



## The Gardener to the Stars

Superstar Brad Pitt and Rhône’s winemaking family, the Perrins, come together once again to repeat their rosé success story with a brand-new London dry gin. **Matthieu Perrin** reveals the secret of their long-term successful collaboration to **Ruma Singh**.



It is impossible to miss the slew of celebrities who have jumped on to the super-premium spirits production bandwagon. Call it a side-hustle if you will, but this is one that doles out mega publicity and generates big bucks. Take George Clooney who launched his Casamigos tequila (which he sold to Diageo a few years ago for \$1 billion), and fellow actor Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson whose Teremana Tequila has notched up multiple awards. Ditto for actor Ryan Reynolds who hit the headlines with his Aviation gin before selling it to Diageo.

But wait. No list of celebrity-backed beverages is complete without a mention of Brad Pitt. The movie star created a rosé-coloured storm when he launched his premium Provence rosé, Chateau Miraval with his now ex-wife Angelia Jolie, and now he has made another move in the alcobev market by launching a gin.

### Not Just Another Gin

This one, called The Gardener is a repeat collaboration with superstar wine producers of the Rhône, the Perrin family of Château de Beaucastel in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the very collaboration that had created Miraval in Provence, in 2012. Following Miraval’s success came a limited-edition rosé Champagne, called Fleur de Miraval Exclusivement Rosé, a partnership with Rodolphe Péters, a rosé Champagne specialist based in Mesnil-sur-Oger.

The new Champagne was a sell-out success at just under \$400 a bottle and became the official bubbly served at the Oscars. Following that, in May 2023, The Gardener gin was launched with great fanfare at the Cannes Film Festival, at the grand re-opening of the iconic hotel, The Carlton, preceded by a three-month soft launch for the on-trade. With it, came a specialty cocktail, called The

Secret Garden, served to the stars at Cannes.

It all seemed to fit in beautifully. Brad Pitt is not only an Oscar-winning actor, he is especially remarkable for his business acumen. The Perrins, on the other hand, have carved out a reputation for brilliant winemaking over five generations in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Brad Pitt’s relationship with the Perrins developed over the years to become rock-solid, the collaboration delivering some of the biggest success stories in modern beverage history.

During an exclusive interview with Matthieu Perrin, he spoke frankly to me about the relationship. “When Brad bought Château Miraval, he was looking for an oenologist to partner with in the long-term. Today, we believe we trust one another. We both share similar values for the future,” he said.

Neither the Perrins nor Pitt could have anticipated the astonishing success of Miraval – it sold out in 5 hours on its launch in 2013 – at a time when the rosé boom had not begun. Perrin describes the erstwhile rosé category as being like the patisserie section of a restaurant: always a delicious afterthought, never the main meal.

“Just as the Patisserie Chef will never be considered a restaurant’s main Chef – rosé was always secondary to red and white wines. Now we are proud that we played a role in opening the category to the world,” said Perrin,

He shared that ten years ago, the rosé market was very small; it was not considered a serious wine. Creating a quality-driven premium rosé was a challenge. As France’s first-ever organic wine producers, the Perrins, despite their historic reputation, had never made rosé before as Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation rules do not permit rosé production.

But never ones to shy away from a challenge, the Perrins grasped at this one with both hands – Beaucastel after all was the first Rhône Valley wine to sell on La Place de Bordeaux, and the Perrin family are members of the exclusive Primum Familiae Vini, featuring the 12 first families of wine. A history of excellence was on their side. Within a decade, the Perrins with Pitt had turned the category on its head, making the ‘non-serious wine’ into a desirable luxury product. This story was repeated

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once again in their next venture with Pitt – here too, they stepped out of their comfort zone only to see great success with their Fleur de Miraval rosé Champagne.

In the same way that Miraval is not just another rosé, or Fleur de Miraval is not another Champagne, Perrin is clear about where The Gardener is placed. “I like to say it is not just another gin,” he said.

I ask him about the partnership with Brad Pitt, something many are curious about. Who drives decision making? It is a total collaboration, he replied while adding, “Brad does not believe in compromise when it comes to quality. Every choice in his life is only about quality. Like us (Beaucastel is certified biodynamic) he believes sustainability for the sake of future generations is very important. And we both have a common love for the Cote d’Azur.”



### The Gin’s the Thing

As in the case with their earlier ventures, the Perrins and Pitt started with little idea about making spirits. But, they had a clear vision about what they wanted to create.

Research and reflection brought them the realisation that gin is a spirit that could reflect the diversity of the Riviera. “We decided our gin must represent the Riviera’s



Tom Nichol &amp; Matthieu Perrin

*The trio of creators of The Gardener Gin – Brad Pitt, Tom Nichol and the Perrin family - form a triptych*



art de vivre without compromising on quality in any way,” explained Matthieu Perrin.

Surrounded by the immense biodiversity of the region, they realised they were spoiled for choice. “All around us at Beaucastel and at Miraval there were herbs and shrubs growing. We thought we should make a spirit that would reflect the terroir. This concept is very important to us and drives our winemaking too. We know of the way Cognac speaks of the Cognac region, and tequila reflects Mexico – but we had no spirits to represent our own beautiful region, even though great names like Picasso, Van Gogh, Cézanne and Dior all came to the Riviera to be inspired,” elaborated Matthieu Perrin.

But they knew making gin was totally different from making a terroir-driven wine, so a Master Distiller had to be brought in to the mix. A mutual friend introduced Perrin to legendary gin Master Distiller, Tom Nichol, the man behind Tanqueray gin. “What was amazing was that he had never heard of us, or of Beaucastel,” Perrin laughed as he reminisced. “As soon as we heard that we knew he was the right guy! But he had little interest in working again – he wanted to enjoy his retirement, his grandchildren. We had to work hard to convince him that this was going to be the project he had long dreamed about: the creation of the ultimate London dry gin,” added the winemaker.

Nichol eventually agreed, with one stipulation – the base of the gin was to be grain and nothing else; the alcohol had to be pure and neutral to express the delicately nuanced botanicals. “It made perfect sense

to us. Our only condition was that the grain must be organically grown,” recollected Matthieu.

## Reflecting Riviera

Nichol focused on the range of citrus that the Riviera was famous for – the bitter orange of the Cap d’Antibes, the sweetness of pamplemousse or pink grapefruit, the juicy lemon of Menton. With these came scents of the lavender fields of Provence, the wild rosemary and figs that grew in abundance everywhere in the Riviera. The Mediterranean feel carried through to the fluted bottle, featuring fluid lines and a bright Mediterranean blue: eye-catching on any retail or bar shelf.

Who designed it, I asked Perrin. “Brad Pitt did – do you know he is an artist too? We wanted the bottle to reflect the Riviera, and Brad drew it: the lights of the bottle revealed through the strokes of his paintbrush, reflecting the changing colours of the day in the Cote d’Azur, the light reflecting the sea, the swirls of the leaves and branches of the trees, the carved wood of the stopper...” Matthieu continued.

The trio of creators of The Gardener Gin – Brad Pitt, Tom Nichol and the Perrin family - form a triptych, he added. Brad the dreamer, the star in the sky, Nichol the alchemist representing fire, and the Perrins representing the earth, being rooted to their land for over five generations.

The Gardener Gin is presently available in France, Germany, Australia and Spain and will soon be released in the UK in June, followed by the US. The gin’s flow in the Asian market will follow. 