

f SAN francisco

Our Annual Best

JULY 2000

THE BEST OF THE BAY AREA

BEST FIXIN'

PAY YOUR GIN A COMPLIMENT

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In my lifetime, I've learned some things. I've learned that a direct correlation exists between the quality of the gin in

my martini and that of my health. (I prefer Plymouth, the oldest still in continuous production, which throughout the 19th century was prescribed by ship surgeons to all officers in the British Royal Navy, regardless of ailment.) I've learned that bitters, just a dash, awaken gin's juniper flavor like a fairy-tale kiss. (I use Fee Brothers, the country's last surviving maker to use West Indian orange.) But, truth be told, little in this world counts more to the educated dipsomaniac than a good vermouth. Until recently this was, shall we say, rather problematic. The best was Noilly Pratt, but only in the sense that Luxembourg is bigger than Liechtenstein. Given that a full third of a proper martini ought to be vermouth, you can imagine why the martini went dry. That is, until Andrew Quady came along with his California varietal. Around here, good wine seems to cultivate itself on the vine, so Quady sagely turned the majority of his attention to the herbs and spices and flowers that, infused into the finished, fortified wine, provide its voice; Quady's vermouth, which he calls **VYA**, bottles the Central California landscape, or rather his personal conversation with it. Firmly

shaken with gin and bitters, and served over a simple olive or three, perhaps dirtied with a swill of brine, Vya has been rumored to foster California's eternal youth.

It may even be the antidote to educated dipsomania: Lately I find myself forgetting to add gin and bitters—and sipping it on ice. —*Jonathon Keats*

