

19/07/2024

<https://www.foodandwine.com/best-gins-from-winemakers-8680761>

FOOD&WINE

Why Are Winemakers Suddenly Making Gin?

As a terroir-driven spirit, gin is a natural pivot for winemakers looking to express the aromas and flavors of the land.

By [Brian Freedman](#) | Published on July 19, 2024



PHOTO: FOOD & WINE / ENGINE GIN / ANDRE BRUNEL / UNCLE VAL'S / ELENA DISTILLERY

Gin has the potential to be a deeply terroir-driven spirit, so it only makes sense that winemakers are getting into the game. From France and Italy to New Mexico and beyond, a growing range of gins are being crafted by winemakers or incorporating their expertise to achieve new dimensions of flavor.

For Fabrice Brunel, apprentice winemaker at his family's Rhône Valley estate, [Domaine André Brunel](#), gin is another means to express the fantastic breadth of the region's botanicals.

“There is a lot of crossover between winemaking and gin-making, especially the embodiment of terroir through carefully selected botanicals, a deep connection to our winemaking heritage, highlighting the differing characteristics in vintaged gin, and an appreciation for the human influence that has shaped our environment over centuries,” says Brunel.

RELATED: [Understanding the 4 Main Types of Gin, According to Experts](#)

Something similar is afoot in the Langhe, part of Italy's [Piedmont](#) region, where the great wines of Barolo and Barbaresco are produced. Engine Gin, which comes packaged not in a glass bottle but in a metal canister reminiscent of an old-school gas can, is a nod to the region's automotive history. It's produced entirely from organic Italian components, including damask rose and sage from Piedmont, Sicilian lemons, and more. The distillery was founded by Paolo Dalla Mora, husband of Rossana Gaja and son-in-law of Italian wine legend Angelo Gaja.

The family behind beloved Piedmontese producer [Vietti](#) is also now in the gin business, a transition that makes perfect sense.

“The expansion of wine producers into the gin market could be attributed in my opinion to several factors,” says Elena Penna Currado Vietti, owner and distiller of Elena Spirits. “Firstly, gin production requires a solid understanding of distillation and botanical infusion, skills that many wine producers can easily develop. Additionally, the focus and knowledge of terroirs can play an important role in some cases, especially if producers want to emphasize the local and unique characteristics of their botanical ingredients. In our case, this knowledge played a fundamental role, as our Italian Alpine territory, rich in botanicals, and the long history and tradition of distillation and wine production of Piedmont, were important synergies and catalysts for our project.”

Stratusphere, which was formerly called New Amsterdam Gin, isn't crafted by a winemaker but does represent the first non-brandy spirit to be made by wine industry giant E. & J. Gallo – another indication that the borderline between the worlds of wine and gin is growing blurry.

Top cocktail bars are taking full advantage of these excellent new offerings. Brendan Bartley, general manager of [Bathtub Gin NYC](#), enjoys Benham's Gin, which is produced in Sonoma and was founded by Derek Benham, who also founded [Purple Wine + Spirits](#). It's a “really bright and flavorsome gin, done with some really cool botanicals including buddha's [hand],” says Bartley. “It's really aromatic and makes a beautiful dry Martini, but has [a] burst of freshness that leaps out of the glass and holds up really well in Gin & Tonic and shaken cocktails.”

Here are six excellent examples of this new world of winemaker gin.

Elena Gin



PHOTO: FOOD & WINE / ELENA SPIRITS

The family behind Vietti, the famous Piedmontese producer, has crafted this delicious gin in Serralunga d'Alba, home to some of the greatest wines of Barolo. Elderflower, wild mint, Maritime Alpine juniper, and chinotto peel make for a delicious, unique, and unforgettable gin from one of Italy's key wine regions.