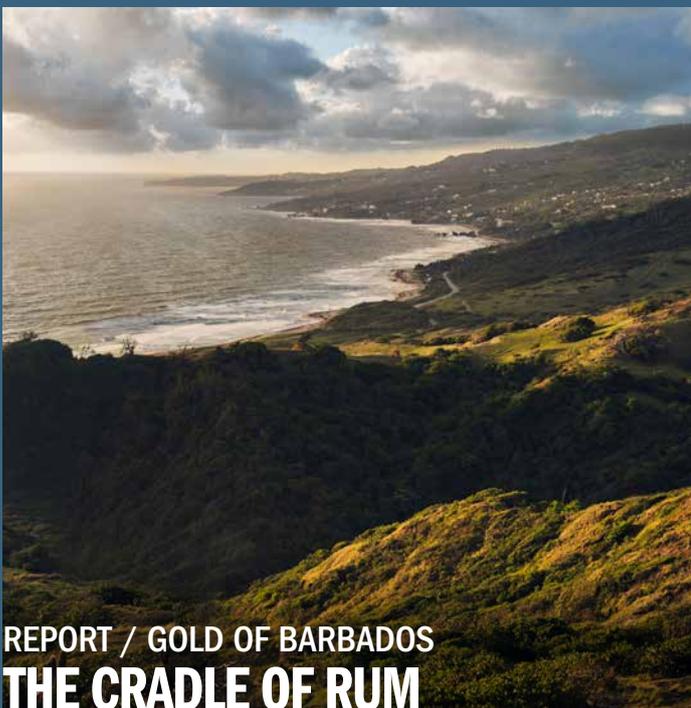
SUPPLEMENT OF BARTALES



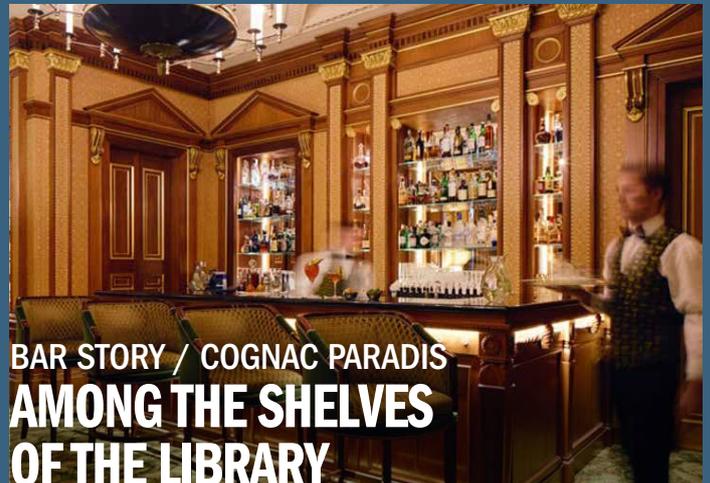
HOT SPIRIT / NORTHERN GIN  
**WILD HEART**



TREND / LONGING FOR GREEN  
**SOURNESS THAT'S JUST RIGHT**



REPORT / GOLD OF BARBADOS  
**THE CRADLE OF RUM**



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ZOOM / THE TEARS TOP TEN  
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# SINGULAR AND PLURAL

**W**hen the worst is over, when the seemingly never-ending time of quarantine makes way for fast-paced and full days, when nothing, or just about, will be the same as before, we will not necessarily find ourselves in a better world. Much could change, and yes, for the worse too. The terrible effects of the pandemic may deepen the imbalance and fractures of a world we have always known, the world as we knew it before COVID. Political tensions and economic inequality are being exacerbated, pushing the natural balance of the planet beyond its limits. In reassessing a new model for development, we may have to abandon that egocentricity of the self, who can do it all. We may have to disregard our predatory and narcissistic ways and rediscover those founding values such as community and solidarity, which ultimately is the only lesson that the virus leaves us with – solidarity above all else. There have been many initiatives putting effective support strategies in place. Starting from Listoke Distillery, the distillery and school of gin in Ireland, with its (sanitising) gel for hands that is perfumed with juniper botanicals. “[In] absolutely uncharted waters for everybody, it’s just a way that we can all help”, says its managing director. To face masks produced by the greats of the fashion industry and apps with coupons to support bars that have had to close their doors due to the lockdown. Indeed, that is solidarity. That is all we really need, before dawn breaks.

Follow us



**BarTales**  
*Best of*

N. 26 | MAY 2020

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**DRINK RESPONSIBLY**

# WILD HEART

## The Hebrides, Orkney, Skye and Shetland: the indomitable pride of the islands producing the best in Scottish gin

BY ALESSANDRO PALANCA

**R**eefs in the middle of the sea, numerous small bits of land inhabited by people with ancient and proud origins, often rebellious, unconquerable, navigators in the past, explorers, traffickers and clandestine distillers. People tempered by the cold winds of the north, who share every possible resource with nature to extract its fruit and enjoyment. They boast the proud Vikings among their ancestors, as well as populations of Norse origin; people who were not viewed with favour at the time, but whose modern descendants would not hesitate to offer you the best hospitality possible.

In the Inner and Outer Hebrides, Orkney,



Skye and the far north of the Shetlands are sparsely populated islands, at times extreme, but whose names are known to whisky enthusiasts around the world. This is what we will talk about. On those tiny reefs scattered in a cold sea and lashed by relentless winds, man and nature have created some of the most famous spirits in the world.

Distillation is the primary occupation of these islands where the concept of farm distillery was born, and that goes beyond economics. Around the islands' distilleries communities and social projects have developed. The new gin craze could not go unnoticed by these proud Scots, who invented gin.

It is in Scotland that a multitude of gins are produced, and from Scotland that craft producers who stand out in the market come. And again, it is from these Scottish islands that gins characterised by their region hail. These are proud gins, influenced by sea winds and the extraordinary geology of the earth, with botanicals that only genius distillers could discover. Here we will talk of the gin of the Scottish islands that, except for some, are largely

unknown. These are all products with a story to tell – that of proud navigators, unspoilt nature and places where we can lose our hearts.

## THE BOTANIST – ISLE OF ISLAY

Produced by the Bruichladdich Distillery on the Scottish island of Islay, The Botanist is created in an ancient copper still, stolen from the decay of time and affectionately named “Ugly Betty”. The Botanist is one of the purest and most complex gins on the market. Its aromatic structure is made up of 22 botanicals, many of which are hand foraged on the island. The result is a gin that surprises the senses, that is natural, wild, with a complex structure that tells of a journey through



the island’s natural surroundings. On the nose there is an explosion of aromas: menthol, juniper, coriander, with an undertone of anise and citrus, honey and flowers from Machir Bay, and wild mint. Maceration

takes place with an alcohol base produced from a 96% grain distillate. It is then diluted with local spring water to 56%. The botanicals macerate for 12 hours. Distillation takes about 10 hours, during which the alcohol vapours move from the infusion chamber that contains the botanicals.

**Nose:** a fresh bouquet of herbs, juniper and sweet citrus. After just a moment, the sweet, spicy and earthy notes of the cassia and coriander open up the way to the complexity of the 22 botanicals from Islay. The aroma of the botanicals gradually increases, releasing the wild aromas of mint, thyme, Spanish broom and chamomile.

**Palate:** rich and smooth, fresh at first and then it warms the whole palate, well-rounded with a citrusy





freshness. The balance and complexity are distinctive, with sweet and earthy hints that blend with the delicate floral and herbaceous notes. Every sip reveals deeper layers and more complex combinations of delicate flavours. The finish is smooth and balanced. ABV 46%

### **KIRKJUVAGR GIN – ORKNEY ISLANDS**

In July 2018, on the seafront of Kirkwall, the ancient capital of the Orkney islands, local couple Stephen and Aly Kemp inaugurated Orkney Distilling, with a visitor centre alongside it. Their entrepreneurial adventure started in 2016 when they decided to combine their passion for gin with the proud island spirit. A year after its opening, Orkney Distilling was recognised as a “5 Star Visitor Attraction” by the Scottish Tourist Board. Orkney Distilling boasts a number of multi-award winning hand-crafted gins with a modern soul thanks to the botanicals used. They are, however, inspired by a proud tradition and the Viking origins of the islands.

