

SA's Fynbos inspired gins are leading the way



BY MELLISSA BUSHBY | EDITOR 19TH JUL 2019

As South Africa's craft gin market continues to grow at home it's also attracting enormous attention from across the seas – all thanks to the country's diverse endemic vegetation.

South Africa's Western Cape is home to the Cape Floral Kingdom, one of only six floristic kingdoms in the world. It is the region with the smallest yet richest vegetation per unit of area, boasting over 9,000 plant species. According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the Cape Floral Region "represents less than 0.5% of the area of Africa but is home to nearly 20% of the continent's flora". Naturally, these extraordinary plants have given rise to rare botanicals and unusual recipes that infuse the spirit with a South African twist, providing a great 'leg up' for the local market.

There are many types of gins all over the world, from traditional and spicy to fruity and floral. Now, moving away from traditional juniper flavours, South Africa's Fynbos botanicals are opening a whole new category; that of herbaceous gins. These gins pair perfectly with a classic premium tonic such as Fever-Tree's Indian or Refreshingly Light tonic waters, so that the dominant botanical can really be celebrated.

Inverroche is arguably the most well-known gin brand to experiment with Cape Fynbos varieties. In 2011 they launched a few bottles of three handcrafted gins – Classic, infused with limestone fynbos; Verdant, infused with mountainous fynbos, and Amber, infused with coastal fynbos. Each of these is intended to pay homage to the rich terrain from which the botanicals are handpicked.

Years later and we now have a vast range of premium Fynbos inspired gins to choose from including the likes of A Mari, Autograph Gin, Cape Fynbos Gin, Cape Town Gin Co., Geometric Gin, Ginologist, Jorgensen's Gin, Sugarbird Cape Fynbos Gin, Wilderer, Wixworth Gin, Woodstock Gin Co. and more.

According to Inverroche botanist, Jan De Vynck, "Fynbos botanicals work well in gin distillation because it offers many unique and complex aromas and flavours found nowhere else. During distillation, the oils contained in these botanicals form a special molecular bond with the alcohol vapour rendering the liquid truly Cape, distinctly ours".

“There are numerous Buchu species and all have some unique quality whether black currant, citrus, ginger, garlic, etc. However, they all share a unique flavour profile which is hard to describe; a fresh, almost minty flavour, somewhat zesty, but most of all, probably one of the most quintessential flagship aromas for Fynbos.”, De Vynck continues, “We also use Kooigoed – a combination of herbal and spicy with notes of saffron and liquorice, as well as Suurvy – a distinct acidic sweetness with a woody, almost earthy character”.

Much like the quinine in tonic water being used for hundreds of years to prevent feverish illnesses such as malaria; Fynbos has been used by South Africans for millennia for its medicinal properties... and the different Fynbos species have been found to have different flavour profiles and functions. Consequently, Fynbos-inspired gins and top-class tonic waters such as Fever-Tree, whose quality quinine is sourced from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are the perfect match.

There are many other noteworthy flavours to come out of South Africa that further contribute to its burgeoning craft gin scene and international achievements. Rooibos, African ginger, Kalahari truffles and Honeybush are to name but a few. But none have performed quite like our famed Fynbos.

For more information on Fever-Tree, please visit www.fever-tree.com.

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