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Was Russian Vodka Invented on This Day?

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

The story of vodka's origin is as fuzzy as the effect that Russia's national drink has on one's memory — but at least one theory traces its roots to Oct. 10, 1503.

That's when Kremlin monks were said to have distilled an exclusively Russian-made spirit using a Russian-built apparatus. Instead of drinking it to get inebriated, though, the monks used the product as a disinfectant.

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Before that date, what is now called vodka had been brought to Russia by Genoese merchants.

Vodka's origins in Russia have also been traced to the 1440s — when a Greek monk was said to have inebriated his captors to escape the Kremlin — and Jan. 31, 1865, when Russian chemist Dmitry Mendeleyev found the ideal ratio of alcohol to water.

Both theories, however, have been dismissed as the stuff of legend.

Whichever vodka origin story rings true, one hardly needs a reason to raise a toast for Russia's nectar of the gods.

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