

include Jefferson's, High West, Bell Meade, Calumet, and Hirsch. They old hold off about 6 to 8% of their own whiskey for future bottlings under the Bardstown label.

Most amazing about Bardstown is their spectacular welcome center and tasting room. They see themselves as a place where distilling meets the culinary arts and craft cocktails. The massively spacious hall can accommodate diners and has one of the largest whiskey bars in the state, featuring more than 100 Kentucky bourbons. And a few from Tennessee. It's all stunningly presented, including as a tastefully appointed gift shop.

More important is the whiskey. The have four releases under the Bardstown label. The incredibly humble Nally explains that they put more than 52 blends together, and everyone at the company got to try them and comment. He stressed the team aspect of their assemblage. And the unique thing is that the labels are all about transparency. Their "Discovery" and "Fusion" series labels explain the exact blends inside the bottle. For example, the Discovery Series blend is on the label: 45% 13-year-old bourbon from Indiana,

32% Kentucky 13-year-old bourbon, and 23% 16-year-old Kentucky bourbon. The Fusion Series is 40% 13-year-old Kentucky bourbon; 3-year-old 18% Bardstown Wheated; 3-year-old 42% Bardstown High Rye Bourbon. I also liked the collaboration project with Goodwood Brewing where they aged 9-year-old Tennessee Bourbon in Goodwood brewing barrels. They also did a collaboration with Copper & Kings. The whiskeys have received overwhelming enthusiasm.

"The Prisoner is a collaboration we're doing," McNally revealed. "The Prisoner Wine Company selects several different vintages of their wine, they blend them together percentage-wise to create the Prisoner wine finish. We've got barrels from Prisoner and we're going to age product in those barrels for about 19 months. That product is going to be blended together in the same ratio that Prisoner develops the wines out of. We're excited by that."

Bardstown will start releasing their own whiskeys in individual bottlings when their first whiskeys reach six years of age. Approximately 2022 or 2023. In the meantime,

these blends are off the charts fantastic. Super smooth, sophisticated.

CHICKEN COCK WHISKEY RETURNS!

Established in 1856 in Paris, Kentucky, in the heart of Bourbon County, the original Chicken Cock American Whiskey rose to popularity during the 19th century when James A. Miller built a distillery and started making Chicken Cock. It became an instant success, and really thrived during Prohibition, making it an especially iconic brand. Unfortunately, the original distillery where Chicken Cock was made burned down in the 1950s. Grain & Barrel Spirits of West Palm Beach, Florida, have resurrected the brand.

Chicken Cock and Bardstown Bourbon announced that the whiskey would be made at Bardstown as

part of Bardstown Bourbon's Collaborative Distilling Program. "Joining the Collaborative Distilling Program at Bardstown completes the exciting resurrection of Chicken Cock, one of the oldest bourbon brands in the country," said CEO Matti Anttila. "The brand is now officially 100 percent back home in Kentucky."

The brand boasts several different bottlings. Most famous is their 90-proof Chicken Cock Straight Bourbon Whiskey. The bourbon is bottled in a replica of the Prohibition-era Chicken Cock bottle. Caramel colored, with notes of dried fruit, caramel, and vanilla; creamy, almost buttery. Butterscotch and toasted vanilla come through. Lovely. They also offer Beer Barrel Select, 10-Year-Old Bourbon, and Single Barrel 8-Year-Old. They produce two ryes; one of them is a straight rye aged in Goodwood Brewery beer barrels named Ryeteous Blonde.



STEVE NALLY

THE 100 MILLION BOTTLE MAN

Steve Nally was the first person Peter Loftin hired in his new venture. Nally was in Wyoming, having built and established Wyoming Whiskey, that state's first legal distillery. Another notch on the belt of his storied career. The wily industry veteran had been the master distiller at Maker's Mark for more than 15 years, and is a Bourbon Hall

of Fame member. It's estimated that he has made more than 100 million bottles of whiskey during his career.

Loftin called Nally and told him he wanted to build a brand. When Nally asked him if he knew anything about the business, Loftin answered honestly that he did not. "That's why I want you," responded Loftin.

"Pete came out here and he had a vision. We looked at several places around Kentucky. When he first started this venture, he wanted to produce a brand to start with," recalled Nally, a big man with twinkling eyes set above his bushy gray mustache. Nally was with Loftin when they purchased the large farm that now serves as Bardstown HQ. "We started construction in 2014. During that time, we started talking to potential clients who are now customers, with the idea of producing for them. And Pete's vision became a reality."

Nally started out at Maker's Mark in 1972. He was born and raised not far down the road from Maker's Mark, and like a number of local kids, he went merely to look for a job. In 17 years he went from janitor and night watchman, to

warehouse supervisor, to bottling assistant supervisor, to a mechanic. He became the master distiller in 1988. He moved to semi-retirement in 2003, after working there for 31 years. In 2007, he went to start Wyoming Whiskey.

