

Crafted by Karven

A new local gin has purity at its heart

ALEX KIRICHUK, a Master Distiller with more than 25 years' experience in crafting spirits, describes himself as "without mercy" when it comes to creating the purest gin he can for newly released Karven Premium New Zealand Dry Gin.

Karven is a small-batch gin, crafted at Alex's Puhoi-based distillery and then bottled and hand-labelled by a small team in Riverhead, just 100 bottles at a time. Karven co-founder, Stephen Menzies, says the name is inspired by the handcrafted nature of their product and the unique New Zealand landscape, carved over time and home to a diversity of distinctive flora. "Our whole business philosophy is around creating the purest spirits we can and enhancing these with unique New Zealand botanicals."

In Karven Gin, those botanicals include native manuka flower, as well as New Zealand lemon, grapefruit and lemon myrtle, all of which are foraged from orchards around the Puhoi distillery. The remaining juniper, Ceylon cinnamon, angelica root and coriander seed are imported and certified organic. The resulting gin is fresh, sophisticated and delicately floral with bursts of fresh citrus. Its smooth taste comes from Alex's innovative distillation techniques and an uncompromising desire to achieve the purest gin he can. "We use a very high quality GMO-free grain alcohol," explains Stephen, "and then Alex triple filters it to get rid of any impurities so that it's incredibly smooth – the process is labour intensive but the result is worth it. We believe that clean, pure spirits not only taste great, but they are also more friendly on the body." And it isn't just the flavour turning heads. Stephen and business partner Simon Red-



path worked with Unified Brands to develop the Karven brand design and strategy, which Stephen says has been a hit. "One of the local store owners sold a bottle to a lady and offered to put it in a bag for her and she said, "No, I want to walk down the street so that everyone can see it." Karven has

begun local distribution into bars and liquor stores, but the team is eyeing the export market too. "There's an appetite for good quality New Zealand spirits internationally, and we're about to send our first shipment into Australia," says Stephen. "Our philosophy means we have to manage our growth carefully; we're premium, small batch and high quality. Each bottle is time-consuming and expensive to make, but it's this type of product we want and that's where we want to be positioned – we don't want to compromise on any of that." Karven has already won an Outstanding Silver at the IWSC and double gold at the China Wine and Spirits Awards.

Next up is a New Zealand vermouth, spiced rum, and oak-aged vodka. "We rest our vodka in an oak barrel infused with botanicals," says Stephen. "We're very excited about all of these and expect to bring them to market in the next couple of months."

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