

Whey-Based Gin Set to Enter US as Super-Premium Category Demand Surges

New Zealand whey-based gin eyes US launch after top international award as super-premium gin demand grows.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- US consumers are set to gain access to a whey-based craft gin following a major award win at one of the world's leading international spirits competitions.

The move comes as the US gin market shows a widening split between falling mainstream volumes and rapid growth at the super-premium end of the category.

According to [Distilled Spirits Council](#) of the United States data, overall gin volumes have fallen since 2019, while the super-premium end of the category has grown 187% over the same period.

Super-premium gin represented around 8% of gin cases sold in 2024, but its growth is creating new interest in higher-value products with stronger provenance, production and craft credentials.

[Clarity Distilling Company's](#) Clarity Navy Gin, made using ethanol derived from grass-fed New Zealand dairy whey, was awarded 99 points and a Gold Outstanding medal at the 2026



Clarity Distilling Company's Clarity Navy Gin



Clarity Distilling Company founders George White and Stephanie Downer

[International Wine & Spirit Competition](#)
in London.

The spirit was the highest-scoring gin entered in this year's competition.

The award has prompted a surge in enquiries from American consumers and distributors, with the company now assessing routes into the US market and looking for import and distribution partners.

Co-founder George White says the US opportunity is strongest at the premium end of the category, where consumers are more likely to seek out products with a clear production story.



Clarity Gin is labelled by hand

"The overall gin market in the US has been under pressure, but the super-premium end is telling a very different story," says White.

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Our opportunity is to bring something genuinely different to that segment: a whey-based gin built on New Zealand dairy provenance, individual botanical distillation and international award recognition”

George White

“That is the part of the market where consumers are looking for provenance, craft, production method and a reason to trade up.

“Our opportunity is to bring something genuinely different to that segment: a whey-based gin built on New Zealand dairy provenance, individual botanical distillation and international award recognition.”

The US remains one of the world's largest spirits markets. DISCUS says more than 8.3 million 9-litre cases of gin were

sold in the United States in 2024, generating nearly US\$1 billion in revenue for distillers.

White says gin remains less developed in the US than categories such as tequila, mezcal and whiskey, which have benefited from stronger premiumisation and origin-led marketing.

“Gin is not a saturated hero category in the US in the same way tequila or whiskey has become,” he says.

“That is why we see an opportunity. There is still room for education, discovery and premiumisation, especially for brands that have a clear reason to exist.”

Clarity's alcohol base is produced from casein whey, a by-product of milk processing. The whey contains lactose, or milk sugar, which is fermented before the ethanol is recovered through distillation and concentrated.

Most ethanol used in spirits is made from molasses, cane sugar or grain. White says the use of whey gives Clarity a production story that is unusual in the international gin market.

"The locally sourced whey in our base spirit gives the gin a texture and softness that people notice," he says.

"It changes the mouthfeel of the product and gives us a point of difference in a market where consumers are already familiar with the quality story behind New Zealand dairy, but may not expect to see it expressed through a gin.

"Most gin globally is built on a grain or sugar-based spirit. We are starting from a very different raw material, and we think that is one of the reasons international judges are responding so strongly to the product."

The company also distils each botanical separately before blending the final spirit, a process White says gives greater control over flavour, balance and consistency.

The IWSC result follows several other awards for the company, including Double Gold at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition for Clarity Dry Gin, Gin of the Year and Spirit of the Year New Zealand at the 2026 London Spirits Competition for Clarity Navy Gin, Best London Dry Gin at the New Zealand Spirits Awards and Distillery of the Year at the 2025 Small Batch New Zealand Gin Awards.

White says the latest award gives the company credibility as it looks for US import and distribution partners.

"For a small producer to be competing against some of the most established spirits brands in the world and come out with this level of recognition is a significant moment," he says.

"The challenge now is to find the right US import and distribution partners who understand the opportunity for a differentiated super-premium gin with a New Zealand grass-fed dairy story behind it."

Clarity Distilling Company was founded by George White and Stephanie Downer and launched in 2023. The pair currently run the business themselves, including distilling, bottling, labelling, packing and fulfilment.

White says the company is operating at about five percent of its capacity and could scale

production quickly if a distribution agreement is secured.

“Right now we are operating at only about five percent of our capacity, so we are able to scale quickly if we can secure the right distribution agreement,” he says.

“The immediate challenge is not whether we can make more gin. It is securing the right partners, funding stock, managing logistics and getting product into market in a way that protects the brand.”

Downer says export growth would allow the business to move from a two-person founder-led operation into a larger manufacturing company.

“George and I are involved in every part of the process at the moment. We distil, bottle, label, pack orders and send them out ourselves,” she says.

“Export growth would allow us to move from a two-person founder-led operation into a larger manufacturing business.”

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