"The history of the bourbon industry is that there's always been a lot of secrets about it. Everybody knew about the families that grew it and promoted bourbon but you didn't know a lot about the process itself," Nally explained. "One thing that Bardstown Bourbon is all about is being transparent. No hidden stories and no hidden production practices."

Discussing his "Fusion" series, Nally said, "We're really excited by this. It really shows the art of blending but also shows what our products are coming to be with a very, very good finish. I like to call this finish the Kentucky hug."

Lots more to come from this legendary distiller.

BARREL HOUSE

Barrel House Distilling Company was founded in the winter of 2006 by native Lexingtonians Jeff Wiseman and Pete Wright. They established their new craft distillery in the barreling house of the old Pepper Distillery in historic Lexington. In a short time, Barrel House has garnered a reputation as a small craft house that, even while making moonshine, makes its mark through quality. It released its first product—Pure Blue Vodka—in December 2008.

Its vodka was an immediate hit, and it has since moved on to other spirits. It produces vodka and rum (the aged rum is very nice), as well as moonshine and bourbon. According to the distillers, “In 1877 *The Saturday Evening Post* declared, ‘Kentucky is the home of the Moonshiner.’ Barrel House has revived this long tradition with the introduction of Devil John Moonshine, named in honor of Kentucky legend Devil John Wright. Devil John was a lawman and moonshiner from eastern Kentucky in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.” The recipe is classic ‘shine, a combination of white corn and



pure cane sugar. This is actually a lovely, light whiskey, with some nice spice notes and appealing vanilla flavor. And it is great for cocktails.



Its 115-proof RockCastle Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey is “named for the county that is home to our limestone-rich mountain spring water,” and is made with local Kentucky corn and wheat. This is a small-batch, wheated craft bourbon—which makes it fairly unique right

off the bat. RockCastle is bottled at barrel strength, and features notes of toffee, caramel, burnt sugar, and vanilla. It is a very nice expression; rich and with a nice finish!



THE ELKHORN TAVERN

The Barrel House Distillery features a separate taproom and cocktail lounge. The bar is named after Elkhorn Creek, which runs through town. Here, Wiseman and Wright showcase inventive cocktails made from their products. It also has a

local beer list and a nice wine list. The bar features a rustic décor that has a historic touch to it, highlighted by lots of wood and copper. And they have top flight mixologists to boot.

