The Story of De Kuyper
The De Kuyper family has been involved in the Dutch gin industry since as far back as 1695. Petrus de Kuyper took the first step by producing gin barrels at his cooperage in Horst. His third son, Jan de Kuyper, took it one step further by opening a distillery in Schiedam. Jan’s sons, Johannes and Pieter, succeeded in taking over a large distillery in Rotterdam and rapidly became the biggest distillers in the city.

Schiedam 1911. Smoke billows from the chimneys of the numerous distilleries and settles on walls and streets. The tall grain mills tower above a blackened and rainy city. Whilst the Golden Age of the gin-producing city of Schiedam comes to an end, heavy steam engines drive long piles into the ground on the Buitenhavenweg to form the foundation of what will become the ultramodern business premises of the De Kuyper family.

1695

Petrus de Kuyper and Anna Custers open a “cooperage” in Horst.

1752

Jan de Kuyper, third son of Petrus and Anna, switches the company’s activities to the production of gin with the purchase of a Schiedam distillery.

1695

After 23 years of construction the Spanish complete the Castillo de San Marcos. The castle was designed to protect the small town of St Augustine in Florida (US) against foreign threats.
The Spanish discover the entrance to San Francisco Bay. This strait was later named the Golden Gate during the gold rush.

The French era. During Napoleon’s ban on exports, the US Prohibition, the First World War, the Depression and the Second World War. Driven by entrepreneurial spirit, a love for the distilled product and close family ties. Today the 11th generation of the De Kuyper family stands at the helm of a strong global company, ready for many more centuries of De Kuyper aanpassen naar Today the 11th generation is working in the company but the company is led by ’s occupation, Mark de Witte at the moment.

Jan de Kuyper’s sons, Johannes and Pieter, succeed in taking over a large distillery in Rotterdam. A few acquisitions and extensions later they become the biggest distillers in the city.

The business continued to expand. Exports to the United Kingdom, Canada and distant overseas markets increased.

By combining forces, the De Kuyper family successfully steered the family business through good times and several crises.

Johannes and Cornelis Petrus maneuver the business through this difficult time with the help of their uncle Pieter. The brothers manage to purchase four distilleries between 1804 and 1816, demonstrating their financial strength and support. After 1813 exports are back in swing. However, by that time in many countries De Kuyper previously exported to, the need for imports had been replaced by industry. The result is a fall in sales. High excise duty also places sales in the Netherlands under pressure.

The French era. During Napoleon exports to the United Kingdom are banned.
The 2nd half of the 19th century shows a boom in trade. Foreign demand for Dutch spirits grows.

1825 George Stephenson opens the 42-kilometer Stockton & Darlington railway between County Durham and Darlington with his self-designed steam locomotive.

1825 After many years of losses, Johannes and Cornelis Petrus decide to divide up the business. The distilleries in Delfshaven goes to Cornelis Petrus, whilst Johannes stays on at the Rotterdam distilleries. The business owned by Johannes (and his son Cornelis) forms the basis for the company today.

1846-1860 The 2nd half of the 19th century shows a boom in trade. Foreign demand for Dutch spirits grows.

1850 The first of a series of post boxes is installed in The Hague, in preparation for the launch of the postage stamp.

1850 Around 1850, businesses start to brand their products to avoid imitations. The first De Kuyper trademark is registered in Canada in 1875.

An artist supposedly played with the symbols of the two Rotterdam-based distilleries “Anchor” and “Clover leaf” to produce a logo. During this process he decided to replace the clover leaf by a heart.
Traditional production methods, *the essence of De Kuyper*

The methods used for the production of spirits have changed significantly over the years. The distilleries have disappeared from the centre of Schiedam, and the tall grain mills have become tourist attractions. In 1910 De Kuyper’s entire production process, from producing the alcohol to bottling the drinks, took place within the walls of De Kuyper’s business premises. Today only the traditional flavouring of the alcohol still takes place in Schiedam. After all, it is the natural extracts and distillates that make De Kuyper’s unique spirits stand out from all the rest.

The perfect spirit is the result of skill, carefully selected ingredients and a controlled process. At De Kuyper the Master Distiller, with the aid of a committee, is responsible for coming up with new flavours and products.

Sales remain high, however the business experiences a fall in turnover on the American continent due to the Civil War (1861-1865). Trade is also strong with Curaçao, Rio de la Plata, the United Kingdom, the colonies and the west coast of Africa.

The London company Matthew Clark & Sons becomes a very important customer. Clark does not only purchase De Kuyper’s products for the UK, but also for the British colonies. The Canadians also develop a strong taste for Dutch gin. Around 1870, 85% of exports are destined for the UK and Canada.

1898 The White House is opened in Rotterdam. It was at that time the tallest office building in Europe.

The De Kuyper company finally establishes itself in Schiedam on the site purchased back in 1893.

