



Sipsmith's juniper-forward V.J.O.P. Gin was used to craft a hot Gin and Ginger cocktail with spices and lemon juice at an outdoor wreath-making event in San Diego, CA.

BRINGING GIN Full Circle

**SIPSMITH
EXPLORES
THE WINTRY
POTENTIAL OF
GIN AT COCKTAIL
PARTIES IN
SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA**

PHOTO: MICHAEL MORSE

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Charcuterie on rustic cutting boards served as sustenance for hungry wreath-makers in San Diego.

by Rich Manning and Abby Read

Gin may not immediately strike one as a wintry spirit or a category that can be served hot. As a result, many see Martinis, Gimlets, and Gin & Tonics as tipples typically meant for warmer days and longer nights.

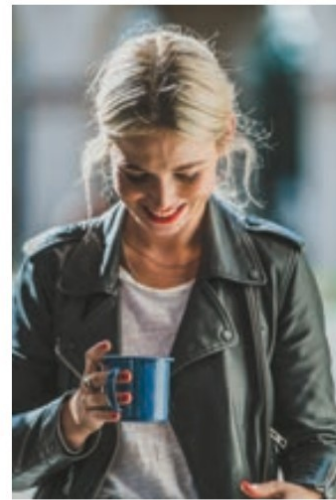
Sipsmith Gin, however, respectfully disagrees. As Lucy Ellis, Beam Suntory’s West Coast U.S. Brand Ambassador for the brand, told *The Tasting Panel*, “Gin, especially our London Dry, is full of all of the necessary spices and natural sweetness you associate with winter seasons. Juniper, cinnamon, sweet citrus, and licorice all lend to a warming and festive flavor profile, especially when heated!”

These seasonal libations also have a history: Between the 17th and early 19th centuries, hot gin drinks were a highlight at “frost fairs” in London, where ice skating and other winter activities unfolded alongside tented vendors on the frozen River Thames. “It was so cold and their love of gin so strong,” says Ellis, “that river dwellers were known to heat their gin with hot metal pokers to stay warm.” (Ellis, however, prefers sticking to enameled mugs and teaware for her own gatherings with family and friends.)

In keeping with tradition, Sipsmith Gin hosts Hot Gin Nights for the public every winter at rooftop bars—equipped with heaters and blankets, of course—around London. After attending the pop-ups, some people have started mulling gin as a substitute for their standard mulled wine, Ellis notes.

These festivities crossed the pond this winter to Southern California, where Ellis recently hosted two events for Sipsmith Gin in Los Angeles and San Diego. While heavy rain kept those gathered at Eataly’s L.A. outpost inside—creating the ideal environment for enjoying warm drinks and good company—the weather proved just mild enough for an outdoor wreath-making event in San Diego, where attendees learned about the art of hot cocktails and door-side decorations.

PHOTO: MICHAEL MORSE



Lucy Ellis, Beam Suntory’s West Coast U.S. Brand Ambassador for Sipsmith Gin, hosted the San Diego and L.A. events.

Crafting Hot Gin Cocktails

The holiday season looks different in San Diego than it does in other parts of the country: Your only shot at frostiness comes when the name of L.A. Chargers owner Dean Spanos is uttered to a local football fan. And snow? . . . How about no. Yet while some see these elements as the tragic loss of Bing Crosby's White Christmas dreams, it does provide a rather appealing backdrop for unconventional winter activities—among them outdoor wreath-making and wintry cocktails made with Sipsmith Gin.

On a mid-November afternoon, the promise of both pastimes lured a group of local bartenders to the historic Casa del Prado building, located within the city's sprawling Balboa Park. Most attendees arrived in short sleeves, as one does in San Diego this time of year. The crisp breeze pushing through the Casa's rectangular courtyard, however, downgraded the sun's rays to a gentle pulse while creating an instant case study in relativism: It may have been downright chilly by San Diego standards, but the conditions were perfect for showcasing Sipsmith's ability to work wonders in the winter months.

It's a trait the British-born Ellis believes is a no-brainer despite gin's American reputation for being a warm-weather indulgence. "I think it's very ironic that gin is associated with the summer in the States," she told the group. "Think about where gin and gin

culture originate—a lot of it stems from London. Now, think about London and its weather. It's not exactly a place to go in the summer months, is it?"

