



# WINEENTHUSIAST

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## 11 OF OUR FAVORITE GINS FOR MARTINIS FOR 2022

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Musical theater fans may recall “You Gotta Get a Gimmick” from *Gypsy*, a number in which a trio of burlesque performers urge the title character to “do something special, anything that’s special” to distinguish her act.

The latest crop of gins seems to take a page from that libretto. There’s no shortage of great gins out there, and in order to be remembered, gin producers are leaning harder than ever into finding that “something special” to pull away from the pack.

That might mean flavoring the gin with fresh instead of dried juniper (Procera) or experimenting with resting the gin in small barrels made from juniper wood (Citadelle Juniper Decadence—no

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easy task, by the way: "Since the juniper is a modestly sized tree, its wood is not suitable for making long, curved staves, as it is too hard to bend," the company explains. Instead, "special small casks were built with straight sides.")

Others emphasize regional flavorings (see: kelp and other coastal botanicals for sea-inspired Hendrick's Neptunia, or Irish honey in Ireland's Silks) or the provenance of the raw ingredients used to distill the base gin (Northern California grapes, Mississippi Delta rice). And novelty gins come in an ever-expanding array of hues: pink, purple, blue. One newcomer, Scapegrace Black, uses butterfly pea to transform from murky gray to vibrant pink when tonic water or citrus is added, a fun party trick in a glass.

Has gin become too gimmicky? To be sure, it's hard to stand out in a crowded marketplace. We can't fault gin-makers for wanting to entertain us with a backstory or a bit of novelty. But it's worth remembering that since most gin is consumed in cocktails—not straight up—versatility may be the strongest selling point a gin can offer. A great Martini doesn't require a gimmick: it just requires a great gin.

**#1. Uncle Val's Zested Gin; \$39, 96 points.** Warm star anise, cinnamon bark and a teasing whiff of cocoa nibs perfumes this gin. The palate opens with a sweet, tingly mintiness that lifts off the palate, winding into a citrusy finish laced with lime peel astringency. —Kara Newman

#### UNCLE VAL'S / ZESTED GIN