



Belgin Spéciale Dry Gin

Country: Belgium

Region: Lion d'Orweg - Aalst

Producer: Hand Crafted Belgian Gin

Bottle size: 50cl - abv: 41.4%



The history of Gin starts in the Low Countries (Belgium) in the 15th century

To find where 'gin' comes from we need first to find the origins of genever/jenever, the prototype combination of grain spirit and juniper berries and other botanicals. According to the National Jenever Museum of Belgium it was first produced in Flanders in the 13th century. At this time, this area was part of the Low Countries that also included what is now Holland, bits of Northern France and Luxembourg.

Originally used as a medicinal tonic or a herbal medicine, it wasn't long before genever was being drunk for pleasure. Again the transition lacks precise dates and written records but one source of information is the numerous records of taxation levied on distilleries throughout the Low Countries from the late 15th century onwards.

The first recorded mention of genever as a distilled beverage flavored with juniper and botanicals was in 1552, in a book called 'Een Constelijck Distileerboec' by Antwerp-based Philippus Hermanni. That's not to say there are no other recipes yet to be found and diligent historians will keep looking no doubt. But, knowledge tended to be handed down orally then, as not everyone was literate.

The English first met genever during the Eighty Years War (1568-1648) when the armies of France, England and Spain fought over religion, politics and territory in the Low Countries. Here, English mercenaries were introduced to the local grog, given to steady their nerves before battle.

The origin of gin can be traced back to Belgium, Brugge with the first published recipe of a spirit made with juniper berries (the main ingredient in gin). Belgin's artisanal Belgian gins are the result of 500 years of Belgian distilling history since giving birth to gin, Belgian's rich spice trade going back to medieval times and the craftsmanship from Belgium's famous beer and culinary history. Belgin continues the story of gin with unique new flavours such as Fresh Hop and brings a new level of gin quality back to the country that started it all.

To be legally classified as a gin, the primary flavour influence in the finished spirit has to be juniper, and Belgin source their hand-picked juniper berries from Macedonia, regarded by many experts as the finest available.

The company philosophy is to only use natural ingredients, and to extract their flavours by treating every component individually. No artificial colours, synthetic concentrates or sweeteners are used in the process - it's all in the skill of the distiller

Certain botanicals are distilled separately and others in groups. In addition, fresh herbs or fruits are macerated for extra fresh flavours. The European definition does not allow these innovative techniques in a London DryGin.

Is this better than a London Dry.?

Spéciale, which shares many of its botanicals with its sibling, but the final balance is definitely more citrus driven. Orange, lime, lemon and Italian bergamot combine to keep the flavours fresh, with coriander, cardamom and caraway seeds adding a particularly aromatic feel to this gin.

(All of the botanicals used Juniper - Lime - Cloves - Star Anise - Lemon - Thyme - Vanilla - Orange Peel - Coriander - Lavender - Bergamot - Angelica Root - Cardamom - Cinnamon - Caraway Seeds - Angelica Seeds - Belgian Hops)

Some fresh hops are added to this expression as it helps to give the finish a little edge, and helps to balance the final product for an exquisite cocktail experience.

Spéciale is bottled at a slightly stronger than the norm at 41.4%, particularly important when you're trying to ensure that none of those light delicate flavours escape the mixture because there is insufficient alcoholic strength to 'fix' them into the gin.

NOSE: Crisp, fresh and delicate

PALATE: Delicate with flavours of orange, lime and lemon

FINISH: Aromatic delicate with a medium finish

THE IDEAL SERVE

The classic G&T made with Spéciale is 50ml's gin, 100ml's artisan Indian tonic, slice of lemon, 2 coriander leaves and a couple of juniper berries for garnish, all served with ice in a balloon style glass. As an alternative, you can use orange zest in place of the lemon and juniper berries - we know they're hard to find, because we keep the best ones for ourselves...

For those of you that still remember the drinks of the 70's, Spéciale is also a great ingredient in a gin and bitter lemon on those long hot days when you want something zingy and refreshing, garnish with a little lime peel, and add a couple of drops of [Belfleur](#) elderflower liqueur if you want to gently soften the citrusy explosion!

