

## Gin School – Derby Telegraph Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April

One day, back in 2008, William Chase, the owner of hugely successful crisp brand, Tyrells, walked into the office of the man charged with spearheading the company's diversification into muesli and got straight to the point, "Muesli is bloody boring. Let's make vodka instead."

Two years later, Chase Vodka won the San Francisco World Spirits Award for Best Vodka.

The man responsible for turning Chase's inspired whim into award winning reality was Jamie Baxter. Starting with zero knowledge of spirit making, Jamie, ably supported by Chase, learnt the ins and outs of distilling from the ground up and became, very quickly, one of the UK's most sought after master distillers.

After leaving Chase, Jamie created a number of successful vodkas and gins before launching, in the summer of 2014, Burleigh's Gin from his purpose built, artisan distillery just outside Loughborough in Leicestershire. There, last Thursday afternoon, I, my colleague, Dougie, and 8 other invited 'pupils' attended Burleigh's brilliantly conceived Gin School.

'School' began, with us all gathered around Messy Bessy, the beautiful copper pot still that produces Burleigh's Gin and genial Jamie explained just what gin is and how it's produced. To my surprise, the definition of gin is laughably lax and a spirit is entitled to the name simply by being mainly flavoured with juniper berries. Such imprecision, leads, Jamie feels, to certain producers pushing the boundaries a little too far but he's not naming names!



Next, Jamie told us about the 3 types of gin – Compounded (Bathtub), Distilled and London Dry – and it's the production method of the last of these that I'll briefly describe, as it's the process used to make Burleigh's Gin. In short, base alcohol of an agricultural origin has botanicals (flavourings) added to it and the liquid is then heated in a copper pot still until the liquid vapourises and the impurities are removed. Following this, the vapour passes into a column (Coffey) still and becomes liquid again when it's cooled by cold water at the bottom of the Coffey still. To finish, the alcohol is diluted with distilled water to bring the resultant gin down to the desired alcohol level – usually between 40% and 47%.

Burleigh's Gin contains 11 botanicals, 5 of which are to be found in the beautiful Burleigh Wood nature reserve adjacent to the distillery, and when Jamie moved on to talk about them, we, his already highly engaged audience, became even more attentive. Why? Well, at Gin School, everyone gets to make their own uniquely flavoured bottle of Gin to take home and we were all keen to pick up some top tips from the master distiller.

Having listened to Jamie's advice, we all chose our botanicals and eagerly set about distilling in our own mini copper stills. I was confident of my creation but, in retrospect, maybe 13 botanicals was pushing my luck or maybe I was a tad heavy handed with the angelica. Either way, my colleague Dougie, no doubt buoyed by the large G and T he'd been handed by charming Gin School manager, Lucy, felt that my effort had a distinct touch of superglue about it and, rather ruefully, I had to agree.



Never mind, what is it they say? If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again. And to that end, I'd love to make a return gin making trip to Burleigh's and would ask anyone else who is keen, to contact me and maybe I can put a Worth Brothers outing together

In the meantime, why not try a bottle of Burleigh's Gin. It was awarded 4 stars by spirits expert, Simon Difford, and described as "Dry and piney with generous juniper and hefty coriander with woody spice and zesty citrus. It's a big flavoured robust gin but with some delicate floral notes."

**Burleigh's London Dry Gin £ 33**

## **Gin School Details**

Gin School includes a tour of Burleigh's distillery, where you'll discover the history of gin and the fine art of distilling.

Whether you prefer floral, citrus, herbal or spicy notes, you'll learn how to create your own unique gin using botanicals of your choice. Burleigh's Master Distillers will guide you through the process of weighing your ingredients and distilling your gin on your own mini copper pot. You'll then bottle, cork and seal your own 70cl bottle before adding a personalised label ready to take home.

Gin School lasts approx. 3 hours and normally costs £ 95 per person.

However, we've negotiated a special rate and can offer a trip to Gin School plus mini bus transport there and back for only £ 85 per person.

Please let us know if you're interested (we need 8 customers per trip) and we can get some dates arranged.