The distillery currently produces five gins, four of which are different variants of Kirkjuvagr. These Orkney gins are characterised by local botanicals that include a certain variety of Norwegian Angelica, which is not indigenous but has become established on these islands.



The inspiration for Kirkjuvagr Orkney Gin (pronounced kirk-u-vaar) comes from the discovery of a local legend that tells of an angelica variety brought to the islands by ancient Norwegian populations. This angelica, or arch-angelica, still grows wildly today. Among the botanicals of Kirkjuvagr Orkney Gin we have local botanicals such as Ramanas Rose, Burnet Rose and Borage. Local Orkney bere barley is also used. All the botanicals were grown and handpicked together with the Agronomy Institute of the University of the Highlands and Islands at their site overlooking Kirkwall Bay. After two years of development, Orkney Distilling is now able to grow the species in its own botanical garden. Great care was taken also with regard to its design and packaging. The labels show a repetitive wave design that symbolises the island's maritime traditions and the spirit of exploration of its inhabitants, islanders and traditionalists with an extensive history behind them, but who never stop.

Every label bears the Vegvísir (pronounced vegg-vee-seer), which is the symbol of the brand. It is the name of the ancient Viking compass that was thought to have magic powers, allowing navigators to return home unharmed, up north. Towards that north that is home to the Orkneys and its gin.

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A symphony of 34 herbs.



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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.*

**alpestre.it**

Distributed by: OnestiGroup S.p.A.

### **Kirkjuvagr London Dry Gin**

**Nose:** fresh sea breeze with a sweetness that is reminiscent of lemon and pine sorbet.

**Palate and finish:** initially warm and then sweet spicy notes follow. It has a floral finish that is smooth and long. ABV: 43%.

**Ark-Angell Storm Strength Gin** uses the same botanicals as Kirkjuvagr, but with a higher ABV. It is bottled at navy strength of 57% ABV. Ark-Angell maintains the personality of Kirkjuvagr, with a substantial overall intensity that comes through most strongly in the finish. In this gin, the note released by the archangelica is highlighted, a botanical that still grows in the Orkneys on the island of Westray, also known as the “Venus of the Orkneys”.

**Harpa London Dry Gin** (41% ABV) gets its name from the first month of the Norwegian summer, that together with spring was an important time of the year for ancient Vikings. Harpa is the lightest gin, decidedly citrusy, and a bit sweeter and smoother than the other gins from the Orcadian distillery. The botanicals include more juniper berries and chokeberries, a favourite among the Vikings and twice the amount of orange and lemon peel is used.

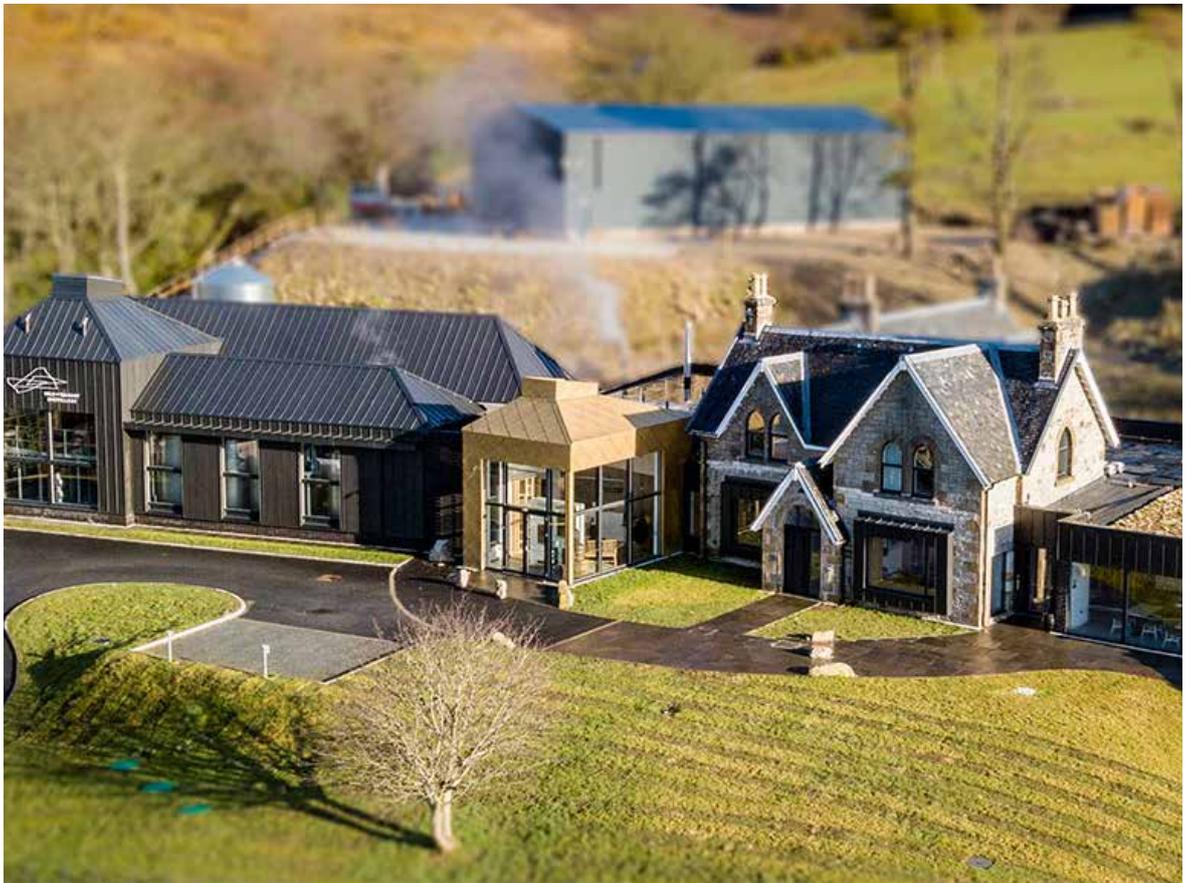
**Aurora London Dry Gin** (ABV 42%) is inspired by the aurora borealis or northern lights, the breath-taking spectacle that marks the end of long summer days and the start of the endless and dark winter nights on the island. It is the time when people come together at home to share stories and company before a peat fire, looking at the northern sky in awe. Cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves provide warm and spicy notes. Pink and black peppercorns feature in the effervescent finish.

**Beyla Old Tom Gin** (ABV 40%) is the latest product from Orkney Distilling. In Norse mythology, Beyla was the goddess of bees, with strong ties to the earth and whom the gin pays homage to. Beyla is Kirkjuvagr sweetened with honey from local bees. Fresh Scottish raspberries add the fruity and delicate colour, which is all balanced by the sweetness of the island’s honey.

## **ISLE OF RAASAY GIN**

Raasay is an island of the Inner Hebrides, off the west coast of Scotland. From Sconser, on the west coast





**PRODUCERS**  
 BELOW,  
 ALASDAIR DAY  
 AND SCOT BILL  
 DOBBIE.



of Skye, it is reached by a short 25-minute ferry trip. This part of the world is known for its natural beauty, exaggerated landscapes, special geology and one of the most incredibly diverse Scottish ecosystems. With a rich history that is celebrated by Gaelic poet, Sorley MacLean, Raasay is known for having historically been a main centre for clandestine distilling.

Founded by Alasdair Day and Scot Bill Dobbie, the Isle of Raasay Distillery was inaugurated in September 2007 and plays a very important role in the island's economy. It employs over 10% of the local population of the island, producing approximately 188,000 litres of spirit, it has a visitor centre and hotels.

Isle of Raasay Gin is the first legally produced spirit in the history of the island. Its botanicals (rhubarb, orange and lemon peel, coriander, angelica, liquorice, orris root, Java pepper and local juniper) are combined in an alcoholic base obtained by triple distillation.

**Nose:** fresh and aromatic, juniper, citrus and a hint of rhubarb.

**Palate:** dry, balanced, spicy notes of juniper and citrus, with the heat of the rhubarb. Fresh finish and flavour-some. ABV 46%

## REEL ORIGINAL GIN – SHETLAND ISLANDS

Reel Gin comes in a number of variants. “Original” was the first distillate produced by the Saxa Vord Distillery, located in an ex-RAF base on the island of Unst, the most northern and inhabited of the Shetland islands. Introduced in October 2014, Original has a bouquet of botanicals where mint comes through as its main component. The mint used is grown on the island. There are nine botanicals in Original, including cinnamon, coriander and citrus, that are well balanced with the freshness of the mint.

