



Coville

THE ORIGINAL
TOMATO-WATER GIN



Hi.

My name is Will Schragis. I'm the founder of Project Optimist Drinks and a partner at WellSpun Consulting.

I've been fortunate in my career to experience many different facets of the drinks industry. I've worked as a sommelier and in wine auctions, as a whiskey blender and in product development, and more recently in national sales for a bourbon producer.

More than anything, what I love is being a product wonk.

Welcome to Project Optimist—and to the curious world of Covalle Tomato-Water Gin.

LONG BEFORE I EVER DREAMED OF WORKING IN COCKTAILS AND SPIRITS, I WAS OBSESSED WITH TOMATOES.

As a kid, I grew tomato plants in pots on the balcony of our Manhattan apartment. As an adult, I used my mid-September birthday party to host a tomato-themed potluck called “Tomato-Fest.”

It was after one of these parties—where the bowls, empty of salad, held only small puddles of fresh, bright, delicious tomato water—that I first used it in a cocktail.



Covalle Tomato-Water Gin started as a passion project but took us more than a year of R&D to perfect. At each step, the drink became more scalable and stable, and each iteration surprised more people.

What we thought was going to be our “friends and family” gin has become our ticket in. Covalle grew from a lifelong passion of savory fruit, and now it is real—with the ability and intent to scale.



OUR TEAM



WILL SCHRAGIS

SALES / TOMATO BOY

Will Schragis is a highly experienced professional in the food and beverage world who began his career as a bartender and intern distiller at Kings County Distillery in Brooklyn, later working as a sommelier, spirits sales manager at Zachys, and leading product innovation at Barrell Craft Spirits. He has built a reputation for combining deep industry knowledge with a passion for spirits blending and brand development.



AMANDA BIGGAR

SALES

Amanda Biggar has worked extensively at the brand level and within large and small distributors. She has managed territories for Constellation Wine and Spirits, overseen regional operations in the craft spirits space, and full-book sold within SGWS. Amanda is known for her goal-driven, results-oriented execution and relentless determination.



LINDSAY GULICS

SALES

Lindsay Gulics has a passion for community-building and purpose-driven brands. Her career spans hospitality and sales, from curating wine lists and training teams at NoHo Hospitality and John Fraser Restaurant Group to leading sales and distributor partnerships across the Northeast for craft and global brands.



CELIA ERICKSON

OPERATIONS

Celia Erickson began her career at Eleven Madison Park, later serving as a sommelier at Gramercy Tavern and Maialino, before leading wine programs as Wine Director at Loring Place and Corporate Wine Director at Delicious Hospitality Group. She has built a strong reputation for combining deep operational expertise with a passion for team development, and strategic leadership.



ELI DREYFUS

CREATIVE

Eli Dreyfus is a creative director, designer, illustrator, and cartoonist who focuses on communication and deep concept development to unlock fresh, insightful ideas. He is known for bringing a thoughtful and diligent creative voice to projects, specializing in visual purpose and consistency across labels, ads, graphics, and typography.



