

MEN'S JOURNAL

Rethinking the Gin and Tonic



A gin and tonic has long been the drink of unimaginative grandparents. But a boom in groundbreaking gins and custom-made tonics has opened up new possibilities for the simple highball combination. While the "London dry" style of gin (Bombay Sapphire, Beefeater, Tanqueray) is predominantly infused with the cool note of juniper berry, a renegade group of new Western-style gins – like Hendrick's in Scotland, Dorothy Parker in Brooklyn, and Aviation in Portland – are adding new flavors with outside-the-box botanicals like cucumber, dried hibiscus petals, and lavender. Following suit, bartenders have started retooling tonic, as well. Tom Richter, head bartender at the Beagle in Manhattan, based his Tomr's Tonic on the original 19th-century British officers' recipe, once used to fight malaria in colonial outposts. Made from the boiled bark of the Peruvian cinchona tree – which produces quinine, the first tonic – and sugar, citrus, and herbs, Tomr's Tonic adds an earthy spice and dark coloring to the usually crisp, clear G&T. Bartenders are even replacing the time-honored lime wedge with exotic garnishes like lemongrass strands and sprigs of pine, which play off the new botanicals. "The gin in a G&T still has to have some amount of juniper," says Richter, "but the rest of the cocktail is whatever turns you on."

– Stayton Bonner