



JUNO

★★★★

A very fresh face on the New Zealand spirit scene, Juno is the creation of husband and wife Jo and Dave James, who moved back to New Plymouth from Melbourne to begin this venture in 2015. They use pure Mt Taranaki water in their production, and Juno is created in the London Dry style – only one pass through the 350L copper still, with all the botanicals included.

Tasting notes: The distinctive black bottle immediately set Juno apart for our tasting team. They thought it was slightly more classical, with a strong juniper presence, but also a strong herbal aroma and aftertaste.

ARIKI

★★★★

Rulers in ancient Polynesian feudal communities were called 'Ariki'. The name is a nod to founding partner Sean Rota's Pacific heritage, and the fact that New Zealand is the southernmost of the Pacific islands. The Polynesian influence is continued in Ariki's recipe, which uses Cook Island vanilla and Tongan coconut amongst the botanicals that flavour it. Ariki use a custom-designed still.

Tasting notes: Ariki was one of the strongest performers on the day, with David describing it as 'his favourite overall' and 'quite attractive on the nose'. The sweeter, vanilla and coconut elements were memorable.

SACRED SPRING DRY GIN

★★★★

The Dancing Springs distillery in Takaka, Golden Bay, is home to Sacred Spring gin. Sacred Spring uses aquifer water from Takaka's Te Waikoropupu Springs. With an underwater visibility of 63m it's the clearest water ever measured anywhere in the world. Manuka is a key flavour among their eight botanicals, which reflect careful research; more than 44 recipes were trialled during development.

Tasting notes: Sacred Spring's packaging is very eye-catching, especially in the sunlight. 'Fresh citrus and obvious juniper' dominated the nose and it had an oily feel in the mouth. 'Very complex.'

REID+REID

★★★★

Brothers Chris and Stew Reid were inspired by craft whiskey distilleries on a trip to Scotland and their gin was

influenced by Chris's Martinborough winemaking background. They bring a sense of 'place' to their gin by using local botanicals, such as horopito, manuka and kawakawa, which the brothers forage themselves. Reid+Reid attempts to find a balance between traditional and modern styles of gin.

Tasting notes: Rachael said that she "way preferred the smell" of Reid+Reid, and Caleb thought it had 'a smooth start with a kick to finish'. Overall the tasters thought it had strong peppery notes but was a very well balanced gin.

KARVEN

★★★★

A couple of friends sitting around a bonfire on a family farm near Auckland decided to follow their dreams in 2015, when they realised that the farm had its own source of artesian water. Branded as an exceptionally smooth gin, Karven's botanicals are nearly all sourced from within NZ, and are as fresh as possible.

Tasting notes: Karven stood out in several ways. First, all the tasters agreed that it had massive citrus and particularly sweeter 'orangey' notes on the nose. It was also more viscous and was described as 'oily' by every one of our tasters.