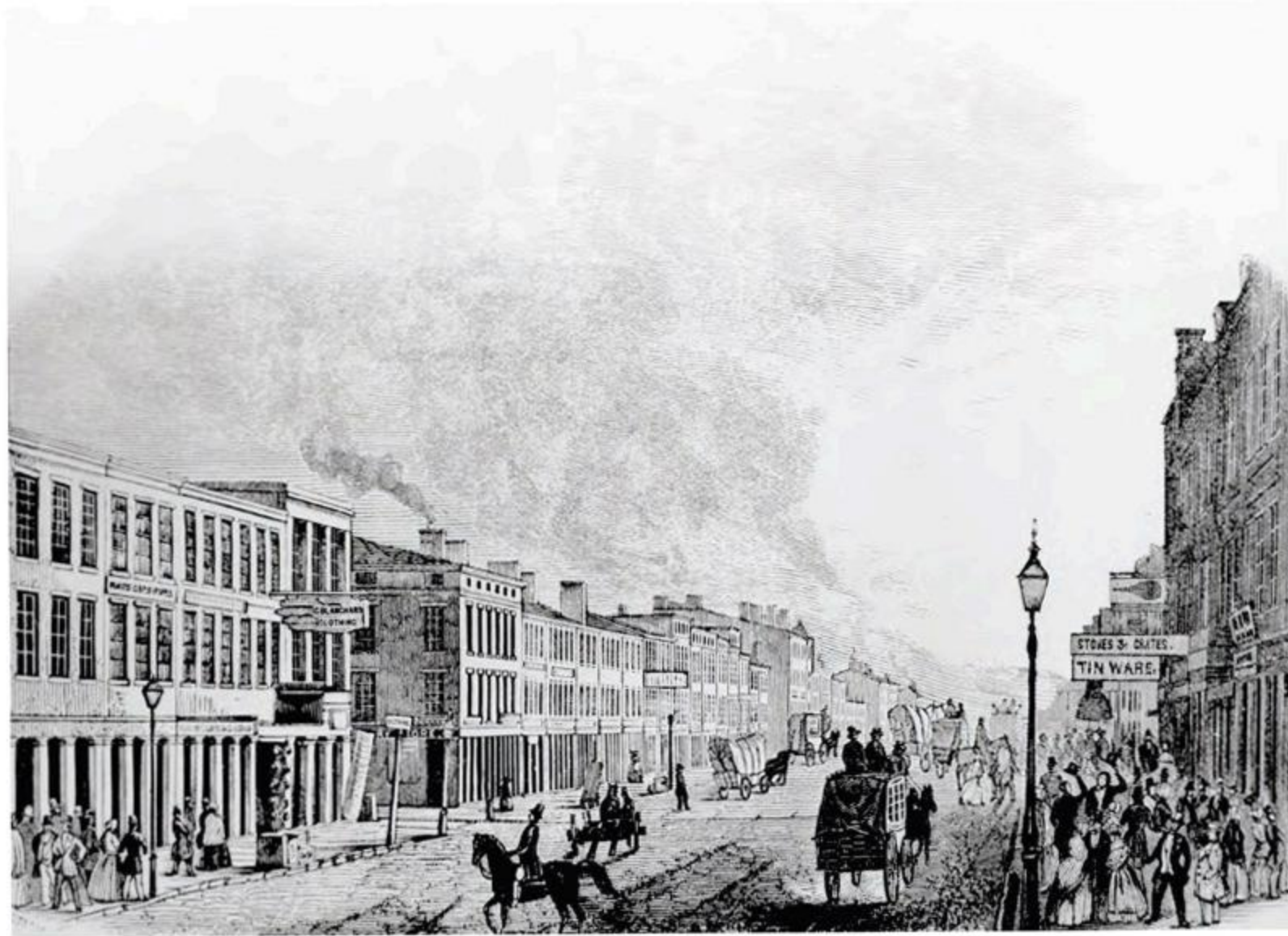


BARTON 1792 DISTILLERY

Established in 1879, Barton 1792 Distillery “continues today as the oldest fully-operating distillery in Bardstown, Kentucky. Situated in the heart of bourbon country on 196 acres, the distillery boasts 29 barrel aging warehouses, 22 other buildings, including an impressive still house, and the legendary Tom Moore Spring,” according to the company.

Barton produces a full range of bourbons and ryes for the market. Most notable are the 1792 Full Proof Bourbon, 1792 High Rye Bourbon, 1792 Small Batch Bourbon, 1792 Port Finish Bourbon, 1792 Sweet Wheat Bourbon, and 1792 Single Barrel Bourbon. It also produces Tom Moore Bourbon

Whiskey, Kentucky Gentleman Bourbon Whiskey, and Fleischmann's Preferred Blended Whiskey, among others.



The 1792 Barton Small Batch Bourbon is regarded by numerous whiskey writers as the distillery's best. It's made with a mash bill of 75% corn, 15% rye, and 10% barley (same recipe as Very Old Barton 6). There is no age statement, and it

is released at 46.85% ABV. According to the distiller's notes, 1792 Small Batch is a "marriage of select barrels carefully chosen by our Master Distiller."



BLUEGRASS DISTILLERS

Bluegrass Distillers, located in Lexington, opened its doors

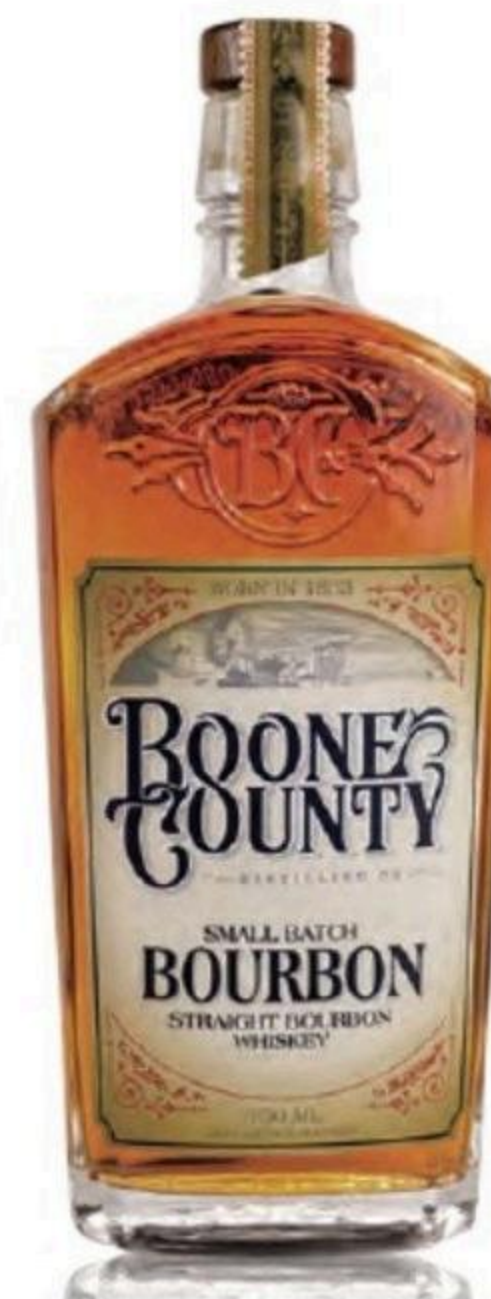


in 2015. This unique, high-end, small-batch distillery was founded by Nate Brown, Sam Rock, and Matt Montgomery. The aim of Bluegrass Distillers is to craft world-class bourbon in the heart of the Kentucky Bluegrass region. Not only is Bluegrass considered a serious craft distiller, one of its biggest selling points (other than the finished product) is that it attempts to work with local farmers to source its ingredients.

