

D4 THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 2007 • THE HARTFORD COURANT

TONICS GOING UPTOWN

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Now you may think that a splash of Schweppes or Canada Dry is perfectly fine. After all, they've been the staple for generations of G&Ts. But upscale tonic waters — Q Tonic, Fever-Tree Premium Indian Tonic Water, and Stirrings Tonic Water — are now on

the first on the market with premium tonic, sells its tonic for about \$5 for a 4-pack of 6.3-ounce bottles (\$1.25 per bottle); available at select Whole Foods and www.stirrings.com). Fever-Tree costs about \$6 for a 4-pack of 6.8-ounce bottles (\$1.50 per bottle); available at Food Emporiums in Connecticut later this month, and at Whole Foods in

experienced a tonic epiphany one night about four years ago when he had friends over for G&Ts in his backyard. "Two drinks in, my teeth started to feel really sticky," he says. He reached for the tonic bottle and found that it was loaded with high-fructose corn syrup, just like a Sprite or 7-Up. "I thought, that's ridiculous. Why isn't there a tonic water as good as the gin we're mixing it with?"

The next day he started researching tonic waters and ordered cinchona tree bark on the Internet to concoct tonic water in his kitchen. Years later, the result is Q Tonic, which may be the Cadillac of tonics on the market. Silbert, whose clients include only a handful of serious cocktail purveyors in Manhattan, says he finally achieved the perfect tonic water: a quick quinine sharpness that gives way to a long, rounded sweetness that complements the juniper in gin.

His devotion to a better tonic will no doubt pay off for Silbert, whose in-the-know bartender friends can easily hand-sell a better tonic to a cocktail community eager for the best of everything.

LeNell Smothers, owner of LeNell's Ltd: A Wine & Spirit Boutique in Brooklyn, N.Y., says better tonics like Q not only are worth the price, but they appeal to the same discerning customers who will pay more for better produce.

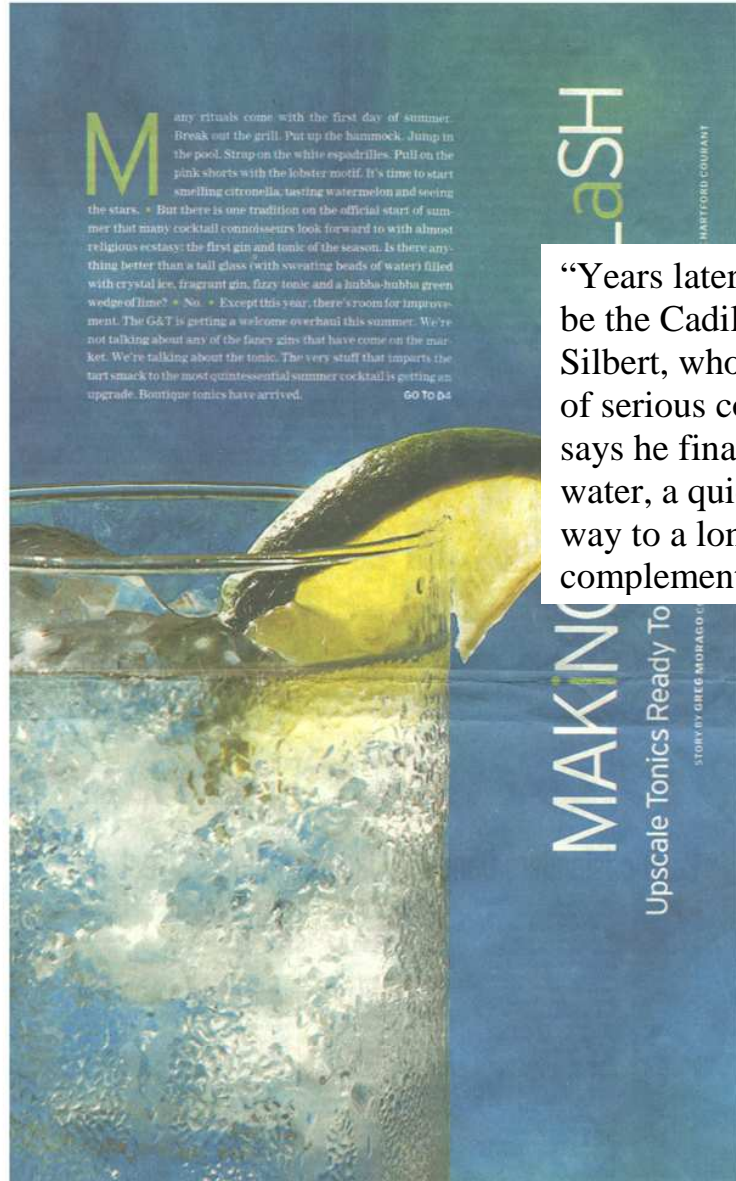
"With the renaissance of the cocktail, we have seen more interest in fresh-squeezed juice. This then leads folks to better ingredients overall in their drinks. The Slow Food movement has inspired imbibers to drink fresher and more natural," says Smothers, whose store carries a variety of super premium gins. "These are the same folks who will pay more for organic produce, work at the food co-op, or join a CSA [community supported agriculture]. It's the quest to be 'real' and closer to our food sources."

