



Kina Lillet

Kina Lillet was created at the end of the 19th century in France, where wine-based tonics flavoured with quinine were popular.



Such drinks are known in France as quinquinas due to the addition of the quinine, a bitter ingredient that is extracted from the bark of the South American cinchona tree, or “kina kina”. The ingredient acts as a muscle relaxant and has been used for centuries to treat malaria.

Kina Lillet was launched in 1895 as an aperitif and tonic and quickly became known as “the aperitif of Bordeaux”. In addition to the wine and quinine, it consisted of a blend of fruit liqueurs.

In the 1920s the company launched Lillet Dry for the English market, which was usually mixed with gin, while the company reduced the prominence of Kina in the name and sometime in the 1930s Kina seems to have been dropped altogether.

A further name change occurred in the 1960s, after Lillet Rouge was introduced; the original product became known as Lillet Blanc (or Lillet Blonde depending on territory), a name which is retained today.

James Bond and Kina Lillet

The 1950s saw a revival in the fashion for cocktails and Lillet became popular once more in England - “Everyone enjoys and gin and Lillet” ran the ad - and the drink took off in the United States.

This coincided with Ian Fleming getting down to writing his “spy story to end all spy stories”, which included the recipe for James Bond’s first contribution to the cocktail world, the Vesper (overshadowed later by the Vodka martini of course). The recipe given by Fleming is as follows:

- 3 measures of Gordon’s gin
- 1 measure of vodka
- ½ a measure of Kina Lillet

Shake until ice cold and serve in a deep champagne goblet with a large thin slice of lemon peel.

KINA LILLET

Looking to buy Kina Lillet online? Order now from the following merchants:

[The Whisky Exchange](#) (UK)

[The Drink Shop](#) (UK)

[Morrell Wine](#) (USA)



Did Ian Fleming get it wrong?

Kina Lillet's successor - Lillet BlancKingsley Amis, in *The Book of Bond*, claimed that Fleming had made an error in his recipe because the quinine in Kina Lillet would make the drink too bitter and it should be made with "Lillet vermouth" instead.

Probably Amis was referring to Lillet Dry (see above), but what is certainly true is that Bond was a little out of touch - by the time *Casino Royale* was written the original drink was known simply as Lillet.

Unfortunately it is impossible to test Amis' theory today; in 1986 the recipe was changed and the quinine content decreased to reduce bitterness. The result is a fruitier drink with a pronounced orange flavour.

Where to buy Lillet

Lillet isn't the easiest product to find and given its role in *Casino Royale*, it is surprising that Lillet were slow to realise the promotional opportunity afforded them.

However, it is available from a few online sources, or you can contact the company via their website to find a local supplier

[The Whisky Exchange](#) (UK)

[The Drink Shop](#) (UK)

[Morrell Wine](#) (USA).

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Kina Lillet returns in Quantum of Solace

Bond's request for a martini that included Kina Lillet in Casino Royale saw a surge in demand for the product upon the film's release in 2006, deluging the tiny company's staff with enquiries from all over the world.



With Kina Lillet making a return in Quantum of Solace, there is every indication that demand is just as strong, if not stronger, than after the release of Daniel Craig's first outing as James Bond.

In fact the company dropped Kina from its name years ago and added Lillet Rouge in the 1960s, at which point the original product was renamed Lillet Blanc. The latter was reformulated for the modern palate in the mid 1980s when the quantity of quinine was reduced, and with it went its bitter aftertaste.

Lillet is set among the vineyards of Podensac, in the Bordeaux region of France and sells some 750,000 bottles per year, roughly half in France and the remainder is exported to Japan, the US, Canada and Spain.

The company was founded in 1872 by the Lillet brothers and remained in the hands of the family until 1985, when it was taken over by Bruno Borie, a Bordeaux wine merchant. Borie modernised the company's operations and it was under his hands that the product was reformulated. It remained under control of the Borie family until earlier this year, when it was taken over by the Pernod Ricard group.

Lillet is an wine and fruit based aperitif and often served chilled with a slice of orange, but it is also an essential ingredient in the cocktail that James Bond later names the Vesper.

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The James Bond Dossier

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- ½ a measure of Kina Lillet

Shake until ice cold and serve in a deep champagne goblet with a large thin slice of lemon peel.

Where to find Lillet

Despite the increase in popularity of Lillet since Casino Royale, it remains surprisingly difficult to find.

You can order online from the sources below, or contact Lillet direct via their website to find a local supplier.

[The Whisky Exchange](#) (UK)

[The Drink Shop](#) (UK)

[Morrell Wine](#) (USA).

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