

PRESS RELEASE
December 17, 2025

Beefeater's Master Distiller Emeritus, Desmond Payne, Announces Official Retirement

An icon of the gin industry, Desmond Payne MBE will officially retire this year after nearly six decades of service to the industry.



Today, Beefeater, the world's most awarded gin, officially announces the retirement of Master Distiller Emeritus, Desmond Payne MBE, following an illustrious career spanning almost 60 years, thirty of which have been spent at the helm of the Beefeater brand.

An unrivalled career, Payne has been pivotal in shaping the Beefeater brand that the world knows and reveres today. Under his guardianship, Beefeater has become the world's most awarded gin, thanks to his dedication to quality, heritage, craftsmanship and the original recipe inherited from founder James Burrough. His innovation and creations have driven the Beefeater brand forward, from the creation of Beefeater 24, a botanical-forward luxury gin, to his flavour innovations, including, among others, Beefeater Pink Strawberry and Beefeater Blood Orange, perfectly balanced liquids designed to complement and enhance the citrus-forward flavour profile inherent of the Beefeater brand.

Speaking on his retirement, Payne comments, *"It has been an honour and a privilege to be the guardian of Beefeater Gin and see the brand thrive over these last three decades. But all good things must come to an end, and it is time for me to retire and pass the baton onto the next generation. This has been more than a job to me; it has been a chance for me to follow my passion while honouring the traditions and craftsmanship of those that have come before. I know Adam and the rest of the distilling team will continue to champion Beefeater, creating only the highest quality liquids deserving of the Beefeater name."*

Offering her thanks to Payne's years of service, Murielle Dessenis, Global VP Marketing Gins for Beefeater, comments, *"There are many emotions that envelope this moment – gratitude, pride and a touch of sadness. But also, excitement for what the future will hold. Desmond has been a revered and trusted custodian of the Beefeater brand, and his lifetime of service will be felt for many years to come. Enjoy your retirement, Desmond! And we know the brand is in excellent hands with Adam, an exceptional distiller who will continue to drive the brand forward."*

Desmond's retirement comes with a highly impressive list of achievements throughout his 60 years, from having an MBE bestowed upon him by the late Queen Elizabeth II to being awarded the IWSC's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016 and scooping The Gin Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015 among so many others. Desmond, the gin industry thanks you.

Having stepped into the Master Distiller Emeritus role three years ago, Adam Cocker took on the role of Head Distiller, taking up the mantle from the legendary Payne and will continue to lead the team, guarding Beefeater Gin's original recipe while innovating exciting new creations to come.

About Beefeater

Beefeater London Dry Gin is the world's most awarded gin, distilled in the heart of London. Created by James Burrough in the 19th century, the iconic Beefeater recipe has remained virtually unchanged and today it is guarded by Beefeater's Master Distiller Emeritus, Desmond Payne, the most experienced gin distiller in the world. Beloved by international bartenders for its consistently outstanding quality and classic London dry taste, the Beefeater range consists of Beefeater Dry with its iconic crisp, clean, well-balanced flavour, Beefeater Crown Jewel, the pinnacle of Beefeater's portfolio; Beefeater 24, a super-premium gin infused with Japanese and Chinese teas to create a distinctive, complex gin to suit contemporary cocktail culture and the brand's successful flavours, Beefeater Pink Strawberry, and Beefeater Blood Orange.

About Pernod Ricard

Pernod Ricard is a worldwide leader in the spirits and wine industry, blending traditional craftsmanship, state-of-the-art brand development, and global distribution technologies. Our prestigious portfolio of premium to luxury brands includes Absolut vodka, Ricard pastis, Ballantine's, Chivas Regal, Royal Salute, and The Glenlivet Scotch whiskies, Jameson Irish whiskey, Martell cognac, Havana Club rum, Beefeater gin, Malibu liqueur and Mumm and Perrier-Jouët champagnes. Our mission is to ensure the long-term growth of our brands with full respect for people and the environment while empowering our employees around the world to be ambassadors of our purposeful, inclusive and responsible culture of authentic conviviality. Pernod Ricard's consolidated sales amounted to € 12,137 million in fiscal year FY23. Pernod Ricard is listed on Euronext (Ticker: RI; ISIN Code: FR0000120693) and is part of the CAC 40 and Eurostoxx 50 indices.

For additional information



M&C Saatchi

For more information contact the The Absolut Group-team at M&C Saatchi.

theabsolutgroup@mcsaatchi.com

Read this online

<https://theabsolutgroup.com/media-room/press-release/beefeaters-master-distiller-emeritus-desmond-payne-announces-official-retirement/>