

Gin Tasting Experience at One Square

There's more to Scotland than whisky," quips Hugh Gibb when we meet. Gibb is Senior Barman at One Square Edinburgh, where he proudly oversees a collection of fifty types of gin. He gets a wry smile when people come in and do a double-take "Where's the whisky?" Of course, One Square does indeed keep plenty of single malt Scotch on hand, but he

likes to put ten different bottles of Scottish gins in front of his customers, to get folks thinking.

That is Gibb's goal: to get people thinking about and tasting and appreciating gin. He loves sharing the history and folklore of the spirit, peppering his conversation with tidbits such as the fact that the gin and tonic was the most

frequently ordered cocktail at Studio 54 in New York during the late disco era. "The interesting thing is that gin is from everywhere; it's a global spirit," says Gibb. "For a brief period of time it was British. Most cities that had a port had a thriving distillery scene."

The didactic method Gibb has invented is called the Gin Tasting

Experience, a sampling of a few very different types of gin, each served with a carefully chosen tonic and garnish. "All garnish should have some legitimacy to be there," he stressed, explaining how he tastes and studies the botanicals of a gin to decide which notes to highlight.

I sipped each brand neat before adding tonic, led by this knowledgeable and



Hugh Gibb



Experience

By Fredric Hamber

re Edinburgh

charming raconteur. Gibb was raised in Edinburgh and returned there after a few years in London. Herewith is what he offered up the afternoon of my visit.

Caorunn

"This is a Scotch gin, it's been around for a wee while," Gibb said. What makes Caorunn different is the use of local botanicals: heather, dandelion, roan berries, and the Coul Blush apple. The tonic he pairs it with is Fentiman's, which, he explained, is distilled and "needs a strong gin to hold up. Lots of gins have an acidic citrusy taste. Caorunn works with Fentiman's because Fentiman's has a lot of citrus." It is like quinine-flavored lemonade. That's also why Gibb doesn't use citrus as a garnish with that combination. Instead



he garnished the drink with two thin apple slices: Royal Gala and Granny Smith to bring out the apple flavor.

Gin Mare

This spirit is distilled 50 kilometers outside of Barcelona with thyme, olives, basil and rosemary. For the tonic we used Fever Tree, a good choice as "It is neutral and has smaller bubbles." The smaller bubbles of Fever Tree let you taste more of the gin on your palate. The garnish used for this was orange, because "It is not as sharp as lemon," he said.

Monkey 47

Schwarzwald Dry Gin My personal favorite of the gins I sampled, this German spirit is made with 47 botanicals including cloves, so Hugh says "You can pick and choose what you want to bring out." For garnish he starts by rinsing the glass with a hibiscus wash made from hibiscus tea, then adds a clove-spiked orange slice. The tonic was 1724 from Chile and contains some Seville orange. "There's no point in spending money on a really nice gin and then scrimping on the tonic water," Gibb advised. I loved the complex taste while sipping neat, and again after adding the tonic water and the orange to the glass with a trace of hibiscus—it was a slightly sweetish cocktail that I would probably drink too fast.

G'Vine

Produced in France since 1976, G'vine has a light, floral taste. It contains ten or twelve botanicals and is made from a grape base, which

gives it a distinct profile, "Like vermouth," Gibb said. He rinsed the glass in elderflower cordial and added Fever Tree tonic to the gin and pomegranate seeds as a garnish. Suddenly the cocktail came alive. I had been unenthusiastic about this gin until the tonic and hint of elderflower had been added.

At this point the table was getting a little messy, two glasses per gin, the small bottles of tonic water littered about, and me there having a jolly time with a serious expression on my face, taking notes for Luxe Beat readers. There was one more to go...

Sloane's

Gibb called this Dutch gin "The most traditional" of those I tasted. I could detect a little licorice. "But not like a bad bottle of Sambuca," Gibb

interjected "it's very subtle." In lieu of tonic water, we added Schweppes Ginger Ale. Lately One Square Edinburgh has been encouraging the kitchen chefs to get into the gin act with gin/food pairing dinners, and because of the vanilla flavors Sloane's works well with a rich chocolaty dessert—even incorporated into a recipe!

The Gin Tasting Experience is by appointment only. For more information and to reserve a spot when you're in Edinburgh, go to www.onesquareedinburgh.co.uk/gin-tasting.

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