**Tasting notes:** on the palate, juniper, mixed spices and sweetness with a citrus flavour come through initially, and a refreshing mint finish. Overall it is dry. ABV 43%

**Reel Ocean Sent London Dry Gin** is a tribute to the maritime history of the Shetland islands and its inhabitants. Ocean Sent is an evolution of Original, launched in October 2015 with an ABV of 49%. The distillery’s team is trained to collect a certain type of sea algae that is the main feature of the botanicals of Ocean Sent Gin, giving it a unique flavour. It is called bladder wrack, also known as sea oak. It is an algae found on the coast of the North Sea, the west coast of the Baltic sea and in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. This gin also contains nine botanicals and is very smooth and warm. The main feature of the algae does not clash with the citrusy and juniper soul of the distillate.

**Reel Simmer Gin** is an aromatic, cool and refreshing spirit, created to celebrate Simmer Dim, Shetland’s summer twilight. It was launched on World Gin Day in June 2016. In this recipe there are eight botanicals including orange peel, cumin, juniper and liquorice that ensure a smooth and long-lasting body. ABV 49%

**Reel Filkska Gin** is bottled at an ABV of 40%. It is a special release created in a small 100l still. The local dialect derives from Norse and Scottish languages. Filkska means elevated and lively, terms that represent the personality of this spirit which features pink grapefruit peels that give a distinctive tone, together with juniper, coriander, cinnamon, angelica and orris root and almond. The botanicals are left in an infusion the night before distillation. It is a citrusy gin that is well balan-





ced, with eight botanical elements. The aroma of the pink grapefruit peels combine well with the cinnamon and orris root.

**Reel Wild Fire** is a London Dry Gin created to celebrate the eighth and final book of the “Shetland” series by best-selling author Ann Cleeves. It is a well-balanced London Dry, whose flavour starts off delicately and then grows into feelings of warmth. Notes of cinnamon and orange linger on the palate, and it has a spicy finish. Among its botanicals we find dried red chilli and locally grown sorrel. ABV 40%

**Reel Up Helly Aa Gin** is a limited edition that celebrates the Viking culture of the Shetlands. Every year the islands celebrate a Viking rite known as the “Festival of Fire”. This gin is refined for at least 75 days in a select cask. It is then bottled at navy strength of 57%. It is a light straw colour. On the nose it presents juniper and citrus, followed by a lovely sweetness of the cask. On the palate it has notes of sherry, sweet citrus and coastal flavours. The sweetness of the sherry is balanced by the tannins of the cask. Dry and with a clean finish.

## MISTY ISLE GIN - ISLE OF SKYE

Thomas and Alistair Wilson (in the photo on the right) grew up on Skye and have made their dream come true – to establish the first gin distillery on the Isle of Skye. Alistair, the younger of the two, comes from the hospitality industry and was a manager at various bars and restaurants in Glasgow. Thomas was a local builder and worked for the Highland Council and served in the Parachute Regiment and as a firefighter. In creating Misty Isle Gin they were inspired by the local landscape, especially the Cuillin mountain range. Misty Isle was introduced in February 2017. The gin is locally produced at Portree, using the crystal-clear waters of the source of the Storr Loch, just over one kilometre from the distillery. They are still the only producers of gin on Skye. The bottle shows the elements of Skye, the mountainous landscape and turbulent seas. The label's design accurately represents the Cuillin mountains, and has a number of finishing touches, including copper foil that symbolises the copper stills. Every bottle of Misty Isle Gin is unique and different. When each bottle is made, the process requires a small imperfection to be left in the glass at the top, an intentional imperfection that is always different and unique and that forms when the glass cools.

Completely independent the distillery has as many as 4 stills. The local juniper is collected and slowly distilled in traditional copper stills using gas for approximately 8 hours. There are 11 botanicals in total: juniper, coriander, grains of paradise, angelica root, orris root, liquorice root, black pepper, lemon peel, lemon verbena, cassia bark and another top secret botanical that is only found on the Isle of Skye. All this results in a gin with a marked note of juniper, but not too floral, with earthy hints and a pinch of spice and feint citrus flavours with a refreshing aftertaste. Recommended with orange peel. ABV 41.5%

Another product from the Isle of Skye Distillery is Tommy's Gin, a special release dedicated to the memory of Tommy Wilson, father of the founders of the distillery, who served in the British army during the Suez crisis. The botanicals include: poppy seeds, juniper, coriander, liquorice root and sweet orange. Main characteristics: sweetness of the poppy with a feint hint of liquorice, the sourness of the redberries with a touch of sweet orange, leaving a balanced citrusy flavour. For each bottle of Tommy's Gin sold, a donation is made to local military charities. ABV 45%





**PEOPLE**  
 DIRECTLY  
 ABOVE FROM  
 LEFT TO RIGHT,  
 ANDERSON  
 BURR  
 BAKEWELL  
 WITH PRINCE  
 CHARLES OF  
 WALES. IN THE  
 PHOTO ABOVE,  
 LEWIS  
 MACKENZIE  
 WITH THE  
 SUGAR KELP  
 ALGAE.



## ISLE OF HARRIS GIN

Harris is the southern part of the isle of Lewis and Harris, the largest archipelago in the Outer Hebrides. The Harris distillery was born from an idea of Anderson ‘Burr’ Bakewell, who believed that the rare and fleeting spirit of this island could be captured in a bottle and shared with the world. Anderson was struck by the many young people who were leaving the island, halving the population of the local community over the past 50 years. He built the distillery thinking that he could stem the tide of migration. With a group of partners helping him, it took seven years to make his dream come true.

On 24 September 2015 the Isle of Harris Distillery became a reality. A great celebration was organised on that day. Three generations of “Hearaich”, the Gaelic word for the people of Harris, came together at the distillery to light the first peat fire and wait for the first spirit to be released. The distillery started off with 10 people with the ambition to double this number over the next five years. Today it has nearly 40 permanent employees, which is a significant number for an island of less than 2,000 inhabitants. Every drop of Isle of Harris Gin is produced in a small gin copper still in the tiny village of Tarbert. The still is called “The Dottach”, in honour of a local woman, who is dearly remembered by her fellow citizens. There are a total of nine ingredients in this gin. The botanical that characterises the maritime soul of this gin is the algae sugar kelp, sustainably harvested from the island’s underwater forest and then dried. Lewis MacKenzie assists with this, a local diver who is also an algae expert. Sugar kelp is not harvested in the months that have an “r” in their name in order to give the plant time to recover. The spirit is softened by fresh water with a low mineral content that flows from the nearby spring of Abhainn Cnoc a ’Charrain.

Isle of Harris Gin is bottled and labelled by hand in the distillery and sealed with a natural cork stopper. The packaging of Isle of Harris Gin is a reminder of the maritime traditions of the island and bears the geographic coordinates of the distillery. It is recommended to use some pink grapefruit when making a G&T with Isle of Harris Gin. ABV 45%

**Alessandro Palanca**



## MIXOLOGY MINDED COLLECTION

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DRINK RESPONSIBLY

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# SOURNESS THAT'S JUST RIGHT

New, strictly alcohol-free formulations to replace lemon and lime  
For cocktails that are seductive and sour

BY ALESSANDRO PALANCA

**A**lcohol-free products have of late been garnering the attention of those in the industry, as well as seeing substantial investment. Such a great focus on health, a need for green drinks, and the search for new flavours and consumption experiences have never before influenced the alcohol-free drinking world and some of its ingredients as they do today. It is a new way of drinking that is nevertheless sophisticated in its search for what is natural.

In modern bartending, fruit juices are natural and their sugars are 'whole'. Sugar-free tonic waters with new flavours have invaded the market. Sodas in general have done it with new and varied offerings and even welcome water is made with various aromas. Bartenders and the industry are showing great interest in these ingredients and such awareness has brought about an opportunity for introducing innovative products to the market.

