



October 7, 2015 By [Kelly Tenny](#)

## HIGH FLYING COCKTAILS: INTERVIEW WITH AVIATION AMERICAN GIN



*Photo Courtesy of Aviation American Gin.*

**Q:** *When, and how, did the idea for Aviation Gin come about?*

**A:** House Spirits Distillery, the company behind Aviation American Gin was founded in 2004 by Christian Krogstad. Aviation American Gin is the company's flagship product, and it was first introduced in April, 2006. The gin is also a uniquely conceived product — one born from the the first ever distiller-and-mixologist collaboration, between distiller Christian Krogstad and mixologist Ryan Magarian.

Aviation American Gin was inspired and guided by the great American cocktail gins of the past. The pre-prohibition era cocktails that have found their place on today's cocktail scene were traditionally made with American cocktail gins (think less juniper-forward notes), which disappeared shortly after prohibition in favor of London Dry styles. Aviation American Gin pays homage to that era, and though the spirit is only a decade old, its recipe is steeped in history.

**Q:** How about the name? Do you have any high flyers in your midst or is there a different meaning behind it?



*Photo Courtesy of Aviation American Gin.*

**A:** Aviation American Gin was crafted with a cocktail experience in mind. As such, our name reflects that thought process, and our name pays homage to one of our favorite pre-prohibition gin cocktails: The Aviation.

New York has always been famous for its hotel cocktail bars, and one of the best was at the Hotel Wallick on Broadway and 43rd Street. The manager was a Bavarian bartender named Hugo Ensslin, and in 1917 he published a compendium of the Wallick's recipes called Recipes for Mixed Drinks.

Unintentionally, this became the last cocktail book published in New York before Prohibition, making it a time capsule of the great cocktails served at that time.

One of the most innovative and popular cocktails at the Wallick was the Aviation, thus named because of its pale, sky blue hue. It was inspired by the Wright brothers' recent flight, and by the excitement that swept the world in the years that followed. Hugo Ensslin's recipe called for El Bart Gin, a brand that disappeared during Prohibition and never returned. When we set about creating Aviation American Gin we asked, "What would El Bart, or other pre-Prohibition American cocktail gins, have tasted like?" We knew they would be more balanced and mixable than classic London Dry gin because cocktail gins must work well with citrus, spice, and herbs, while London Dry was developed with a very strong juniper note to pair with the bitterness of quinine.

We'll never know exactly what El Bart Gin tasted like, but we tested over two dozen trial batches of Aviation American Gin in an Aviation cocktail, so we're pretty confident that Hugo Ensslin would have put us on his menu.

**Q:** *On the bottle, Aviation Gin refers to itself as American Gin. Can you tell us a little bit about this distinction?*

**A:** As mentioned above, American Gins are a welcome departure from the London Dry styles that dominate the spirits market. The "American Gin" flavor profile was a prominent fixture within the spirits market before Prohibition – and provided the ideal flavor profile for classic American cocktails like the Aviation, the brand's namesake cocktail.

**Q:** *What would you say sets Aviation Gin apart from other gins on the market?*

**A:** Aviation American Gin is a welcome departure from the traditional London Dry style of gin, offering a more balanced expression that brings together exotic spices from around the world including cardamom, coriander, anise seed, dried sweet orange peel, lavender, Indian sarsaparilla and juniper.

We believe our masterful blend of citrus, floral and savory notes makes this small-batch spirit extremely mixable, and outstanding in contemporary culinary cocktails or vintage drinks alike. It is crafted from all-natural ingredients including naturally gluten-free, American grain spirit.

Aviation American Gin also earned the highest-ever rating for a gin from Wine Enthusiast, with 97 points.

**Q:** When you get feedback from consumers, what do you find their favorite signature cocktails are to make with Aviation Gin?



*Photo Courtesy of Aviation American Gin.*

**A:** We feel Aviation works well in a variety of cocktails, but it pairs exceptionally well with citrus. Of course, we're partial to an Aviation cocktail, which is as follows:

2 ounces gin

3/4 ounce maraschino liqueur

3/4 ounce lemon juice

Garnish: Cherry.

Directions: Shake with ice. Strain into a cocktail glass.