STEFANIE BAIR

SALES

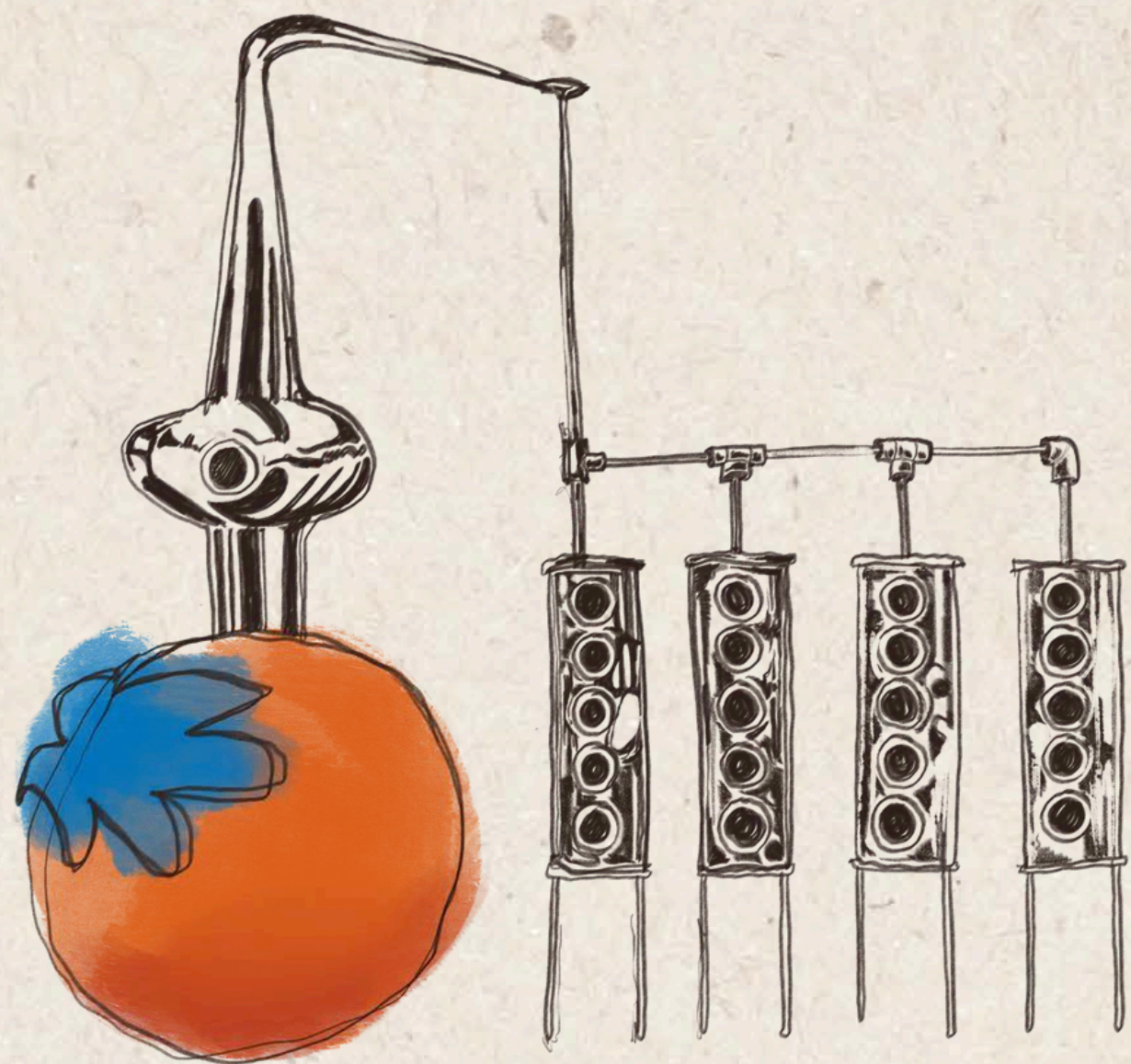
Stefanie Bair's experience and talents span supplier roles from trade-focused brand ambassador to national sales director, and she has the rare ability to move seamlessly between the two. She brings chain commercial and distributor management experience from the craft spirits space, as well as on-premise management experience from both William Grant and Branca USA.



FIRST AND FOREMOST,
**THIS IS NOT A BRAND
OF HERITAGE.
COVALLE IS A BRAND
FOR NOW.**

Covalle was designed by people who are engaged with the spirits world as it exists now. We want to make new flavors accesable, to make creativity in cocktails easy, and to add to the spectrum of flavors at the bar and at home.

