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MIETRO

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Absinthe Trades Mystique for Mass Market

Fabled Liqueur Reemerges As Fears of Toxicity Subside

By WILLIAM WAN
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They called it the green fairy, and they said it could drive you to peaks of manic creativity — that is, if it didn't first drive you mad. Countries banned it. Teetotalers reviled it. Meanwhile, aficionados built an entire black market around it.

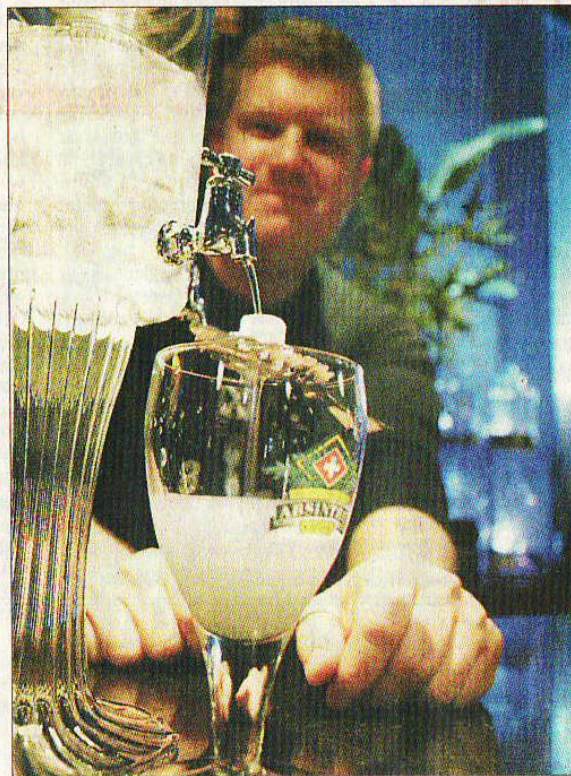
But after decades steeped in mystery and myth, absinthe is forbidden no more, and people are lining up to see for themselves what the green fairy is all about.

It took a legion of lawyers and four years of legal wrangling with U.S. regulators to get it back into the country legally. Since the ban was lifted last year, a handful of companies have been vying to cash in on what they hope will be a new generation of absinthe lovers.

To that end, a small army of Maryland's tastemakers and liquor industry heavyweights assembled yesterday at a Baltimore restaurant, Ixia, for a taste of the notorious drink — an invitation-only affair organized by one of the three major brands now ap-

See ABSINTHE, B2, Col. 1

Bartender Brendan Dorr prepares absinthe for a tasting at Ixia in Baltimore. The tasting was sponsored by Kubler, a Swiss distiller. Kubler is one of three major brands approved for U.S. distribution.



BY WILLIAM WAN — THE WASHINGTON POST