

# Drink your veggies

*Cocktails are becoming a healthier tippie thanks to a growing number of mixologists who are adding greens and other goodies to their marvellous mixes.*

Words John Bishop. Recipe The Botanical Distillery. Photography Aimee Finlay Magne.  
Styling Aimee Finlay Magne and Maria Fernandez Salom

A kale martini is just one of the many combo cocktails in the 'drink your vegetables' trend. We're not talking about strawberry daiquiris, or adding a stick of celery to your Bloody Mary, but the practice of blending veggies with shots of alcohol to make alcoholic cocktails for vegans, or just healthier cocktails for anyone who wants them. Locally grown organic vegetables worked into a cocktail with some alcoholic oomph, often organic and made in sustainable environmentally friendly ways.

In their first class lounge in Dubai, airline Emirates serves a signature cocktail: a plum and coriander martini which has vodka, fresh plums, coriander leaves, crème de cassis, lemon juice and sugar syrup.

In 2015 a dozen mixologists across America gave their favourite alcohol and veggie drinks to Wine Enthusiast magazine. Included were the Surfboard Fizz which uses a quarter of a cup of watermelon with almond syrup, honey and soda. The Bloody Beet adds beetroot, ginger, celery and tomatoes – all juiced – to vodka, a healthy take on the traditional Bloody Mary. Other vegetables commonly used are carrot, capsicums and chillies.

Closer to home the trend is inspiring the birth of healthier cocktails, with The Botanical Distillery on Auckland's Waiheke Island only too happy to indulge us when we asked them to create a beetroot-inspired gin martini recipe especially for Good magazine.

The Botanical Distillery hosts workshops to teach people the art of distilling botanical plants to create your own bespoke gin. They also teach the art of creating aromatherapy-inspired fragrances.

Gin is traditionally made using the native American juniper berry and at the Botanical Distillery lemon and orange peel, orris and liquorice root, cardamin and coriander are also part of the mix. Says The Botanical Distillery's Helen Elscot, one of New Zealand's leading experts in the art of distillation and fragrance, "What we do with our gins is also put a wild part in, we like to use native New Zealand herbs as well – so you could create a kawakawa-inspired gin or a horopito gin which is lovely and peppery, whatever's in season and in your garden as well."

Elscot says that at a stretch, you could even say the gin component of this beetroot-inspired gin martini is healthy: Not only does it contain organic botanical ingredients, according to history the juniper-flavoured spirit used to be distilled and drunk in large quantities in parts of Europe as a substitute for water because the water was undrinkable. People also used it medicinally and as a way of protecting themselves from the Bubonic Plague.

Who are we to argue with that? **g**

## Red Gin Martini

*Either love them, or hate them, beetroot is a super-charged vegetable with powerful nutrients with a distinctly sweet and earthy flavour, and a foodie favourite in celebrity cooking show menus. Beets, as they are sometimes called, are a well-known source of folic acid, potassium, magnesium and iron as well as vitamins A, B6 and C. They contain nutrients called betalains which are powerful antioxidants and have been shown to have anti-inflammatory actions in the body.*

**Makes 14 ice cubes Serves 14**

### For the ice cubes

**1 organic whole beetroot  
(150gm, peeled and  
roughly chopped)  
500ml water**

**25-50ml gin**

### For the garnish

**1 organic orange  
(use the zest without  
the pith and twist)  
Horseradish or Daikon  
radish (sliced thinly  
in circles)  
Rosemary flowers**

**Beetroot icecubes** Place the beetroot in the water and bring to the boil for 10 minutes. Take off the heat and allow to cool completely.

Strain the beetroot and pour the liquid into ice cube moulds (keep a dedicated tray for your beetroot cubes as they will stain the tray). Put in the freezer overnight.

**To make a Red Gin Martini** Fill your martini glasses with ice cubes to chill them, or place them in the freezer, so they are ice cold for when you are ready to pour your Red Gin Martini.

Place one red ice cube in the chilled small martini glass and strain the gin over it. Garnish with a sweet orange zest, radish slice and a delicate rosemary flower.

**Handy hint** Use disposable latex gloves when peeling and chopping the beetroot to stop staining. If your hands are a little pink, use freshly squeezed lemon juice to remove the stains. The leftover cooked beetroot can be added to summer salads with goat's cheese feta and rocket leaves.



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