The latest evolution in the sector has

been seen in non-alcoholic distillates and new generation cocktail mixers that add acidity. Said like that it could be misleading, but in essence it is about distilled flavoured waters and solutions derived from a combination of acids, which are also used in more complex and alcoholic drinks. These are products sought out for their multisensory impact, excellent and versatile when used in cocktails, with that sour note that becomes their main feature. The ingredients are worked with separately, thereby allowing every single part to be processed differently, with the aim of highlighting the final flavour. Once processed, all the elements are combined, resulting in a non-alcoholic product that is intoxicating at the same time.

Supasawa, distributed by Ghilardi Selezioni, and Fluère, distributed by Palini, are two products that have recently entered the Italian market. Finding the ideal acidic formulation can require much time and experience, trials and processing of perishable citrus fruit of varying



quality due to its naturalness, and lead to costs that are often high. For all these reasons, many bartenders have sought to find a reliable substitute for raw materials. For high-volume bars, it means a substantial saving in costs, space, storage, transport, and not least the consistency of the drink. Fruit juices are notoriously affected by many volatile factors: when they are squeezed, the ripeness of the fruit and how the juice is stored. Of course, we are not suggesting that citrus fruit should not be used, since its naturalness is matchless, but in many cases, such products are certainly a great help.

Supasawa (pronounced ‘super sour’) is a premium sour mix developed for making cocktails easily. It is an intriguing mixer that is regarded as “the alternative to lemon and lime” when used in cocktails. It is reliable, stable, economic, sustainable thanks to its long shelf-life and has a pH of 1.95. Supasawa is the meticulous result of combining distilled water and



five different types of acids to simulate the sourness of citrus fruit, balanced with a pinch of sugar and salt. The distilled water is purified through distillation to remove impurities caused by inorganic salts and organic substances. It is ideal for clear cocktails, creating pre-batches of cocktails, punches and especially any sour drinks such as daiquiris and margaritas.

With Supasawa, cocktails maintain



their clarity and it can be easily stored at room temperature for over a year.

From Belgium, Supasawa is a very sour cocktail mixer with a constant pH of 1.95 and zero alcohol. Supasawa's mix of five acids is made of citric acid, which is without doubt the most commonly-known acid. It is an organic acid that is found naturally in lemons and limes in high concentrations. Malic acid provides

a sweeter, pleasant and refreshing type of acid flavour. This organic acid occurs naturally in apples, apricots, berries, cherries, grapes, peaches, pears, plums and quince. Tartaric acid is another organic acid that is naturally found in grapes, bananas, grapefruits and tamarind fruits. It adds a touch of saltiness and added astringency. Succinic acid is an organic acid, which is mainly used as an acidity

Vermouth & Spirits  
**DEL PROFESSORE**



— ITALIAN HERITAGE —

*Gin Crocodile  
Del Professore*

GIN TONIC

- 4 cl Crocodile Gin
- 15/16 cl tonic water
- lemon or orange zest

*Pour 4 cl of Gin in a highball glass filled  
with ice and finish with tonic water.  
Garnish with lemon or orange twist.*



*Tradition, terroir, people*  
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Vermouth & Spirits

# DEL PROFESSORE



ITALIAN HERITAGE



## *Bitter Del Professore*

### AMERICANO DEL PROFESSORE

- 4 cl Vermouth Rosso Del Professore
- 2 cl Bitter Del Professore
- ice-cold soda at taste

Serve in an "old fashioned" glass filled with ice, mix and garnish with lemon and orange zest.

*Tradition, terroir, people*

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regulator and flavour enhancer by adding a touch of umami. Phosphoric acid is a weak inorganic acid that is responsible for the sour and tangy flavour in, for example, jams, colas, and lemonades. Supasawa is produced by DeLuxe Distillery, founded in 2014 and it initially produced gin.

In the dynamic world of new beverage categories, Fluère is a “non-alcoholic spirit”. A work of art created with the same distillation methods used for alcoholic drinks. The three variants of Fluère are made with botanical ingredients and products that give off a complex but balanced flavour. Fluère allows creating drinks with a low ABV or that are completely non-alcoholic and that are unique thanks to their maximisation of flavour.

This type of product dates back to Ancient Rome, when the empire stretched from Scotland to Iran, and from Germany to Egypt. In order to ensure the legions were fit to travel and fight, the Romans experimented with herbs, spices and plants from the countries they invaded. For their fitness, the Romans relied on the disinfectant properties of lavender. Juniper



kept evil spirits at bay, but it was thought also to be beneficial for the kidneys and bladder. Coriander had a positive effect on intestinal health.

**Fluère Original** contains a number of botanicals from all over the world, such as coriander seeds from Casablanca, sugar cane molasses from the Dominican Republic, the best juniper berries from the high peaks of the Himalayas, lavender from Provence and Mediterranean lemon zest. To obtain the best from every branch, leaf and berry, all the plants, spices and fruit

Vermouth & Spirits  
**DEL PROFESSORE**



ITALIAN HERITAGE

*Aperitivo  
Del Professore*

APERITIVO & TONIC

- 5 cl Aperitivo Del Professore
- 15 cl tonic water
- lemon zest.

*Pour the two ingredients  
into a glass full of ice,  
mix and garnish with lemon zest.*



*Tradition, terroir, people*  
delprofessore.it



are individually distilled through so-called hydrosteam distillation. The fermentation process is left out, resulting in a lack of alcohol, with a maximum percentage of 0.1%. Essential oils are derived from the macerated and distilled botanicals that provide the flavour and unique after-bite of Fluère Original. The juniper and citrus give it a bright and fresh character on the nose, while the lavender and coriander add a herbaceous and fragrant note [...]

**Fluère Spiced Cane Dark Roast** is complex and full of character. It has surprising hints of dark roasted coffee, cocoa, liquorice, tonka beans and toffee, from pure sugar cane molasses. It has a well-balanced and complex profile to create seductive drinks.

**Fluère Raspberry** bursts with botanicals that provide a complex yet balanced flavour combined with fresh distilled rasp-

berries for a fresh, smooth and slightly sweet nose followed with a unique after-bite. Overall, Fluère uses typical gin botanicals that ensure marked freshness.

**Fluère** is slightly cloudy. This is due to the reaction of the biomolecules called terpenes when juniper and lemon are distilled together. The cloudiness disappears when the product is mixed with alcohol and remains when it is combined with water only.

Distilling alcohol lowers the risk of contamination, which rises when the products are alcohol free. This is why Fluère guarantees a stability of 18 months, and 16 weeks once the bottle is opened. As we wrote last month, 2020 promises continuous growth in these categories of products. Interest in them is not found lacking.

**Alessandro Palanca**

# AMONG THE SHELVES OF THE LIBRARY

Twenty-seven labels in four sections  
The “paradise” of Lanesborough in London

BY GIULIA ARSELLI



**C**ognac is that noble French distillate that was so loved by Napoleon and has always been considered a symbol of elegance and prestige. The care and knowledge used to create it by expert master distillers in the

Charente Maritime region of south-west France make it the undisputed lead character of one of the most renowned hotel bars of the British capital: The Library Bar at the Lanesborough Hotel.

As the name itself suggests, the bar



is a welcoming and intimate parlour surrounded by a notable collection of books – some of which are antiques – where one can go to taste an excellent drink, but also try something that very few people will get the chance to.

“Liquid History” is a concept created by Salvatore Calabrese, a barman of Italian origin, who came up with the idea, following his London experience at the Dukes Hotel in St James’s, of allowing his customers the moving experience of coming into contact with history, but in a novel way: by tasting it through ancient distillates and liqueurs. This idea, which very quickly became successful and popular, was then taken to the Lanesborough when Calabrese became the bar manager there.

On entering the Library Bar you cannot help but notice three shelves lit by soft lighting that at the same time highlights what is on them – different coloured glass, practically illegible labels and corks coated with thick layers of sealing wax. You feel like you are admiring something that could without doubt be found in a museum; however there you would not be allowed to experience its heavenly content. Heavenly because Lanesborough Paradis is the name this collection uses to present itself to those who leaf through the rich pages of its menu.

When visiting a cognac maison, in addition to the section that houses casks of certain years, one may also find a section where special selections of the distillate



are stored, some of which date back to 40, 50 or even more years.

This area is called 'Paradis', or in other words, the place where every cognac devotee would love to be, surrounded by so many treasures that they would feel like they were in heaven. And in heaven, the angels also demand their share. The so-called "Part des Anges" is that bit of liquid in the casks that over time slowly evaporates by about 2-4% per year. Although this reduces the casks' contents, it is a price that the producers are willing to pay. The knowledge of what will result from it calms the soul and "pleases the celestial spheres".

