

Key information

The plant :

Grande Absinthe = Artemisia Absinthium = wormwood

Artemisia Absinthium literally means “the absence of sweetness” in greek.

Grande Absinthe contains an oil named thujone, which, when blended with alcohol, was believed to be hallucinogenic.

The history of absinthe :

- The Egyptians used the absinthe plant as a remedy.
- The Romans and Greeks used it in a potion made of absinthe steeped in wine that was supposed to heal stomach bugs (wormwood = worm-wode = a cure for worms).
- In the 17th century, a swiss man created an elixir d’ absinthe, the first spirit based absinthe.
- That elixir was promoted by Dr Ordinaire in Switzerland who prescribed it to his patients.
- When Dr Ordinaire died, his butler sold the receipe to Mr. Duval who then sold it to Pernod in 1797 and Pernod built the first distillery in Couvet, Switzerland.
- In 1805, Pernod created the first absinthe factory in Pontarlier, France.
- In mid 1800, the French were giving absinthe to their army troops to fight the malaria ; the soldiers liked it and kept drinking it even in times of peace.
- In 1865, France suffered phyloxera and all the vineyards were destroyed, so the French drank more absinthe.
- Between 1907 and 1912, Belgium, Switzerland and the US banned absinthe.
- by 1912, the French were consuming around 30 millions liters of absinthe per year.
- In 1915, absinthe was banned in France, with the help of the winegrowers who were upset because their wine business had been down since the French were drinking so much absinthe.
- In 1932, Ricard created Pastis, an anis based spirit similar to absinthe but which did not contain the Grande Absinthe.
- In the late 1990s, after so many unconvulsive researches, the ban on absinthe was lifted in France and other European countries.
- In 2007, the ban was lifted in the US as well, providing that the level of thujone was limited to 10mg per liter.

Distilled vs. Macerated

There are 2 kinds of absinthe production types and process :

1) Distilled: this is the method that came a little later after absinthe was created as a way to palliate quality problems ; the use of bad quality base spirit, bad water, etc, would most times give a bad taste or bad smell to the absinthe. On the other hand, distilling will “clean” the product and get rid of bad smell and bad taste, so distilling was the answer for some of the producers. But after it’s distilled, the product also comes out colorless... so in order to give it its original green color back, some of the producers decided to add green coloring (some even added blue coloring). Today we have distilled absinthes that are clear and some distilled absinthes with added green color.

2) Macerated: this is the original method, where the herbs are macerated into a neutral alcoholic base such as beet or grape spirit. Each herb macerates into various vats for a few weeks and the vats are then blended together. The final product is of a pure natural green color, such as La Muse Verte. Because the macerated concoction has not been distilled, all the original flavors of the herbs and plants are intact and intense.