Bluegrass features a 250-gallon copper pot still, working with two mash bills for its bourbons: mash bill #1 is local GMO-free yellow corn and rye; mash bill #2 is the same yellow corn and red wheat. It begins aging all of its bourbons in 53- and 25-gallon barrels. Then it redistributes into its customized program using 5-gallon charred white oak barrels. Bluegrass loves small barrels, saying it “believe[s] the 5-gallon barrel is a very effective way to refine . . . bourbon. This is due to the fact that a smaller barrel has a smaller surface area, which creates an effect of being aged longer.” You may disagree in theory, but the results speak for themselves.

The 90 proof Bluegrass Blue Blue Corn Straight Bourbon Whiskey is an amazing bourbon made from a mash bill of 80% blue corn and 20% wheat. It also makes the 90 proof Bluegrass Kentucky Rye Whiskey 4-Year-Old, which was made in a small batch. It’s a dark, spicy rye that you should keep an eye out for. Another special treat is the Bluegrass Wheated Bourbon made from a mash bill of 80% yellow corn, 15% wheat, and 5% malted barley. But the real standout is the Bluegrass Bourbon Whiskey made with a mash bill of 80% corn and 20% rye sourced from a feed store in Woodford County. It is aged in new, 25-gallon, #4 char, white oak barrels. The 25-gallon barrels accelerate aging and produce a big, spicy bourbon that features assertive burnt sugar and oak flavors. A lovely and easy-to-drink bourbon. Loved the cider barrel aged bourbon too, which is only available at the tasting room.





BOONE COUNTY DISTILLING

The label on each bottle released by Boone County Distilling includes the tagline “Made by Ghosts” as a way for the

founders to pay homage to those who came before them. William Snyder, who opened the Petersburg Distillery in Boone County in 1833 is their inspiration. The Distillery was re-established in 2015 at a new location in Independence. The current owners are Jack Wells and Josh Quinnin. “One of the things people don’t realize is how big the industry was here in Boone County in the 1800s,” said Wells.

Boone County Distilling is a 5,000-square-foot-distillery set on 2.5 acres, with a 500-gallon pot still, four fermenters, and a small bottling line. It can produce 250 barrels of small batch bourbon annually.

The distillery produces a bourbon, rye, and bourbon cream. They also produce a 5-Year-Old Rye Single Barrel (95% rye, 5% malted barley) and a wheated 6-Year-Old Single Barrel Bourbon (51% corn, 45% wheat, 4% malted barley). The Bourbon Cream is very drinkable and gaining in popularity. The Tanner’s Curse Rye Mash and Tanners Curse Bourbon Mash are “New Make” unaged white whiskeys, both of which are very flavorful and distinctive. This is a great example of a small distillery really coming into its own. One

to continue to watch.

BOUNDARY OAK DISTILLERY

Boundary Oak Distillery is located in the small hills of central Kentucky, and the Goodins, the family that runs it, have been in this region for more than 200 years. Founder and master distiller Brent Goodin invested nearly \$1 million and acquired a license in 2013, making Boundary Oaks the first legal producer of liquor in Hardin County since Prohibition.

Boundary Oak released a number of military-oriented products, including its signature Patton Armored Diesel products through a partnership with the George S. Patton Museum. Goodin also created Blackhorse 1901 in cooperation with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, known by the nickname Blackhorse. Another successful release was 82nd Airborne, in connection with the unit based at Fort Bragg. Other releases include their single barrel

Lincoln Bourbon and their St. Luke's Lavender, whiskey made with lavender, inspired by the distillery's popular mint julep recipe.



Most popular has been their Patton Armed Diesel which has reached pretty wide distribution throughout the south. Diesel is a cane sugar wash finished in used bourbon

American oak barrels, and is a lovely slant on traditional whiskey. Quite smooth and easy to drink. Great for sipping at holiday parties or in the backyard.

