

Brands Bulletin

PERNOD REVISITS ABSINTHE

PERNOD ABSINTHE is to put the original 19th century alembics once used to distil the spirit back into operation after almost 100 years.

The brand, which currently uses modern pot stills to produce the absinthe, will revert back to using the same alembics used by the company before the ban in France in 1915.

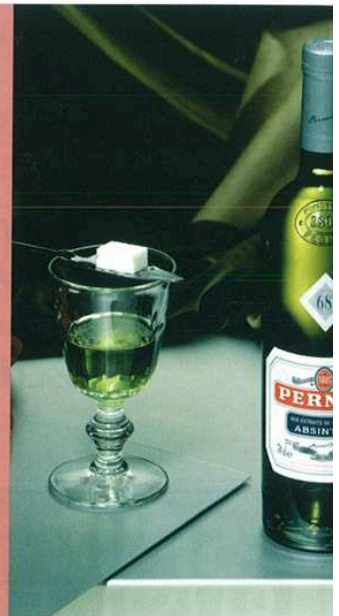
Guillaume Petavy Meynier, international brand development manager for exports at Pernod Ricard, said the move was in response to requests by bartenders for a more authentic product.

"We have always had the alembics here at Pernod, but were not allowed to use them before because of the ban," he said. "But our bartenders, who we are really close to, asked us to start using them again. We want to be 100% faithful to what we did before. However, the

recipe will be the same with little change to the overall taste of Pernod."

To coincide with the new production methods, Pernod is embarking on a relaunch strategy around the world, working with bartenders to become their absinthe of choice, and promoting the product to the creative consumer community.

In September this year, the brand is set to launch a global partnership with Kitsune, a music and fashion label, which will design a new clothing range inspired by Pernod absinthe. The partnership will be launched at New York Fashion Week, and will also appear at similar events in Paris, London and Tokyo in the succeeding months. Pernod will also release a new collectors bottle to coincide with the events.



JANNEAU'S DRAGON TRIO



LEADING

ARMAGNAC

brand Janneau is continuing its new vintage-focused strategy with the release of limited edition bottlings from three

Chinese years of the Dragon from the past five decades.

Janneau released the three vintage Armagnacs – a 1988, a 1976 and a 1964 – at the Vinexpo Asia Pacific show in Hong Kong, coinciding with the current Year of the Dragon, said to be the luckiest in the Chinese zodiac.

The company said it wanted particularly to mark 2012 as a turning-point for the industry, since China is poised to become the biggest single market for Armagnac in the world.

The three vintages represent different dragon years: 1988, aged for 24 years, is an Earth Dragon; 1976, matured for 36 years, is a Fire Dragon; and 1964, which has spent 48 years in cask, is a Wood Dragon.

"Just like the fabulous, rich Armagnacs sealed in these rare bottles, each vintage and each dragon has a different character," said Janneau. "One common point is that they are all being bottled at cask strength, as to express true dragon style."

The labels, depicting three different dragons, were inspired by the majestic dragon figures adorning the ancient wall surrounding the Forbidden City in Beijing.

One cask of each of the three vintages will be bottled, in 70cl bottles and in 3x50cl packs, packaged in a decorated wooden box made of the same oak used by Janneau to age its Armagnacs.

They will be released on allocation to Janneau's core markets.

RESERVE JOINS CITADELLE LINE-UP

FRENCH GIN brand Citadelle's oak-aged Reserve limited edition is to become a permanent part of the range with the unveiling of its 2012 vintage.

First produced in 2008, the barrel-aged bottling has sold out within a week in every year since, as Alexandre Gabriel, owner and president of Citadelle owner Cognac Ferrand, has worked to hone the recipe and find the perfect maturation period.

Gabriel has gradually toned down the oak influence since his first experimental bottling four years ago, which he based on records dating back to 1775 and found in Dunkirk.

Released worldwide, 29 casks (12,000-plus bottles) of the 2012 bottling have been made available.

Citadelle Reserve will remain a vintage product with a slightly different taste every year thanks to barrel variation, but the botanicals and recipe will remain the same.

"Barrel ageing tends to tame the flower and citrus feel of the gin and enhances the rounder, softer notes," said Gabriel. "For our

2012 vintage, we decided to introduce three new botanicals to the 19 we already used.

"We added yuzu from Korea, g n pi flower from the French Alps and the petals of bleuet (cornflower)."

The gin has been matured for six months in seasoned French oak barrels with a light charring.

"It is important to understand that our goal is not to use as many botanicals as possible 'just because'," Gabriel added. "Instead, the botanicals are used to bring forward and enhance the classic taste of juniper berries that make a classic gin."

