

SAN DIEGO Reader



"The gin keeps everything in balance."

Not Yo' Mama's gin and tonic

Ryan Jones makes lemon work with cucumber

Co-owner of [Pillbox Tavern](#), Ryan Jones has something preposterous. He's messed with that bit of perfection known as the gin and tonic. And what he's come up with — well, it's not your dad's gin and tonic — it's not yo' mama's gin and tonic.

But to those who'd rather pour lemon juice on an open paper cut before they put it in their gin and tonic, Jones says he wants you to hear him out.

Pillbox Tavern

118 W. Plaza Street,
Solana Beach

"When my brother and I were little and visiting our grandmother, who was a big fan of Beefeater Gin," he explains, "we got into the liquor cabinet and proceeded to drink her gin. It did not go over very well."



Ryan Jones: "We got into our grandmother's liquor cabinet and proceeded to drink her gin."

The mishap turned Jones off to gin — that is, until [Old Harbor Distilling](#) introduced its version.

"It was," he says, "a complete departure from what I thought of gin in regards to my earlier experience, gins which have that juniper-berry pop."

As for the name of Jones's jerry-rigged g&t, he says it honors Old Harbor's virtues, if only in the childhood breach that long made Jones and gin enemies.

"I was thinking of my grandmother," he says, "but used 'Mama,' because 'Grandma' didn't fit as well with the name."

In developing the recipe, Jones put Old Harbor up against the usual suspects to make sure he wasn't fooling himself or his customers.

"I tried the same recipe with Bombay Sapphire, Hendrick's, Tanqueray," he says. "No matter. The flavor profile's completely different."

Being cucumber-and-cilantro forward, Jones says, the drink made with Old Harbor works better with lemon in his makeover.

"The cucumber shows itself first in the cocktail," Jones says. "It finishes with a good balance of lemon and spice. The gin keeps everything in balance; everything else complements it."

Not Yo' Mama's gin and tonic

- 2 oz. Old Harbor Gin
- 1 oz. fresh lemon juice
- 10 slices cucumber
- ¾ oz. habanero syrup*
- 2 oz. Fever Tree tonic water

Bruise cucumber with gin in pint glass, add ice and other ingredients, cap with bar-shaker, give one stout shake, transfer contents to another pint glass, garnish with cucumber slice.

*Boil 4 cups water, add 5 (all but 1 deseeded) julienned habaneros, boil 8 minutes, add 3 1/2 cups sugar, boil until dissolved, remove from heat, and let sit for 2 hours before use.