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CRAFT BEER
Breaking the Barrier





ANCHOR DISTILLING COMPANY

by Christopher Quinn. Photos courtesy Anchor Distilling Company

Anchor brewing company has made a name for itself in the craft beer industry with brands like Anchor Steam, Liberty Ale and their famous Christmas Ale. But do fans of the brewing side of the business know that Anchor is also blazing new trails in the distilling world?

"Anchor Distilling Company was established in 1993," said marketing director Rusti Porter. She added that the distillery is dedicated to creating very small batches of traditionally distilled spirits. "We've been distilling Junipero (gin) since 1993 and Old Potrero (Whiskey) since 1995."

Since 2004, Anchor Distilling has won a total of seventeen medals at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition, including double gold medals for Junipero and Old Potrero. Both have also won double gold medals for packaging design.

The brewery itself first opened in 1896, and according to Anchor Distilling President, David King, you'd be hard pressed to find a difference in the way things are done now. "Very little has changed," he said. "In fact, we celebrate consistency in production methods." He added that Anchor has always been very committed to using only traditional and artisanal forms of brewing and distilling. "Using only natural ingredients and time honored methods, we are very proud to continue the tradition of artisanal beverages in the United States."

As King notes, the distillation process at Anchor is very similar to the way that it has always been done. There's no reason to change a process that has stood the test of time for centuries. Junipero Gin, like all of their spirits, is handmade using the "distilled dry gin" tradition. The gin is comprised of more than a dozen dried berries, herbs and spices that are mixed together in a small copper pot in their tiny distillery in San Francisco. The gin is distilled in the traditional way in small batches just like it was done in the 1600's in Holland.

"The real 'new news' is that we are now not only distilling, but also importing," said Porter. Anchor Distilling Company is part of the recently formed umbrella company, Anchor Brewers and Distillers. This company is made up of the Anchor Brewing Company, Anchor Distilling Company, Berry Bros. & Rudd and Pries Imports. The companies merged together in early 2011.

"We see Anchor Distilling Company as an umbrella for craft spirits in the United States." For Porter, Anchor is providing a platform for multi-generational family-owned businesses from across the globe to reach out to American consumers.

She says that all across every category of spirit, consumers have an expanding appreciation for artisanal culture, authenticity, and heritage. "We know consumers in the US are moving away from big brands, and are looking to know more about the products they are consuming, where they come from and the families and stories behind them." What the folks at Anchor hope is to have an opportunity to engage enthusiasts who seek out quality and a richer drinking experience.

Many fine food establishments are taking notice of Anchor's strive for better, artisanal spirits. Bruce Cole, restaurant and beverage manager at Japonais Restaurant in Chicago created a signature cocktail using two of Anchor's imports. "We hosted the launch party for both No. 3 Gin and The King's Ginger, so I wanted the guests to try the cocktails and taste the versatility of both liquors. I used the name of the restaurant in the cocktail to signify that it was created for the restaurant."

He added that "The Japonais" wasn't the first recipe he tried. "The previous two recipes were slightly different and the third ended up being the best. I really love gin and I think that it is an incredibly versatile liquor."

Cole said that No. 3 actually refers to the address of Berry Bros and Rudd in London. And, just like the people at Anchor, Cole enjoys getting the best use out of different liquors, especially gin. "I enjoy experimenting with it in cocktails and using other ingredients to really bring out the flavors in the gin. I was really pleased to work with both No. 3 Gin and The King's Ginger. I wanted to use both in a cocktail and spent some time working with different flavors and ingredients to come up with what worked the best."

THE JAPONAIS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 oz. No. 3 Gin
- 1 oz. The King's Ginger Liqueur
- 1 oz. Orange Juice
- Dash of simple syrup

PREPARATION

Muddle two cucumber slices, two raspberries and simple syrup in a highball, add ice. Shake gin, ginger liqueur and orange juice with ice. Strain. Garnish with candied ginger stick.

