



The roller coaster journey of gin through history

Whether it's Queen Elizabeth II of England enjoying a quiet dry gin martini in the afternoon or a millennial discovering the delights of craft gin, there's no stopping the growing number of gin lovers, writes Mukul Manku.



During early 1600s, the English troops who had gone out to help the Dutch against a Spanish assault, noted that the Dutch soldiers seemed to really enjoy their 'genever', especially before military campaigns. This was probably the proverbial initiation of the English into Gin (which came from genever). However, the popularity of gin actually soared, following the accession of William of Orange to the throne of England in 1688. With a Dutch ruler on the throne, Gin became the preferred drink in the court and the streets of England.

With the Crown promoting its consumption as a national drink, gin soon became immensely popular with the English people. The popularity of gin soared so much that it became an obsession and England entered the 'Gin Craze', a period of time where half the drinking establishments in London were literally gin joints. Average yearly consumption of the beverage during that time is said to have reached 2.2 gallons of gin per person.

Gin and gin drunkenness soon came into notice of the clergy who began to preach against the drink's ill effects, including criminal behavior. Such was the sordid state of affairs that Bishop Thomas Wilson is reported to have said in 1736 that gin produced a "drunken ungovernable set of people." Ultimately, the craze got so bad that the Parliament was forced to pass

The Gin Renaissance

Description

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58 Spiritz June 2018

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Gin Day is celebrated world over on the 2nd Saturday of June each year.

COVER STORY

five Acts to slow the sale and consumption of the spirit. And it was by 1751 that the gin craze was brought under control and consumption dropped to normal rates.

In 1800s the British introduced gin mixed with tonic water to its troops in India as an antidote to Malaria. Thus was born the famous Gin and Tonic concoction, which went on to become a preferred cocktail amongst military officers. So much so that the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once acknowledged its role in saving 'more Englishmen's lives and minds than all the doctors in the Empire'.

Gin and Tonic then went on to acquire a cult status which continues till date.

Queen Elizabeth II, who as the British monarch is also the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces, is said to be a gin lover. Reputedly, her first drink in the day, enjoyed shortly before lunch, is a gin and Dubonnet, and at lunch too the Queen reportedly drinks a dry gin martini. Gin thus seems to enjoy royal patronage too.

There is no denying that gin had its share of lows in the past, caused mainly by a flawed perception of it being an old timer's drink. However, current trends indicate a renaissance in gin popularity. With improved botanicals,



Queen Elizabeth II, loves Gin and Dubonnet prior lunch each day



William Hogarth's painting named Gin Lane depicts the ill effects of drink during the period of Gin Craze in England

variety of flavors, qualitative improvements both in gin and tonic water and promotion of innovative gin based cocktails at the bars, further backed by intelligent and segmented marketing targeted at the younger consumers, the gin resurgence is palpable. Today gin is seen as fast becoming the preferred drink of choice for men and women around the world and is surely expected to be so in times to come. 

June 2018 Spititz 59

Keeping in view the pivotal status which the drink has enjoyed (with associated highs and lows) in the world's socio-cultural environment over last four centuries, Spititz Magazine has honoured Gin on its

cover and published my article as itâ??s Cover Story

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