

History and Legends of Absinthe

Absinthe Recipes

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Did You Know?

Men loved the drink so much that they had built-in compartments in the top of their walking canes so they could carry a vial of absinthe and a drinking glass.

[According to the Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry, April 2008 Issue:](#)

A team of scientists has managed to get their hands on 13 unopened bottles of the original, pre-ban absinthe, produced in France before 1915. They find that the stuff contains too little thujone to alter anyone's mind—but more than enough alcohol to do so: the absinthe contained 70 percent alcohol, making it 140-proof, compared to proofs of 80 to 100 characteristic of most gin, vodka and whiskey.

Recipes for preparing absinthe drinks:

Traditional Methods:

#1

Pour a generous dose (1.5 oz/4-5cl) of absinthe into a tall glass.

Slowly drip ice cold



Absinthe

A now legalized liquor that has long been "rumored" to cause madness. No other drink has inspired so much fear, so much awe, and allure as absinthe.

In French, the word "absinthe" means "wormwood." It was also known as the "green fairy" during its heyday in France in the 1800s. Absinthe is an anise-flavored liquor or spirit that is made by steeping wormwood (wormwood has been defined as the quinine of the poor) and other aromatic herbs (hyssop, lemon balm, and angelica) in alcohol. The drink is distinguished by its dazzling emerald blue-green clarity, due to its chlorophyll content. When mixed with water, the liquor changes to cloudy white.

Definition of Wormwood: Wormwood is a derivation of the German word "wermut" or the Anglo-Saxon word "wermod," and has a lineage to the word "vermouth." Wormwood has also come to mean a bitter or mortifying experience. Any of 250 strong-smelling plants with white or yellow flowers that are generally classed as weed. It is specifically the Eurasian perennial (Artemisia absinthium) that is so notorious in the cocktail world. It produces a bitter, dark-green oil once used in making absinthe, vermouth, and other bitters. Wormwood had been used medicinally since the Middle Ages to exterminate tapeworms in the abdomen while leaving the human host uninjured and even rejuvenated by the experience.

Pernod was an original absinthe. It is still distilled

water into the absinthe, until it is diluted by 3 to 5 times the amount of the shot and turns completely cloudy.

Adjust dose and water to your personal taste.

#2

Pour a large shot (1.5 oz/4 -5cl) of absinthe into a tall glass.

Place a slotted absinthe [spoon](#) over the glass and set a cube of [sugar](#) on the spoon.

Slowly drip ice cold water through the sugar into the absinthe, until it is diluted by 3 to 5 times the amount of the shot and turns completely cloudy.

Adjust to your personal taste.

Ernest Hemingway's 'Death in the Afternoon Cocktail'

A [recipe](#) verified in the 1935 humoristic celebrities' cocktail book titled So Red the Nose, or Breath in the Afternoon.

Hemingway wrote: *"This was arrived at by the author and three officers of the H.M.S. Danae after having spent seven hours overboard trying to get Capt. Bra Saunders' fishing boat off a bank where she had gone with us in a N.W. gale."*

1 jigger of absinthe added to a champagne flute

Add iced champagne until it attains the proper opalescent milkiness.

Absinthe Martini - European style

The mixture below was created around the beginning of the 20th century, when it became fashionable in France to drink 'American-style' cocktails.

1.5 ounces Martini red vermouth
1 dash absinthe
1 dash orange bitters

Shake with ice and strain into a cocktail glass.

today, only without the wormwood. Other liqueurs used today as a substitute for wormwood are Ricard, Hersaint, Anisette, Ouzo, and Sambuca.

Absinthe is traditionally served with water and a cube of sugar. The sugar cube was placed on an absinthe spoon (a small slotted spoon), and the liquor was drizzled over the sugar into the glass of cold water until the sugar was dissolved and the desired dilution was obtained. The sugar helped take the bitter edge away from the absinthe, and when poured into water, the liquor turned a milky white. The spoons themselves were often works of art, covered with filigree flowers and stars, or shaped like sea shells.

The effect of this drink was related to the degree of dilution, the amount imbibed, and the frequency of drinking. Physical effects of nausea, disorientation, hallucination and seizure were noted by the drinkers of absinthe. Of course, these effects can be noticed by anyone who drinks too much!