A HIGHLY ABRIDGED **HISTORY OF GIN**



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Like all spirits categories, the history of gin is inevitably told through the perspective of the people and companies who make and sell it now. In general, gin's roots begin in what is now the Kingdom of the Netherlands, where monks pot-still barleywine flavored pre and/or post distillation with Juniper berries. The category as we currently experience it was made popular in the British empire, especially after the mid-19th century, when newly invented column stills allowed for "neutral" spirits to exist as the base of gin and other categories.

The contemporary definition and regulations around gin vary by country. In America we have very few regulations. Gin is simply defined as a spirit that is at least 40% ABV and "possesses the characteristic flavors of juniper."

Like many other vaguely-defined American categories, gin makers in America are afforded a lot of leeway to be disingenuous... or creative.

GIN PRODUCTION

A SUPER BRIEF OVERVIEW

In my opinion, American gin production can be defined by five strategies, each with their own benefits and challenges. Often, more nuanced producers will employ a combination of them (as we do with Covalle).

1) **Pre-distillation maceration gin:** Juniper and other botanicals are introduced to a neutral spirit pre-distillation.

Flavors and textures are extracted via ethanol and water solubility. The flavor and textural compound depends on duration of maceration, the ethanol level of maceration, and the heat, speed, and proof to which it is distilled.

2) **Botanical basket / “Carter head” gin** distillation employs a teabag of sorts to hold the botanicals through which a neutral spirit travels as it vaporizes. This means that the flavors are gently “steamed” out of the botanicals.

The carter head process produces a softer and subtler profile, often with more finesse but also with less force and texture.





GIN PRODUCTION

A SUPER BRIEF OVERVIEW (CONT'D.)

3) **“Single shot” gins** come off the rectifying still as a complete gin. Only water is added before bottling. There is an an impressive elegance to the recipe development in single pass gins, but the strategy is also limiting.

4) **Concentrate gins** rectify a more concentrated version of the final product and then blend it out with neutral grain. There is some debate about whether this is a cost-cutting strategy or a nuanced production strategy.

5) **Compound gins** are gins blended from separate ingredients. Sometimes, different botanicals are infused and rectified separately. Other times, a single shot is polished by a compound. Many especially unique gin recipes are compounds for one reason or another.

In America, there is no official category for “compound gin,” but the term is often associated with bad bootlegged gin in the 1920s and thus has a bit of a bad reputation.

WHAT ARE ACCORDS?

(AND WHY DO WE CARE?)

Compound gin production is a lot like perfume production. There are many levers to pull at the sub-production or ingredient level that come together as one finished product.

In perfume design, the word “accord” refers to a combination of scents, delivery windows, and textures that ultimately has its own combined identify.

While developing Covalle, we did a deep dive on accord theory. We are trying to deliver the *feeling* of eating or being amongst fresh tomatoes, so we had to ask: what are the components of that feeling?

The classic gin “accord” consists of juniper, coriander, and a grounding or bittering botanical (usually anjelica root or gentian root). Our tomato-plant accord needed to have a fresh and acidic note, a fruity note, and strong vegetal/grassy notes (which are often carried by hexanols (alcohols) and hexanals (aldyhydes)).



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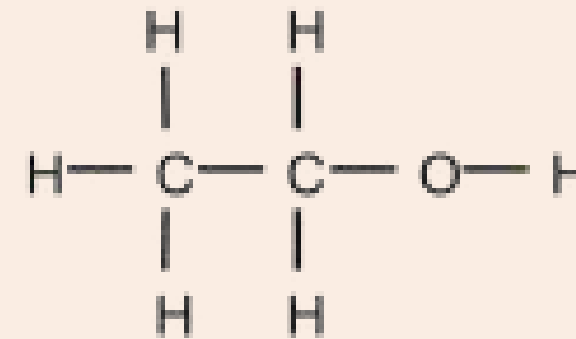
GIN SCIENCE FUN FACT

Alcohols and aldehydes are very similar and often get produced in tandem during fermentation. The only main structural difference is how tightly the last oxygen atom is bonded to one of the carbon atoms.

