

# Sebor's pipe of Absinth

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**W**ell now that's January out of the way for another year. The poor month does suffer from post

Christmas and New Year Festivity blues – in short it is the anti-climatic month, and added to that pay day seems to take forever to come round. The trade doesn't like it either for obvious reasons. Having said all that I've enjoyed myself hugely.

For me it's the time of year when my drinking habits change radically. Sherry becomes the preferred aperitivo for the weekend and Scotch whisky comes to the fore as the after meal preference, and more often than not in the evening the pre-dinner delight as well.. These two significant tweaks means that a good G&T is not nearly so high on the priority list.

It is after all much more of a summer drink, and doesn't have the warmth factor associated with certainly the likes of Scotch, and now of course there's the Absinthe factor. Have you ever attempted drinking the pipe of Absinth? No I kid you not. Straight from the Czech Republic, Sebor Absinth (the 'e' is only when it's from France) has fashioned a glass pipe especially for drinking its Absinth from.

Strange? Well yes, but is it either practical or useful? Well it is as a matter of fact. Let me paint the scenario. It's Sunday and you're settling down with the newspapers at around midday. You are in your chair with a strategically placed drink close at hand. Up goes the newspaper and you read several items of interest – then down it goes in order for more refreshment and up it goes again. This process is repeated, until it's time to have another drink. By which time your paper probably looks like someone's sat on it and no doubt there will be some drops of condensation from the glass of your tippie which have splashed all over the crossword you are saving to do early evening.

But this was pre-the pipe of Absinth. The pipe is specially shaped so it rests easily on your chest whether standing up (that would be good for all the cook of the household) or sitting down. So now you put your chosen drink in the pipe, (it doesn't have to be Absinth) Shaped like a smoking pipe, the bowl bit holds the drink and crushed ice. You settle into your chair, and so fortified you can read your newspaper in theory from cover to cover apart from those important refill interludes. It's an excellent wheeze.

So, it has to be said, is Absinth. Its renaissance is founded of course on its history and the illustrious artistes who drank it

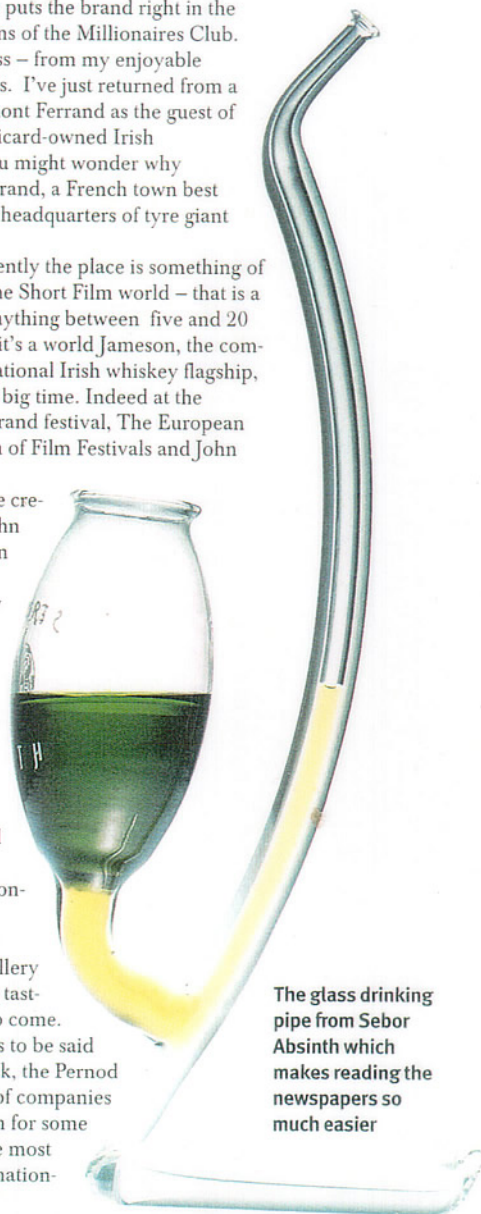
and of course the fact that it was banned at the height of the Bohemian hold it had established in Paris. It has to be said that the Absinthes which are around today are on the whole – there's always one or two which are not – very palatable. They're strong but well made. Fundamentally Absinthe is a blended herbal spirit which tastes of fennel and eucalyptus and too much alcohol...well it's the usual scenario.

After Absinthe was banned in France, the renowned pastis duo Pernod and Ricard came on to the scene, as lower alcohol and more socially acceptable versions. Ricard alone now boasts colossal annual sales – 7.5 million cases at the last count in 1999 – which puts the brand right in the upper echelons of the Millionaires Club.

But I digress – from my enjoyable January that is. I've just returned from a visit to Clermont Ferrand as the guest of the Pernod Ricard-owned Irish Distillers. You might wonder why Clermont Ferrand, a French town best known as the headquarters of tyre giant Michelin?

Well apparently the place is something of a mecca for the Short Film world – that is a film lasting anything between five and 20 minutes, and it's a world Jameson, the company's international Irish whiskey flagship, is getting into big time. Indeed at the Clermont Ferrand festival, The European Co-ordination of Film Festivals and John Jameson announced the creation of the John Jameson & Son Short Film Awards, a new joint initiative worth Euros 300,000 over the next three years – but more of that anon.

So to February: well for starters it's back to that wonderful Pernod Ricard-owned Speyside Distillery Aberlour for a tasting of things to come. It hardly needs to be said that in my book, the Pernod Ricard group of companies is and has been for some time one of the most sociable multinationals around.



The glass drinking pipe from Sebor Absinth which makes reading the newspapers so much easier