1910 The new distillery is brought into use. It is still in use today.

1910 The New Zealand physicist Ernest Rutherford discovers the atomic nucleus and the proton.

The First World War. Although the Netherlands remains neutral during the First World War, the conflict has a noticeable impact on De Kuyper’s production and exports. The prices of raw materials are high, and the unrestricted submarine warfare means that exports to the United Kingdom and the United States are almost impossible.
Only the best ingredients

The fact that De Kuyper chose to settle in Schiedam had to do with the ports. The finest flavourings, peels and fruits were brought to the Netherlands from distant countries via the ports of Rotterdam and Schiedam. Together with the supply of European fruits and flavourings, these imports enabled the De Kuyper distillers to conduct endless experiments with various drinks.

The flavouring ingredients used by the distiller can be divided into a number of categories:

- **Berries and fruits**, such as juniper berries, blackberries and star anise.
- **Rinds**, such as lemon peels, sweet or bitter orange peels and Curaçao orange peels.
- **Leaves**, such as lemon balm, spearmint, peppermint, bay leaves and absinth.
- **Seeds**, such as coriander, cardamom, aniseed, cocoa beans, coffee beans and almonds.
- **Roots**, such as angelica, ginger, gentian, orris, sweet flag and liquorice.
- **Bark**, such as cinnamon, cinchona and angostura.
- **Flowers or parts of flowers**, such as vanilla, clove, hops, saffron and rose petals.
Capturing flavours

There are many things to take into account when developing a flavour. We do not only taste with our mouth, but also with our nose and our eyes. The mouth is only able to distinguish four basic taste sensations: sweet, sour, salty and bitter. We call these the non-volatile aromatic compounds. The mouth does not actually distinguish the difference between a strawberry and a cherry. It is the nose that is able to sense the aromas of the fruit. We call the fragrant aromas the volatile aromatic compounds. To give a spirit the right flavour, the Master Distiller must achieve the correct balance between the non-volatile and the volatile aromatic compounds. The De Kuyper Master Distiller has developed various techniques for drawing the flavours and colours out of the ingredients.

The De Kuyper distillery still features the copper pot stills from 1910. Along the walls dozens of glazed pottery jars are displayed, in which special extracts and distillates are maturing for use as ingredients in limited product ranges. And below the ground, large tanks are used to extract flavours. De Kuyper flavoured alcohol according to traditional distillation and extraction methods. The decision to use distillation or extraction depends on the desired flavour and colour of the end product.

1920
Start of liqueur production.
Over the course of the 1930’s De Kuyper produces nearly twenty varieties of liqueur, including apricot brandy, cherry brandy, triple sec and crème de menthe.

End of the 1920’s
1920-1934: Prohibition in the USA.
International concern regarding public alcohol consumption leads to a drastic decision in the USA: a total ban on alcohol. The effect? People start to distil their own alcohol at home and there is a massive rise in organised crime relating to illegal drink. At the height of his power, the gangster Al Capone employs more than 1000 people!

To ensure that the De Kuyper brand retains a foothold in the USA, De Kuyper supplies alcohol-free gin and orange bitters. A reliable source has informed us that the taste left a lot to be desired.

> Despite the alcohol ban, there is still a demand for Dutch gin. De Kuyper smuggles thousands of litres of gin into a dry USA via Zeeland, UK ports and French cities on to the American continent.

Distillation

Distillation is the process used to produce a flavoured alcoholic liquid by heating a mixture of alcohol and flavourings. The distillation process is based on the principle of the separation of liquids with a different boiling point. De Kuyper uses distillation to produce the main flavouring ingredients for clear liqueurs and colourless spirits such as lemon-flavoured gin.

Filling and soaking

The distiller fills the copper pot stills with a mixture of water and alcohol. The alcohol used can be grain alcohol, malt spirit or molasses alcohol, depending on the product being produced. The flavourings are then scooped into a linen sack. This can be a mixture of flavourings or just one ingredient, such as lemon peels. The sack of flavourings is placed in the pot still and the flavourings are then left to soak for a day or longer.

Pure copper

De Kuyper’s pot stills are made entirely of copper. One of the advantages of copper is that it strongly attracts unpleasant flavours that are released during the heating process, such as sulphur compounds. This means that impurities are extracted from the distillate and remain in the pot still.

Systematic targeting of the Dutch market. De Kuyper had always primarily focused on exports, however at the end of the 1920’s the company devises a strategy aimed at conquering the Dutch market. Travelling salesmen are employed and the first advertisements are published in newspapers and periodicals.
Second World War: The world had not yet recovered from the First World War when the second broke out. The Netherlands’ neutrality was infringed and a five-year German occupation followed. The danger of submarine attacks and trade restrictions led to a stagnation of exports.

