

Gin

Gin is a distilled grain spirit that is flavored with various plant extracts, but mainly the juniper berry. Each distiller has its own spices and herbs and their own recipes combining its items to give their product its own flavor. Gin was invented in the 1600's by a Dutch doctor named Dr. Sylvius. He used gin as an elixir to treat kidney and digestive problems.

British soldiers sampled the product while in the Netherlands and brought the spirit back to England, where it became popular. The gin that the English eventually developed is very different from the gin that the Dutch originally produced, which has a strong flavor and is heavy-bodied. The English developed "London Dry Gin" in the 1830's by distilling the spirit in a continuous still. The name "London Dry Gin" first indicated where the gin was produced. Now, it indicates a type of gin. Also, almost all of the gins on our shelves are labeled "dry." This refers to a gin that has not been sweetened.

Federal regulations do not allow age claims on gin. Most gins are either American or English gin. English gin is produced from corn, barley, and other grains in the mash. The mash is allowed to ferment, then it is distilled in a continuous still at 190 proof. Distilled water is added to reduce the proof and then the liquid is distilled a second time in a modified pot still with flavoring agents and bottled between 80 and 97 proof. The flavoring agents are added to the distilled spirit either by combining the products before the second distillation or by suspending the flavoring agents in a percolator basket above the still and allowing the vapors to pass through the flavoring agents during the second distillation.

American gin is produced using one of two methods: distilling or compounding. Distilled gin is distilled with the flavoring agents (either in the initial distillation or in a second distillation) using a percolator basket. Compound gin is produced by combining neutral spirits with the extracts of natural flavoring agents.

The mixed drink that may be responsible for much of gin's popularity is the martini. A martini consists of 3 ounces of gin and a dry vermouth, to taste (the less vermouth used, the "drier" the martini). The drink is usually garnished either with a lemon twist or an olive.