



Local Proof: The Gateway Gin from Captive Spirits

by Sonja Groset

Seattle-based [Captive Spirits Distilling](#) has captivated gin lovers since they opened in 2012, and launched their flagship Big Gin. Around that same time however, owner and distiller Ben Capdevielle was also creating something a little different. Inspired by the fact that many of the world's premium spirits are aged in used bourbon barrels, Capdevielle was also aging Big Gin. Their Bourbon-Barrel Aged Big Gin also captivated judges in 2014, making them the first American gin to win top honors at the International Wine and Spirits Competition in London.

Capdevielle gets used bourbon barrels from Heaven Hill Distillery in Kentucky, which have been "retired" after about six or seven years. He then fills them with Big Gin and ages it for six months. The results are a tawny-hued spirit without the sharp edges or pungent juniper flavor characteristic of gin. "It's a gateway gin for brown spirits drinkers that want to consider having some gin, or even for first timers," says Capdevielle. "For true ginners, it's fun as hell. You don't use it like you would a London Dry-style of gin, but rather treat it more like a whiskey."

Capdevielle likes to use the Old Tom-style gin in a Negroni, but says it ends up tasting somewhere between a Negroni and a Boulevardier. "The juniper punch has been softened, and the warming spices have been highlighted," says Capdevielle of the gin's flavor. The time in the barrel brings out the flavors of some of the aromatics used to flavor the gin, like cassia cinnamon, cardamom, grains of paradise and Tasmanian pepperberry.

This is not a gin for Martinis or even traditional gin and tonics. Capdevielle's favorite cocktail with the Bourbon-Barrel Aged Big Gin is an Old Fashioned. "It's almost like a warm weather Old Fashioned," he says. "It's made for drinking out on a deck. Just take about two ounces of the Bourbon-Barreled Big Gin, a few dashes of Angostura, a touch of sweetener and serve over ice." Capdevielle also instructs to avoid crushing any fruit in the glass, but instead sippers should take a strip of orange peel and express the oils over the drink then garnish with a cherry.

Over at [Trellis](#) restaurant in Kirkland, Washington's Heathman Hotel, spirit and wine director Justin Doll likes to stock the bar shelves with locally-produced products like the Bourbon-Barreled Big Gin. He works diligently to apply the same farm-to-table chef philosophy of the kitchen through to the bar. "So many of our guests like to eat and drink locally," he says. "So products like Big Gin produced right here in Washington are a great addition to our bar. They get great accolades that people read about, which also makes them want to explore some of our locally-produced spirits."

"With the Bourbon-Barreled Big Gin, we love the botanical nuances but are even more intrigued by some of the flavors that time on oak and char lends to the gin," says Doll. "It develops this great color, nice vanilla notes and a bright cardamom flavor, making it really lovely to work with."

On the cocktail menu Trellis has created for this summer, they created the Rain City Delight, combining Bourbon-Barreled Big Gin with Luxardo liqueur, Cardamaro and grapefruit juice. "We wanted to accentuate the hard spices," explains Doll. "The addition of grapefruit juice really brightens up the drink and also makes it really refreshing. It's perfect for summer weather."

Rain City Delight, courtesy of Trellis

1 ½ ounces Bourbon Barreled Big Gin
¼ ounce Luxardo liqueur
½ ounce Cardamaro
2 ounces fresh grapefruit juice
2 dashes cardamom bitters

Combine ingredients into a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake gently and strain into a Collins glass filled with ice. Top with soda water.