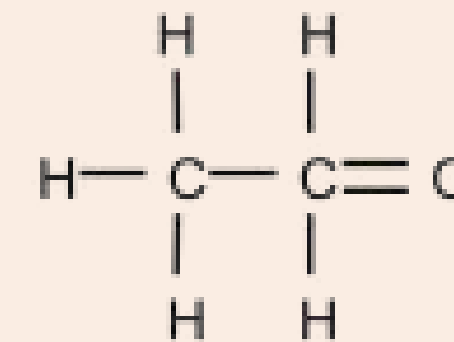
Alcohols are more stable and have higher boiling points.

Aldehydes are oxidations of alcohols, but they are oxidized faster themselves.

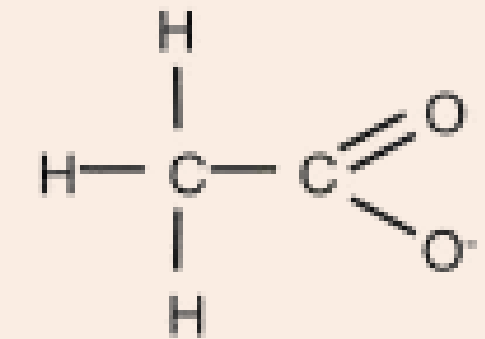
Many of the nuances in long-fermentation spirits or aged spirits are flavors and aromas which result from oxidation chains that begin with something unrelated.