The popularity of absinthe lasted just over 100 years.

History and Legends of Absinthe

15th Century B.C.

Accounts in ancient texts dating as far as 1500 B.C. mention that wormwood's medicinal as well as religious significance, and even a drink that was fortified with extract of wormwood. We will likely never know the exact origins of the very first absinthe ever distilled or the name of its original inventor.

1st Century A.D.

The first written detailed description of absinthe's use and therapeutic properties was written by Gaius Plinius Cecilius Secundus (23 A.D. -79 A.D.), better known as Pliny the Elder's. He was a Roman scholar, author, naturalist, and naval and military commander. He is known for his great compendium of the knowledge of the ancient world called Naturalis Historia (Latin for Natural History):

"There are several kinds of absinthe: that called Santonic from a city of Gaul, the Pontic from Pontus, where cattle grow fat on it and because of it are found without gall; there is none

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Famous Quotes and Writings on Absinthe:

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Irish poet and dramatist:

"Absinthe has a wonderful color, green. A glass of absinthe is as poetical as anything in the world. What difference is there between a glass of absinthe and a sunset?"

After the first glass you see things as you wish they were. After the second, you see things as they are not. Finally you see things as they really are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world."

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), famous American author:

Got tight last night on absinthe and did [knife](#) tricks. Great success shooting the knife into the piano. The woodworms are so bad and eat hell out of all furniture that you can always claim the woodworms did it."

by Francois-Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778)

French writer, satirist:

"The first month of marriage is the honeymoon, the second is the absinthe-moon."

finer than this: the Italian is far more bitter, while the pith of the Pontic is sweet. About its use all agree, for it is a plant very easy to find and among the most useful; moreover it is honoured uniquely in the rites of the Roman people in that at the Latin festival when four-horsed chariots race on the Capitol the victor drinks absinthe, because, I believe, our ancestors thought that it was an honourable reward to be given health...."

18th Century A.D.

1789 - 1792 - According to history or legend, absinthe was originally developed by Dr. Pierre Ordinaire. He was a French doctor in self-exile due to political reasons, who was living in the Swiss town of Couvet. It was said that he discovered the plant wormwood while traveling in the Val-de-Travers. He mixed wormwood and other herbs with alcohol to create his 136 proof elixir. He used this elixir in his treatment of the sick. After many claims of miraculous healing powers, it became a cure-all. It was eventually nicknamed "la Fee Verte," which means the Green Fairy.

It is also believed that Dr. Ordinaire either gave or sold his recipe to Mademoiselle Grand-Pierre, who then sold it to two sisters named Henrod in Couvet. Some historical information suggest that the Henroid sisters were making the elixir before Dr. Ordinaire even arrived in the area, and his is credited with being one of the first people to promote it. The Henrod sisters promoted the elixir commercially by offering sample of the elixir to be sold in nearby pharmacies.

1794 - Abram-Louis Perrenoud (1776-1851), a distiller by trade, living in Couvet in the Val de Travers region of Switzerland. Somewhere around the year 1794, Abram-Louis actually scribbled his recipe for absinthe in his diary.

1797 - A Frenchman named Major Daniel-Henri Dubied, a lace merchant, recognized the commercial potential of the formula and purchased the recipe from Perrenoud. Since he had to distilling experience, he employed Abram-Louis' son, Henri-Louis Perrenoud, who had learned the distilling trade from his father. It is also said that the Major's daughter, Emile, married Henri-Louis in 1797. In 1798, along with Dubied's sons, they began producing absinthe under the name of Dubied Père et Fils.

1805 - In 1805, after several permutations of

by Aleister Crowley (1875 -1947), British occultist and so-called "wickedest man in the world:

"What is there in absinthe that makes it a separate cult? ... Even in ruin and in degradation it remains a thing apart: its victims wear a ghastly aureole all their own, and in their peculiar hell yet gloat with a sinister perversion of pride that they are not as other men." --

by Marie Corelli, 1890 from *Wormwood: A Drama of Paris*:

"It is a charming fairy! . . . one wave of the opal wand, and sorrow is conveniently guillotined!"

