

A refreshing twist in the tonic tale...

Charles Rolls, Executive Deputy Chairman, Fever-Tree

IF ¾ OF YOUR DRINK IS THE MIXER, USE THE BEST

Just ten years ago a gin and tonic (G&T) in a UK pub typically meant a thin tube glass (often dirty), a 25ml optic measure of whichever gin they poured, one lump of ice and a slice of sulphur preserved lemon. And then saccharine sweetened tonic... well this is what we set out to change at Fever-Tree.

There are approximately 120,000 establishments in the UK that can serve alcoholic drinks, and the exciting thing for consumers, is that an increasing number – maybe 12,000 of them – are now offering a significantly increased choice in both spirits offered and in the mixers that accompany them. Our company banner, “If ¾ of your drink is the mixer, choose the best” seems to resonate with a public increasingly aware that they want better quality for the fewer drinks they now imbibe.

FAVOURABLE TRENDS

These positive changes towards consumer choice, in both the drinks and foods we consume, follow clear lines. Largely, consumers now feel they can trust the food they are offered in supermarkets, and are served in restaurants. This was not true 50 years ago. Now consumers can be bolder in their selection. Better flavours, natural ingredients and credibly sourced; these are trends that have swept through chocolate, crisps, beer and indeed almost every area of edible products. They are now sweeping through the quintessentially British drink, the gin and tonic. Invented by British troops in India in the early 1800s, the G&T has had a glorious and distinctive past. But things went wrong in the 1960s. In an attempt to cut costs to maintain company profits, many producers of gin lowered the strength from 40% abv* to the new minimum allowed of 37.5%, downgrading the taste. And tonic suffered more with expensive sugar being partly replaced with cheap but sickly saccharine.

*Alcohol by volume

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THE BIRTH OF THE PREMIUM G&T

So where did the re-birth of this classic British drink start? In fact, it has a surprising international twist. In the early 2000s, the Spanish government, confident and prosperous from a booming construction-led economy, had actively promoted Spanish cuisine to the world. And the chef’s choice of drink after a hard evening’s work, was a gin and tonic. That was nothing new, as the Spanish have had a love of gin on a par with the British for years. Think Larios gin, or Xoriguer from Menorca. The difference was that the Spanish were in experimentation mode, and when new gins, and a new tonic (Fever-Tree) were available on the Spanish market at this critical moment, they re-created the gin and tonic with flair.

In the heat of a Spanish summer evening, consumers were switching away from the heavier whisky and cola, and creating a much lighter ‘digestivo’. Gin is normally served in a large round wine shaped glass, full of ice, typically Hendricks or Citadelle gin mixed with Fever-Tree tonic, (all as directed by renowned chef Ferran Adrià, of El Bulli fame). Between 2006 (when Fever-Tree launched in Spain) and 2011, the premium gin market in Spain grew 25%, the equivalent of 45 million premium gin and tonics.

And this is now a trend sweeping western Europe. In Germany and Italy where gin was virtually unheard of 10 years ago, gin and tonic is in strong growth, with brands such as ‘evoking Rome’, or the ‘Black Forest’.

A WEALTH OF OPPORTUNITY

The first new distilleries in London for 200 years, such as Sipsmith emerged in this benign environment, and we have lost count of the number of new gins on the market. For now there seems room for all due to the huge variety of interesting herbs and spices, and therefore aromas and tastes, that can be distilled into these gins. Along with a variety of tonics which we and others are developing, it is providing olfactory delights around a social occasion. ▶

And of course once one realises that the gin and tonic has been re-born, at least in part due to the quality of the mixer, then whisky and ginger, rum and cola, vodka and ginger beer (Moscow Mule) can be re-conceived. Bartenders, chefs and home cooks are all making full use of the new quality of mixable drinks that can be prepared with ease. It is this ease of preparation that also plays to today's consumer. A good spirit, plus a good mixer, ice and maybe a twist of citrus peel – anyone can make a great drink.

Trends do not always go from Europe to the States, but American bartenders from San Francisco, to Miami, to Boston are also playing hard with 'craft' spirits and top mixers. Alongside the massive structural changes in the US beer market (where craft beers are re-defining the category), the Moscow Mule has become one of the hottest drinks across the nation.

So salud to the Spanish for their early flair and experimentation, and cheers to all the energetic creators of these great drinks. And to consumers – enjoy! **■**



**“If 3/4 of
your drink
is the mixer,
use the best.”**



Co-founded in 2005 by Charles Rolls and Tim Warrillow, Fever-Tree is the world's leading supplier of premium carbonated mixers for alcoholic spirits, with distribution to over 50 countries worldwide. The brand was launched to provide high quality mixers to cater for the growing demand for premium spirits. The company now sells a range of carbonated mixers to hotels, restaurants, bars and cafes as well as selected retail outlets.