BOURBON 30 SPIRITS

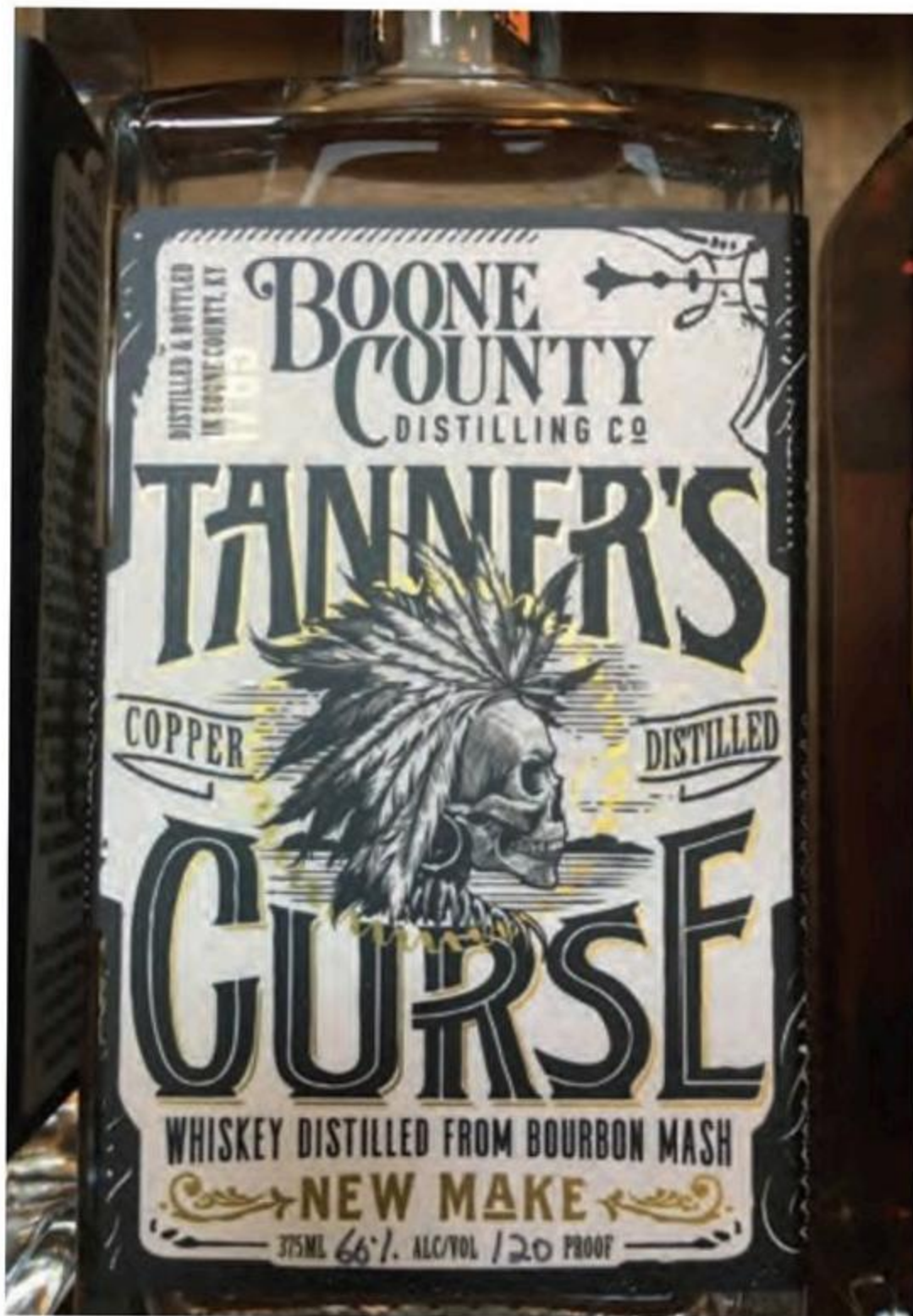
Jeff Mattingly formed Bourbon 30 Spirits in Georgetown in 2014. It is not a distillery as of yet, but a small, craft blending house. It buys and blends whiskeys, as has long been a tradition in Kentucky. These are all small batch, handcrafted, and hand-bottled. And Jeff can charm any crowd.

One of the cool things Barrel 30 does offer from time to time is an opportunity to bottle your own whiskey directly from the barrel. These are special events, and well worth doing if you are able.

