

# edible

## EAST END

CELEBRATING THE HARVEST OF THE HAMPTONS AND NORTH FORK

NO. 49 SPRING 2015

THE  
**DRINKS**  
ISSUE

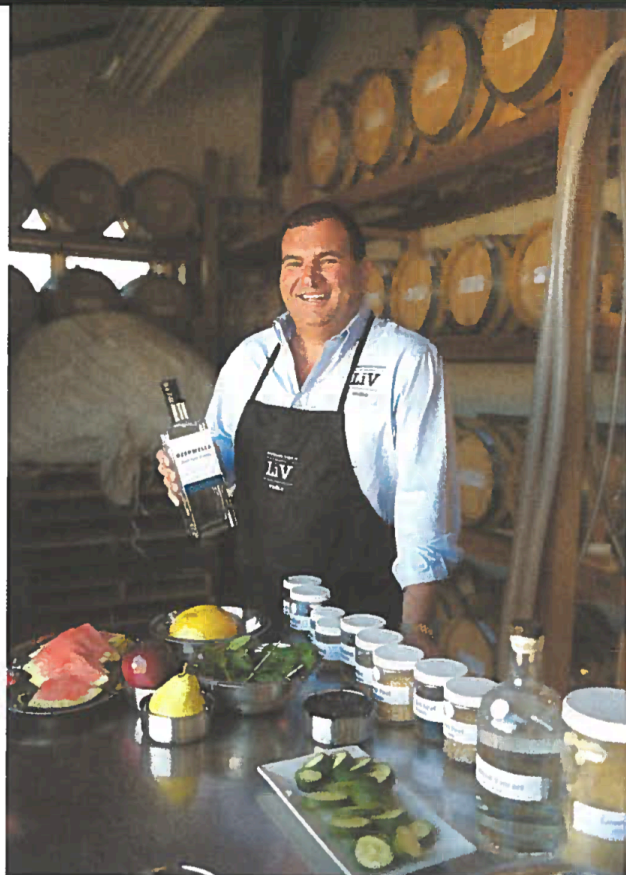
RHUBARB-BASED COCKTAILS • MARTHA CLARA'S NORTHVILLE RED  
THE EAST COAST'S ONLY COOPER • AFTERNOON TEA IN THE ARBORETUM  
HORCHATA IN HUNTINGTON

Member of Edible Communities





"We wanted a dry-style gin, with more citrus impact," says Richard Stabile. "It's got wonderful spring florals, and traditional juniper flavors."



## LIQUID ASSETS

# DEEPWELLS BOTANICAL DRY GIN

*A potato base and 28 botanicals make this local spirit.*

BY GWENDOLEN GROOCK • PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOUG YOUNG

To me, gin is the Shakespeare of spirits. It's complex and herbal, yet light and crisp. A cast of merry, mysterious botanicals acts alongside the pure alcohol, the star of the play. A gin and tonic is sheer perfection; it evokes all the mid-summers that ever there were and, incidentally, does a bang-up job of fending off malaria.

