

North Berwick couple set up gin micro-distillery



It was once described as mother's ruin, but gin is back and turning into the country's most sophisticated spirit. How fitting, therefore, that husband and wife team Steve and Viv Muir have fulfilled a long-held ambition by setting up a gin micro-distillery (NB Distillery Ltd) in their home town of North Berwick and launching their very own brand of handcrafted premium gin.

NB Gin has been made with carefully sourced ingredients and using the best techniques to create a premium quality product. It's made from pure British grain spirit and a combination of eight botanicals, all of which have been meticulously selected to produce a deep and balanced flavour. The gin is stillled, blended, bottled and labelled by hand in North Berwick in very small batches, to ensure that every bottle is of the highest quality. The still itself was custom built in London and installed in North Berwick by the oldest makers in the world, John Dore & Co, their first gin still being made in the early 1800s.

Since its launch in October at Lockett Bros in North Berwick, there has been overwhelming demand for NB Gin from both on-trade and off-trade outlets. In Edinburgh alone it's been snapped up by Vino Wines, Royal Mile Whiskies, Drinkmonger, The Cork and Cask and The Fine Wine Company, and it's being trialled at a number of bars across the capital, including Juniper, a new bar on Edinburgh's Princes Street, and One Square in the city's Festival Square. It's also being sold, served or trialled at a number of other shops, bars, hotels and restaurants across the country.



More than 1000 bottles of NB Gin have already been sold and it boasts more than 40 trade customers spanning Scotland, northern England and London. NB Gin is performing well in gin tastings, coming ahead of all the major brands in feedback from customers. And the company has been approached by an exporter who is interested in distributing the new spirit overseas.

Steve Muir says: "Gin is making a comeback, but it's very different this time round. Consumers are drinking less but are more discerning about quality and fortunately, that's what our product is all about. NB Gin is unashamedly traditional, but provides a balanced flavour and strength which is not overly complicated.

"We've been overwhelmed by the response to our new gin, and our initial sales targets have been more than surpassed. We're being actively contacted by customers who have heard about NB Gin and want to try it or to stock it. We honestly couldn't have hoped for a better response."

Industry figures show just how much sales at the quality end of the market are growing. According to data from Nielsen, the consumer analysts, gin production in Britain has grown by 23 per cent in a decade, and at the premium end, sales increased by 18 per cent between 2007 and 2012.

And according to recent media reports, many super-premium offerings are reporting annual sales increases of up to 48 per cent.

As part of their product development process, Steve and Viv engaged the expert services of Charles Maxwell at Thames Distillers in London, whose family has been distilling gin for more than 300 years. Together with his head of quality control, Gema Zaragoza, they agreed to be part of the official tasting committee for NB Gin and concluded that it was "a fine

gin that was extremely likeable". High praise indeed from the industry experts, and a fantastic endorsement from a company which produces more than 40 gins for 30 brands.

Viv Muir adds: "NB Gin has been a long time in the making, and thankfully it's a very good time for us to be entering the market. But the most exciting part is that we have launched it in our home town. The support has been fantastic and there's been a bit of a buzz about our gin being produced locally, which people really like. We hope that this is just the start. There are no boundaries to our geographical reach, so we look forward to what the future holds for us. It's been a labour of love to ensure that we never compromise on quality, but a fantastic one."