



Master storyteller and gin-tasting guide Aaron Cuneo samples the McHenry Distillery drops, main; The Story Bar at MACq 01 in Hobart

## TALES OF A CITY

**R**ich storylines have been the calling card of MACq 01 since the hotel opened its doors in 2017 – and some 45,000 years earlier as the country of the muwinina people. Now Hobart's dockside luxury property has added another experience to its bagful of yarn-spinning tours.

To make storytelling synonymous with MACq 01, staff delved deep, engaging historians to help research the tales of 114 notable Tasmanians, including Indigenous leaders, escaped convicts, thespians and at least one publican. Their lives and more are shared in walking tours available free for guests of the property and its sister, the Henry Jones Art Hotel.

Gin Tales is a new public sip-and-listen tour featuring five exclusive McHenry Distillery gins, each one distilled by riffing off the traits of five individual characters, chosen from the 114 fascinating Tasmanians who are each linked to a room or suite in the hotel.

The creative spark for this gin adventure began with the hotel's storytelling team selecting one person from five defined character types, which range from "Curious and Creative" to "Fighting Believer". In 2023, they began working with the experts at the McHenry Distillery lab in Port Arthur to figure out what ingredients would produce a gin with flavour notes to best invoke the spirit of the chosen ones.

Then followed months of adding and subtracting mountain pepper here and seaweed there, a dash of pigface in that one and some wild damson plum in this, and acknowledging that squid ink was worth a shot but it didn't work.

At 5pm, six days a week in the hotel's front-page decorated The Story Bar, the "gintuplets" now stand tall, bearing labels whispering their back stories. The five gins waft gently from

A gin tasting experience celebrates Hobart's most famous residents

JANE NICHOLLS



their tasting glasses – 2.5 standard drinks all up, with McHenry soda and tonic on hand to mix.

Charming master storyteller Aaron Cuneo begins with a fun little quiz to reveal our own distinct traits. I'm happy to be anointed as "Colourful and Quirky". "Now let's see if you like the same kind of gin," says Cuneo.

He combines encyclopaedic knowledge of each figure's story ("I go to the Tasmanian Archives on weekends and get out the microfiche"), theatrical panache and the distillery's detailed

data about the gins. It's not all sips and giggles; Cuneo deftly brings in the pathos of Tasmania's history, without dwelling but never ignoring.

As well as mostly local botanicals, these McHenry-made gins are fed with pure Tasmanian water. "We have five natural springs on our property and the water is soft – almost sweet – and at the heart of all the spirits and mixers we make," says Bill McHenry, who enthusiastically signed up his distillery to be MACq 01's partner for the project.

For an hour around the green marble bar Cuneo has us sitting on the edge of our stools, begging for more details as he relates the life stories of the local character behind each gin and how the chosen botanicals match their traits. We hear why one gin is "sweet but feisty", while another "has the spicy kick of a fighter". He spins his tales and shares why the notes of each distilled spirit "resonates with the character's story". It's marvellous fun and the gins are top shelf in every way.

As for the five characters who made the cut, head to the Story Bar and find out for yourself. Trust me, it's quite the tonic.

### IN THE KNOW

Gin Tales raises tasting glasses at 5pm Monday to Saturday in The Story Bar at Hobart's MACq 01 Hotel. Tastings are \$35 per person, and bookings are open to visitors as well as guests. The five gins are also available to purchase exclusively at MACq 01.

[macq01.com.au](http://macq01.com.au)

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