



Creating Gin from Vodka – Using DETOX to Re-Tox

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This is a COVID success story. Needless to say, these sort of wins are hugely significant during these difficult times.

There I was; about two weeks into this new world, around April 7, 2020. It was beginning to settle in that this "event" was not going to be a single episode but more like an endless horror movie marathon.

Among other new experiences, I realized that I did not have enough Gin to last me until that time - not in the distant future, according to our president - when America would emerge from the pandemic in a better way that "far exceeded any other country", because, after all, dealing with a pandemic is a competition, right? But enough of that.

Because I enjoy a martini at the end of the day, I decided to employ my own proven DETOX™ process (the DEstabilization Theory Of Expansion), to help me through this difficult situation. That is, I would DETOX to Re-Tox.

The predicament was that I had about one week's worth of Gin remaining but our governor had closed the liquor stores fearing that these valuable bastions of coping would become the cause of further trauma rather than its solution. Nearby New Jersey chose not to enact similar regulations, however, the small, privately-owned shops were closed as well.

As most of my readers are aware, the DETOX process states that one must lay out a clear vision for success and then list at least three options to achieve this vision. Then there must be three potential outcomes for each option. What this does is allows us to select one of nine possible outcomes, ideally the one with greatest possibility and reward, but be prepared for each of the eight other potential consequences.

My vision was simple; "I will be enjoying a martini at the end of each day." Without belaboring the detail, my three options were to either beg my neighbors to release their vast supplies, steal it from local liquor stores under the cover of darkness, or to make my own. One can imagine the nine possible outcomes for these three options but, suffice it to say, I went with the last option. Under that I chose the outcome that embraced foraging through my own resources as well as utilizing the Internet to fill in the blanks on how to make it work.

The one major epiphany that I had came as the result of finding a particular website on a quick and inexpensive method for making Gin. I needed to decide if I was going to distill my own Gin in the basement or find a shortcut. When I discovered that I could convert vodka - defined as a pure spirit- to Gin virtually overnight, my heart soared. After all, we had a bottle of vodka in our house and no one consumes it except perhaps my teenage daughter when she gets together with her college girlfriends. As a result, I almost doubled my existing potential supply of Gin.

After collecting the one vodka bottle we had, I needed to order spices but, in particular, juniper berries as they are the catalyst that converts raw spirits to Gin. Who knew? I was aware that Gin was made with juniper berries but I was under the impression they were more as a popular flavor infusion rather than a gifted chemical agent for change.

Next up was to place an order on the Internet for spices. I ordered the following:

- Juniper Berries
- Cardamom Pods
- Dried Bay Leaves
- Coriander Seeds
- Rosemary
- Allspice
- Lavender

I began receiving supplies within two short days; well within my burn rate for existing Gin rations.

The next step was to grab my half bottle of vodka, about .75 L and add about 10 Juniper Berries directly to the bottle. I sealed it, shook it slightly and then left it on its side overnight for at least 12 hours to allow the Juniper Berries to work their magic.

I am not a big fan of vodka, particularly in its current presentation as something that is better infused with fruits and vegetables. The space that vodka takes up now in liquor stores is amazing and telling in the fact that consumers need to alter its flavor in order to enjoy it (I say that in a non-complementary way, implying that you must enjoy it raw or not at all, knowing that I'm about to list several infusions to my newly created Gin. However, the slight alterations to taste the result from this next step do not bury the true nature of the Gin. And when I drink it, I am not adding juices or solid objects, except perhaps an olive here or there...)

Moving on, the next step is to infuse the Gin. What I do next, which differs from most others I believe, is to make small batches from the main supply of converted vodka. About 60 to 90 minutes prior to anticipated consumption, I grab a 200 mL jam jar and pour in the new Gin, including any juniper berries that travel along with it. To this, I add the following:

- One half a cardamom pod
- 3 to 4 Coriander Seeds
- a pinch of Allspice
- five sprigs of Rosemary
- four sprigs of Lavender
- tiny piece of Bay Leaf

Next I seal the lid, shake up my new creation and place it in the ice tray of the freezer. I let this sit for about an hour.

This does a couple things: first of all, it allows the Gin to steep and take on the subtle flavors of the spices.

Secondly, it makes the Gin cold. Some like to use a shaker with ice, but this adds a watered-down taste which I do not like and very frustrating when I request a martini at a restaurant.

The third reason is of the greatest value for me; it forces me to take at least one hour to do something else. In the past, I would come in from work, open the freezer, grab my \$45 bottle of Bombay Sapphire, pour in a martini glass after lacing the glass ever so lightly with vermouth and olive juice, and drink it. Within five minutes, I was feeling the numbness from the Gin and within an hour, I was ready for bed. Being a process guy, this was not what I wanted. By adding 60 to 90 minutes to process, I was forcing myself to do something in between, most often exercise. This, for obvious reasons, made me feel good and well but, after exercise and a shower, that martini was well-earned and tasted so much better.

Adding to that endorphin-based high, was the fact that the vodka I use is the cheapest in the liquor store. To be honest, it is not the cheapest, but very inexpensive. When I see a Russian word on a plastic gallon of Kentucky-made vodka, a steer clear. I usually go for the \$14 Gibson Vodka. But compared to my \$45 bottle of Sapphire, it is a home run for my stingy nature.

Now, if I did a taste test with gin connoisseurs, would they choose Eric's gin over Hendrick's? I don't know and I don't care. Gin, for me, tastes even better based on the experience and familiarity. I and my family spent almost half a year in southern France, in a small town surrounded by a wine cooperative. We drank local Cote du Rhone every day. Is it the best Cote du Rhone? According to the experts, no. But when we find a bottle of this wine when we are back in the States, we love it. The taste conjures thoughts and memories of the wonderful chapter in our lives and these experiences are infused in the flavor of this wine. The same is true for my Gin.

The other thing I do with my Gin is I tailor it to the people I am visiting. We have friends whose family is from Finland, so I make them a batch, wrap it in a brown paper label and customize it to their background. In this case, I called the batch, "Batch #9: The Winter War" because it was this great standoff against the Russians in the 19th century that defines part of Finnish patriotism. I also added the spice of their national flower (Lily of the Valley) to the batch. I did the same when visiting friends in the mountains here in Pennsylvania. Their house was amongst the evergreens and they called it "Pineapple". So, naturally, I found some local pine needles and a dash of pineapple and added it to the batch. This is fun and memorable for all, even if you do not like Gin – God forbid!

So this is how I used DETOX to re-toxify my life, or restock my bar. What is particularly humorous, is that I followed the introduction of my gin with three months of abstinence when I did not drink it all. This is not because of the flavor of my Gin, it was more a challenge from my daughter that we carried out together during this difficult time.

So, lastly, you are probably wondering what name I gave to my new creation but I would think that this would be fairly apparent. Reach out to me anytime for your own jelly jam jar, logically labelled "Gin-Eric Gin"...

Let's get started.