

GLOBALMIAMI

Not So Blue

[Katelin Stecz](#) Published September 19, 2024



How a Miami-Made Gin Endorsed by a British Celebrity Went Hemispheric

If Simon Cowell, the judge on American Idol known for his brusque comments and scathing remarks, likes something, you know it has to be good. So, when the UK native endorsed a Miami-made gin –[Harry Blu's](#)– it was all but given the golden ticket of celebrity endorsements.

In 2018, Miami native Harry Blustein first began experimenting with the idea of making a gin. The entrepreneur had spent years traveling around the world, developing a love and a palate for the aromatic spirit. He began his in-home gin operation with a small distilling machine he bought from eBay and some botanicals.

Over the next year, Blustein experimented with various distilling techniques and added different botanicals to get a gin that was perfect over ice. He was inspired by his mother, who drank sambuca as an aperitif after dinner; he took the elderberry component from sambuca and added it to his gin for a smooth, floral taste. “My motivation behind it was to create a craft spirit that was clean and really drinkable. A craft spirit should not require all that many additives or other ingredients to make a complete cocktail,” says Blustein. Harry Blu’s runs counter to industry-wide trends, he says, by using only ten “real” ingredients instead of artificial or “natural” flavorings.

Soon after embarking on his gin distillation journey, Blustein brought his “moonshine” as he called it to a “focus group.” For years Blustein and a group of local cyclists had taken an 80- to 90-mile bike ride every Saturday. Blustein secured a bottle of gin in his bike’s water bottle cage for his fellow cyclists to sample after the ride. Many of them became fans of Blustein’s gin and encouraged him to go commercial.

Today, a few of them are partners in Blustein’s enterprise.

In 2021, Blustein decided to expand into vodka with the same idea as the gin: creating a “clean, drinkable spirit with real ingredients.” He followed up in 2022 with a botanical vodka. Around the same time, Cowell was introduced to Harry Blu’s gin by a mutual friend and colleague. After trying it, the critical media mogul was impressed and wanted to get involved. “It humbled me,” says Blustein. “This world-renowned judge saying that my stuff, my packaging, all the things that we put together is impressive – is just wow,” says Blustein.

Since Cowell officially signed on as a partner, Harry Blu’s has benefitted from his celebrity reputation. According to Blustein, sales are up 40 percent across all three Harry Blu’s spirits (he added a botanical vodka), and Blustein has gone hemispheric. In addition to the U.S., Harry Blu’s is now distributed in 26 countries throughout LATAM and the Caribbean.

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Blustein says the brand, especially its gin, has been well-received in El Salvador and Argentina. While Latin America is not traditionally a gin market, that is rapidly changing. Prior to the pandemic (2017 to 2021) Argentina's taste for gin increased by 174 percent; in that same period gin consumption in Brazil increased nearly 10-fold, according to the International Wine and Spirit Research firm ([IWSR](#).) These numbers bode well for Harry Blu's expansion into the Americas.