

Cheers to 'Ginuary', the drink for January

Get your mojo back with a foray into the craft gin market this year

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LIKE many people, you might be participating in "Dry January" after overdoing things during the festive season. But some of us have a tough time dropping alcohol for a month – and that's where "Ginuary" comes in.

As the name suggests, Ginuary is a campaign designed to encourage people to try gin, ranging from chocolates laced with it, gin-based drinks and even cakes.

We asked Johannes le Roux – founder of The Duchess gin, the world's first sugar-free, non-alcoholic gin and tonic – and Lucy Beard – founder of Hope on Hopkins Distillery – about their take on Ginuary.

Beard said Ginuary means indulging in a range of gins in January.

"There is a challenge within the gin community to encourage people to experiment with drinking gin.

"Drink a different gin or gin cocktail every day during January, to learn more about gin.

"People will realise that no two gins taste the same and that there is an enormous variety of gins out there. There are now more than 100 South African gins, each with their

own taste and botanicals, so, there's more than enough out there to ensure a successful Ginuary challenge," she said.

"There is a growing demand (for gin), and this has caused a huge upsurge in the number of people making gin.

"People are starting to enjoy a range of gins, rather than just sticking to only one brand.

"There is an overwhelming number of local craft gins, using unusual botanicals which are not available in other countries – which also means tourists are interested in sampling local gins," said Beard.

Le Roux said: "The Duchess is a non-alcoholic gin and tonic, so it makes perfect sense to promote the brand during a month when many consumers decide to go booze-free.

"We encourage consumers to take part in Dry January, because of its health benefits. But why not combine Ginuary and Dry January?

"We love and appreciate craft gins, but as a non-alcoholic gin brand, our target market caters to those who choose to go booze-free, whatever the occasion might be.

"We think people can enjoy

a gin any time of the year, but Dry January makes more sense to us than Ginuary, because it's a month when people start their New Year's resolutions, which more often than not include healthier lifestyle habits, including cutting out booze," he said.

"People enjoy products like craft beer, craft gins, etc because it evokes the idea that it's of better quality. Consumers are moving away from mass production towards trusted local brands – for example, being able to visit a local craft gin distillery, or a brewer.

"A big selling point is the product's origin, which makes it more authentic.

"The place of origin is more tangible, and thus more trusted. People are willing to pay more for something if they perceive it to be better quality "crafted". That is also why the craft gin and craft beer market in SA has grown a lot over the last few years, because consumers are becoming better educated about what they are consuming, and also more conscious about consumerism in general," said Le Roux.



A delicious take on the classic gin and tonic, these blueberry basil lemon Spanish gin and tonics are perfect all summer long.

Butter 'em up with spicy, sweet or salty popcorn

TODAY is International Popcorn Day. Celebrating Popcorn Day is as simple and delicious as it comes! You can start by just enjoying a bag of popcorn with your favourite toppings. You can have it with a classic mix of butter and salt, or get creative and add your favourite spices and herbs. There really isn't anything that doesn't go wonderfully with it. To celebrate, try out this caramel and honey popcorn from Dorie Greenspan's kitty of amazing recipes.

Using these measurements for cinnamon and chipotle (hot chilli pepper), you get a popcorn with a mild hit of heat and a subtle cinnamon flavour. If you're making the popcorn for kids, you might want to omit the chipotle; if you're making it for spice lovers, you can increase the amount of both ingredients.

Caramel-Honey Popcorn (Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS:

6 cups popped plain popcorn (not buttered or flavoured)

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon ground chipotle pepper

12 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into chunks

3/4 cup packed light or dark brown sugar

3 tablespoons honey

METHOD:

Lightly grease a large metal mixing bowl with cooking oil spray and pour the popcorn into it. Have at hand two heatproof flexible spatulas (sprayed for extra



slipperiness, if you like).

If you're crisping the popcorn in the oven, centre a rack in the oven and preheat it to 120°C.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper (which you can spray very lightly, if you like) or a silicone baking mat.

Whisk together the baking soda, salt, cinnamon and chipotle pepper in a small bowl.

Combine the butter, brown sugar and honey in a medium saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring frequently, until the butter and sugar have melted.

Bring the mixture to a boil; cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently, until it's a light mahogany colour. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the baking soda mixture to form a caramel.

Stir to make sure that everything is evenly incorporated, and then pour the caramel over the popcorn.

Working with the heatproof spatulas, turn the popcorn until it's coated with caramel.

This takes a couple of minutes. Keep turning; if your kitchen is cold and the caramel thickens, pop the bowl into the oven for a few minutes before continuing. You won't get a perfectly even caramel coating, but you'll come close.

Let the popcorn cool in the bowl before eating.

Bake (120°C) for 40 to 50 minutes, turning the popcorn twice to make sure that nothing sticks and everything bakes evenly.

The caramel may bubble and spread, but it will be fine once the corn is fully baked. Cool on the baking sheet. – The Washington Post



Treat yourself to a bowl or two of the crunchy, delicious, often-time addictive, but mostly healthy snack.

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