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## Let's be-gin 氹氹自喜

Alice Franklin

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Blind Tiger gin and tonic  
Blind Tiger 氹湯力

Franklin: Let's be-gin ????

This juniper-flavoured liquor has experienced a meteoric rise in popularity, thanks to the craft spirits movement and an explosion of botanical experimentation. Now, with a first distillery set to open in Hong Kong, the trajectory points ever higher. 手工精釀烈酒的熱潮，加上專家不停進行各種草本植物配方的試驗，造就了近年以杜松子調味的氹酒人氣急升。今天，香港也迎來首間氹酒蒸餾廠，氹酒的火紅程度可謂一時無兩。By Alice Franklin

# Let's 氹 氹 自 喜 be-gin

Meet friends for an after-work aperitif and the chances are high that at least one gin and tonic will be ordered. What's more, the gin won't be the house standard, as in years past, but will instead be selected from a menu of carefully curated options: Tanqueray, Hendrick's, Four Pillars and more. It's indicative of a renewed interest in the spirit, which has translated into a global growth in gin sales – the total UK spend hit £1.4 billion in 2017, according to the Wine and Spirit Trade Association – and that's not expected to slow down any time soon.

"There are a number of factors contributing to the rise of gin over the past five years," says Jared Brown, Master Distiller of London's Sipsmith distillery, which, when it opened in 2009, was the first new distillery in the British capital since 1820. "First of all, we're seeing gin return to an equilibrium it held in the past. Although it seems normal to us today for a bar to have three or four gins and 40 whiskies, this wasn't always the case. There was a time when you could find an almost equal number of whiskies and gins."

In a simple sense, gin comes from steeping vodka – a neutral spirit – in aromatic botanicals (especially juniper) as it passes through a still, to impart a rich aroma and taste. It fell out of favour over the years, a result of poor recipes, limited production and bad publicity, but today's increased global appetite for the spirit correlates with, among other things, the diversified use of herbs and spices in the small-batch distillation process.

"Gin is a particularly good spirit for showing off hand-crafting," says Brown. "With such a broad and intriguing palate of botanicals to work with and so many traditions built up around it over the centuries, there are a lot of different roads for producers to follow in bringing a good gin to the market."

下班後跟三五好友到酒吧喝一杯，差不多每次都至少有一個人會點氹湯力。還有就是，今天氹酒的選擇已不再獨沽一味，酒單中精心挑選的氹酒種類多得讓人眼花瞭亂，Tanqueray、Hendrick's、Four Pillars等任君選擇。氹酒熱潮重臨，全球銷量節節上升，據葡萄酒及烈酒貿易協會的統計數字顯示，單在2017年，英國人便花了14億英鎊購買氹酒。這股上升趨勢似乎短期之內沒有放緩跡象。

Sipsmith是2009年於倫敦開業的蒸餾酒廠，也是自1820年以來第一間在英國首都開業的蒸餾酒廠，其釀酒大師Jared Brown表示：「促使氹酒在過去五年捲土重來的原因有很多，首先是，氹酒的種類回到風光時，再次跟其他烈酒平分春色。酒吧只供應三、四款氹酒，但威士忌卻有40款的情況，在今天的人看來似乎尋常不過，但其實許久以前並非如此。曾幾何時，酒吧中的氹酒和威士忌數量不相上下。」

簡單來說，氹酒是將各式草本植物（特別是杜松子，氹酒又名杜松子酒）加入中性的伏特加重蒸而成，這些草本植物會為原本無色無味的烈酒注入濃郁的香氣和味道。氹酒曾經因為用來釀酒的草本植物配方欠佳、產量少、宣傳差等原因，一度失寵。今天，氹酒在全球各地再掀熱潮，全賴酒廠大膽選用各式香草和香料釀酒，此外精釀模式的興起也居功不小。

Brown指出：「氹酒最能夠展現釀酒師的工藝，因為可選用的草本植物種類極多，加上數百年來累積的各種各樣的經驗和方法，釀酒師可從中擷取所需，釀造出優質的氹酒。」





This leads to the significance of provenance in production. Along with the use of carefully selected botanicals that seek to offer consumers something deeper than – and different from – what they’ve experienced before, there lies the question of how spirits can be influenced by the regions in which they’re made. During the last few years, the fascination with origin of goods has grown, and this extends to the world of gin. People nowadays are keen to buy local, to support businesses close to home and enjoy something appreciably inspired by the community. Cue Hong Kong Distillery and its Handover Gin.

