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Solera-aged Gin

“The popularity of Citadelle Reserve has grown exponentially since 2008”

Mention solera aging in the beverage world and people think of sherry, Madeira, Spanish brandy and even some rums. But usually not gin. Until now. From the acclaimed house of Cognac Ferrand in Cognac, France comes Citadelle Gin Reserve Solera 2013, the first solera-aged gin in the world. Cognac Ferrand proprietor Alexandre Gabriel has produced aged Citadelle Reserve since 2008, considered a pioneer and the first modern aged gin. With his first solera-aged gin, he has taken gin-aging in a direction never before used. Packaged in Citadelle’s new bottle, Citadelle Gin Reserve Solera 2013 provides a vibrant yet mellow gin flavor and, thanks to its barrel aging, the flavors are seamlessly woven together into a one-of-a-kind gin. It is a wonderful gin alternative in classic cocktails like the martini and the gin and tonic and a must-have in any good bar.

Citadelle Gin (the unaged version) is the only gin in the world distilled in small, Charentais copper pot stills over a naked flame. It is made in small batches infused with 19 select botanicals. Knowing that gin was originally stored and transported in wooden barrels and therefore somewhat ‘aged’, Alexandre Gabriel began experimenting in the mid-2000s with barrel-aging his Citadelle Gin. He introduced aged Citadelle Gin Reserve Limited Edition in 2008 and never looked back. “This is going back to the original style of what was known as ‘yellow gin’ made 120 years ago, the golden age of gin, when gin spent time



in wooden barrels,” describes Gabriel. The popularity of Citadelle Reserve has grown exponentially since 2008, each vintage introduced globally and always selling out quickly. Gabriel experimented with aging gin in different types of casks, understanding that each imparted different flavors. “As a cellar master, I’ve always been fascinated by the flavor possibilities offered by blending different casks. I’ve tried different ways to make the ultimate aged gin since 2008 [see end of release for details], and I concluded that the best was not to age gin in just one cask but in different types and then to marry the liquid. This aging and blending style is called solera and it means you have a ‘mother solera vat’ which maintains the blend profile indefinitely.” Solera vat aging for Citadelle involves an intensive process of putting new-made Citadelle into three different types of casks for anywhere from two to five months. The casks used for aging are:

- 1) ex-Cognac casks that are rinsed with gin so that the Cognac doesn’t overpower the gin;
- 2) ex-Pineau des Charente that impart a full-bodied mouthfeel, some spiciness and a flowery roundness (this was a touch suggested by Gabriel’s friend Audrey Saunders, owner of famed Pegu Club, NYC);
- 3) **American oak casks** : Once the gin has aged in casks, it is poured into the mother solera vat to a specified taste profile created by Gabriel. The gin ‘marries’ in the mother solera vat and then it is bottled. To note, the solera vat will only ever be half-emptied as this residual liquid maintains a consistency in the taste.

TASTING NOTES

Amazingly fragrant and vibrant with beautiful juniper aromatics in the forefront supported by delicate notes of angelica, coriander and citrus with a touch of baking spices which come as a result of Citadelle’s unique naked flame distillation. The palate is round with great texture due to the low swan neck pot-still and the delicate extraction of essential oils from the botanicals. The finish is wonderfully long and complex. Citadelle Gin Solera Vintage 2013 is available now in the U.S. for a suggested \$34.99 (750ml; 44% alcohol by volume).

A HISTORY OF CITADELLE GIN AGING

Nearly every gin sold on the market today is bottled immediately after distilling, but since 2008 Gabriel has created and bottled Citadelle Reserve which is refined for several months in small, seasoned French oak barrels before being bottled. The 2008 Vintage was such a new and unique gin that it sold out within weeks of its global introduction! Since 2008, Gabriel has released a limited edition aged gin each year and has tinkered with the recipe ever so slightly, giving each vintage its own unique taste profile. Gabriel says, “I am happy to see that what we started as an experiment more than five years ago has now picked up some speed. We see other companies creating oak-aged gins and I am pleased that our Citadelle Reserve 2008 has started an aged gin ‘movement’ of sorts.”

Vintage 2009: Citadelle Gin rested in oak casks with a medium char for five months and produced a gin with subtle flavors of vanilla, flowers and cinnamon. Acclaimed spirits writer F. Paul Pacult named the 2009 Vintage one of the Top 50 Spirits of the Year in Wine Enthusiast.

Vintage 2010: Gabriel wanted to engineer a perfect ‘aging’ gin with more flower and spices notes, so he produced a special batch of Citadelle with more violet, iris and grains of paradise. The gin was aged for six months in oak casks with a light char. This produced a gin with a lovely roundness, harmony and elegance.

Vintage 2011: Citadelle Gin Reserve was made with the same botanicals as in 2010 but distilled at a higher proof (44.7 % ABV).

Vintage 2012: Gabriel added three new botanicals – yuzu, g n pi and bleuet (cornflower) – to the 19 botanicals already used to make Citadelle Gin and aged the spirit for six months in oak casks with a light char.