Sloe Gin World Championships

Monday 4 August, 2014

Frant Pub to Host Sloe Gin World Championships

Where to pick the best sloes, wild mushroom foraging and Christmas wreath making with Moondown

The George pub in Frant, East Sussex near Tunbridge Wells is to again host the Sloe Gin World Championships on Wednesday 10th December from 1.00pm.

Artisan sloe gin makers from across the world will gather at the popular village pub on the Kent/Sussex border, to vie for the coveted Sloe Ginster World Champion title for 2014. This Christmas will mark the 6th year of the popular annual event which began when pub locals began arguing over the perfect sloe gin recipe.

Dating back 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.

Sloe gin is a red liqueur flavoured with sloe (blackthorn) drupes, a smaller relative of the plum, normally made with an alcohol content between 15 and 30 percent by volume.

It is traditionally made by infusing gin with the bitter-tasting drupes using sugar is to extract the sloe juices are extracted from the fruit.

“Hand crafted sloe gins are generally superior to commercially produced branded sloe gin liqueurs are made by flavouring cheaper neutral grain spirits, producing an inferior flavour akin to a fruit cordial taste,” said pub landlord Greg Elliot.

Sloe gin is made from ripe sloes, which by tradition are picked after the first frost of winter. Each drupe should be hand pricked with a thorn taken from the blackthorn bush on which it grew. Connoisseurs says that the drupes may only be pricked with a metal fork or pin if is made of silver.

Some modern protagonists pick the sloes earlier and freeze them, claiming that this not only splits the drupes and replace 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.

Moondown mushrooming and Christmas wreaths

Locals looking for advice as to where they can forage wild sloes can visit Moondown website www.moondown.co.uk. Based at Bells Yew Green, near Tunbridge Wells, the company teaches county crafts, making Christmas wreaths and hosts wild mushroom foraging courses.

Sloe Gin Recipe:

Fill a wide-necked jar half way with pricked drupes and add 4 ounces (110 g) of sugar for each 1 imperial pint (570 ml) of sloes. Fill the jar with gin, seal and turn several times to mix, then stored in a cool, dark place. Turn every day for the first two weeks, then weekly, for at least three months. The gin develops a deep ruby colour. The liqueur is poured off and the drupes removed. Some sloe ginsters reuse the berries infused in white wine or cider, made into jam, as a basis for a chutney, or a filling for liqueur pudding or chocolates. The liqueur is then filtered into clean bottle or and left to stand for another week. The sweetness can be adjusted to taste at the end of the process by addition of more sugar. Allowing the drupes sufficient time to ensure full extraction, the gin develops an almond-like essence and aromatic flavour from the sloes' stones. In some recipes, the process is accelerated with the inclusion a few drops of almond essence, cloves and a cinnamon stick of cinnamon.

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 George pub has its own golf society, “the Gofers” and is a meeting point for several local clubs and societies. Winter

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is enlivened by the Monday night quiz, special food nights, and darts competitions.

Media Contact: To review or arrange a review or competition prize, contact George Shaw, Avocado Media T 01892 750851

M: 07860 695555 geo@avocadomedia.co.uk

The GeorgeInn

36 High Street, Frant, Tunbridge Wells TN3 9DU

T: 01892 730350

www.frant.info/home/community/directory/accommodation-and-food/the-george-inn.html

Company Contact:

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