
Flavors of juniper, lavender and spices

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We invited Jerald O'Kennard, director of the Beverage Tasting Institute, and Adam Seger, manager, sommelier and mixologist of Nacional 27, to join the Good Eating tasting panel for a blind tasting of gins. All are so-called boutique gins, going for distinctive flavors, and most of them are small-batch. Most are relatively new to the market, except for Plymouth Gin, an old-timer still relatively obscure to imbibers but a growing favorite with bartenders for its citrus aromas.

The gins are listed top to bottom in order of our most to least favorites, along with tasters' comments. (Prices are what we paid at retail for 750-milliliter bottles.)

Hendrick's Gin, Scotland (88 proof)

Floral scents of lilies and apple blossom. Flavors of perfumed plum, potpourri and a slight pepperiness. "Reminiscent of muscat grapes," O'Kennard said. \$29

North Shore Distillery Distiller's Gin No. 6, Lake Bluff (90 proof)

A clean, slightly piney aroma, with citrus and lavender notes. The taste for Seger was unmistakable: "Lavendar, lavender, lavender, violets and jasmine." \$28

Cadenhead's Old Raj Dry Gin, Scotland (110 proof)

This straw-colored (from saffron) gin smelled of coriander, white pepper, grapefruit and candied citron. It tasted of zippy citrus, a touch of anise and spicy coriander. "A wonderful balance of vibrant juniper and creamy vanilla and citrus peel," O'Kennard said. \$53

Junipero Gin, San Francisco (98.6 proof)

From Anchor Distilling Co., this gin had notes of ginger, coriander, citrus oil, bergamot, mild juniper, and a great oily texture. Flavors of dried fruit, vanilla, citrus and custard with an herbal/pine finish. \$35

Plymouth Gin, Plymouth, England (82.4 proof)

A subdued nose of dried flowers, juniper oil, talc; flavors of fruit Danish and frosting with lightly herbal juniper. \$23

Cascade Mountain Hand Crafted American Gin, Bend, Ore. (95 proof)

Golden straw in color, with scents of vanilla, lemon curd and subdued citrus candy. Some tasters scored this gin quite low, citing its somewhat off flavors of dishrag, harsh tannic caramel and bitter zest. \$26

—*Joe Gray*

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