

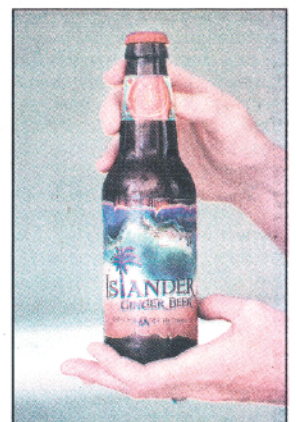


Photographs by Akil Simmons

**Authentic recipe:** Islander Ginger Beer was sparked by an old recipe Georgia Dunn found while poring through archives in Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands

Ginger Beer business venture is uncorked during Georgia Dunn's family history search

# Spirit of the past



By Nadia Arandjelovic

Georgia Dunn was on a hunt to find out more about her family history.

She didn't expect to come up with an idea for a business.

Islander Ginger Beer was sparked by an old recipe Mrs Dunn found while poring through archives in Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

She has ties to both places. Her ancestor, Thomas Harriott II, was one of the first settlers in Bermuda in the early 1600s; Mrs Dunn resides on Grand Turk, the largest island in the Turks and Caicos with a population of 3,700.

Unlike the soda-style ginger beer prevalent today, this formula is more like an artisan craft beer.

It was considered the most popular alcoholic beverage in the Caribbean for hundreds of years, according to Mrs Dunn.

"This all started as a personal journey of mine," she said. "When I inherited our family house, which was 10,000 square feet, no one alive in my family today really knew much about it.

"We knew who built it, but not exactly which year or where the money to build it came from.

"My grandmother told me as much about it as she knew and when my father inherited the house from her I always wanted him to write these things down, but he didn't. Then when he passed away and my brother and I inherited it we knew something had to be done.

"People would ask us questions about the history of the house and we wouldn't know the answers. I took it as a personal responsibility to find out more about this house because it's a national treasure and considered to be one of the most historical-

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— Georgia Dunn

ly significant houses in the Caribbean. There's information about it in the Bermuda National Museum because it's Bermudian built and we believe the limestone was also from Bermuda. It's considered to be the most significant Bermudian house outside the Island."

Mrs Dunn worked for the Turks and Caicos Government and had centuries of research at her fingertips. "I was very interested in the culture of the Turks and Caicos Islands in all its forms — architecture, music and food," she said.

"I would spend my lunchtime and evenings studying up on my Bermuda history and Turks and Caicos Islands history and I had the great ability to then live in the records during my lunch hour every single day and write up my notes every night." She learnt that the islands have a "very long culinary tradition", which is unique to each region.

"Each island has their very specific recipes that are introduced and passed down from generation to generation," Mrs Dunn said.

She discovered there were two old alcoholic beverages — ginger beer and a prickly pear wine.

"It piqued my interest that different families had various types of alcoholic recipes and ginger beer especially caught my eye," she said. "I started making it in the Turks and Caicos for commercial production and distribution with very small batches and then started offering it to the bars and restaurants on Grand Turk.

"But at a certain point I realised

that it had limitations as a commercial product.

"You really need a lab and have to understand what's happening with your beverage at the microscopic level for it to be a commercial success. I needed a product with a longer shelf life so that the quality wouldn't degrade under very difficult and hot weather conditions."

She chose Thomas Creek Brewery, a microbrewery in South Carolina to make the drink. Their water quality has made the taste that much better, she said.

"Ours is the authentic recipe that dates back hundreds of years and uses sugar cane, not grain, for the alcohol in the beer."

Mrs Dunn said the reward of starting this new business venture has been twofold. She feels more in touch with both her Bermudian lineage and her Turks and Caicos family history today.

She's also happy to have brought back a popular drink and introduced it to a younger generation.

"I hope this will inspire people to find out about other old local recipes before they're lost," she said.

"The reality is if we don't capture them, older generations are going to have to take these recipes to the grave. It's always the last generation that has to do something to preserve and keep it going. I also love the fact that through recipes like this we're reminded how we don't have to go to a museum to experience culture. I love museums, but we can also experience culture through everyday foods and drinks. "The culinary arts is such an accessible avenue and that's just so fantastic to me."

Islander Ginger Beer is expected to be available at Lindo's locations and Supermart on Front Street.

Visit [www.islandergingerbeer.com](http://www.islandergingerbeer.com).



**Rewarding journey:** Georgia Dunn feels more in touch with both her Bermudian lineage and her Turks and Caicos family history