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French company Pernod Ricard has decided to resume exporting the quintessentially British product to Moscow

NEWS / UKRAINE WAR

# Outrage as Beefeater gin owner resumes exporting to Russia

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IT is a quintessentially British export – a London dry gin named after the warders that guard the Tower of London.

So it is no wonder MPs last night expressed outrage at the French company that owns Beefeater gin – after the brand's 'shameful' decision to resume supplies to Russia.

Pernod Ricard had initially paused shipments to the rogue state in March 2022, condemning Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

But the Mail can reveal that the French parent company has quietly decided to cancel the embargo, meaning Beefeater Gin, which is made in London, has recently reappeared on the shelves of local supermarkets in Russia.

The decision has been blasted by politicians and campaigners at home, with Alicia Kearns, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, last night saying: 'Pernod Ricard profiting from an aggressor state responsible for war crimes is shameful.'

'What will it take for them [the company] to be shamed into doing the right thing? Pictures of Wagner fighters and Russian war criminals drinking Beefeater Gin in illegally occupied Ukraine?'

Labour MP Dame Margaret Hodge, chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on anti-corruption said: 'Beefeater's decision is appallingly wrong. To put the profits of their company above the interests of the brave people of Ukraine who continue to battle valiantly for their freedom is immoral.'

'And to ignore the security interests of Britain and the West simply to increase the money they make for their shareholders deserves condemnation from us all.'



A spokesman for Pernod Ricard said they decided to resume shipping to Russia on a 'limited basis'

A spokesman for Pernod Ricard said the firm decided to resume shipping to Russia on a 'limited basis' because pre-existing stock held in the country had now run out.

The company, which markets under the slogan 'Spirit of London', advertises Beefeater on its Russian site and says it has five offices across the country and around 300 employees.

Simon Fell – co-chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on fair business banking, said: 'This is an astonishingly poor decision and will rightly cause huge upset.'

'We placed sanctions on Russia because they invaded a sovereign nation with no provocation. They have since gone on to commit war crimes of the most heinous nature.'

'The idea that it is now an appropriate time for Beefeater Gin to appear on Russian supermarket shelves is for the birds. I would hope that Pernod Ricard will stop chasing every penny of profit, do the right thing, and reverse their decision.'

Before the war, Pernod Ricard made about 3 per cent of its annual sales on the Russian market and the company's website still claims it is 'one of the leaders in the Russian premium spirits market'.

Last week the company was forced to U-turn on its decision to resume exports of another of its brands, Absolut vodka, after a furious backlash in Sweden.

And it comes after the Mail confronted designer Paul Smith over his commercial ties to the rogue state – resulting in the fashion tycoon pulling out of Russia.

Our investigation revealed that Paul Smith was one of three British luxury brands, including car firm Rolls-Royce and Mike Ashley's lingerie retailer Agent Provocateur, that was still open for business in central Moscow. Rolls-Royce has since confirmed it has ceased trading with Russia.

Paul Smith, which Sir Paul founded in 1970, initially refused to discuss its presence in Russia, but the tycoon performed a U-turn after our Mail reporter confronted him over his trade links there, and the firm 'ceased all supplies' and closed stores in Russia.

Regarding the latest scandal involving Beefeater, Nick Martlew, director of the Ukraine Solidarity Project, said last night: 'After so much death and suffering, it's appalling that Pernod Ricard seems to think it's OK to profit in Putin's Russia.'

'Quietly reinstating brands like Beefeater and Jameson on their Russia sales page and hoping Ukrainians won't notice the spike in exports to Russia shows the company knows this is indefensible.'



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'Beefeater's owners should do the right thing, do what so many other companies have done, and stop trading with Russia while it wages war on Ukraine.'

Neil Barnett, CEO of intelligence firm Istok, which specialises in central and eastern Europe, added: 'There was no cost to them pulling out in March last year, because they still had inventory in Russia to sell.'

'Now that stock has run out, they're going straight back in. Meanwhile Russia continues to slaughter Ukrainians. It's cynical and odious.'

Mark Dixon, of the Moral Rating Agency, called for a boycott of the product, saying: 'It is as disgusting as it is ironic to return to Russia while others are still getting out. It is the first large group we've tracked making a U-turn.'

'What do they think has changed since they stopped exports last year which could possibly justify them going back?'

'Putin is still relentlessly attacking Ukraine and threatening the world. Beefeater will be supporting the Russian economy that pays for the murder of Ukrainians. It is as though Beefeater is having a gin and tonic on their graves.'

'Anyone who drinks Beefeater Gin is complicit in supporting Putin's regime. Boycott Beefeater.'

'Claiming they are complying with international sanctions is a twisted red herring. This kind of doubletalk shows the company knows its behaviour is reprehensible.'

A spokesman for Pernod Ricard added that a 'local affiliate' had been selling products in Russia since the start of the war, but that its stock had now run out so they had taken a decision to 'resume our shipment on a limited basis' keeping supplies to 'the minimum to ensure the economic viability of our company'.

In a statement, the firm added: 'We immediately and continue to utterly condemn the unjustifiable war and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. We have stood and stand firmly with the people of Ukraine.'

'We have not changed our position, which has always been to protect our teams and avoid any accusation of fraudulent bankruptcy by maintaining a minimum level of activity.'

'We are definitively not conducting business as usual and our decisions were not taken lightly.'

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