本頁:Cotswolds  
Distillery的工作人員  
正密切注視釀酒過程







Newton knows that as Hong Kong’s pioneer in distillation, he’s paving the way for others to follow, much as Sipsmith did in London, where there are now more than 20 gin distilleries. “Everyone said it was impossible, you can’t build a distillery in Hong Kong, but I wasn’t going away – if you turn me down here I’ll just come from another angle,” Newton says, of the perseverance it has taken for him to launch in the city. His is a passion that he hopes will lead Hong Kong consumers to a deeper appreciation for small-batch gin production, made as locally as possible. All the signs point in the affirmative.

Beyond botanical experimentation and provenance, the recent gin resurgence can also be attributed to the parallel ascendance of mixologists in the popularity stakes, both in Hong Kong and further afield. As they become more prominent ambassadors of the drinks industry, it’s fair to say the tipples they create will only rise to be more in demand, and gin is top of their list when it comes to building mixed beverages.

“Gin is a versatile and universal spirit that has the ability to be a binding base that doesn’t overpower other ingredients, as most brown spirits tend to do,” explains Himson Lam from Dr. Fern’s Gin Parlour, a Hong Kong bolthole that was named one of Asia’s 50 Best Bars in 2017. “The culture behind cocktail making has now expanded to include using gin in a variety of forms, not just in the classics, like martinis.”

This “ginaissance”, as it’s been affectionately coined, shows no signs of burning out, especially with the arrival of Hong Kong’s very first local distillery set to fan the flames. As small-batch businesses continue to take root, filling bottles with a spirit that is as unique as their communities, so those tending bar will find new and innovative ways to use gin on the menu. We’ll raise a glass to that. 🍷



“Gin is a versatile and universal spirit that doesn’t overpower other ingredients

氈酒是靈活、萬用的基底烈酒，不會蓋過其他材料的味道”

– Himson Lam



除了草本配方和產地因素，近年調酒師在香港以至世界各地冒起，也是促使氈酒復興的主因。由於調酒師作為美酒推廣大使的影響力益發重要，他們調製的創新飲品也會更受歡迎，而氈酒正是他們調製雞尾酒時喜用的烈酒。

位於置地廣場的Dr Fern's Gin Parlour獲選為「2017年亞洲50間最佳酒吧」之一，酒吧調酒師Himson Lam解釋：「氈酒是靈活、萬用的基底烈酒，它能夠結合不同味道，又不會像大部分棕色烈酒般蓋過其他材料的味道。雞尾酒文化與時俱進，今天氈酒的用途已變得非常廣泛，不只用來調製傳統雞尾酒如馬天尼等。」

名為「氈酒復興」的熱潮不僅毫無減退跡象，隨著香港本地首間蒸餾酒廠開業，相信熱潮更會再度升溫。當精釀酒廠打穩根基，釀出別具本土特色的氈酒後，帶領潮流的酒吧自然會發揮創意，利用這些美酒調製飲品。來，為氈酒乾杯！🍷

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Eden Mill distillery's pale pink Love gin, hailing from St Andrews in Scotland; the wide range of gins on offer at Dr. Fern's Gin Parlour in Hong Kong; the entrance to the award-winning bar

This page: A selection of the varied gin-based cocktails available at Dr. Fern's Gin Parlour

對頁左上圖起順時針：設於蘇格蘭聖安德魯斯鎮的Eden Mill蒸餾酒廠生產的淡粉紅色氈酒Love；香港酒吧Dr. Fern's Gin Parlour叫人眼花瞭亂的氈酒選擇；這家得獎酒吧的大門

本頁：Dr. Fern's Gin Parlour各種以氈酒調製的雞尾酒

