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By Michael Barker

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New Tesco gin from surplus table grapes



Supermarket launches waste-reducing premium spirit, supplied by partnership of Richard Hochfeld and Foxhole Spirits

Tesco is claiming a first by launching a new gin made from surplus table grapes.

Supplier Richard Hochfeld is working with Sussex-based distiller Foxhole Spirits to produce the exclusive gin, called HYKE, which launches in Tesco on 18 March. The 50cl bottles have an alcoholic strength of 40 per cent and cost £24 each.

The move comes in response to calls to reduce food waste, with Richard Hochfeld losing the equivalent of 1.4 million punnets of grapes in the packing process each year.

The launch of HYKE comes with sales of gin hitting a 50-year high, and demand for premium gin at Tesco up 90 per cent in the last year.

Tesco's buying manager for spirits, Andrew Hargreaves, said: "We are always looking at innovative ways to tackle food waste and work closely with our suppliers to do just that. There couldn't

be a better time to launch HYKE. Gin is the drink of the moment with demand for premium-quality varieties rocketing by nearly 90 per cent in the last year.

"As a result of the boom we now stock about 80 different gins and we think that with its unique taste and exceptional quality HYKE will go down well with the growing number of gin connoisseurs."

Karen Cleave, technical director at Richard Hochfeld, explained that for packing, grapes are cut and trimmed to fit the punnets, leaving loose grapes and tiny bunches that can't be sold as fresh. "The size of the trade means that these lovely fresh grapes - equivalent to the weight of about 3.5 blue whales - end up as compost, animal feed or in an anaerobic digester," she added.

"Now we're taking them on a delicious journey which respects the provenance of the grapes and supports our commitment, as one of Tesco's biggest suppliers, to cut waste."

HYKE gets its distinctive character from both the grape spirit and a unique blend of botanicals, inspired by the grapes' origins in Africa and South America, according to Tesco.

"We knew that there was something special that could and 'should' be done with this quality by-product, so we applied our expertise and craftsmanship to the challenge," said James Oag-Cooper, managing director and co-founder of Foxhole Spirits. "The result is a totally unique product which tastes exceptionally delicious, is beautifully presented, sustainably conscious and yet still affordable.

"Its rich, sweet citrus characters, followed by velvet-textured spice and complex aromatics combine to make HYKE Gin versatile enough for a classic G&T, a refreshing spritz or a sophisticated martini."

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