

INTERIORS

Gin is a thing right now. If you have any doubts about how fashionable it is, the latest figures from the Wine and Spirit Trade Association reveal that sales hit a high in 2017 — we drank 51 million bottles of the stuff.

It's not quite the "gin crazed" 1730s, but with more than 100 British gin brands, 315 distilleries and dozens of flavoured tonics to try, it leaves us asking, where do we keep it all? The gloriously designed bottles and large balloon glasses can't be stuffed in a corner.

The answer is a gin cabinet or station, a focal point in the home where guests can linger, from the aperitif through to the digestif, dazzled by a range of flavours, tonics and botanical garnishes.

They are popping up in prime central London developments, according to Tim Macpherson, the head of residential at Carter Jonas, an estate agency. "In the past 12 months I've valued more than a handful of properties that have an integrated gin cabinet, much to the delight of prospective buyers," he says.

"Gone are the days when a bottle of gin would sit covered in dust in a cupboard. Gin drinkers are a committed bunch who pride themselves on their collection of high-end and inevitably artisanal liquors."

If you prefer to mix your gin and tonic in private, there's a hidden gin cabinet in the master bedroom of a five-bedroom house in Cumberland Terrace, London, on sale for £12.95 million through Carter Jonas.

You also don't need a super-prime property, just an alcove or a garden shed, according to Laura Thompson, the customer marketing manager at Fever-Tree, which produces tonic water. She says: "We've had a number of requests recently for advice on how to create a gin and tonic bar. People seem to be creating elaborate at-home gin and tonic cabinets or trolleys, and now they want to renovate their outdoor spaces and sheds."

Gin cabinets are being used to sell a lifestyle at Lansdowne Place in Ballsbridge, one of Dublin's most luxurious developments. "The developer, Chartered Land, had a lot of buyers express an interest in how to install a gin bar, so it is incorporating them into its apartments in order to meet the demand," says Sara Cosgrove, an interior designer. "The agent thinks that they will be a game-changer for buyers who love to entertain."



A Roundhouse kitchen with dedicated bar area, £35,000 (roundhousedesign.com). Below: bespoke mirrored bar cabinet by the designer Naomi Astley Clarke

A gin cabinet — the tonic for your home

Cosgrove has created a full-length cabinet in the kitchen of the show apartment that opens to reveal shelves of gins, a marble preparation counter and storage drawers. The cabinets

will be available in the phase of apartments to be released at the end of the year, which are priced from €800,000 (£707,000) for two bedrooms through Savills.

"Over the past three years I've had interest pick up for this sort of feature," she says. "Not only do we create gin-specific bars for our clients, every apartment has some kind of bar element, and we also do custom bar carts or one-off pieces of furniture such as the Ginger & Jagger walnut bar cabinet [£8,920]," she says.

Cosgrove's bespoke bars cost between £3,000 and £15,000, depending on the specification, with fancy fridges adding £1,000. "Antique mirrors work really well with any kind of lighting. I often use discreet strip LEDs and diffuse lighting around the bottles, along with different textures," she says. The decorative element of eclectically designed bottles such as Gunpowder Gin's pretty blue bottle helps, along with the apothecary-style jars of peppercorns, juniper berries and orange peel. Greenery or fresh herbs accentuate the botanical vibe.

The designer Naomi Astley Clarke agrees that bar units are de rigueur. She recently made a unit with mirror squares on the doors. "On the inside of the unit we had mirror sides, with dark oak shelves protected by glass, LED lighting and an integrated fridge. There is something lovely about guests being able to help themselves to drink, with it all laid out invitingly." The units cost between £4,000 and £8,000 (naomiastleyclarke.com).

At a property in Belgravia, west London, the international design house March & White has used a metal-coated timber finish by Metall FX to bring a private members' club feel to a bar concealed with wood-pannelled doors.

Another bespoke bar concealed by sliding doors can be found in a residence at One Hyde Park in Knightsbridge, west London. "We focus on people's everyday life rituals," says Charu Gandhi, the founder of Elicyon, an interior design company that designed a four-bedroom home in the development. "A bar is often part of this ritual, with some clients describing in great detail how they exactly mix their gin and tonic and the specific nibbles they like. We delight in creating a design story around this."

It's a far cry from those 18th-century gin shops.

Liz Rowlinson



This bar created by Elicyon at One Hyde Park, Knightsbridge, can be concealed