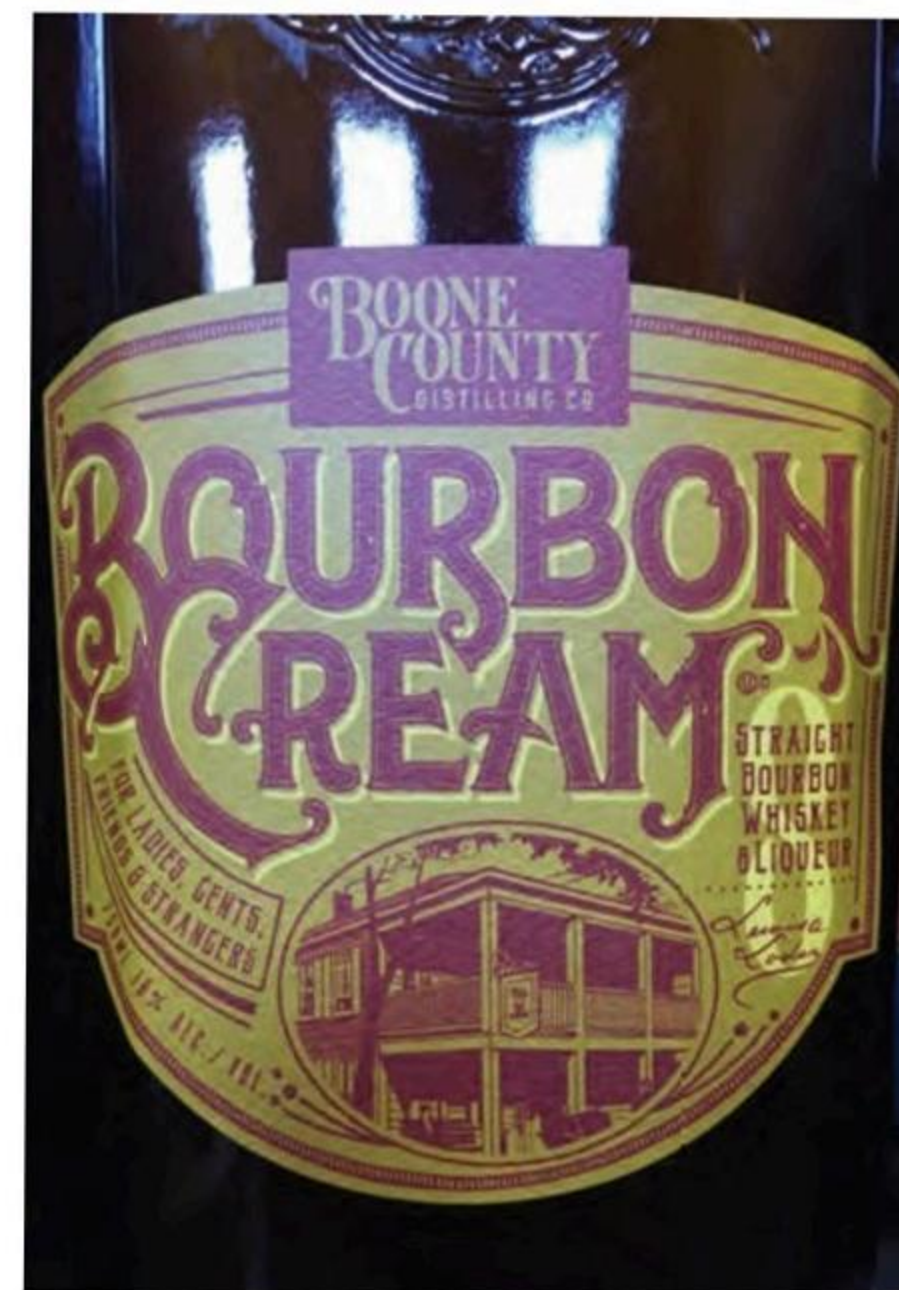
It's most commonly found expressions are the 100 proof Bourbon 30 Small Batch, 90 proof Bourbon 30 Straight Bourbon whiskey, and 98 proof Bourbon 30 Rye Whiskey.



whiskeys. They enjoy names like “Don’t Talk About It, Do It,” “Another Summer Hayride,” “Indian Sumer,” “Sugar Lips,” “Blondie,” “Flap Jack,” and the like. These small bottlings are exceptional and smooth, but not inexpensive. That is the beauty of what Barrel 30 does. These elixirs won’t be seen again. Super enjoyable tastings in a fun setting. Great staff!



In the last few years, they have released numerous small-batch bottlings in their new blue label J. Mattingly



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BROUGH BROTHERS DISTILLERY



Brough Brothers Distillery, owned and operated by the Yarbrough brothers — Victor, Chris, and Bryson—became the first African American-owned distillery in Kentucky. This new 850-square-foot craft micro-distillery is on Dixie Highway, in Louisville. Fresh Bourbon, the other African-American led distiller, launched their whiskey earlier, but the distillery's construction was delayed due to COVID-19.

Victor is the CEO, co-founder of Victory Global LLC, and leads the day-to-day operations of Brough Brothers. Bryson is

the COO, co-founder of Victory Global LLC, and manages the Brough Brothers manufacturing and production operations. Chris is the CMO and operates the marketing and events programs.

Victor had gotten the idea while living in the UK, exporting hard cider to the US, and importing bourbon to the UK. “When we imported bourbon into the UK and other markets we saw there was a tremendous growth opportunity. We learned a great deal about the process of distribution and gained an understanding of retailers and pricing,” said Victor. “We are the brand, that’s the critical distinction,” Victor told *Forbes*. “When we were out at trade shows ahead of the launch, people see us and want to talk to us.”



