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**The
Guardian
Labs**

The Japanese craft gin

Matcha gimlets to Sakura martinis: five Japanese-inspired gin cocktails

Pay homage to Japan's sophisticated – but thoroughly unpretentious – bar culture with these five drinks that showcase some of the country's unique ingredients

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About this content

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In the swankiest bars in Ginza, something like Tokyo's answer to Mayfair, and the hole-in-the-wall spots of Shinjuku, cocktail making is something akin to an art form, with each ingredient carefully considered and every turn of the stirrer calculated. The same could be said of the distillation process behind Roku Gin, and these five twists on gin cocktails are designed to show off its distinctly Japanese botanicals: the citrus tang of *yuzu*, pronounced umami of *gyokuro*, the refreshing tang of *sencha* and subtle sweetness of

sakura.

Sakura gin martini

Sakura (cherry blossom) is one of the six botanicals in Roku Gin, adding a subtle sweetness to any cocktail. When the sakura blooms across Japan, it's a time of national celebration. So, this floral twist on the gin martini makes for the perfect festive libation, with a delightful hint of cherry from maraschino liqueur.

Serves **1**

30ml Roku Gin

20ml sake

10ml maraschino liqueur

Pinch of salt

Cherry blossom or olive, to garnish (optional)





📷 Cherry blossom garnish complements the botanicals in the sakura gin martini. Photograph: Clive Nichols/Getty Images

Pour the liquids in a cocktail shaker and shake. Stir in a pinch of salt. Pour into a martini glass and, if in season, add a bud of cherry blossom to garnish. Alternatively, garnish with an olive.

Ikigai's yuzu smash

Luke Bensley, owner of Ikigai cocktail bar in Birmingham, came up with this medley of

yuzu, lemon and sugar, hitting sweet and sour notes in equal balance. "This cocktail pairs beautifully with Roku as it uses yuzu, one of the main botanicals within the gin," he says. "It's a brilliantly zingy way to enjoy Roku Gin." Taking the flavour profile of a gin sour, the yuzu smash adds a Japanese twist.

Serves 1

30ml Roku Gin

20ml yuzu sake

20ml lemon juice

15ml sugar syrup

Mint sprig, to garnish (optional)

Pour the liquids into a shaker full of ice. Shake hard for approximately 10 seconds. Strain through a fine mesh over ice into a rocks glass. Garnish with a sprig of mint.

Shibuya Underground's matcha tea gimlet

This Japanese twist on a gimlet comes courtesy of Sameul Boltoun – owner of Shibuya Underground in Birmingham. Usually, dry gin and lime syrup with a citrusy garnish make up this classic gin cocktail. However, Boltoun and the team at Shibuya Underground have created a take on the gimlet that complements Roku Gin perfectly, pairing it with a matcha-infused cordial. The bright green of the matcha tea syrup is aesthetically similar to the classic gimlet, but the taste is earthier.

Serves 1

For the matcha cordial

100ml water

½ tsp matcha tea powder

½ tbsp lemon juice

85g sugar

For the umami oil

250ml olive oil

12g dried shiitake mushrooms

6g kombu kelp

4g dried seaweed

For the cocktail

50ml Roku Gin

20ml matcha cordial

Umami oil

Going to the trouble of making the umami oil several days in advance for this may seem like a pain, but it's easily worth it for what it adds to the cocktail, as well as to any Japanese inspired dishes you fancy trying your hand at thereafter. To make the umami

oil, place the shiitake mushrooms, kombu and seaweed in the base of a jar and pour in the olive oil. Leave for a few days (ideally a week) to infuse and remove the solid ingredients when ready to use. For the cordial, combine the matcha tea, a splash of lemon juice, sugar and water in a mixing jug stir and then strain through a coffee filter to clarify. Then, pour the gin and clarified matcha cordial over ice and stir. Finish with a drizzle of umami oil.

Chotto Matte's wabi-sabi

Japan meets Peru in this lip-smackingly sweet and sour cocktail from Chotto Matte in London. The wabi-sabi is about balance, and the beauty of imperfection. This refreshing highball is fruity and sharp, with a honey-sweet hint. Its creator, Chotto Mate's global bar manager, Gabor Fodor, says it was influenced by "the evolution of Nikkei cuisine" – the blending of Peruvian and Japanese flavours and styles. It has the puckering hit of a pisco sour, but the hint of bitterness brings out the sakura leaf in the Roku Gin.

Serves 1

30ml Roku Gin

20ml pisco

10ml dry vermouth

Orange bitters, a dash

Lemon juice, a squeeze

½ tsp agave nectar

30ml grapefruit juice

Lemonade

Ito togarashi, to garnish (optional)

In a highball glass, pour in the gin, pisco, dry vermouth, a dash of orange bitters, lemon juice, agave nectar and grapefruit juice. Stir, add ice and top with lemonade to the brim. Stir again briefly and garnish with ito togarashi (fine strands of dried chilli) if available.





📷 Ginger matchsticks add a bite to the classic G&T

Roku Gin G&T with ginger

Sometimes simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. Since Roku Gin is a fine balance of botanicals, a simple serve of premium tonic water, ice and fresh ginger matchsticks lets the carefully crafted gin speak for itself. Garnishing with the fiery snap of fresh ginger is a Japanese twist on the classic British drink.

Serves 1

50ml Roku Gin

Premium tonic water

Fresh ginger, sliced into matchsticks to garnish

Slice the fresh ginger into long equal slices. Fill a highball glass to the rim with ice and top with six ginger matchsticks. Pour the premium tonic over ice and add a stirrer. Pour in the gin and stir to balance the elements.

Roku is available to purchase from Sainsburys

bedrinkaware.co.uk