Although barrel-ageing classic dry gin is unusual today, Gabriel's researches suggest that the practice would have been commonplace more than 100 years ago, when barrels would have been used for storage and transportation.



Gin Masters 2012

GIN MASTERS 2012		
COMPANY	PRODUCT	AWARD
STANDARD		
BURLINGTON DRINKS	CITY OF LONDON 40%	GOLD
OLD ST ANDREWS	LONDON 40	SILVER
PREMIUM		
CHIVAS BROTHERS	BEEFEATER LONDON DRY 47%	MASTER
CHIVAS BROTHERS	PLYMOUTH 41.2%	GOLD
SPIRIT OF THE LAKES	BEDROCK 40%	GOLD
DESTILERIAS CAMPENY SA	ONLY 43%	SILVER
OLD ST ANDREWS	PINK 47	SILVER
SUPER PREMIUM		
COGNAC FERRAND	CITADELLE RESERVE 2011	MASTER
COGNAC FERRAND	CITADELLE	MASTER
BRAMLEY AND GAGE	6 O'CLOCK GIN 43%	SILVER
WILLIAM GRANT & SONS	HENDRICK'S 41.4%	SILVER
INVER HOUSE DISTILLERS	CAORUNN 41.8%	SILVER
MICRO DISTILLERY		
PHILADELPHIA DISTILLING	BLUECOAT 47%	SILVER
NAVY STRENGTH		
HAYMAN DISTILLERS	ROYAL DOCK OF DEPTFORD 57%	SILVER



Nathan Merriman, head bartender at The American Bar at The Savoy Hotel adds: "I love citrus, floral and juniper-driven styles of gin. Something that is well-structured, complex with great depth and body."

As for me, my own approach is to try to avoid having any kind of preference when tasting. This may sound as though I'm trying to be diplomatic, but I like to see what kind of experience each sample offers on the palate, and then take it from there – particularly as various styles of gin can be equally successful.

A whole range of opinions were voiced during judging, and our discussions were continually evolving, which is exactly how it should be in a democratically run tasting. Then it was a case of trying to reach a consensus. This usually required further discussion and a re-taste, another round of voting, and more talking.

Such a protracted judging process is hardly surprising, as we frequently had to compare brands that were stylistically very different, and delivered their own particular experience.

Some offered elegance or mellowness compared to a richer, more upfront style, and different gins had their own way of evolving on

Gin Masters 2012

GIN MASTERS 2012

COMPANY	PRODUCT	AWARD
DESIGN & PACKAGING		
ANALOGUE SPIRITS	SPARROW GIN	GOLD
THE POSHMAKERS	ISH LONDON DRY 41%	GOLD
CASALBOR WINES & SPIRITS	BAYSWATER LONDON DRY 43%	GOLD

THE JUDGES



Ian Wisniewski, freelance journalist; Herchelle Perez Terrado, Waitrose; Nathan Merriman, American Bar at The Savoy; Peter McKay, Alcohols Limited; Ivan Dixon, Harvey Nichols; Anne Jones, Waitrose; Vincenzo Calenzo, The Rib Room and London vice chairman, UKBG; Shannon McCoy, Pro Bar Chick.

CORRECTION: In last month's Asian Spirit Masters report, Zoran Peric should have been described as UK brand ambassador, Suntory, and not as published. Apologies for the error.

the palate: some revealed a sequence of individual flavours, while others showed a more "integrated" package of aromas or tastes. Other factors included different levels of sweetness and dryness (and how this influenced flavour delivery), and varying textures, with the finish providing the final impression.

And once the awards were decided, it was time for more discussion. But this time we were off duty, and could enjoy a post-tasting review rather than debating individual samples.

"I think it's wonderful that the gin sector has blossomed and now includes so many diverse styles and taste spectrums," said McKay.

Meanwhile, Ivan Dixon, gin category buyer at Harvey Nichols, said: "Overall I was pleased with the diversity of styles on show. It was a really good cross-section of examples and an interesting snapshot of what today's category has to offer. I preferred the more typical styles

which exhibited a fruit/juniper balance, focus of flavour and depth to them."

And our host for the competition, Vincenzo Calenzo, Rib Room bar supervisor at the Jumeirah Carlton Tower, and vice chairman UKBG London Area, added another perspective. "Great gins with a lot of surprises," he summed up, adding: "The super-premium category was full of outstanding and powerful products." SB



Some gins offered elegance or mellowness, compared to a richer, more upfront style