“Booze is a good old boy industry. It goes back 150, 200 years in the US, to a time when African Americans weren’t free. There was no way we could establish any ownership or legacy, and this is a legacy industry,” said Victor. “A fair number of businesses, particularly in the Kentucky spirits industry, started off as family businesses and most of them are still owned by the family. That means that people work with people who look like them. And there aren’t many people that look like me in this business. It’s very difficult to get in.”

Brough Brothers Bourbon Brewery was planned to open in Louisville's West End, where the brothers grew up. They want to be at the center of the neighborhood's revitalization by offering employment and volunteer opportunities to create a driving economic engine. "We are pushing the community forward," Victor stated. "It's not about us, it's really about the generations behind us, as a lot of blood, sweat, and tears have been put into the start-up."

Brough Brothers released their first bottling in February 2020, right into the teeth of the global pandemic. "We were fortunate to get it into stores, including Liquor Barn and Total Wine, ahead of the pandemic," Victor said. The good news? It sold out. Keeping the momentum going was the challenge.

Brough Brothers 82 proof Bourbon Whiskey is a medium-bodied whiskey. The mash bill is 75% corn, 21% rye, and 4% malted barley and the grain is sourced from both Indiana and Kentucky. They use a sweet mash, and fermentations can last up to seven days. There is also a filtration process the spirit goes through for a smoother taste. Currently, its

whisky is matured in a couple of different locations in Kentucky. Victor called it a "party bourbon," perfect for cocktails, and affordably priced under \$30. A golden honey colored whiskey, with floral aromas and notes of green apple and pear, hints of ginger and spice.

Master of Malt, the UK's most recognized purveyor of whiskey called Victor and his plan "brilliant." You can't get much higher praise than that. Looking forward to good things from Brough Brothers.





THE BROWN-FORMAN CORPORATION/DISTILLERY

Brown-Forman is one of the foremost names in the spirits category, and one of the largest distilling operations in the world.

George Garvin Brown founded the company in 1870 with his half-brother, and they started selling JTS Brown Bourbon by the bottle instead of the barrel, the first to do so. Today, Brown-Forman owns such brands as Jack Daniel's, Woodford Reserve, Early Times, and Old Forester. It also owns such world-renowned brands as Canadian Mist, GlenDronach, BenRiach, Glenglassaugh, Finlandia, Herradura, Korbel, and Chambord. In 2016, the company's reported sales had reached \$3.08 billion annually.

The company's world headquarters, which resembles the campus of a small liberal arts college, is located in Louisville,

although no longer in downtown. While several of its major brands, like Woodford and Jack Daniel's, have their own distilleries, the company's massive Shively plant is the engine that drives the Brown-Forman machine. Early Times and Old Forester have been made there for years, as have the components for other brands.

OLD FORESTER

Old Forester is the oldest and longest running bottled whiskey in America, and has been sold for 150 years. From 1920 to 1933, Old Forester was one of only 10 whiskey brands authorized for medicinal purposes, which is why it survived Prohibition.

Chris Morris, of Woodford fame, has been Brown-Forman's master distiller since 2006. Old Forester and Woodford Reserve are both made from a mash bill of 72% corn, 18% rye, and 10% malted barley, and this relatively high rye component provides a spicier ending.

Brown-Forman produces several expressions including Old Forester Classic (86 proof); the Whiskey Row series,



which includes 1870 Original Batch, 1897 Bottled in Bond, 1920 Prohibition Style, and Birthday Bourbon; Old Forester Signature (100 proof), Old Forester 1920 Prohibition Style (115 proof), and Old Forester Birthday Bourbon (94–97 proof). These last two are personal favorites.

The Old Forester Signature is an exceptional buy! This is a big, rich whiskey with immense flavor to go along with the ABV. There is no age statement, which is disconcerting, until you nose the glass and taste the whiskey. Whatever Chris Morris and his team did, they did it right. Big caramel and brown sugar notes precede a gingersnap ending.

Old Forester 1920 Prohibition Style, a nod to the distillery's former shepherd Owsley Brown, is the third release in the Old Forester Whiskey Row series. This has lots of big bold flavor, with a nose and finish to match. There are lots of chocolatey notes in this one.

