

DRINKING BROOKLYN GIN

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AFTER LAST WINTER'S RECORD SNOWFALLS AND THE COOL, WET SPRING THAT FOLLOWED, YOUR DESIRE FOR SUMMER SUNSHINE MAKES SENSE, THOUGH THE SEASON COMES WITH ITS OWN SPECIAL SET OF MISERIES. CHASE THEM AWAY (OR AT LEAST COOL THEM OFF) WITH ANY OF THE FINE, ARTISANAL SPIRITS CONCOCTED BY BROOKLYN'S GROWING NUMBER OF MICRODISTILLERIES. GIVEN THE SEASON, THOUGH, LET US INTRODUCE YOU TO THE BOROUGH'S TWO GIN-MAKERS.

BREUCKELEN DISTILLING COMPANY

A weird mix of histories—the Dutch settlement of New York, how English soldiers rechristened *jenever* “Dutch courage” after drinking pints of the alcohol before battle during the 1600s—comes together in Breuckelen Distilling Company: the microdistillery gets its name from the borough's Dutch spelling, and the outfit manufactures gin.

That may be all the history the distillery will recognize, however. “We designed this recipe out of nowhere,” says Brad Estabrooke of his company's gin. “We didn't reinterpret an old recipe. We just came up with a flavor profile we thought would taste good.”

So, instead of using a neutral grain spirit as a base the way most gin producers do, Breuckelen crafts a wheat-based spirit it redistills with botanicals like rosemary, grapefruit, and the juniper berries that give gin its distinct bite. The result is a fragrant bouquet and round flavor that has netted the small distillery favorable notices

from sources as varied as *Men's Health*, *Time Out New York*, and *SpiritsReview.com*.

The microdistillery has already begun to expand its product line. A small batch of whiskey made its way to local distributors late this spring; Estabrooke predicts another larger batch in July. Breuckelen's aged gin should be available the same month, he says.

Until then, fans and soon-to-be fans of the distillery can buy its gin from shops in Brooklyn and Manhattan, like Greene Grape in Fort Greene and Blanc & Rouge in DUMBO, or find it mixed in bars like Black Rabbit in Greenpoint and Fort Defiance in Red Hook.

It's no good tapping Estabrooke for recommendations for his own gin, though. Asked for his version of the perfect gin drink, the proprietor stalls. He can't answer the question readily and instead, grinning, quotes an anonymous wit: “I'm very picky about what I'll drink: I'll only drink things that are wet.”





LES PAUL
A dry gibson martini with Breuckelen Gin, rainbow peppercorns and a cocktail olive.





NEW YORK DISTILLING COMPANY

Novice distillers and drinkers, take heart: Tom Potter walks among you. The cofounder of the Brooklyn Brewery is applying his business and sybaritic savvy to the making of gin, though these were supposed to be his retirement years (he left the brewery in 2004). Visits to small distilleries on the West Coast changed his mind, however, and Potter reentered the booze biz three years ago, excited by the possibilities of the artisanal-spirits market. "It reminded me very much of the brewery days of the 1980s and 1990s," he says about his distillery tours. "Some of them were making terrific products, some not so terrific but the energy was really great. I was fired up, thinking New York has got to have a good one... and at that point it didn't have any."

The result? New York Distilling Company, the venture Potter began with Allen Katz, former chairman of the board of Slow Food U.S.A. and host of *The Cocktail Hour*,

a weekly show broadcast on Martha Stewart's Sirius Satellite Radio channel. The distillery found a home at 405 Leonard Street near Pete's Candy Store in Williamsburg, and Potter says gin enthusiasts can expect a grand opening in September. In the meantime, the distillery is testing three types of gin and plans to begin distributing two of them in July.

One currently in production is a "naval strength" gin, so named because the British Royal Navy needed gin that wouldn't prevent gunpowder from igniting, should the alcohol somehow spill on the explosive. (Sloppy drunks and choppy waves were apparently of equal concern on British ships.) The result was a 100-proof, or 57 percent alcohol by volume (ABV), English gin—stronger than 100-proof American, which has 50 percent ABV. No naval-strength gin is currently distributed in the States, Katz says, but connoisseurs of fine liquors can look forward to its introduction in Brooklyn this summer. •



PERRY'S RICKEY
 1 1/2 oz Navy Strength Gin
 1/4 oz Real Grenadine
 Squeeze half a lime shell into a collins glass (and add spent lime shell)
 Fill with ice and build remaining ingredients. Top with chilled seltzer