Ethanol



Acetaldehyde



Acetate

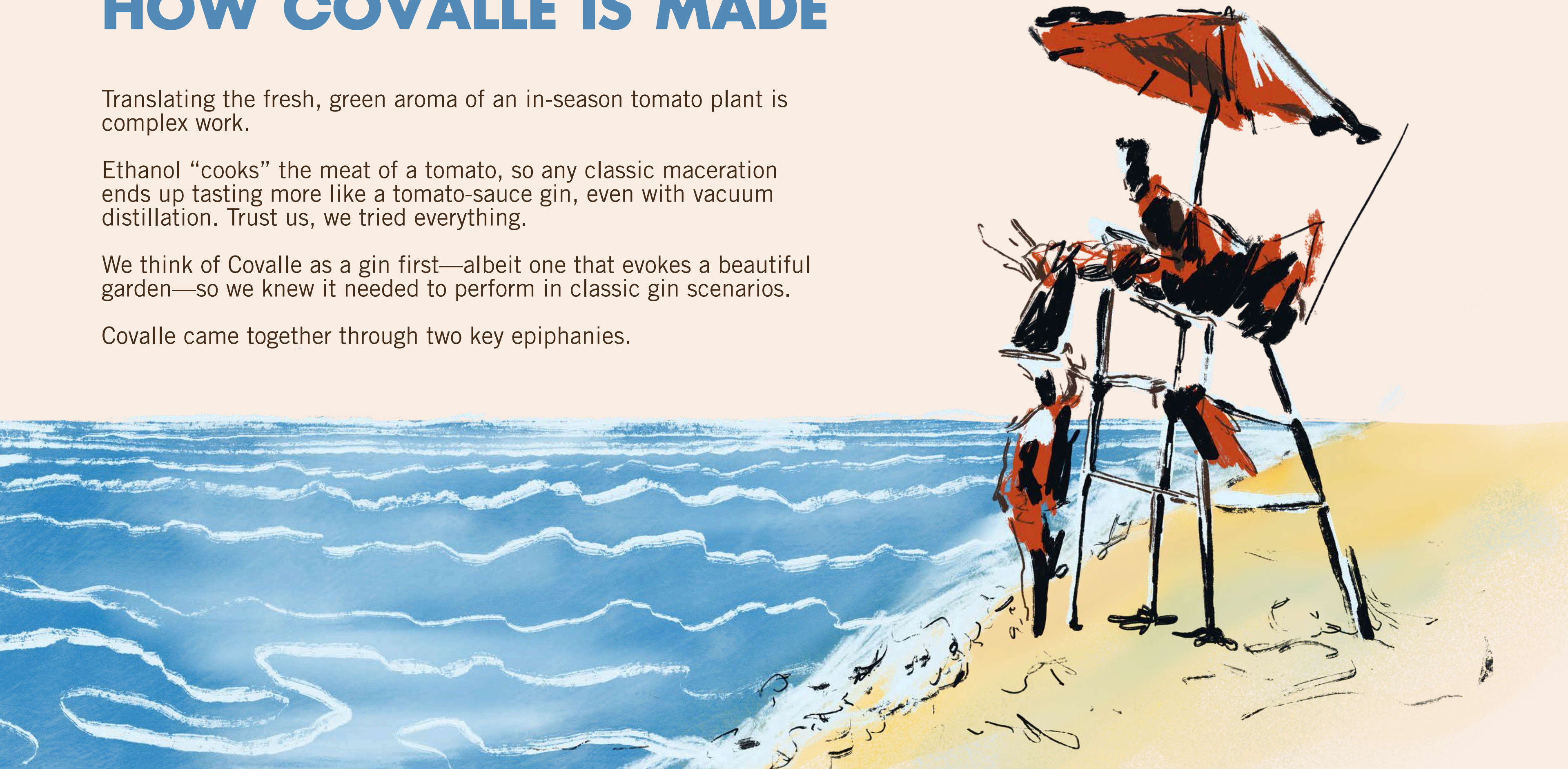
HOW COVALLE IS MADE

Translating the fresh, green aroma of an in-season tomato plant is complex work.

Ethanol “cooks” the meat of a tomato, so any classic maceration ends up tasting more like a tomato-sauce gin, even with vacuum distillation. Trust us, we tried everything.

We think of Covalle as a gin first—albeit one that evokes a beautiful garden—so we knew it needed to perform in classic gin scenarios.

Covalle came together through two key epiphanies.



EPIPHANY #1

THE AROMA WE NEED IS NOT SIMPLY IN THE FRUIT; IT'S IN THE TOMATO PLANT.

To preserve this note, we use apple and cucumber pulp to carry the oil from the leaves and stems of fresh tomato plants into a water- and ethanol-soluble liquid. We blend the mixture with an industrial blender, then clarify it using a centrifuge. Apple is rich in fructose, much like a ripe tomato. Cucumbers contain a variety of hexanols.

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EPIPHANY #2

THE BASE OF COVALLE NEEDS TO BE A LONDON DRY GIN.

We need a gin that is savory and structured enough to soften when blended with our tomato concoction. We tasted hundreds of gin options and looked at a plethora of ways to adjust them to our ideal flavor set.

We blend our tomato plant “goodness” into this London Dry Gin and then bring it to 46% ABV (our favorite for martinis), using a low PH water which highlights the brightness of a fresh, ripe tomato.

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OUR PRODUCTION PROCESS

A SHORT, ROMANTIC SUMMARY

- 1** Tomato leaves and stems are pulverized into an apple and cucumber pulp. The oils from the tomato plant bind with the spongy apples and cucumber. That mixture is then clarified and pasteurized and blended into our London dry gin.
- 2** We bring the resulting “compounded and naturally flavored” gin to proof with a low-PH water so that structurally (in its PH and sugar content), Covalle matches tomato water.
- 3** Our long journey of R&D eventually led us to this process, which required a level of large-scale work that we didn’t originally anticipate. What started with us tossing different tomatoes and tomato plants into jars of gin ended with a process that is totally shelf-stable, scalable, and produceable at a price ideal for cocktail use.

THE SEASIDE TOWN OF *Covalle* OUR TOMATO FAIRYTALE



WHY THE FAIRYTALE?

A good brand is more than a good liquid. It's the liquid, the package, the reason for existing, the story, the passion (from the maker AND the sales team), and the cohesiveness of its entire universe.