During the occupation, every man was at risk of being sent to work in Germany if he could not prove that he was ‘needed’ in the Netherlands. At one stage, the staff at De Kuyper were only working half days on full pay due to declining production. De Kuyper kept two sets of accounts to prevent the regional employment office from discovering that the workforce was over capacity. A huge risk!

During the war there was no contact between Schiedam and the distilleries in Canada and the USA. Despite this, these two overseas distilleries were able to continue business as normal: clever planning meant that there were sufficient alcohol stocks just before the war broke out, and Henry de Kuyper had been authorised to take decisions independently from Schiedam.

1932

Persistent demand from Canada and North America leads to an agreement between De Kuyper and Meager Bros & Co for the production and sale of gin for the Canadian market. Henry De Kuyper takes charge of the Canadian distillery.

1934

De Kuyper enters into an agreement with National Distillers Products Corp. in New York regarding the sale of De Kuyper products and the joint establishment of a production unit in New Jersey. De Kuyper USA is born.

1940-1945

The reconstruction. During the reconstruction the government decides that exports have priority over production for domestic consumption, with the aim of bringing foreign currency into the country. For De Kuyper, this means an explosive increase in production.

After the war, domestic production focuses mainly on matured gin. This is mainly due to the longing for a return to the ‘good old days’ amongst the Dutch population. In addition to matured gin, ‘young’ gin also appears on the market. This is the new name for the ‘normal’ gin, which acquires a more positive image as a result. After the war, Canada becomes fully accessible again. Exports to Canada rapidly come to account for 60% of profits!

Underground glass

The building was constructed back in 1910. However, stainless steel had not yet been invented. There were very few solutions available for storing large amounts of liquids without affecting the flavour. After all, a wooden cask changes the flavour of the product. A solution was found by digging holes underground and having these lined with watertight glass wall tiles by Swiss artisans. Which was a first! The additional advantage of underground storage was the soft earth in Schiedam: the groundwater stabilises the tank so that there is no need to drive piles into the ground, as well as ensuring a constant temperature year-round.

1937 The Hindenburg, the largest zeppelin ever built, catches fire and crashes whilst attempting to dock at the Lakehurst naval air station in Boston.

Heating and cooling

The alcohol and water mixture together with the flavourings is then steadily heated to a constant temperature of 78 degrees. Pure alcohol evaporates at 78 degrees, together with the volatile aromatic compounds of the flavourings. The vapour mixture is collected in the copper helmet of the pot still. The vapours stream from the lid to a copper coil that runs through a wooden condenser filled with cooling water. As the vapour cools, a colourless flavoured alcohol mixture is produced, containing 65% alcohol. The cooled flavouring then flows through the éprouvette, a window with a tap, where quality can be continuously monitored. After distillation the mixture is stored in an underground tank to allow the alcohol and the flavourings to blend. This process is called ‘marring’.
Extraction

Extraction is the process used to produce a flavoured alcoholic liquid by allowing flavourings to seep in a mixture of alcohol and water. The process is similar to brewing tea. Extraction makes it possible to draw both volatile and non-volatile aromatic compounds, bitter notes and natural pigments from the flavourings. De Kuyper uses two extraction processes: maceration and percolation. The first process is similar to making tea, and the second to brewing coffee. De Kuyper uses extraction to produce coloured – not clear – liqueurs, such as crème de cacao, and coloured spirits such as Schipperbitter.

The role of alcohol

The alcohol percentage chosen for the alcohol-water mixture depends on the desired flavour of the extract. A lower alcohol percentage results in an extract with more water soluble components, such as bitter substances, acids and sugars. A higher alcohol percentage will produce an extract containing more essential oils. Although alcohol on its own does not taste of anything, it plays a crucial role in determining the final flavour of the extract.

Maceration: an underground process

To produce an extract according to the maceration method, the distiller fills one or more underground tanks with a mixture of water and alcohol (between 35% and 80%). Once the tank is filled with the right percentage alcohol-water mixture, a combination of flavourings or a single ingredient are added in sacks of inert material. The sacks are hung on strings in the alcohol-water mixture.
Quality takes time

The advent of Dutch brandy. The 1950’s marked a struggle between the Netherlands and France over the product name “Dutch Cognac”. The Dutch government eventually yields to the pressure from France. Within a few years, new labels are phased in and the name ‘Dutch brandy’ changes to “Vieux”. Dutch brandy becomes hugely popular in the Netherlands, partly thanks to the fact that the product goes very well with mixers. The labour shortage inspires De Kuyper to take on female staff as part of a trial. The trial proved to be a success, and the company has employed female staff ever since.


1966: The domestic division becomes independent. Domestic sales have always been a ‘problem child’ for the De Kuyper export business. There had been a massive boom in domestic sales as of 1957, followed by a very steep drop around 1966. The decision is made to make the domestic division independent by turning it into a public limited company. Remy and Nick de Kuyper take control of this part of the business.