"Let me be mad . . . mad with the madness of Absinthe, the wildest, most luxurious madness in the world."

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partnership, Henri-Louis changed his surname from Perrenoud to Pernod and he established a distillery of his own in Pontarlier, France called Maison Pernod Fils.

19th Century A.D.

1847 - Absinthe's progress from medicine to social poison started with the military. It is said that the demand for absinthe rose dramatically after the Algerian War (1844-1847) when the soldiers were given rations of absinthe along with their drinking water as a bacterial deterrent. The soldiers, now hooked on absinthe, began drinking it in peace time France, thus starting the first surge in absinthe popularity.

1870 - 1900 - Grape Phylloxera (a tiny aphid-like insect that attacks the roots of grapevines) attacked the root stock of vineyard all over the France and Europe. The epidemic devastated most of the European wine growing industry. Within 25 years, grape phylloxera had destroyed two-thirds of the vineyards in Europe. The price of wine skyrocketed and became scarce and very expensive. The aristocrats bought and consumed what wine was available. The middle class (the artisans and tradesmen) began looking for a cheaper alternative to wine. As absinthe was already growing in popularity, it became the perfect alternative.

1880 - From the 1880s to the turn of the century, drinking absinthe during the cocktail hour in France became so popular that people begin calling it the l'heure verte (the green hour) for the liquor's bright green color. Generally, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., the cafes in Paris would be crowded with people drinking absinthe. At cafes, one could find policemen, laborers, bankers, and artists, all enjoying the elaborate absinthe ritual and all getting "loaded."

Absinthe was the "beverage du jour" for artists, writers, and poets in Europe. It was known as the drink of the Bohemians. The bohemians were self-impoverished artists, writers, musicians, free-thinkers, and counter-culture types. Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Picasso, de Maupassant, and especially Vincent Van Gogh are associated with absinthe. The "green fairy," as absinthe came to be called for purportedly causing hallucinations, is thought to have encouraged Van Gogh to cut off part of his left ear. They believed absinthe stimulated creativity. Absinthe was believed to raise the drinkers consciousness, insights, and emotional experience to another level. It seemed that everyone indulged themselves enthusiastically; so enthusiastically in fact that

alcoholism began to be a serious problem in France.

Men and women became enthralled with the ritual of presentation as well as with the appearance, taste, and excitement of the liqueur. Absinthe was one of the few drinks considered ladylike and women freely enjoyed drinking it in the [dance halls](#) and coffee houses where it was most commonly served. Picasso painted several haunting images featuring absinthe women drinkers.

Absinthe drinking was exported to New Orleans and its French Quarter, where the Old Absinthe House have been a tourist attraction for more than a century. Absinthe" appeared in New Orleans liquor advertisements as early as 1837, but its popularity didn't take off until the latter half of the 19th century with the opening of the barroom that would become the Old Absinthe House in 1874.

20th Century A.D.

At the turn of the 20th century ,much of France (and parts of the rest of Europe and the United States) were on an absinthe binge. This wide spread popularity led to an attempt at its prohibition. Backed by the [French wine](#) growers, the temperance movement targeted absinthe as responsible for alcoholism, racial degeneration, and social instability.

1910 - Absinthe was banned in Switzerland

1912 - When the prohibition movements were underway, on July 25, 1912, the Department of Agriculture banned absinthe in America. One of the reasons it is banned in the U.S. is that it was thought to have caused insanity and hallucinations that drove drinkers to commit criminal acts. In other words, it was pretty much like any other alcoholic drink.

1915 - At the outbreak of the First World War, the drink was seen as a threat to the nation, and the National Assembly voted for the bill to ban absinthe as an act of national defense. The France banned absinthe use in 1915.

1990 - A revival of absinthe began in the 1990s, when countries in Europe began to reauthorize its manufacture and sale.

21st Century A.D.

Absinthe is once again legal in most of the world

2007 - In 2007, after 95 years of prohibition, absinthe was finally authorized again for sale in the United States in bars and liquor stores. U.S. re-evaluation came after European distillers pressured American officials to conduct real research and approve authorization of selling absinthe.

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