

In Good SPIRITS

When it comes to quality spirits, it's no longer necessary to look overseas. **Drinks expert Christopher Cooper** presents the best of British



Your expert guide

Christopher Cooper
The director of wine and drinks consultancy Drinkonomics (drinkonomics.co.uk) approaches his topic as a true expert, yet in a fresh and accessible manner. With an enviable career carved at Soho House, Gordon Ramsay, and Corbin & King, Chris's expertise has earned him an established reputation as a respected and renowned voice worth heeding.

Whether you're creating a culinary masterpiece or mixing the ultimate cocktail, it's all about ingredient provenance.

Increasingly, bartenders and mixologists are looking to champion home-grown produce and, with a little know-how, you can do the same with your own drinks cabinet. So, whether it's pre-prandial *aperitifs*, spirits to mix into food-flattering cocktails, or *digestifs* to round off an excellent meal, check out the very best liquor the British Isles has to offer. Our guide assures you kudos amongst friends and peers; allowing you to introduce them to new, novel, and top-quality UK-born spirits.

Clear favourites



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1. BEST FOR A GIN MARTINI

Tanqueray No. Ten

PRICE £32 WAITROSE.COM

Why Developed to create the ultimate martini, No. Ten has a unique, full-bodied character of white grapefruit, lime, orange, juniper, coriander and a hint of chamomile. It makes a dry yet perfectly flavoursome martini and is a true homage to the brand's passion and attention to detail.

Try with Raw oysters and fish – or in a martini ahead of Rack of Pork (p60)

2. BEST FOR A G&T

The Botanist Gin

PRICE £35.35 BBR.COM

Why A truly artisanal, small-batch, hand-crafted treat from Islay, combining classic aromatics with locally-foraged botanicals. This distinctive, complex floral gin is rich and mellow with cool, fresh flavours of apple mint, spring woodlands, summer flowers, honey, thistle, and Islay peat smoke.

Try with Aromatic and spicy dishes, like Lamb and Runner Bean Curry (p63)

3. BEST FOR A VODKA MARTINI

Element 29 Vodka

PRICE £32.99 SELFRIDGES.COM

Why Created from British wheat, Element 29 is distilled in a century-old copper pot still, allowing for a gentle, precise distillation and a fuller expression of natural flavours. Superbly clean with a mellow mouthfeel, tasting elegantly of cracked black pepper, aniseed, grass, hay and citrus.

Try with Oysters, smoked salmon, or decadent Caviar with Potato Rösti (p132)

4. BEST TO IMPRESS

Japanese Gin, The Cambridge Distillery

PRICE £64.99 SELFRIDGES.COM

Why London meets Tokyo in this world first, blending traditional juniper with Japanese botanicals including *shiso*, sesame, *sansho* pepper and *yuzu*. This gin is a real talking point: unique and elegant with exciting earthy and nutty notes and Asian green vegetal flavours.

Try with Stuffed Calamari (p45), drunk long with tonic



Element 29 vodka's hint of aniseed makes it unique

Images by Sarah Bayliss



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4. THE WILD CARD

Kamm & Sons

£28.86 AMATHUSDINKS.COM

Why Nobody can really describe Kamm & Sons – this drink has no official definition! Made from forty five botanicals, it's a kind of mellow, smoother Campari with elements of British gin and hints of Jägermeister and Pimms. But not quite like any of those... completely unique and a great bottle to have for those who like to experiment with cocktails; a must-try.

Try with Raspberry & Amaretto Trifle (p64), or in a 'Britz Spritz' or Negroni

Mixing it up

1. BEST FOR CREATIVE COCKTAILS

Blackdown Sussex Bianco Vermouth

PRICE £24 THEGOODWINEHOP.CO.UK

Why England's first bianco vermouth is smooth, refined, and flavoursome, using local herbs and spices including silver birch sap to infuse fortified Sussex-made wine. Expect chamomile, woodland and juniper aromas, creamy and spicy notes, and a smooth finish with a hint of sweetness.

Try with A British dry gin, mixed into a martini to precede classic fish & chips (p48)

2. BEST CONVERSATION STARTER

Tarquin's Cornish Pastis

PRICE £36.95 BBR.COM

Why This anise-flavoured spirit is similar to Pernod or Ricard – a creation fusing classic international gin ingredients with foraged gorse flowers from the local clifftops. Fresh and aromatic and very lively to drink; full of orange and coconut, and salty gorse flower aromas balanced with orange zest.

Try with Salad of Heirloom Carrots (p32), or with sweet prunes, raisins or liquorice

3. THE LAID-BACK NUMBER

The Duppy Share Rum

PRICE £36.70 SPIRITEDWINES.CO.UK

Why This has a British connection and is worth a mention! Creator George Frost sourced the ultimate golden, cask-aged rums from the former British colonies of Jamaica and Barbados. Blended for the UK, it's a great sipping rum with a fruit and vanilla character and a smooth, spicy finish.

Try with Chocolate desserts, salted caramel, fruit cake, or sweet Gypsy Tart (p84)



After-dinner drinks

BEST FOR A WHISKY SOUR

Haig Club

PRICE £45 TESCO.COM

Why David Beckham's whisky looks super-sleek and very cool; much like the man himself. Made at Haig's Cameronbridge distillery - seen by many as Scotland's hidden gem - this single-grain whisky is the next trend in whisky: a fresh, clean, ultra-smooth style featuring butterscotch and toffee flavours.

Try with Fresh fish starters, pomegranate salads, or The WI's Chicken Mousse (p76)

BEST CROWD-PLEASER

Somerset Cider Brandy 20 Year-Old

PRICE £74.10 HEDONISM.CO.UK

Why This amazing Calvados-like barrel-aged cider brandy is released annually on Apple Day in October. It may be old but it certainly doesn't lose any of its signature West Country character - with baked apples, brown sugar, and brandy notes, it's smooth and complex with Christmas pudding richness.

Try with Tart tatin, or Spiced Pear & Apple Tart (p56)

BEST UNDISCOVERED SECRET

Fekin Irish Whiskey

PRICE £23.69 MASTEROFMALT.COM

Why Contrary to its cheeky name, this premium Irish liquor has finesse and is perfectly balanced. This playful spirit has its own unique character - it's silky-smooth, with gentle malty elements and a honeyed finish which alternates between the lighter, fruitier and heavier, oakier notes.

Try with Chocolate, on its own, or with *petit fours* like Lavender Shortbread (p78)

BEST SIPPING WHISKY

Laphroaig 18 Year-Old

PRICE £109 HEDONISM.CO.UK

Why Islay whiskies are salty and briny. Here, eighteen years in-barrel creates deep, pronounced flavours and a breakfast-y character, with flavours of banana loaf; even coffee.

Try with Macadamia Brownies (p149) - but best simply sipped



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