

Islander Ginger Beer - bringing back TCI's cultural legacy

A DELICIOUS alcoholic drink developed using traditional Turks and Caicos Islands recipes has flown off the shelves after just two weeks of its introduction.

Islander Ginger Beer, made from fresh and carefully sourced ingredients, has proven popular with tourists and residents alike.

Salt Cay resident Georgia Dunn, owner and CEO of the British West Indies Trading Company, spoke to the Weekly News this week about its journey from conception to production.

She explained that she has spent years tracing her rich family history back through several centuries.

As one of the few descendants of Thomas Harriott, who led a historic imperial voyage to explore the New World, Dunn has deep roots in the region.

During her research into the United Kingdom, Caribbean and Americas, she came across numerous references to a drink she had tasted and enjoyed during her years in the

TCI.

The business owner found out that ginger was introduced to the Caribbean from Asia in the 16th century and the region quickly became a leading exporter of the root.

In the 17th century the region's prolific yield of the spice, along with sugar cane, citrus juice and yeast led residents to create a distinctly Caribbean beverage.

Ginger beer became the alcoholic drink of choice throughout the Caribbean for close to 200 years and its popularity spread across the world.

By the mid-19th century there were more than 4,000 breweries in Great Britain and 1,500 in the United States and Canada dedicated to production of the drink.

However increased taxation on low percentage alcoholic products led to its decline as a fermented beverage.

Instead of drinking the alcoholic beer consumers opted for a non-

alcoholic version of the drink and added rum – a cocktail known now as the Dark and Stormy.

So alcoholic ginger beer became a rarity and until the present date ginger beer has been more widely recognised as a non-alcoholic drink.

As she carried out her research Dunn became attached to the idea of recreating and sharing the drink that had once been a household staple.

She made it her mission to bring back the true flavours of Caribbean ginger beer and re-establish a lost tradition.

Dunn created the unique recipe for Islander Ginger Beer, which is five percent alcohol and is made from filtered water, cane sugar, ginger, lemon, and secret spices.

"I was very particular when it came to sourcing all of the ingredients so that the consumer could taste that no expense was spared to achieve the highest quality product," she told the Weekly News.

Eager to learn more Dunn then went to study the science of fermentation at various universities in the United States to allow her to create a commercially viable product.

The plan was to produce the beer locally, but after much experimentation she found that her fermentation equipment was not capable of creating a stable product and it led her to opt for assistance



Islander Ginger Beer is light and refreshing and contains five percent alcohol

from the US Bacardi brewery.

Dunn is extremely proud of the unique product that is the result of recollections from local residents and repositories from various archives.

"It's a hand crafted product made with all fresh ingredients with small batch production and you can taste the care that goes into it," the artisan said.

Once production increases she hopes to build a brewery in the Turks and Caicos Islands to further build local pride.

"We hope that one day it will be a brand ambassador for the Turks and Caicos Islands and to promote the islands around the globe."

Islander Ginger Beer can be found in restaurants, bars and shops across Providenciales, in Parrot Cay and plans are in place to sell it in Grand Turk, the birthplace of the beverage, Salt Cay, and the other family islands.

The beer label features a map of the Turks and Caicos Islands, along with a seal stating 'Turks and Caicos born'.



Salt Cay resident Georgia Dunn wants to put the 'beer' back into ginger beer



Georgia Dunn with staff at Graceway Gourmet, one of the stockists