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Absinthe Tasting



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The mystique of an alcohol that has been banned since 1912 obviously has me eager to taste what inspired some of the best writers and artists of the 19th and 20th century. Some noteworthy absinthe drinkers were Van Gogh, Manet, Picasso, Oscar Wilde and Ernest Hemingway. After my own tasting, I can attest to the “lucid drunkenness” that is the most common side effect to drinking absinthe. But, I am sure the lucidity would quickly vanish after the second or third drink... just like any other high proof liquor. Since both of these liquors are over 100 proof, it could be very easy to over-indulge.

But, like those before me, I must admit that I fell in love with the ritual and traditions involved with imbibing absinthe. The charm of measuring out the liquor and slowly drizzling the water over large crystals of sugar. And, then, watching as the clear liquid slowly clouded and swirled. It transforms drinking a simple cocktail into a centuries old tradition.

And, like all things old that are new again, we add our own touches. We soon learned that we love the idea of substituting rock sugar crystal stirrers in place of the absinthe spoon. This stirrer makes for a great adult style lollipop to lick as you consume your tasty beverage.

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LUCID Absinthe Superieure

62% alcohol by volume (124 proof)

Price: \$57

Lucid Absinthe is a traditional French-made absinthe verte (green absinthe) developed by Ted Breaux. Their recipe for absinthe contains a full measure of grande wormwood, green anise, sweet fennel and other culinary herbs.

Taste: Strong anise and herbal flavor with bitter wormwood... There is also a peppery numbing quality that starts slowly and builds with each sip. By the end of the glass, I had trouble detecting much more than anise and alcohol. The high alcohol content is surely the cause for this. It provides a strong heady punch to your senses, but ends with a pleasant tingly mellow buzz.



Kubler Absinthe Superieure

53% alcohol by volume (106 proof)

Price: \$50

Distilled in the birthplace of absinthe, the Val-de-Travers region of Switzerland, Kubler Absinthe was first distilled in 1863. This original formula is being produced again today, now that the ban on absinthe has been lifted. Switzerland lifted the ban in March of 2005. The US lifted the ban in May of 2007.

Taste: There is a delicate, fresh anise with a floral/herbal essence that makes the taste of this absinthe superior to Lucid. The complex flavors of anise, fennel and other herbs blend well with the hint of bitter wormwood. Kubler also has a light, sweet perfumy quality that makes drinking Kubler absinthe dangerously easy. Where Lucid packs a strong punch, Kubler is pleasantly subtle and leaves you with a deliciously mellow buzz.

Verdict: These are two great examples of what absinthe should be... each different... but pleasantly so. And, both have found a permanent place in our bar.