

A white gift box with a black ribbon bow, featuring a logo that reads "THE GIN BOX CRAFT GIN CLUB". The box is surrounded by a variety of dried botanicals including cinnamon sticks, citrus slices, berries, and lavender flowers.

"Gin has long been enjoyed in South Africa and, for decades, we have been drinking many imported British gins, because, up until recently, we had never really 'South Africanized' it. In addition, it had always been drunk with a simple tonic, but it could be adapted and made more original by adding hints of flavour, garnishes like pomegranates or rosemary, through to even changing the colour of the gin," says Buckham.



Star player of the drinks cabinet

Global growth of gin has increased year on year, accelerating dramatically for the past three. New consumers and product innovation are the driving forces behind the sector's international success. According to *The Guardian*, British drinkers have been quaffing gin in record amounts during 2016, buying 40 million bottles in a spending spree that outstripped sales growth in beer and sparkling wine.

SA, however, has the benefit of a massively diverse flora that provides botanical ingredients unlike anywhere else in the world, rooibos and fynbos among two of the most common examples. In fact, SA is the only country in the world with an entire plant kingdom inside its borders. This, together with a local appetite for entrepreneurship has seen many distilleries popping up, crafting often adventurous, small batch gins to satisfy any palate.



Lorna Scott adds female fynbos flair to SA's gin segment

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There are more than 75 local gin brands being produced by 50 local gin distillers dotted around the country. While many drinkers are apprehensive to try new brands, not knowing where to start, The Gin Box eases the confusion by acquainting its members with a new brand each month.

"There's no doubt that there's more bravery and fun with gin drinking, because there's more versatility with it. In the same way that whisky experienced its own period of popularity, which will always endure, and craft breweries exploded onto the scene, gin has rapidly emerged as the new star player of the drinks cabinet and bar scene," adds Buckham.

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