

A Brief History

In early medical history, the distillation of liquids and steeping of herbs was a common practice. Even the term "Aqua Vitae" meaning "The water of Life" was used to describe various alcohols.

Out of this interest, Gin was invented in the 1600's in the Netherlands. In the late 1600's in England, distilling was deregulated for political purposes. The result was cheap, easy to come by Gin being distilled from anyone who wanted to. What happens to public opinion when something is cheap and easy? It becomes less favorable. So, the reputation of Gin plummeted.

Couple the poor reputation with general social unrest in England throughout the early to mid 1700's and you get a scapegoat. People believed that Gin, so cheap and readily available, was the cause for social breakdown. The 18th Century engraving "Gin Lane" by William Hogarth shows the masses drunken and falling apart in an alley. Gin was treated with the same disdain as cocaine or heroine today.

It wasn't until the 1800's when Americans and then Europeans began mixing drinks that Gin began to climb in public opinion. Suddenly it was posh to mix various alcohols with juices, tonics, olives etc. In British colonial India, Gin was mixed with Tonic Water, a bitter solution containing Quinine and created to combat Malaria. The result was a hit, and the Gin and Tonic became a signature distinctive drink in Britain.

Prohibition further pushed Gin up in status. Hole in the wall illegal drink joints continued to popularize cocktails and, by association, their ingredients. More recently, Gin has seen a revival and the dawn of an age of craft Gins. Now there are many distillers, with different botanical blends and processes, making their own Gins with distinct tastes and appeals.

There are several prominent flavors of Gin. Most commonly used are Juniper, citrus peel, botanicals like lavender and peppercorns.

Tanqueray 10: Orange and Juniper flavors dominate.

Nolet's Silver Dry: Juniper mixed with Anise and raspberry flavors.

St. George Dry Rye: Perfect for the Holidays, with permeations of Cinnamon and Nutmeg.

Berkshire Mountain Greylock: Juniper is far and away the prime flavor here, but citrus plays a key role as well.

Treaty Oak Waterloo: Lavender permeates with the traditional Gin botanicals.

Commercial Gin is made from a second distilling of an already appropriate alcohol (There are several regulations for clarity, particulates and alcohol by volume for this starter booze) mixed with flavoring botanicals. However, it is possible to create a "compound" Gin by infusing your donor alcohol, in this case vodka.

Let's Make Gin!

What You Need:

- Bottles to steep and store
- Coffee Filter (Or clean new water filter like Brita)
- Fine Mesh Strainer
- Funnel
- 26 oz Vodka (Nothing too fancy, but nothing cruddy either)
- Botanicals

The Process:

- Wash your bottle thoroughly with a non liquid soap agent like oxyclean. This will remove soapy flavor that might be left on the bottles.
- Add your bottle. Use the funnel to add the juniper.
- Steep Juniper for desired amount (see Flavors section).
- Add botanicals in desired amounts (See Flavors section).
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- Filter product with the fine mesh strainer to remove large particulates.
- Filter again with coffee filter for finer particulates.
- For a clearer end result, filter through a new, activated charcoal filter like Brita pitcher. Keep in mind this may cause it to taste less like Gin. You don't have to, you will just have a darker Gin with possible settling sediment.



Flavors:

There are a lot of different ways to make Gin. Some Gins are great for Gin and Tonic, while others are better suited to Martinis. The purpose here is to create your own unique mix. But, here are some guidelines to get you started.

Juniper Gin:

Focus on the flavors of Juniper and less on the flowery components of the botanicals. Steep the Juniper and Vodka for 30 hours. Add the botanicals and steep an additional 6 to 10 hours.

- 2 1/2 tbsp Juniper
- 1/4 tsp Whole Coriander
- 1/4 tsp Rosemary
- 2 Allspice Berries
- 1/8 tsp Fennel Seed
- 1/8 tsp Dried Lemon Peel
- 2 Black Peppercorns
- 2 Green Cardamom Pods
- 1 Bay Leaf



Exotic Gin:

Focus on the flavors of Juniper and less on the flowery components of the botanicals. Steep the Juniper and Vodka for 24 hours. Add the botanicals and steep an additional 12 hours.

- 2 tbsp Juniper
- 1/4 tsp Whole Coriander
- 1/4 tsp Rosemary
- 1/4 tsp Lavender
- 2 Rose Hips
- 2 Allspice Berries
- 1/8 tsp Fennel Seed
- 1/8 tsp Dried Lemon Peel
- 2 Green Cardamom Pods
- 1 Bay Leaf