In 1770, the young Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette of Lorena were married, the last of the royals to live in the luxurious palace in Versailles, a date that is part of a chapter in history tormented by conflicts and revolutions, but that nevertheless is the starting point of the extraordinary selection of cognac. Almost two and a half centuries have passed from the time that the precious liquid in this bottle was created – it is the oldest in the collection, but not the only one from the 18th century.

The 27 bottles that form part of the Paradis have been divided into 4 distinct sections: 18th century, pre-Phylloxera, 19th century and 20th century. Apart from the

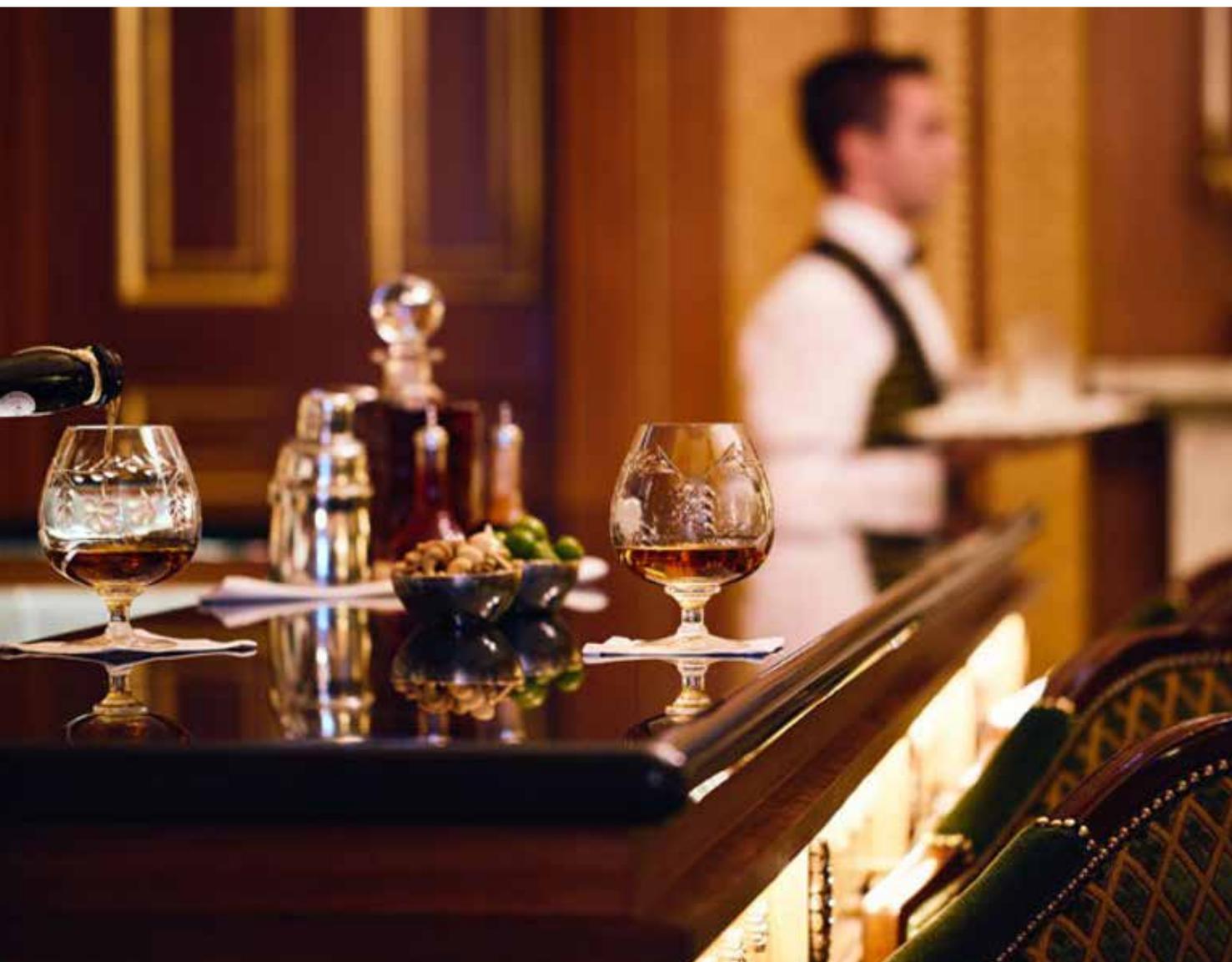


different periods of aging that they underwent, what undoubtedly divides the two large groups of cognacs is Phylloxera. This terrible blight, which came in the form of a small, yellow parasite, decimated more than 70% of the vineyards across Europe in the second half of the 19th century.

The peak was reached between 1872 and 1874. Before then, the main type of grape grown in the Charente Maritime region was Folle Blanche, a grape with a dry and floral aroma. It is almost certain that these vines date back to the Roman era. This insect was remorseless; cognac producers saw years and years of work and sacrifice disappear. Only the casks

and their contents remained and they have reached our times, albeit in limited quantities, but enough to be appreciated. Each bottle bears a date on the label that is often difficult to read as its either faded or covered by a layer of dust and debris that has become bound to the solid and durable glass.

This date refers to the year when the cognac was distilled and placed in casks for aging. Since in the 18th and 19th century no regulations or disciplinary regarding cognac production were explicitly stated as they are today, it is difficult to establish the length of aging that many bottles underwent. In fact, only a few, such



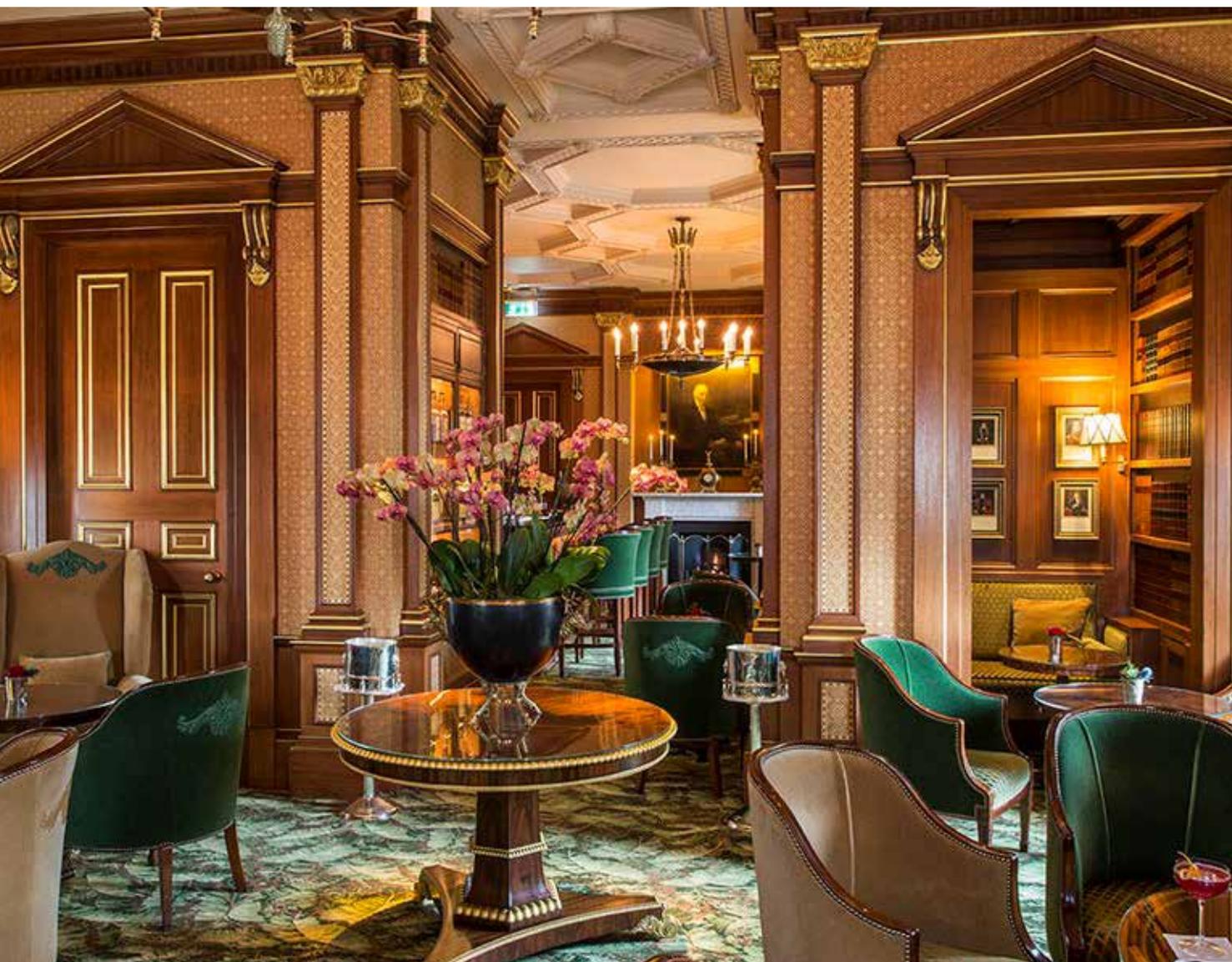
as the Cognac Napoleon Reserve 1811 for example, bear a bottling date, which in this case is 1903, confirmed also by the dark colour of the distillate and the deep and soft aromatic profile.