In the 1970’s, liqueurs take the lead over gins within De Kuyper’s product portfolio. The first cocktail competitions for off-licence owners are organised and huge sums are invested in the promotion of liqueurs.

Percolation: a dynamic process

Producing extracts by means of percolation is a dynamic process in which a mixture of water and alcohol continuously flows through the flavourings at a temperature of 60 degrees Celsius. The flavourings are first placed into a large basket with a perforated base. Very fine flavourings are first placed in linen sacks. The basket is then hung inside the percolator. The percolator is a pressure-resistant tank with a tight seal to prevent alcohol from escaping.

Flavour through flow

Inside the tank, below the flavourings, a mixture of water and alcohol is heated to approximately 55 degrees. The mixture is pumped up and sprayed over the flavourings. The soluble substances contained in the flavourings are absorbed into the mixture. The mixture flows back into the tank and is then pumped around once again. The entire process can last from ten hours to two days. Flavours are extracted faster during the percolation process than during maceration thanks to the heat and the flow of the alcohol-water mixture. The De Kuyper distiller often uses percolation to test new extracts.

The alcohol-soluble substances and water-soluble substances are incorporated into the mixture during the maceration process. Depending on the type of flavouring, the maceration process takes between ten days and six weeks. Fine essential oils are rapidly absorbed into the solution. Insoluble substances, such as bitter substances, take a long time to dissolve. Producing an extract with the right balance of soluble and insoluble substances is a matter of time. The distiller’s experience is a decisive factor in this process.

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Since the introduction of liqueurs in 1920, De Kuyper has grown to become the world’s largest producer of these products. Our range of thirty-six liqueurs has found its way to more than one hundred countries around the world, with more than fifty million bottles produced every year. Besides liqueurs, De Kuyper also produces a number of nationally and internationally popular brands such as the peach liqueur Peachtree, liquorice liqueur Dropshot and the mandarin liqueur Mandarine Napoléon.

A Royal endorsement!
To mark the company’s 300th anniversary in 1995, De Kuyper is granted the designation ‘Royal’ by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix.

After more than 300 years, Koninklijke De Kuyper is still a family business and the company has succeeded in making a global name for itself as a leading distiller of liqueurs and advocaat: more than three centuries of excellent quality from the heart of Schiedam!
De Kuyper Works!

Schiedam 2010. On the outskirts of the city centre, tucked away between modern buildings, a very unique company is hidden. Looking at the hundred-year-old historic facade, you would not suspect that the company behind it is the world’s largest producer of liqueurs. Once in the main hall, the company’s three-hundred-year history merges with vividly coloured contemporary design to represent the world of De Kuyper in the year 2010. A family business with a history and a future. A family business with traditional production methods and worldwide distribution. A family business full of ambition and a passion for spirits. Welcome to the heart of De Kuyper, the De Kuyper Works!

Bar training & cocktail workshops

De Kuyper is happy to share its knowledge of flavours and quality with professionals and up-and-coming stars behind the bar. In co-operation with the Che Group’s renowned cocktail shakers, De Kuyper offers professional bar training sessions and cocktail workshops. The training sessions and workshops are held in the ultramodern bar in the De Kuyper Works!

Business advice service

What do you need to make your catering business a success? How do you equip a commercial bar? De Kuyper’s business advice service can help you to stand out from the crowd. Our consultants can help you to put together a top-quality product portfolio and select the right equipment to run a well-organised bar.
To harness the spirit of the 21st century, De Kuyper launched a delightful contemporary design classic in November 2013. The new packaging expresses quality, authority, and authenticity.

Royal De Kuyper’s line of over 40 flavored liqueurs is split up into four groups: The Essentials, The Traditionals, The Fruits, and The Distiller Signature. Users can now let the character of their liqueur match to their setting or occasion.

A contemporary design classic

Essentia nostra in distillato est

A lot of what we do is craftsmanship. That is why we put ‘Essentia Nostra in distillato est’ on each bottle cap: Our essence, distilled. This is our signature. It’s what sets us apart.
For over three hundred years our family has invested heavily in the foundation of our company, Royal De Kuyper. Our foundation, our passion, is the art of distilling. The essence: a beautiful distillate, born of an ancient craft that is used to formulate quality liqueurs. With a new, large-capacity distillery, so that all distillates come from our ‘own kitchen’. Composed in the traditional way, with only natural ingredients.

This new distillery requires fresh ideas to mix with the old. Ideas in the form of unique flavors that will inspire new cocktails or find their place in the culinary world.

The Creative Kitchen

The Creative Kitchen is an integrated team comprised of marketing experts, researchers, and master distillers. A truly collaborative team! Together, each day, they set out on an inspiring journey.