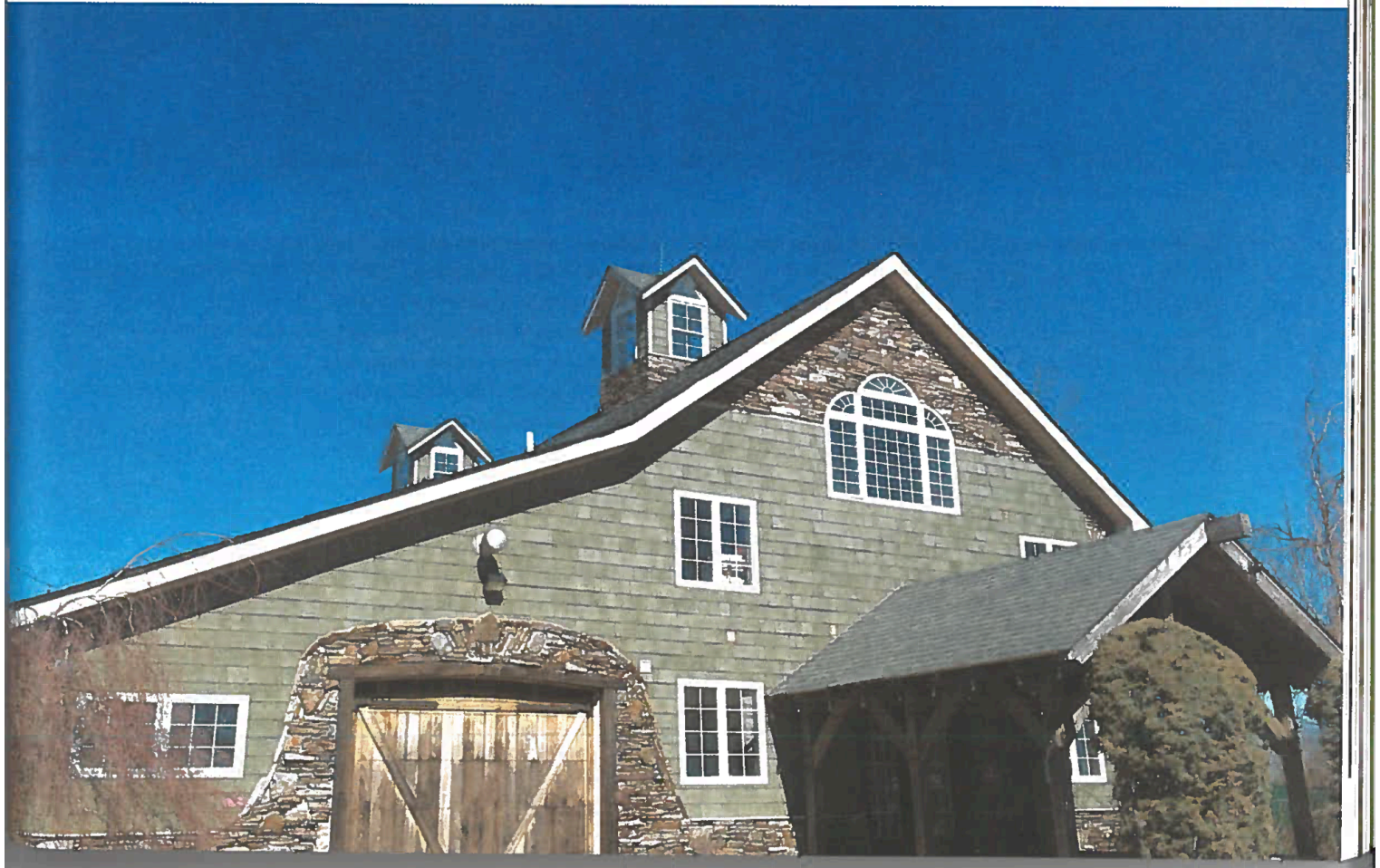
Long Island Spirits has released its first gin, and this of course demanded immediate investigation. There's much ado about craft gins at the moment, but they can be hit-or-miss affairs. I have even run across ill-conceived efforts that immediately bring the word "bathtub" to mind, as in the vile stuff illegally peddled during Prohibition. There's the varying quality of the base spirit, endless aromatics options and the occasional attempts to engage inexperienced palates, resulting in silly spirits that are happy mingling with something fruity but hardly resembling gin at all. Not that the English/Dutch style is the only proper style, as much as it pains me to

say that, but gin has to taste like gin, damn it!

At Long Island Spirit's 100-year-old former horse barn now distillery in Baiting Hollow, we walk upstairs past a security guard into a wide, light-filled tasting room that overlooks a potato field stretching north to the Long Island Sound. Behind the long bar are arrayed the LIS family of products—vodka, Pine Barrens Whisky, Rough Rider Bull Moose Rye, flavored spirits, brandy, rum—all small-batch and handcrafted. The distillery is on the ground level, housing a mash tun, stills and blending tanks. A huge, gleaming, cylindrical copper still rises up through the second story like a rocket. This speaks to some serious distilling; over the course of the year, about two million pounds of local potatoes pass through the place. Yes, this distillery makes clear spirits from Long Island potatoes. It's kind of awesome. An aside: Back in the day, some claimed, disparagingly, that they could taste potatoes in the first

**Limey.** Opposite page, a gin and tonic, for recipe visit [edibleeastend.com](http://edibleeastend.com); above left, Richard Stabile, owner and master distiller at Long Island Spirits; right, a bucket of juniper berries will join 27 other ingredients to make Deepwells gin. Overleaf, the pot stills at Long Island Spirits; dried and fresh botanicals are steeped in potato vodka to make the gin; the tasting barn at Long Island Spirits.







vintages of Long Island wines. Was it fanciful to imagine that some sort of *eau de pomme de terre* lingered on? Anyway, here at LIS, the lovely taste of the humble spud is celebrated, not scorned.

