



CULINARY PROFILE OF THE MONTH

Bee plus plus

TEXT: MARTIN PILKINGTON | PHOTOS: DARD-DARD

Geoffrey Bette has used a favourite family recipe to establish a buzzing beverage business. Or should that be bee-verage?

In his teens, Geoffrey Bette watched his Polish grandfather, Stanis, make up a dozen or so bottles of his delicious honey and spirit recipe every year, learning what made it special. It was time well spent, as at 25 he decided to make his own, and now Geoffrey's version is the core of a new but rapidly expanding business, Dard-Dard – 'Sting-Sting' in English.

"I spent a year developing and testing the recipe, eventually deciding to reduce the alcohol content to 30 per cent ABV from Stanis' 40, to give it better balance and less fire!" Geoffrey explains. "The result is a perfect equilibrium between the dry spirit and the sweet honey. In 2006, I be-

gan selling it at foodie markets and fairs. When by 2015 demand outstripped my ability to produce, I looked for a partner, and thus began working with Distillerie Gervin who, like me, have a family-centred and artisan ethos – they make it for me using exactly the same recipe as I did making it on a craft basis."

Geoffrey owes a great deal to Stanis, and speaks fondly of his late grandfather: "He liked my version, and shortly before he died, watched me on a national TV news programme talking about the product, and was extremely proud," he recounts. It meant a lot to Geoffrey when Stanis gave his approval of the tweaked version, given the cheeky name BeePee's by its creator.

Just as his grandfather was, Geoffrey is fiercely proud of the product's special nature: "It's not mead, and it's not Krupnik



Geoffrey Bette.



BeePee's Sour

- 1.5cl of BeePee's liqueur
- 1.5cl of Amaretto
- 1.5cl of lime juice
- 9cl of good-quality tonic

Pour the well chilled ingredients into a frosted glass and decorate with a slice of lime

- the Polish honey-flavoured vodka," he stresses. "Like my grandfather, I macerate the pure honey and marry it with alembic-distilled spirit - it's not the artificial 'honey-flavouring' some big-name drinks brands employ."

That pure quality and fine flavour has led to the drink being taken up by a long list of chefs and traiteurs keen to harness its refined taste in their dishes. Many of



these recipes and ideas are being loaded onto Dard-Dard's new website so home cooks can try them; and the mouth-watering menu for the company's launch event this March brings together some of the best, from nibbles to dessert, at the same time featuring some of the myriad ways it's served as a drink - in cocktails, mixed drinks, or neat as a digestif.

GinBee's

The success of the original has led to Geoffrey creating an additional product, GinBee's, again made with his friends at Distillerie Gervin, where honey is once more at the heart of the product, though via a different method - BeePee's uses maceration, in GinBee's it's actually distilled in the alembic. This being a contemporary gin, it also includes six punchy botanicals to add depth and complexity: juniper berries, thyme, rosemary, lemon



peel, bitter almonds and angelica root. "It can be drunk on its own as a stunningly delicious digestif, or included in classic gin cocktails," he says.

From humble beginnings as a craft product sold at small fairs and markets, BeePee's has grown and grown, and now more than 100 retail outlets stock it across much of Belgium, from boutique drinks suppliers and fine-food shops to some major supermarket chains, where it can be found in the local specialities section. More and more bars and restaurants are taking it up, too. Currently, discussions are underway with distributors in Luxembourg and Switzerland, and it is now to be found more and more in France, too. "It's good that I've got a workforce of 10,000 behind me," says Geoffrey. And as they're bees, the over-heads are small!



Launch event

Dard-Dard SRL is holding a celebratory dinner and concert to mark the new company's launch. Venue: Theatre Saint Luc in Tournai. Date: 21 March 2020. Tickets €49, book before 15 February. The menu showcases BeePee's and GinBee's in various drinks and dishes, including: smoked salmon with chicory and orange; salmon and BeePee's foam; duck breast with BeePee's jus; iced shot of BeePee's served in a chocolate coupe.

BeePee's Granita

Geoffrey recommends this for two gourmands or three gourmets! All the ingredients must be as cold as possible. Mix three scoops of lime sorbet with 10cl of very well chilled Cava. Pour 3 - 4cl of BeePee's into a glass and cover with the sorbet and Cava mousse. Serve, and watch the magic as the granita slowly forms.

Web: www.dard-dard.com