Rolls sees better tonic as an inevitable path given gin's resurgence — a welcome trend to any die-hard G&T lover. "At last, gins, those really great gins, with their significant differences are being dusted off and appreciated again," Rolls says. "And, at last, we have started a movement, which others are joining, to offer consumers quality tonic water and mixers."

Cheers.

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upscale gins. It would stand to reason that a consumer who would pay \$30 to \$40 for a boutique gin or vodka would care enough to spend a few dollars more for a superior tonic.

At least that's the logic. Makers of upscale tonics pride themselves on superior ingredients. None uses high-fructose corn syrup, which has supplanted sugar in mass-produced tonic; none uses synthetic flavorings. Q Tonic, based in Brooklyn, N.Y., uses organic agave nectar as its sweetener, combined with hand-picked Andean quinine (extracted from the bark of the South American cinchona tree, it gives tonic its familiar bitter taste), lemon juice and triple-purified water.

Fever-Tree, based in the United Kingdom but now available in some U.S. markets, blends Tanzanian bitter orange oil, African marigold and coriander and lime oils with cane sugar, spring water and high-quality natural quinine. Stirrings, a Nantucket, Mass., company that produces a line of upscale cocktail essentials, makes its tonic from triple-filtered water, cane sugar and natural quinine.

The boutique tonic experience costs about twice as much as supermarket tonic. A 6-pack of 10-ounce bottles of Canada Dry tonic water is about \$3.80 (about 63 cents per bottle). Stirrings,

Smith sees a niche market for upscale tonics: "Every liquor has gone through the boutique thing, why not mixers?"

That's precisely the thing Charles Rolls was going for when he created Fever-Tree mixers. The man responsible for the rebirth of Plymouth Gin, the venerable British brand he revived in 1997, turned his attentions to upscale mixers in 2002. The utter illogic of pairing fine spirits with inferior mixers spurred him to create a line of mixers that is just now breaking into some U.S. markets.

"What I learned was that too often the gin and tonic was either spoiled by the cheap sweeteners, by being too warm, or by being flat and not really fizzy," Rolls says. "The new gins are doing a great job taking forward a message that not all gins are the same. Yes, there is juniper in the gin but also coriander, cardamom, cubeb, rose, cucumber — a plethora of really notable herbs and spices that can be detected particularly on the nose, but also on the palate. So then how crazy do you get with a mixer which is so overpowering that you cannot smell or taste the difference between, say, Sapphire and tonic and Gordon's and tonic?"

Jordan Silbert couldn't agree more. The Brooklyn, N.Y., resident says he

Grand Vision Needs Great Special Effects

Hillary Has Her Theme Song, But Any Campaign — Like A Circus — Requires Spectacle

By JESSE LEAVENWORTH
COURANT STAFF WRITER

Now that U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton has a campaign song, it's time to plan the big show to accompany it.

Live stage effects and video technology have surged since former President Bill Clinton strode into the 1992 campaign amid balloon drops and crowds bopping to Fleetwood Mac's "Don't Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow)."

Hillary should try something far grander to go with the soaring melody and lyrics of her official

song, Celine Dion's "You and I." So here we go (and keep in mind that Air Canada also used this as a theme song).

As the first notes of "You and I" pulse through the stadium, a vision unfolds:

High above the mountains, far across the sea/I can hear your voice calling out to me/ Brighter than the sun and darker than the night/I can see your love shining like a light.

A satellite photo of the U.S. appears on a huge screen behind the podium, zooming in to the East Coast, then Maine's rocky shoreline, then closer to lobstermen hauling in their catch. The men stop and look skyward. The camera sweeps across the country, framing the landscape and



on the web

To hear Hillary Clinton's new campaign song by Celine Dion (and to see the video that introduced it), visit www.courant.com/hillarysong.

the people — men and women at work in factories, fields and offices; kids in schools; a baby on her grandpa's lap. The shots of each group end with the people looking up, hope in their eyes.

And on and on this Earth spins like a carousel/ If I could travel across the world/The secrets I would tell.

GO TO D5

COMING TOMORROW

Uplifting colors, designs and artwork can help alter the mood for people who are ill and spending a lot of time at home or in health-care settings.

AT HOME

ON THE WEB

Influential, or overrated? Either way, "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" wasn't the only groundbreaking album released in 1967. Find out what else the Summer of Love produced in this week's SoundCheck, The Courant's music podcast. Hear it at www.courant.com/soundcheck.