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DRINK

Weekend Project: How to Improve Your Quarantine Cocktail Set-Up

Honey's owner Arley Marks taught me how to up my cocktail game.

By [Ned Riseley](#)

Published on 8/7/2020 at 12:57 PM



Arley Marks Quarantine Gin & Tonic | Photo: Arley Marks; Illustration: Maitane Romagosa

WEEKEND PROJECT

Does our cocktail of choice say something about us? In college I drank...honestly whatever was there, but when pressed to pick something more specific, whiskey sours or whiskey gingers more often than not. Whiskey popularity was on the rise, and it seemed particularly collegiate, a hearkening back to old-world masculine intellectualism, a liquid version of saying you've read *Light in August*. I do like whiskey, but in some ways it's an unsustainable identity for me, unless I become a tech oligarch or someone who races horses. In my 20s, I drank vodka sodas when I wasn't drinking beer, which seems like a kind of "I contain multitudes" statement, but was simply about my alternating desires to lose weight or save money. Now, having just turned 30, I have swung open the doors of my (nonexistent) liquor cabinet. The great bartender in the stars is staring at me vacantly, waiting for me to make a decision, and the great bartender in the sky...is me. I am the bartender and the bartended, the parent and the child, the doctor and the patient. Upon writing this, I am struck by the fact that I am perhaps already succumbing to certain inevitabilities of nature and morphing into my parents, who light up at the mere mention of "Tanqueray" and have an intimate relationship with their bartender that involves "Kelly"

putting their gin and tonics in a “tall glass” with “a lot of ice.” The gin and tonic may very well be my destiny, should I accept it. But will I?

The gin and tonic has, I regret but am not surprised to inform you, a colonial past. It began in the army of the British East India Company, as a preventative for malaria. In the 1700s, a Scottish doctor named [George Cleghorn](#) who looks kind of like [Gerard Depardieu](#) in a [Queen Amidala wig](#), found that [quinine](#), an ingredient in tonic water, was an antimalarial. Soldiers, who were already getting a gin ration, started making the drink. Since then, it has become one of the most popular summer drinks, and is particularly beloved in the UK. Fleabag and Hot Priest drink gin and tonics on *Fleabag*. The star of *Normal People* [Paul Mescal](#) was recently photographed by the paparazzi walking down the street in an Adidas jacket with two canned gin and tonics in one hand and a bag of prawn cocktail crisps in the other, which set certain thirsty corners of the internet alight with murmurings of “laddish-ness.” The gin and tonic is refreshing and very English. It’s Mr. Bean jumping into the English Channel on New Year’s Day, with a squeeze of citrus.

In mind of the cocktail’s rather traditional associations, I’ve been on the hunt for some new twists that might keep things fresh with me and G&T. When I spoke to [Arley Marks](#), a mixologist and co-owner of the Brooklyn cocktail bar and meadery, [Honey’s](#), he had his own take on the cocktail that promised to elevate mine. He’s also been drinking a G&T in quarantine, but when he’s not drinking it with [The Botanist Gin](#), he uses a splash of [Yola Mezcal](#), and he likes to add a shot of [Monfefe ginger](#), no matter the liquor. So far, my cocktail innovations in 2020 have mostly revolved around particularly “at-home” choices. A whiskey sour with leftover pickle juice and honey scraped from the bottom of the jar, a gin and tonic with sad cucumber and a few sad basil leaves that I plucked on their way to the trash. Vodka on ice.

Marks was not prescriptive in his advice about at-home cocktail making, and stressed the artfulness of mixology in our conversation. His origins are in the art world, after all. After studying Sculpture at RISD, he began experimenting with making sculptural installations that involved liquid, which soon morphed into a practice with cocktails that combined his love of sculptural design with a taste for specialty cocktails. Marks describes his early sculptural interests in ways that make it clear how sculpture led him in this direction. “I was really interested in multi-sensory experiences,” he told me, “So things that are visual, have maybe a sense element, tactile in some way, interactive, something that can really use all the senses.”

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While working at a restaurant after graduating from art school, Marks picked up some of the practical bartending knowledge that led him to combine his love of sculpture and making drinks. A collaboration with the fashion brand [Eckhaus Latta](#) for their first Fashion Week show gave Marks the platform to begin making a name for himself in New York, which led to a position as the bar manager at the hip downtown spot, [Mission Chinese Food](#). Now, he is the co-owner of [Honey’s](#), a bar that I have been hearing about for years in New York and that has received rave reviews from *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *GQ*, among others.

I went on the Eckhaus Latta website for some inspiration for my own interdisciplinary mixological practice, where I found a [\\$240 net tank top with a rolled collar](#) (on sale) that I am eager to buy for my next high-end LARPing experience. Until I can purchase it, however, I will have to use my imagination and some of the wisdom Marks gave me about making my own drinks. In terms of practical tips for making your own concoctions, Marks tells me he stays away from white sugar and favors alternatives like manuka honey, maple syrup, and coconut sugar, which not only sweeten, but also deepen the flavor of a cocktail. Ah, to be sweet *and* deep, at a time like this. He also tells me he usually blends an acid and a sweetener for his cocktails, and likes to put fresh herbs and edible flowers on top, for more complex flavors and a visually interesting cocktail.

I just so happen to currently be at the birthplace of my G&T habit, my parents’ house, for the first time since last fall, staring into the refrigerator like the Eye of Sauron and regressing whenever possible. Two nights ago, I made everyone Marks’ Mezcal G&T and my parents kept asking me if Mezcal was mescaline and we all agreed that Mezcal seems to weaken the verbal inhibitions rather quickly, as no one could stop talking after a few sips. While my parents tend to have their G&Ts with a more straightforward mixer, and have grown somewhat weary of my Millennial-healthy-choice-herbal-hocus-pocus dogma, they were intrigued by the ginger element and

my father even let me put some rosemary and edible flowers in his drink. If you are looking for an antimalarial elixir that also serves as a truth serum and an anti-inflammatory, I highly recommend this quarantine glow-up.

Arley Marks Quarantine Gin & Tonic

Build in glass in this order:

1. 1oz [Yola Mezcal](#)
2. Splash [Monfefe Ginger shot](#) (approx .25oz)
3. Squeeze of lime, drop squeezed lime into glass.
4. Add ice to fill glass.
5. Top with quality tonic water.
6. Give a quick swirl to mix ingredients.
7. Dash [angostura bitters](#) on top for color and depth of flavor.

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