While Ellis' logic alone should prevent people from shoving gin to the back of their liquor cabinet after Labor Day, the trio of Sipsmith-based cocktails poured during the event made another strong case for stocking up on the spirit as the mercury drops. Each mixed drink featured a different Sipsmith expression: The brand's classic London Dry Gin provided the base for a Hot G&T; Sipsmith Sloe Gin went into the Hot Mulled Sloe; and Sipsmith V.J.O.P. served as the main ingredient in the Gin & Ginger cocktail.

The various gins shined through these distinctive beverages, leaving no doubt as to which spirit the barkeeps were sipping. At the same time, each radiated with calendar-appropriate character: The Hot G&T's simple formula of gin, tonic reduction, and hot water felt both familiar and fresh on the palate, yet the inner heat generated with each sip lent an unmistakable coziness. The Mulled Sloe's "holiday spices" weren't disclosed, but they played nice with the beverage's known ingredients, including warm spiced apple. Last but not least, the Gin & Ginger tasted like a clever variation of a hot toddy.

Despite their differences, all three cocktails created a sense of place, an attribute Ellis said is critical to their enjoyment. "A good hot gin drink will



PHOTO: MICHAEL MORSE

In San Diego, Sipsmith Sloe Gin was used to craft a festive drink complete with warm spiced apple cider and holiday spices.

have balanced flavors and aromas," she explained. "Some of these notes directly come from our botanicals, like licorice and cassia. These notes allow the beverage to stand up to the climate."

The cocktails also gave the bartenders some necessary inspiration for a different type of creativity than they're used to, helping them craft wreaths deserving of any front door. Their creations also proved rather camera-worthy, with every circular masterpiece

PHOTO: MICHAEL MORSE



San Diego attendees gathered outside to try their hand at DIY wreath-making.

PHOTO: CAL BINGHAM



Lucy Ellis stirred up hot libations for guests in L.A.

PHOTO: MICHAEL MORSE



Just add tonic reduction and water: The hot Gin & Tonic served in San Diego showcased Sipsmith London Dry Gin.

PHOTO: CAL BINGHAM



Guests at Sipsmith's L.A. event huddled together inside to take cover from the rain while enjoying food and hot gin drinks.

getting its own moment to shine in the photo booth. A faint whiff of evergreen floated though the air as the event wrapped, but whether the scent came from a wreath or a spilled cocktail was hard to determine.

What was certain, though, is how much appreciation Ellis has for the

bartending community's willingness to share the joys of gin-based winter cocktails with their customers. "Bartenders play such a critical role in turning the public onto gin's possibilities," she said. "The bar is where you're going to find out about new things—you're never going to get

info on winter gin drinks from your local grocery store. Fortunately, we're living in a time where more people are interested in what they're putting in their bodies when they go grab a drink, so there is plenty of opportunity for bartenders to talk about having gin all year round." ■■

PHOTO: ALEXANDRA CANICHO



Tapping into the Gin Craze

Myles Burroughs, Beverage Director for The Derschang Group in Seattle, Washington, keeps dreaming up new ways to serve gin. Over the years, the company has embraced tap cocktails for consistency and efficiency while reducing its environmental footprint. At Queen City, one of six Derschang properties, Sipsmith Gin has made the cut as a featured spirit in these unique drinks.

The bar's Nitrogen Sipsmith Martini features Sipsmith London Dry Gin, Boissiere Extra Dry Vermouth, filtered water, and a bit of fresh lemon oil. "Ingredients are combined in a small Cornelius keg, pressurized with nitrogen using a modified lid with a diffusion stone, and then dispensed from a stout faucet," Burroughs explains. The cocktail was inspired in part by a dinner he attended, where cocktail historian and Sipsmith's own Master Distiller Jared Brown demonstrated making thrown cocktails.

Burroughs says he's seen the "overall perception of gin changing for the better" in his home city. "I think Sipsmith strikes a nice balance because its profile is easy enough for a newcomer to gin to wrap their head around, but it's also exceptionally well made and speaks to seasoned gin lovers as well," he adds. "Being able to serve traditionally stirred cocktails in this manner really opens the door for us to elevate the tap cocktail experience."

In Seattle, WA, Myles Burroughs serves as Beverage Director at Queen City, a bar that's part of The Derschang Group.