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Red ants, a winning concept for Redant.

Let the challenge inspire you - it was this way of thinking that led Raphael Redant from Australia to the unfamiliar flora and fauna of the forests of The High Coast of Sweden. Following the path of creativity, he emerged as the winner of the global final of Hernö Gin Cocktail Awards 2019. His cocktail of smoked juniper wood, sea water and red ants blew the judges minds and was unlike anything they'd ever tasted. He named it God's Country.

So where did his creativity come from? How did Raphael, growing up in Belgium where he watched Jurassic Park and dreamt of being an archeologist, end up as bartender in Australia? And how did he prepare for the Hernö Gin Cocktail Awards and the challenge in The High Coast of Sweden?

– I studied art back home in Belgium, but wasn't sure of which direction I should go from there. I like exploring, trying new things and going places, so I moved to the furthest place I could think of when I was twenty. My base has been Sydney in Australia for the past eleven years, tells Raphael.

Where driving forces come into their own.

That Raphael's rightful place was behind the bar quickly became clear at his first workplace in Australia; a restaurant where he started off as an all-rounder.

– The team saw that I was more confident in the bar and that I had a pretty decent knowledge, so I was employed as a junior bartender. My passion and my skill grew, and it still does after more than a decade as a bartender. I just love doing this! says Raphael with a huge smile on his face.

– Meeting new people on a daily basis and being on stage every night is

quite amazing. Not one single night is the same as another, he adds.

In the bar Raphael's driving forces come into their own. Exploring cultures, flavours, and finding new ways to keep developing is what drives him forward. Together with his continual ambition to come up with either a new concept for a drink or a new process that will improve his daily work.

Amazed by the product, the place and the people.

– The first time I encountered Hernö Gin was in my bar when one of our suppliers came to me and said, 'Man, you got to try this gin!' He didn't have to tell me that it is a multi-awarded product to realize it was good juice!

When a few years later he set foot in Dala and visited the Hernö Gin distillery, Raphael was amazed by the surroundings and the humble people that create the gin. He strongly recommends other bartenders to take part of Hernö Gin Cocktail Awards.

– Do it! Don't overthink it! And let the challenge inspire you, that's his advice.

Expected the freezing cold. Embraced by warmth.

Preparing for Hernö Gin Cocktail Awards, Raphael downloaded an App for Scandinavian foraging to browse what he could possibly find in Mother Nature's own larder – the vast areas of wilderness in the far north. And he really expected to meet the freezing cold out there.

– Instead I met amazing people from the passionate Hernö Gin family, friendship with other competitors, a breathtaking landscape and a surprisingly warm weather, he remembers back.

Hernö Gin Cocktail Awards brings out the very meaning of terroirs.

On the day of the competition he decided to not overthink, go with the flow, see what he would find into the wild and let his imagination do the rest. And his mind was surprisingly open for ingredients like sea water and red ants.

– The biggest challenge was the time. When we got back to the distillery, we

only had two hours preparation time to create a quality drink. Under that pressure I managed to come up with a few tasty components that I just had to balance together, tells Raphael.

And he sure did balance it together. A large portion of creativity is the true recipe for the winning cocktail "God's Country".

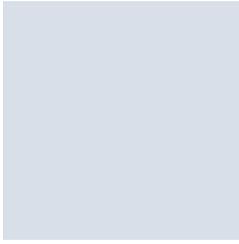
Raphael's do's and don's before going to Sweden:

<https://hernogin.com/article/red-ants-a-winning-concept-for-redant/>

Hernö Gin is the world's leading and most awarded craft gin producer. Proud pioneers who started the first gin distillery in Sweden back in 2011. It all began with a passion for the juniper predominant spirit and a dream evolving to gin crafting. A journey that took Hernö Gin's founder Jon Hillgren to places and gin distilleries all around the world in his thirst for knowledge and search for inspiration. Finally settling in the small village of Dala just outside Härnösand in the High Coast of Sweden.

Hernö Gin is crafting the world's most awarded gins from natural organic botanicals in the hand hammered copper stills Kierstin and Marit. With a mindset of crafting, transparency in all parts of the process and total focus on quality, Hernö Gin intend to bring premium gin culture to every home.

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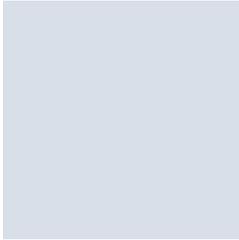
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