

Meet the Maker: Durbanville Distillery



By [Samantha Snedorf](#)

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It's time for another distillery tour segment. I want to throwback to my quick road trip out to Meerendal wine estate in Durbanville, situated about 30 minutes outside of Cape Town.

The distillery as it turns out is not run as part of the wine estate, but rather as a separate entity which allows for them to focus on their distinctive gin and distillation process.



Durbanville Distillery is unique for many reasons, the first being that they craft their own barley based spirits which not many distilleries do. In-house distillation is very time consuming and complex which is why many distilleries prefer to bring in their neutral spirits.

The father and son engineering duo, designed and built their own stills which indicates why they prefer to do things themselves, but it doesn't end there. You see, these stills are special in that they make use of the cold press method. This complicated distillation process entails using a vacuum to lower the boiling point of the gin. As soon as you walk through the quaint wine tasting room, into the icy distillery you feel the difference in temperature.

Exactly how much does the temperature get lowered you ask?

The normal boiling point for gin is about 78/79°C but once placed inside this still, that number is brought down to an astounding 28°C or less.

What does that mean for the gin?

Well, a lower boiling point means that there is a softer flavour to the gin – so soft in fact that it can even be consumed as a sipping gin. It also means that the botanical flavours are stronger and more predominant as they are boiled at a lower heat, keeping more of their delicate essential oils intact.

As if all of this wasn't enough, it turns out that there is one more thing that makes this gin unusual.

Ninety-nine percent of gins are crafted with what is referred to as the trinity of botanicals. Juniper obviously, coriander which is lemony and finally angelica root which serves as a fixative. This final ingredient allows the flavour of any other botanicals added to stick to the gin after the final distillation. Durbanville gin does not contain Angelica root which indicates to me the possibility of the cold distillation preserving much stronger and stable botanical flavours, creating no need for the fixative as they retain more of their essential oils than they would in a higher heat. This is just my guess as I, unfortunately, did not get to meet the distillers themselves to ask.

Along with the juniper and coriander, they also use aniseed which is liquorice flavoured, cassia bark which is cinnamon flavoured and cloves which give it a very hearty, warm and spiced taste.



Cloves particularly can present themselves as an overwhelming flavour so the balance in this gin is a fine line that they have managed to perfect. It certainly tastes something special and unlike any other gin I have ever experienced and I scooped up a bottle along with their rum.

Did I mention their rum?

Durbanville's line spans across a vodka, gin and three varieties of rum. The rum is also special because it is soft on the palate and very smooth. The rum distillation requires that sugar be added to the spirit and in Durbanville's case, they use molasses. When sipping this rum neat and on the rocks, I found the distinct taste of molasses on my palate which lead to mixed feelings inside of me. When I was younger and severely anaemic, my mom used to force me to have a tablespoon of raw molasses every day. It was pure misery and tasted horrible, which is why I immediately recognised the taste (#tortured memories) but the pleasant surprise was to find that I didn't hate it this time around.

I have to admit that I have already polished off my bottle of rum and have done a lot of work on the gin too, so I may be due for a return visit.

If you are interested in buying their gin, rums or vodka, you can check out their [website](#) where you can scoop up a bottle or two. Their gins are unbelievably affordable at only R269 a bottle, and they also offer various gift packs which are worth a look.

If you do happen to be in the Cape Town area, I would recommend popping into the wine estate for a quick tasting and a bite to eat. There are even playgrounds for kids outside to occupy the little ones while you sip on some gorgeous distilled spirits.

Read the [original Meet the Maker](#) on SamSamButDifferent.

ABOUT SAMANTHA SNEDORF

Snedorf is a qualified journalist and full-time blogger. She is obsessed with gin and is trying to bring light to the enormous number of gins and talented crafters that we have in South Africa. She films weekly videos where she samples different gins and focuses on their different botanicals. In the near future, she would love to host gin tastings and sell the handcrafted botanical bags she creates. She adores travel and wants to explore the world whilst drinking gin and taking beautiful photos.

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