This softness, which wraps around the palate from the first sip and offers special flavours, is due to the long aging period in casks and the reduction of the alcohol by volume and concentration of aromas due to the evaporation that is the “Partes des Anges”.

The glass of the bottle represents the “cover of the work of art”. The colour and the particular shape show the evolution

of glass working. The various tones come from the chemical composition of the sand that was used and the temperature it was subjected to. On some bottles there is also a marking imprinted on the glass at the base of the bottle’s neck – an “N” with a crown above it: this indicates that these cognacs were destined for the private reserve of Napoleon Bonaparte, who drank large quantities of the spirit. The final act, the seal that delivers these works of art to history and that must ensure its survival, is the stopper. Its cork is an element that allows for reduced exchange between the air outside and the bottle.





Of great importance to the evolution of many prestigious wines, in the case of distillates that are aged in casks, no further changes take place once they were bottled as long as they are stored correctly. The only process that may occur again is evaporation. Comparing two bottles that have not yet been opened, the 1778 and 1802, although we are not certain of the bottling date, we see how the younger cognac, the 1802, is simply sealed with the cork stopper and capsule, while in the other, the stopper has been covered by a layer of sealing wax. Looking at the level of liquid inside them, the first is much

more reduced (approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  less of the total volume), while the second is as full as it normally would be. This shows how the product, even once bottled, undergoes evaporation and a reduction in volume due to the permeability of the cork, which can be avoided by adding a sealing agent, the sealing wax, which was widely used in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The idea of being able to make a unique gesture in life, which will reach only a few, is one that is appealing to anyone. If you think that these bottles, unique in their kind, contain from 14 to 20 portions of distillate, based on the total volume of the



bottle, it is clear that only so many people will have the privilege of tasting something that is part of history, something that no longer exists. This is what moves those who go to the Library Bar and decide to allow themselves this experience at least once in their lives.

To celebrate the moment in a worthy manner, the customer is strictly served at their table so that they have the opportunity to admire the precious liquid, poured in a crystal snifter using a special Roll 'n' Pour Jigger. This specific way of pouring the drink allows precisely 50ml to be measured out directly into the glass, with-

out the risk of wasting even a single drop, whose value, in the case of the older distillates, comes to a few hundred pounds. The rest is part of the experience that the distillate gives those who taste it, slowly, warmed by the heat of the hand, so as to gradually release all its aromas.

Each time the last drop of a bottle is served one gets the feeling of having lost something extraordinary, which left an indelible mark on those who enjoyed the "spirit". But also on those who provided the experience through their impeccable service.

**Giulia Arsellì**



# THE CRADLE OF RUM

A tour at Mount Gay where water, yeast and molasses ferment perfection

BY FABIO BACCHI

**W**hite beaches that are blinding and sun-kissed, sapphire and emerald water, lush landscapes, perfect weather all year round, and rum! Welcome to Barbados, the cradle of rum, a significant and historical element of the local culture here. The origin of the word “Barbados” is somewhat controversial. It is certainly attributable to the Portuguese or the Spaniards who sailed towards South America. However, it would seem that the name of this island of the Antilles was coined in 1536 by the Portuguese explorer Pedro A. Campos, who called the island Os Bar-

bados (the bearded). This was probably referring to the local ficus trees with their long aerial roots that look like “beards”.

The great majority of Barbados’ inhabitants are of Afro-Caribbean descent, from Africans who were deported as slaves in the sugar plantations. They are colloquially referred to as “Bajan”, a term that is also used for the local creole language. The main driver of the island’s economy is tourism.

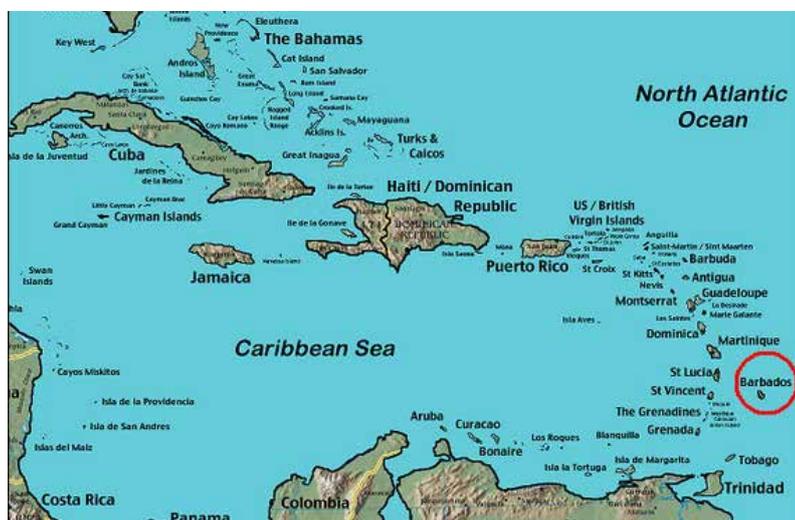
The story of rum starts at Mount Gay in 1703, the oldest date attributable to the birth of a rum distillery. Here the stills have been running non-stop for more than



300 years, and they have no intention of stopping. Drop after drop, the past, present and future of this island condense into a liquid that comes from the lush sugar cane plantations to age in the casks that fill the cellars of Mount Gay. The process of refining cane into sugar, and then into molasses that is fermented and distilled, is more than just tradition; it is the most essential ingredient of Barbados.

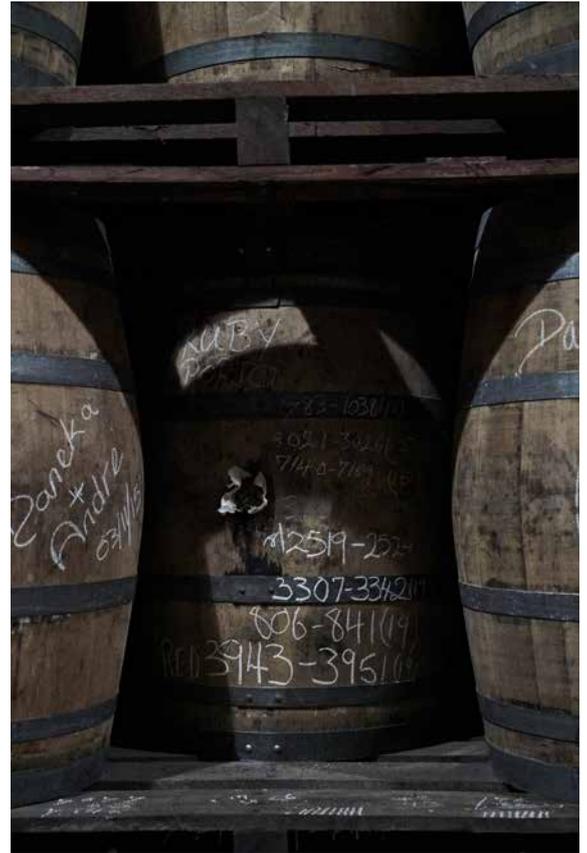
The story of Barbados is found in the bottles of Mount Gay, an announced legacy. We were invited to take part in a tour with European journalists in order to learn about this legacy up close.