Covalle began as a passion project. Its story is woven into my (Will's) story and the stories of WellSpun, Small Victories, and Project Optimist. But that is not a brand story.

As this project unfolded, we knew that we needed a home for the brand that could live beyond just us. So we created the town of Covalle.

The town of Covalle allows us to be playful with our branding. It also gives all of our brand materials a cohesive home and an emotional throughline.







COVALLE'S PLACE IN THE COCKTAIL WORLD



APPROACH

- Covalle is designed to grab interest, by flavor, by look, and by name.
- From the very beginning we have been dedicated to a price point that fits a cocktail program.
- Complicated cocktails need simple ingredients.
- Good, simple cocktails need complicated ingredients.
- Covalle is designed to make a simple cocktail read, taste, and feel like something much more complicated.

ON PREM TARGET

- The most successful On Prem items are ones that solve problems for a bar or restaurant.
- Covalle is designed to make simple, inexpensive and shelf-stable recipe builds taste like complicated cocktails.
- We love Covalle features at fancy cocktail bars, but the sweet spot is the bar or restaurant that needs to be *perceived* as fancy.
- Covalle thrives on menus that are fast, easy, consistent, and do not need a lot of prep. The Tomato-Water Martini at a hotel bar or steakhouse will crush.

OFF PREM

- It is important for retailers to know that it's not just another gin, it is **Tomato-Water Gin**.
- Covalle can be perceived as either a particularly interesting gin, or as a cocktail ingredient
- Covalle is gin-adjacent. It can be sold to someone looking for a gin OR someone looking for a flavor ingredient
- A lot of people DO frequent the gin aisle, and "Tomato-Water" grabs interest in a way that no other gin does.

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COMPETITIVE SET



*WE DONT REALLY SEE COVALLE AS HAVING A CLEAR COMPETITIVE SET,
BUT HERE ARE SOME BOTTLES THAT OVERLAP IN USE CASE.*



MOLETTO TOMATO GIN



HENDRICKS



CROP TOMATO

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USES

Covalle works ESPECIALLY well in spiritus and tall-fizzy drinks because of its lower-than-normal PH and pronounced tomato-plant aroma.

Tomato Season Last Word anybody? Gin and Tonic with a cucumber garnish ...or basil, to stay on the tomato theme?

We have also found that Covalle pairs especially well with:

- Giffard Piment d'Espelette
- Giffard Abricot du Roussillon
- Lilet Blanc
- Suze
- Fig Syrup
- Any tonic water (we love light fever tree)

Two Notes:

- Covalle is more acidic than other gins and so the citrus or other acidic ingredients should usually be dialed back a little
- Covalle and Campari have some constructive bitterness issues. It's not all bad, but we're leaning towards Campari substitutes for Negroni builds in a first look.

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COCKTAIL CARDS

FEAT. GIFFARDS

THE COVALLE MARTINI

*3 PART COVALLE TOMATO-WATER GIN
1 PART DRY VERMOUTH
1 PART BLANC VERMOUTH*

*COMBINE INGREDIENTS ON ICE, STIR, STRAIN
GARNISH WITH 1 OLIVE AND A LEMON TWIST*



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COCKTAIL CARDS

FEAT. GIFFARDS

THE GENTRY GARDEN

*1.5 OZ COVALLE TOMATO-WATER GIN
.75 OZ GIFFARD PIMENT D'ESPELETTE
.75 OZ FRESH LIME JUICE
.25 OZ SIMPLE SYRUP (2:1)*

*SHAKE, STRAIN, SERVE UP IN A COUPE
GARNISH WITH A CUCUMBER*



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COCKTAIL CARDS
FEAT. GIFFARDS

