Sloe Gin World Champions Announced

Monday 15 December, 2014

Glasgow-based "liquid deli" ***Demijohn*** has been crowned Sloe Ginster World Champion for 2014. The annual competition is hosted by The George Inn in Frant near Tunbridge Wells on the Kent/Sussex border.

The world's finest artisan sloe gin makers gathered at the popular village pub, to vie for the coveted title on 10th December.

Demijohn, which also has outlets in Edinburgh, York and Oxford, took the award from among professional entrants, ships its liqueurs worldwide through its mail order operation

Winner of the Home-Made category was Grace Winey, originally from the Portuguese Azores islands, who travelled down from her home in Bury-St Edmunds in Suffolk, with her American husband to attend.

Sloe Seduction based in Marden, Kent was named Gold Medal Winner for South East England. Sloe Seduction is also known for its award-winning sloe gin chocolates, sloe gin marmalade and sloe gin chutney.

Demijohn's winning sloe gin described as, "Not too sweet, not too dry and a perfect drink for the winter," is based on a family recipe dating back to 1842 and made by a husband and wife team in Worcestershire. Although the recipe is a closely guarded secret, Demijohn MD Angus Ferguson advises those making their own concoction "Never infuse for less than 10 months to ensure a rich and deep flavour."

Upon being presented with the award Angus said, "We are over the moon – I only hope there will be enough left this year for others to try it at Christmas."

Sloe Seduction owner Katharine Hook is also a believer of the slow approach to sloe gin making. She spends much time riding her off road Suzuki motorcycle, checking the progress of the sloes.

"Never rush to pick the berries - let them mature naturally", she said, adding "Once picked I wash them gently then personally select the best sloes, before pricking to help infuse into the gin and sugar – the best time to drink is the second Christmas when it has had over a year to mature gracefully."

Demijohn's sloe gin costs £30.50 for a 50cl bottle. A **20cl** bottle of Sloe Seduction gin is £11.95.

Sloe gin is a red liqueur flavoured with sloe (blackthorn) drupes, a smaller relative of the plum, normally made with alcohol content between 15 and 30 percent by volume. It is made by infusing gin with the bitter-tasting drupes using sugar is to extract the juices from the fruit. By tradition the berries are picked after the first frost of winter. Each drupe should be hand pricked with a thorn taken from the bush on which it grew. Connoisseurs say that the drupes may only be pricked with a silver pin or fork

Some modern protagonists pick the ripe sloes earlier and freeze them, claiming that this not only splits the drupes and replaces the pricking stage, but by analogy to ice wine, the freezing changes the flavour of the drupes.

All proceeds of the event are donated to the MS Society which supports people with Multiple Sclerosis www.mssociety.org.uk.

Editors' Notes: Two miles south of Tunbridge Wells, Frant is bordered by EridgePark and is on the High Weald Walk making it a popular stop for walkers. The heart of the local community, the busy GeorgeInn has its own golf society, "the Gofers" and is a meeting point for several local clubs and societies. Winter is enlivened by the Monday night quiz, special food nights, and darts competitions.

Dating to around 1750, the traditional country pub, with two bars and restaurant, traditional English food with continental influences, hand drawn beers, oak beams, a large enclosed garden and dogs lying by log fires in winter – The George Inn makes an ideal setting to judge the most traditional of Christmas liqueurs.

Media Contact: Contact George Shaw T 01892 750851

Media:



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Scan Me:

M: 07860 695555 E: shaw.geo@gmail.com

Photos available

Demijohn: www.demijohn.co.uk

Sloe Seduction: www.sloeseduction.co.uk

Grace Winey: gracewiney@hotmail.com T: 01284 752 822

The GeorgeInn

36 High Street, Frant, Tunbridge Wells TN3 9DU

T: 01892 730350

www.thegeorgeinnfrant.co.uk

Company Contact:

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E. support[@]pressat.co.uk

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