

Heads & Tales

SIGNATURE PUB GROUP HAS CREATED A NEW GIN BAR AND DISTILLERY IN EDINBURGH WITH SPENCERFIELD SPIRIT COMPANY

Below the streets of Edinburgh, a new bar is serving up gin and cocktails alongside the copper pot stills of a working distillery. Heads & Tales has been set up by Spencerfield Spirit Company, makers of Edinburgh Gin, in the basement of Signature Pub Group's Rutland Hotel at the west end of Princes Street.

Formerly occupied by nightclub The One Below, it has been transformed into a 70-cover bar by leading hospitality design practice Tibbatts Abel which also worked on The Huxley bar on the ground floor. "We have made the space into a more cool urban hideaway," says designer Adam Tibbatts. "It has an industrial feel with a high-end finish." Beneath a central chandelier made from demi-johns used for resting spirits, it features wooden, copper, tan leather and barrel-cut tables.

Spencerfield Spirit Company, headed by Alec and Jane Nicol, has installed two copper pot stills, called Flora and Caledonia, behind a thick glass partition so they can be

seen by customers at the bar. They produce Edinburgh Gin as well as bespoke gins for the bar and customers, and there is also a small bottling facility. Open Tuesday to Sunday, it operates as a visitor experience about gin in the daytime and then becomes a bar from 4pm.

The bar is headed by Bruce Hamilton, a bar consultant and former brand ambassador for Drambuie liqueur, who has brought together an expert team including Sian Ferguson, previously at 99 Bar and Kitchen in Aberdeen, Emma Andrew, who was at 99 Hanover Street in Edinburgh, and Jody Buchan, brand ambassador for AquaRiva tequila.

They offer a menu of 20 original cocktails, mostly made with gin, such as The Pink Panther, combining gin with cranberry juice, lime juice, orange bitters and a special syrup. The bar stocks about 30 gins, including up to 20 from Scotland, with a variety of styles and countries represented. Alongside a core list, other brands will come and go. "We're not out to have the largest collection of gins," Bruce said. "We want to keep the back-bar ticking over, using products throughout the cocktail menu."

The name is a spin on the heads and tails which are the first and last parts of the spirit when it comes off the still. It



The Pink Panther

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is run in partnership with Heriot-Watt University's International Centre of Brewing and Distilling whose professor of brewing and distilling Paul Hughes will work with one of his graduates to provide research into Scottish botanicals and Edinburgh's distilling history as well as develop new products. Alex adds: "With our new visitor centre and distillery coupled with the Heads & Tales gin emporium, Edinburgh's great tradition for distilling looks set to be revived."

Behind the scenes

Design: Tibbatts Abel
Lighting: Chantelle Lighting
Furniture: Room Food