**FREE YOUR
MIND**

*1.5 OZ COVALLE TOMATO-WATER GIN
.5 OZ GIFFARD APRICOT DU ROUSSILLON
.25 OZ HONEY SYRUP
ANGOSTURA TO TASTE*

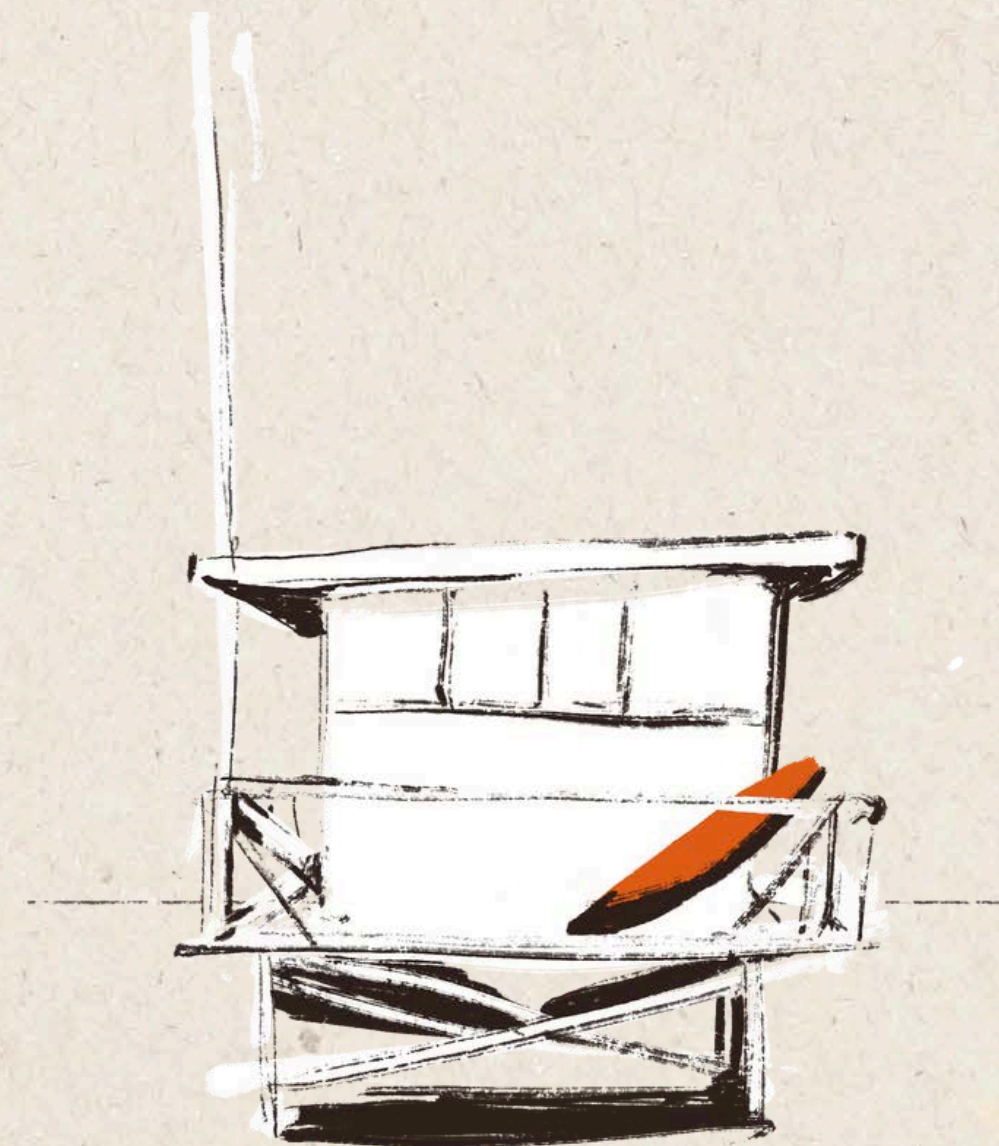
*STIR AND STRAIN OVER ICE
GARNISH WITH ORANGE TWIST AS DESIRED*



QUESTION TIME!



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THANK YOU