

# VITAL STATISTICS

Taking the measurements of the GQ world

## No7: Craft distillers putting vodka back on the map

### REYKA

Distilled in: **Borgarnes, Iceland**  
£26, reyka.com

**PURIFIED THROUGH:** Lava rock  
**WITH:** Water from the nearby Grabök Spring  
**AMOUNT OF NON-RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY USED BY THE DISTILLERY:** Zero kWh  
**SO HOW'S IT POWERED?** Geothermal energy  
**LAUNCHED:** 2006  
**ARRIVED IN THE UK:** 2012  
**MASTER DISTILLER THORDOR SIGURDSSON'S SECOND JOB:** Head of the Borgarnes police  
**BOTTLES PER BATCH:** 800  
**HOW THE LOCALS DRINK IT:** In straight shots alongside pieces of rotting shark meat  
**HOW LONDONERS DRINK IT:** In straight shots. Without the rotting shark meat  
**BUY IT FROM:** Harrods, Selfridges, Waitrose

### MAMONT

Distilled in: **Siberia, Russia**  
£30, mamontvodka.com

**MADE WITH:** Pure water hauled up from Siberian wells  
**PLUS:** White winter wheat and cedar nuts  
**PRODUCED IN:** The Itkul distillery, founded in 1868 in the Republic of Altai, Russia  
**NUMBER OF BOTTLES PER BATCH:** 4,000  
**DISTILLED:** Six times  
**HOW MANY CASES IN THE WORLD:** 6,000  
**DESIGN:** Tusk-shaped  
**WHY?** It references the mammoths that once roamed the Siberian countryside  
**HOW THE LOCALS DRINK IT:** Straight, with a mouthful of meat or animal fat in-between each shot  
**BUY IT FROM:** Selfridges, sohowine.co.uk

### HDW CLIX

Distilled in: **Kentucky, US**  
£315, hdwclix.com

**WHY CLIX?** It means 159 in Roman numerals  
**WHY 159?** It's the number of times the vodka is distilled  
**THEN IT'S RESTED FOR:** One year  
**LAUNCHED IN THE UK:** February 2013  
**BOTTLES AVAILABLE IN THE UK EACH YEAR:** 30  
**MADE AT:** The Buffalo Trace whisky distillery  
**PACKAGED IN:** An individually numbered glass decanter with crystal stopper  
**WHICH IS:** Unbranded, to allow lifetime use  
**BUY IT:** Online, exclusively in the UK from thewhiskyexchange.com  
**Photograph** Sudhir Pithwa

### BABICKA

Distilled in: **Prostějov, Czech Republic**  
£40, babickavodka.com

**LAUNCHED:** 2010  
**FOUNDER:** Alex Clarke  
**WHOSE FAMILY:** Hosted the first Isle of Wight festival on his farm in 1970  
**BEFORE ALEX WAS:** Expelled from school for getting the headmaster's daughter drunk – yes, on vodka  
**NUMBER OF DISTILLATIONS:** Six, with corn, wormwood, coriander, fennel and star anise  
**THEN IT'S RESTED FOR:** Two months  
**HOW OLD IS THE DISTILLERY?** 500 years  
**THE NAME:** Babicka is an old Czech word that means "grandmother"  
**DRINK IT AT:** Nightjar and China Tang  
**BUY IT FROM:** Harvey Nichols

### VESTAL

Distilled in: **Kaszubia, Poland**  
£24, vestalvodka.com

**LAUNCHED:** 2010  
**NUMBER OF BOTTLES PER BATCH:** 5,000  
**MADE FROM:** Virgin potatoes – like Jersey Royals but with a more intense flavour  
**HOW OFTEN:** Once a year, over a ten-day period in July and August  
**WHY?** To produce the spirit at the moment when the potatoes are at their freshest  
**DISTILLER WILLIAM BORRELL SAYS:** "This vodka should be drunk in an armchair, with a cigar. And always at room temperature"  
**NOT CHILLED?** "That's a myth. Before ice was available, vodka was drunk tepid at harvest time. Room temperature is truly authentic"  
**BUY IT:** Online only, at vestalvodka.com



### SIPSMITH DAMSON

Distilled in: **Hammersmith, London, UK**  
£23, sipsmith.com

**FOUNDERS:** Sam Galsworthy and Fairfax Hall  
**MADE IN:** Prudence, London's first copper-pot still for 200 years  
**LAST TIME A DISTILLER'S LICENCE WAS REQUESTED IN LONDON:** 193 years ago  
**THAT CREATED:** Problems  
**HOW COME?** No London authority had any of the formal documentation in existence  
**FINALLY LAUNCHED IN:** 2010  
**DAMSON-INFUSION TAKES:** Four months  
**ALCOHOL CONTENT:** 28% ABV  
**TYPICAL VODKA ALCOHOL CONTENT:** 40% ABV  
**AVERAGE NUMBER OF BOTTLES PER BATCH:** 350  
**TEAM WITH:** Dark chocolate; drink after dinner  
**BUY IT FROM:** Majestic, Waitrose

### CHASE

Distilled in: **Herefordshire, UK**  
£35, chasedistillery.co.uk

**LAUNCHED:** 2008  
**FOUNDER:** William Chase of Tyrrells' crisps  
**CRISPS AND VODKA?** Some potatoes are too small for making crisps  
**DISTILLED:** 130 times  
**HEIGHT OF THE DISTILLERY COLUMN:** 70ft  
**MAKING IT:** The tallest of its kind in the world  
**CELEBRITY DEVOTEES:** Sir Sean Connery and Yotam Ottolenghi  
**DRINK IT IN LONDON AT:** The Dukes Hotel bar, Ian Fleming's former home-from-home  
**BUY IT FROM:** Fortnum & Mason, Waitrose

### BLACK COW

Distilled in: **West Dorset, UK**  
£29, blackcow.co.uk

**LAUNCHED:** 2012  
**HEAD DISTILLER:** Dairy farmer Jason Barber  
**IT'S MADE FROM:** 100 per cent cow's milk  
**INSPIRED BY:** A documentary about a Siberian tribe making vodka with yak's milk  
**BOTTLES PER BATCH:** 300  
**GRASS-FED COWS IN THE HERD:** 250  
**TASTING NOTES:** Creamy on the nose  
**CELEBRITY DEVOTEES:** Daniel Craig, Stephen Fry and Elizabeth Hurley  
**BUY IT FROM:** Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason  
Emily Wright