

Jozi's first artisan distillery by Mirari Gin

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The City of Gold's first artisan distillery is nestled in the heart of Johannesburg's trendy Maboneng precinct. Established in 2013, *Time Anchor Distillery* is a place where creativity and science merge into the harmonious, delicate creation of hand-made and distinctly artisanal spirits - including their unique and fragrant Mirari Gin Range, created by Chief Distiller Shanna-Rae Wilby. While spirits have a masculine image, Wilby is one of the significant women who are changing this narrative. She heads up a distillery that has progressed from a 100-litre holding capacity to 100,000 litres since its founding. It is an astonishing progression in a few short years.



In a recent trend reveal consumers with discerning palettes are turning towards the artisanal – seeking handmade craft beer, coffee and spirits, created using traditional methods and enlivened by modern creativity. Within this movement, the image of gin has shifted, from standard gin and tonics, solely flavoured by lemon garnishes, to the epitome of modern luxury with a bespoke quality. Locally, consumers are moving over to luxurious artisan gins infused with a range of fragrant botanicals and made in South African micro-distilleries.

The Latin roots of the word 'Mirari' are based in a sense of wonder – rooted in the miraculous and describing the act of observation and admiration. It is an apt descriptor for a range of gin that presents a unique and explosively sensory experience.

The *Mirari Gin* range has three variants, each with their own unique signature. TAD's [Amber African Botanical](#) Gin bears the mark of 13 botanicals that includes multiple botanicals that are indigenous to South Africa, including, Honeybush, Rose Geranium, Sour Figs and Boekenhout Honey. Each 500l litre batch of their [Pink Damask Rose Gin](#), on the other hand, is distilled with over 1000 damask roses, chamomile, grapefruit, cubeb berries, green cardamom, and subsequently infused with rose water. The [Blue Orient Gin](#) counterpart represents a traditional spiced gin, bearing the flavours of Cardamom, Grapefruit, Grains of Paradise, Ginger and Cassia Bark. Naturally coloured through the subtle infusion of blue pea flowers, the gin magically transforms from blue to pink when tonic is added.



Shanna-Rae Wilby

It is evident that with each variant of Mirari Gin, Wilby has focused on the creation of unique and innovative flavours, with captivating personal signatures and striking sensory narratives at their heart.

This is bespoke artisanal gin that tells a story: created with passion and memorable to all, from their very first sip. It is artisanal and artistic, with bottles that bear a hand-written batch number as a testament to their handmade conception.

The creation of gin is a delicate art. *Time Anchor Distillery's* first gin went through sixty recipes in a trial-and-error period of invention until Wilby arrived at the final version, while the *Mirari Gin* range took 14 months of development. It is a labour-intensive process. To create their various gins everything is done on site, including distilling with botanicals, in a process that takes approximately six weeks.

'It's very similar to baking', Wilby says, 'Once you have a specific recipe, you don't alter from it'.

This is where the 'time' in *Time Anchor Distillery* derives its name: from the meticulous and methodical patience required to distil their spirits. The focus on a craft philosophy extends to every bottle being hand-labelled, hand-boxed and hand-cartoned to keep the process as authentic as possible. This ethos forms the 'anchor' of the name, as central to the *Time Anchor Distillery's* spirits is ensuring integrity in the process of artisanal creations, with a farm-to-glass sensibility that keeps sustainability in mind, and focus on a sense of community in its spirit.

Wilby's alchemy journey started in a rose garden. As a child, she would accompany her grandmother into her garden, picking roses to infuse into medical grade ethanol and learning to create basic perfumes. This was the inadvertent starting point for her vocation as Chief Alchemist at *Three Anchor Distillery*. The path to the creation of the distillery and their premium *Mirari Gin* range was further explored through youthful experiments with confectionary-infused vodkas at university, and later creations using a 5-litre micro-distilling copper pot still, gifted by her fiancé Warrick Brown – her partner in the distillery – after he noticed how passionate she was about creating products.

With the creation of the premium *Mirari Gin* varieties, Wilby has come a long way from these experiments, making and selling lemonade at the bottom of her childhood driveway at five-years-old and creating rose-scented perfumes with her grandmother. At this age, she wanted to be an inventor, motivated by a love for both experimentation and the art of creation. *Mirari Gin* and its delicious varieties is the oblique realisation of this dream and spirit through alchemy.

Serving a fragrant taste symphony, *Mirari Gin* is destined to become an international brand that transcends its local shores, but remains firmly South African in its flavours and roots: focused on innovation, inspired by curiosity and founded on the spirit of craftsmanship.

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