The frame of this ancient story starts in the surroundings of St Lucia in Barbados. Julie Padovani, a name that is well-known in the global spirit industry and who is the communications manager of Mount Gay, and Chesterfield Browne, the Global Brand Ambassador, are the perfect guides for



helping us immerse into the Mount Gay world, currently led by managing & director, Raphael Grisoni.

At the start of the 1700s, William Sandiford combined some small plantations into a single plot under the name of Mount Gilboa. In 1747 he sold the property to John Sober. The Sober family approached Sir John Gay Alleyne, a fourth generation



**DISTILLATES**  
ON THIS PAGE  
SOME IMAGES  
OF THE MOUNT  
GAY DISTILLERY.

descendent in Barbados, to partner with them in running the distillery. The innovations and commercial success achieved by John Gay were significant. When John Gay Alleyne died, the Sobers decided to

dedicate the property to his memory. Since a Mount Alleyne already existed, they chose Mount Gay, a name that the entire rum world would come to know in centuries to follow.

In Barbados it is as if all the natural elements, the sun, water, the sugar cane and indigenous yeasts have come together in a close pact with man. There are three essential ingredients (water, yeast, molasses) and three phases – fermentation, distillation, and aging and mixing. Perfection does not allow room for error. The vats that contain the molasses and water are kept on site at St Lucia. Doors and windows are left open and the natural yeasts in the air convert the sugars into alcohol. They fulfil their role according to nature. In times gone by, there were many local sugar mills. One of these, which is undergoing restoration, can still be found among the plantations of Mount Gay.

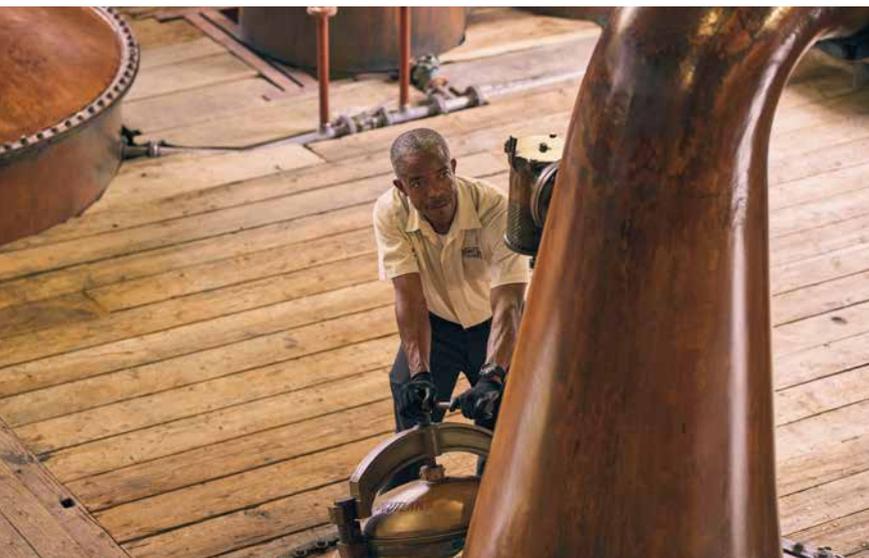


Making our way to the top of the hill where production takes place, we pass between undulating sugar cane fields, the gold of Barbados. From

this sugar cane comes a distinctive molasses with complex notes of mocha, sweet almond, ripe banana and vanilla. Then a small wooden building appears. Inside it is an artesian well dug for the

first time in 1703 by the founders. It is from here that the water comes for Mount Gay Rum.

The water in Barbados is probably the purest in the Caribbean. This is due to the particular geology of the island, made up of coral sedimentation dating back millennia that filter the water, making it as pure as high mountain springs.



Fermentation takes place in two stages. The first is spontaneous and in the open, it exposes the molasses and water to the Barbados air and its natural yeasts. The second, which is controlled, consists in using grown yeasts that are selected and developed in the distillery.

The artistry of a rum producer comes through during the distillation process. It is during this phase that secrets passed down the generations materialise in the form of alcohol vapour, which condenses in the copper stills. At Mount Gay the pot and column still are used. The first provides intense aromas and flavours with the double distillation. The column creates a spirit that is noticeably mellow in flavour and character. Both are matured and mixed.

At Mount Gay the master blender is almost held sacred. Only four people have boasted this title over the past 40 years. Today it is the turn of Trudiann Branker, the first woman, who in the last five years has worked alongside the former master blender, Allen Smith.

During maturation the rum's evaporation (Angel's Share) can be up to 12%. Instead of Angel's Share it should be called Devil's Share! Trudiann is currently experimenting with aging in various types of casks.

The story of Mount Gay is one of people who have dedicated their life to rum, with an obsession for passing on their knowledge to those to come. Today the brand is part of the Remi-Cointreau group, distributed in Italy by Molinari. If you ever pass through Barbados, don't forget to try the Barbados Rum Punch and the Bajan Painkiller, or simply Mount Gay Rum in the many rum bars across the island.

**Fabio Bacchi**



**EXPERTS**

ABOVE AND IN THE PHOTO ON THE RIGHT, TRUDIANN BRANKER.



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*Girolamo Luxardo*



### **MOUNT GAY XO**

A fine blend of refined spirits distilled in a column and pot still, matured between 8 and 15 years in ex-American whisky and ex-bourbon casks. On the nose there is an explosion of fruit, banana especially. It is very balanced, with subsequent notes of spices, vanilla and toasted bread. On the palate it is rich, warm and mellow, with hints of oak that give it depth and elegance. With a bewitching complexity in its evolution, its finish is still rounded and mellow. A rum of great class that deserves meditative and passionate tasting. A rich spirit. ABV 43%



### **1703 MASTER SELECT**

Now bearing this name, until the previous edition the label read 1703 Old Cask Selection. It is a celebration of time and the distillation of Mount Gay Rum. The best reserves of the distillery are selected for this spirit. A style that is consistent in terms of quality and character, but with subtle nuances in taste with each new edition introduced since 2009. A traditional column and pot still are used for this annual limited release with only a few thousand bottles, product of the blending of the best expressions of Mount Gay (between 10 and 30 years), selected over time by Allen Smith. It is matured in ex-American whisky and ex-bourbon casks that have been intensely toasted. It has a refined harmony of fruity notes, vanilla, banana, wood and coffee, demonstrating great balance and excellent roundness with a long and refined finish. ABV 43%

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## MOUNT GAY POT STILL RUM

The limited edition of this year, the second in the range, is the first created by master blender Trudiann Branker, obtained only using rums that have been distilled in pot stills. Distilled and placed in casks in 2009 (10 yo) it is Mount Gay's homage to rum that has been produced for approximately 200 years. From 1703 until the early 1900s, when a Coffey style copper column was introduced, Mount Gay always used pot stills. Limited to 4,920 bottles, the result is an extraordinary rum that reminds us of the past, and it was possibly my favourite during the tasting done at the distillery. The golden amber shines, slowly running down the side of the glass. From the liquid notes of caramel, mocha and plums are released into the air. A distinctive personality that is exalted on the palate, initially with a spiciness, followed by ripe and dried fruit, dark chocolate and oak. It has an excellent acidity, initially sharp, with a clear trace of sea breeze that comes through as its main feature. ABV 46%



## MOUNT GAY BLACK BARREL

Launched in 2013 to commemorate the 310th anniversary of the distillery, this rum also comes from spirits that are distilled in column and pot stills, matured in ex-American whisky and ex-bourbon casks that have been intensely toasted. This spirit is robust and “meaty”, with complex spicy notes, toasted wood and followed by fruit. We identify mint, apricot, mango and vanilla, dark chocolate and pipe tobacco, leather and dried leaves, against a backdrop that has slightly smoked touches. On the palate it immediately balances with the nose: vanilla, oak and caramel stand out, warm, progressive with medium body and a long finish that reminds one of beeswax. ABV 43%

# GRAZIE

## TO THE WORLD'S BEST BARTENDERS

## AND TO ALL THE VERMOUTH LOVERS



# #1

## BEST

SELLING VERMOUTH



# #1

## TOP

TRENDING VERMOUTH

## 2020 YEAR OF THE VERMOUTH DI TORINO

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# IT'S A LONDON THING

London's home-grown rum guru, RumFest founder Ian Burrell, shares his thoughts on his city, Black Tears dry spiced and rum in general-ideal for the armchair traveller

DI THEODORA SUTCLIFFE



**B**orn and raised in North London by Jamaican parents, Ian Burrell grew up with rum – as a medicine for cuts, bruises and winter colds, as a cooking ingredient and, ultimately, as punch. He has been promoting the spirit around the UK and beyond for decades, first as a brand ambassador, then as a bar owner, and, for the last 13 years, as founder and promoter of the RumFest London event. Here's his guide to how to enjoy his home city, once the world returns to normal and travel is back on the menu.