The 94-proof spirit is called Deepwells Botanical Dry Gin—I love the name; it's kind of Shakespearean. It's named for the glacial Pine Barrens aquifer under this part of Long Island that provides the water and the 28 botanicals that flavor the spirit, says Richard Stabile, owner of LIS. "We wanted a dry-style gin, with more citrus impact," he says. "It's got wonderful spring florals, and traditional juniper flavors; we introduced it a few months ago, and we've had an incredible response."

In distilling, Stabile says, pure alcohol vaporizes and condenses to create a high-proof product. Volatile oils also escape the heavy base, and these lend character to the spirit. For gin, a special

chamber is filled with macerated botanicals, and the alcohol is allowed to pass through, picking up aromas and flavors. LIS was founded in 2007, and released its first vodka soon after, but it took about six years to develop Deepwells Gin. The staff tested different versions and sought feedback from Stabile's circle of spirits enthusiasts. "This finally delivers the extraordinary characteristics and exceptional flavor that we long sought to achieve," he says.

The 28 botanicals—and I'm listing them all because they're fascinating—are almonds, anise, apple, basil, chamomile, cinnamon, coriander, cubeb berries (a kind of pepper), cucumber, elderflower, fennel, grains of paradise, grapefruit peel, honeysuckle, juniper berries, lavender, lemon peel, licorice root, lime peel, merlot leaf, nutmeg, orange peel, orris root, pansy flowers, pear,

**Gin and juice.** All the spirits at Long Island Spirits are hand capped and capsuled; bottom right, head distiller Jonathan Bittner adds dried botanicals to the st



pineapple, spearmint and watermelon. Some of these seem a bit fanciful, like the merlot leaf, but that's part of the magic.

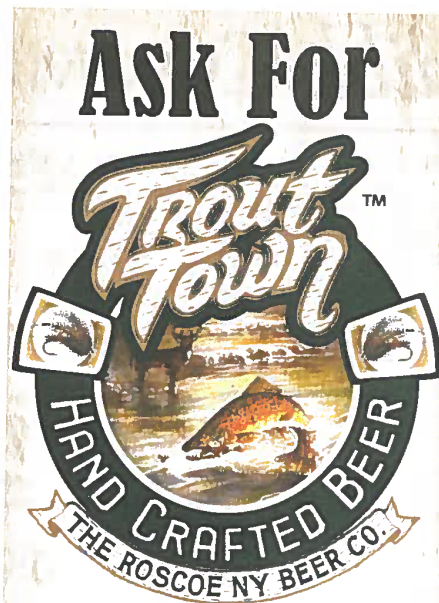
So what does Deepwells taste like? We swirl, sniff and sip. I have tasted the LIS vodka, LiV, a number of times, so I'm familiar with the distinctive effect of the potatoes, compared to grain-based vodkas. There's more body, a fuller mouthfeel and, yes, a subtle earthy note. It's a multiple gold-medal winner, and rightly so, but it's not for people who like their vodka tasteless.

This gin has the same base notes, overlaid with a delicate, clean citrus-floral effect. With a definite and reassuring note of juniper, it's still clearly in the gin camp. It doesn't taste like a traditional British gin, but nor is it like many of the too-flowery, light craft gins on the market; it hits a sweet spot somewhere in between. They say everyone's a critic, but in my humble opinion, this gin is going to enjoy a long run.

Deepwells Botanical Dry Gin comes in hand-numbered batches of six hundred 750-milliliter bottles, priced around \$35. It's for sale in the LIS tasting room, as well as Michael's in Riverhead, Westhampton Beach Fine Wines and Spirits, the Wine Guy in Smithtown and Barrels & Stills in Melville. Winebow, the distributor, sells wholesale. [e](#)



**WATCH** A full photo essay showing how Long Island Spirits infuses their gin is on [edibleeastend.com](http://edibleeastend.com).



**145 Rockland Road  
Roscoe, NY 12776  
607-290-5002**

**[RoscoeBeerCompany.com](http://RoscoeBeerCompany.com)**

**No Tall Tales,  
Just Great Beer**