



IT'S GIN-UARY!

In addition to Beefeater London Dry Gin and Beefeater 24, a number of limited editions—many sold in the U.K. and Duty Free—are periodically released.

England's Oldest Winning Hand

WHEN IT COMES TO GIN, BEEFEATER AND PLYMOUTH DO BRITAIN PROUD

story and photos by Richard Carleton Hacker



At The Refectory, the well-stocked bar at Plymouth Gin Distillery, the Sloe Gin Fizz is just one of the countless cocktails offered. It can be topped with soda water, ginger ale, or ginger beer, according to customer preference.



Master Blender Sean Harrison has made some impressive changes to focus renewed attention on Plymouth Gin, including these miniature distillation units that permit visitors to create their own gin using any combination of Plymouth's botanicals.

Although gin got its start in 16th-century Holland, it was Prince William of Orange who indelibly linked it to England in 1689 by encouraging the distillation of corn, which begat London dry gin. While Beefeater wasn't London's first dry gin, it is the sole survivor of dry gins originally distilled in the English capital.

Today, Beefeater's Master Distiller, Desmond Payne, carries on the tradition. At a recent lunch with Desmond in the Lanesborough Hotel's Michelin three-starred Apsleys restaurant, his drink of choice was Gin and Tonic, made with Fever-Tree and Beefeater 24, which in addition to the nine botanicals normally used incorporates Chinese green tea, Japanese Sencha tea and grapefruit peel. I had a Beefeater 24, chilled and straight up.

Later, at the distillery, I noted limited-edition Beefeater variations, including Winter Gin, with the added botanicals of nutmeg, cinnamon and pine, and London Market, incorporating pomegranate, cardamom and lime. A new visitor's center, slated to open later this year, will tell the Beefeater story in a new and dramatic way.

It takes three hours—or four Plymouth Gin Martinis—to get by train from Paddington Station to Plymouth, home of the world's only geographically protected gin, which has been made in the old Black Friars Distillery since 1793. Master Blender Sean Harrison has made some impressive advances—or, more appropriately, steps backwards. In this case, returning to the past is a good thing.

First, Sean has brought Plymouth Gin



Beefeater Master Blender Desmond Payne, who has been creating this iconic London dry gin for forty five years, enters the distillery in Kennington.

back to its original proof. Second, he has reintroduced the classic Plymouth Sloe Gin, now being imported to America, as is the historic 114-proof Navy Strength. Finally, the older-style bottle and labeling have returned and will be here by March. Distillery visitors can even make their own gin, selecting from any combination of Plymouth's seven botanicals.

There will always be an England—and thanks to Beefeater and Plymouth there will always be English gin. ■■