**What cocktail bars should we not miss in London?**

I prefer bartenders to bars, because they really make the atmosphere. Some of mine are Laki Kane, an exotic rum bar in Upper Street, Islington, Tayer + Elementary, Alex Kratena and Monica Berg's place, and Trailer Happiness, a perennial Tiki basement bar, just off Portobello Road. If I'm going to go high end, a bar that doesn't really get mentioned as much as it should is Donovan Bar at Brown's Hotel. That's hosted and run by Salvatore Calabrese, who's still one of the best hosts in the spirits industry when it comes to making your customers feel like a million dollars.

**Where do off-duty bartenders go**

**drinking once they finish their shift?**

There's a place in Soho, El Camion, where Dick Bradsell used to work, and a lot of bartenders go to drink in the downstairs bar, Pink Chihuahua.

**What's a cool live music venue?**

One of my favourite live places is Jazz Café in Camden Town. London is such a multicultural melting pot and Jazz Café has been going for many years and continues bringing the latest singers and creating a really great musical vibe.

**Where can you find the best selection of ingredients in London?**

I'm very fortunate to live in an area that's very mixed and diverse. I can get Caribbean produce, Asian produce and Mediterranean produce quite easily. Local markets and local high streets in the suburbs are great, like Dalston market or Stroud Green Road in Finsbury Park. They cater for a multicultural audience so you can get bespoke things there.

**Where should we go for coffee and why?**

If you're looking for a good coffee and to people watch, Shoreditch seems to be the place. But Soho's still a popular place to sit down and get a coffee and watch the world go by. Bar Italia on Frith Street is a great place.

**What's the best place for Caribbean food in London?**

Besides my house? The

best place that ticks all the boxes would be somewhere like Tracks & Records near Liverpool Street, which is part-owned by sprinter Usain Bolt. They have the best Jamaican rum selection (I created their rum menu) and one of the top Caribbean chefs, Colin Brown, manages the place.

**What city market should we not miss?**

Brick Lane Market on Sundays has everything, people selling all types of stuff. There's always something that you need, even if you're going there not expecting to spend any money. There's something there for everybody.

**Where is the best place for street eats?**

One of my favourite places is Dinerama down in Shoreditch. There are lots of street food-y places all under one roof, so you get a selection. It's almost like a supermarket for street food.

**What's an activity that we should see in your city?**

There are a lot of football teams in London, so catch a football match – Chelsea, Arsenal, West Ham. Or you could go and see a cheaper team a bit lower like the league, something like Leyton Orient.

**Tell us a secret place in your city that we can't miss.**

There's Secret Cinema. The shows pop up, you can sit down, have a glass





of wine, eat a meal and watch a movie with friends.

## MIXING WITH BLACK TEARS: LONDON STYLE

Burrell has championed Black Tears since it launched in May 2019. “When people who drink spiced rums think of spiced rums, they usually think of a spicy sweet product they mix with their favourite mixer and that’s it,” Burrell says. “Black Tears is different. It’s Cuban. It’s not sweet. It’s fairly dry, so it’s great for bartenders to use in styles of cocktails where you have the ability to sweeten the cocktail or leave it dry.”

His cocktail is named for Maria Soto Robbins, a Cuban artist based in Florida, and inspired by her still life painting, *Cuban Coffee and Lime*. Coffee is one of Black Tears’ key spice ingredients, while

lime forms part of the rum trinity.

We may be confined to our homes right now, but that doesn’t mean we’re going to stop dreaming of travel.

**Theodora Sutcliffe**

### LA RICETTA

#### MARIA SOTO ROBBINS

##### INGREDIENTS

- 50ml Black Tears Spiced Rum
- 25ml Fresh Lime Juice
- 12.5ml Sugar syrup
- 3 dashes of chocolate bitters
- 3 dashes of Angostura Orange bitters

Shake all the ingredients and double strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with the oils from a twist of orange peel, and 3 lightly flamed coffee beans.



## THE ITALIAN JOB

A stone's throw from the hunting grounds of Charles Albert, at the foot of the hill of Santa Vittoria d'Alba (Cuneo), Villa Ascenti has stood for almost two centuries, towering over the plains of the Tanaro valley. Of historical significance for the house of Savoy, the estate was initially a cellar and then the location of one of the major vermouth establishments, so well-known that the name of its locality "Cinzano" became recognised all over the world.

The Villa Ascenti Gin project involved Diageo master ambassador, Franco Gasparri, during its first phase of development, which started in 2017. Sent to London to Diageo's headquarters, which also house its research and development laboratories, Gasparri was a little sceptical. How could the leader in gin, which owned brands such as Gordon's, Tanqueray and its super premium version Tanqueray Ten, not forgetting Gilbey's and Jinzu, think of producing a new gin that was made in



Italy? And yet, considering the gin market in Europe, the trends that guide this growth and the rich Diageo portfolio, it soon became clear that there was a gap for developing a new product.

Just a few weeks on the market, Villa Ascenti Gin is highly regarded by barmen and already boasts significant distribution. The cradle of Villa Ascenti Gin is Santa Vittoria d'Alba, in the province of Asti. The project team was led by distillery manager Lorenzo Rosso. The identifying ingredient of the product is strongly regional: the Moscato d'Asti DOCG grape, the most classic and extensive Piedmont vine, with a white grape that is harvested





from August to September, and the ingredient of one of the most famous wines from the 'boot'.

Its ties to Moscato are historic. The current Villa Ascenti distillery is located in King Charles Albert's old wine cellars, who with the help of the Cinzano brothers started off production of the sparkling wine (Asti). The base alcohol obtained from the Moscato wine is redistilled with juniper in Frilli stills from the 1970s. This spirit is then added to the distillates of

the individual botanicals.

Distillation of the other botanicals takes place in a different still by vacuum distillation and at low temperatures. Some of the botanicals are used fresh, others dry. The fresh botanicals provide a greater freshness and balsamic quality.

The combination of Moscato and juniper creates an interesting and innovative aromatic profile, a mellow and velvety undertone that makes sipping it particularly pleasant and silky, further enhanced by

the citrus notes of Ligurian lemon and Calabrian bergamot. The dry and fresh profile is characterised by local botanicals such as mint, sage and thyme. The floral and fruity tones come from other botanicals including yarrow, elderflower and dried fig.

Villa Ascenti Gin is a label reserved for those who also love finding a clear territorial authenticity in distillates, a combination of perfumes and aromas attributable to a region and its traditions. It is exactly this that sets Villa Ascenti Gin apart.

In the glass it is completely crystal clear and transparent. On the nose are citrusy aromas, hints of mountain herbs, medicinal herbs, delicate hints of spiciness and the balsamic tinges of juniper. The intense plant-based aroma on the nose dissolves on the tongue with the typical softness and elegance of the Moscato grape, its fresh floral hints, and the silky and balanced aromas of ripe fruit. The finish is long-lasting and fresh. A surprisingly elegant gin that is ideal in gin & tonics or martini cocktails, or in a Derby, or why not even in an Alaska or a Caruso of the past.

#### NOTES

**ABV:** 41% small batch

**Appearance:** crystal clear and bright

**Nose:** fresh and herbal, with hints of juniper and citrus peels, aromatic herbs and Moscato grapes. The thyme and mint are vibrant and fresh on the nose.

**Palate:** dry and pleasant on the palate, balanced and persistent. The Moscato grapes come to life. The mellow and fruity flavour of this distillate softens the sour hints of the juniper. It is a gin with a fresh and dry profile, characterised by aromatic herbs and balsamic hints, velvety and with a hint of sweetness.



# Rum Malecon

EL SABOR ALTÍSIMO

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