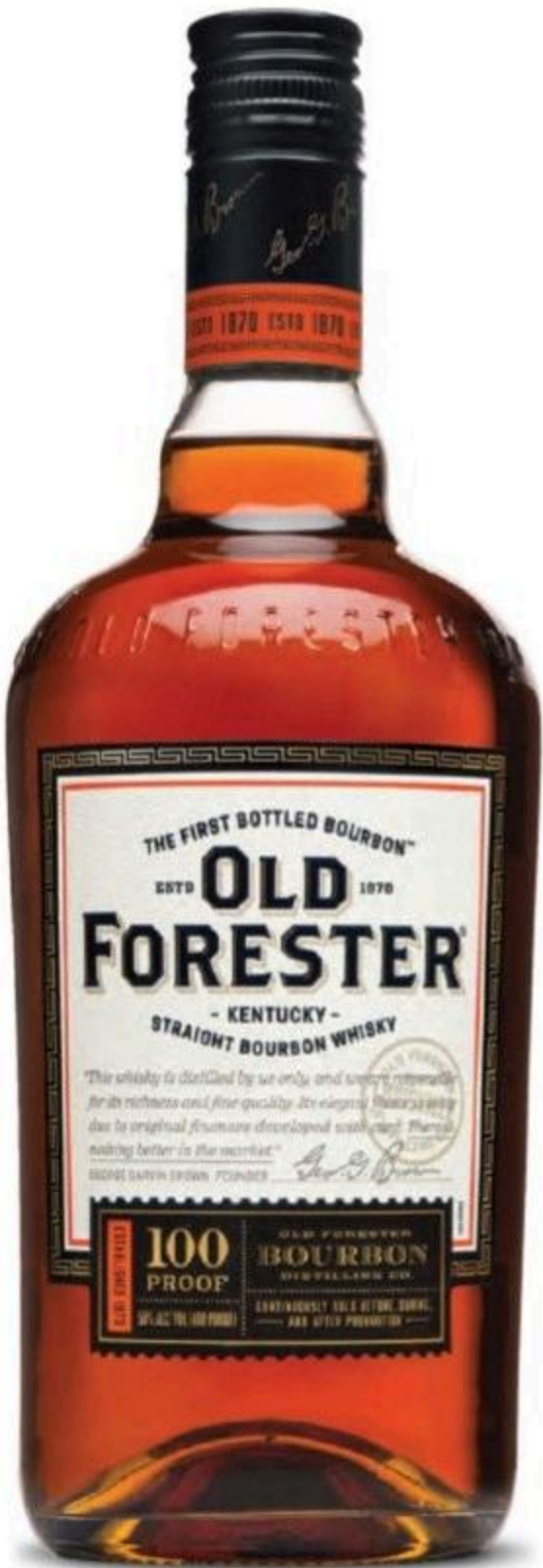
The biggest, and best, of the line is the Old Forester Birthday Bourbon, which is released annually. The 2017 release marked the 17th issuing of this legendary bourbon. According to the distiller's notes, "The 2017 Birthday

Bourbon barrel selection was drawn from 12-year-old barrels from different warehouses and floors on May 27, 2005. Ninety-three barrels matured together on the 4th floor of G warehouse, yielding an extremely spice-forward expression. The remaining 27 barrels matured together on the fifth floor of K warehouse, contributing a rounding sweetness to the blend. Several barrels from both lots basked in the sun, highlighting the effects of maturation along an external wall in Old Forester's heat-cycled warehouses."

The proof has also varied, per Brown-Forman: "The 2017 Old Forester Birthday Bourbon will be on shelves with a suggested retail price of \$79.99. Florida and Georgia will receive the 95.4 proof expression and remaining states will receive the 96 proof expression. Kentucky is the only state which will receive both expressions with the 96 proof expression shipping first."

This is an amazing whiskey, with lots of dark caramel flavor and a big spicy ending that does not overpower the whiskey. An exceptional, incredible whiskey, with an incredibly beautiful nose and palate. If you're looking for

a bourbon to impress your friends and family over the holidays, this is it.





THE MASTER TASTER OF OLD FORESTER

Jackie Zykan went to college in St. Louis where she majored in biology, and had every intention of going to medical school. To make money during her undergrad days, she held down bartending jobs. Tearing through Nashville and St. Louis, and dubbed a “rock star” by one journalist, she now thinks of herself in those days as a “shaker for hire,” doing freelance bartending jobs from numerous brands. Then she became beverage director for a local hospitality company. Then she became the brand ambassador for Brown-Forman.

She started as master bourbon specialist, then took on a hybrid role combining the talents of a brand ambassador and mixologist. What was it like to go from a master specialist to master taster? “The main difference between the two is just a little bit more production training. I still do all of the job requirements of the first one, I just added more onto my plate.”

By 2020, Zykan been with Brown-Forman for more than five years, and held what is certainly one of the most coveted jobs in the entire industry. Has it been difficult as a woman working for one of the oldest names in bourbon? “It’s going

to be as hard as you want it to be for yourself being a female in a male dominated industry. You can either focus on it or you can just lean in and focus on doing your job and rise above it and just carry on,” Zykan said. “I don’t ever think of it as oh I’m young for this role or I’m a woman in this role, I just go to work.”

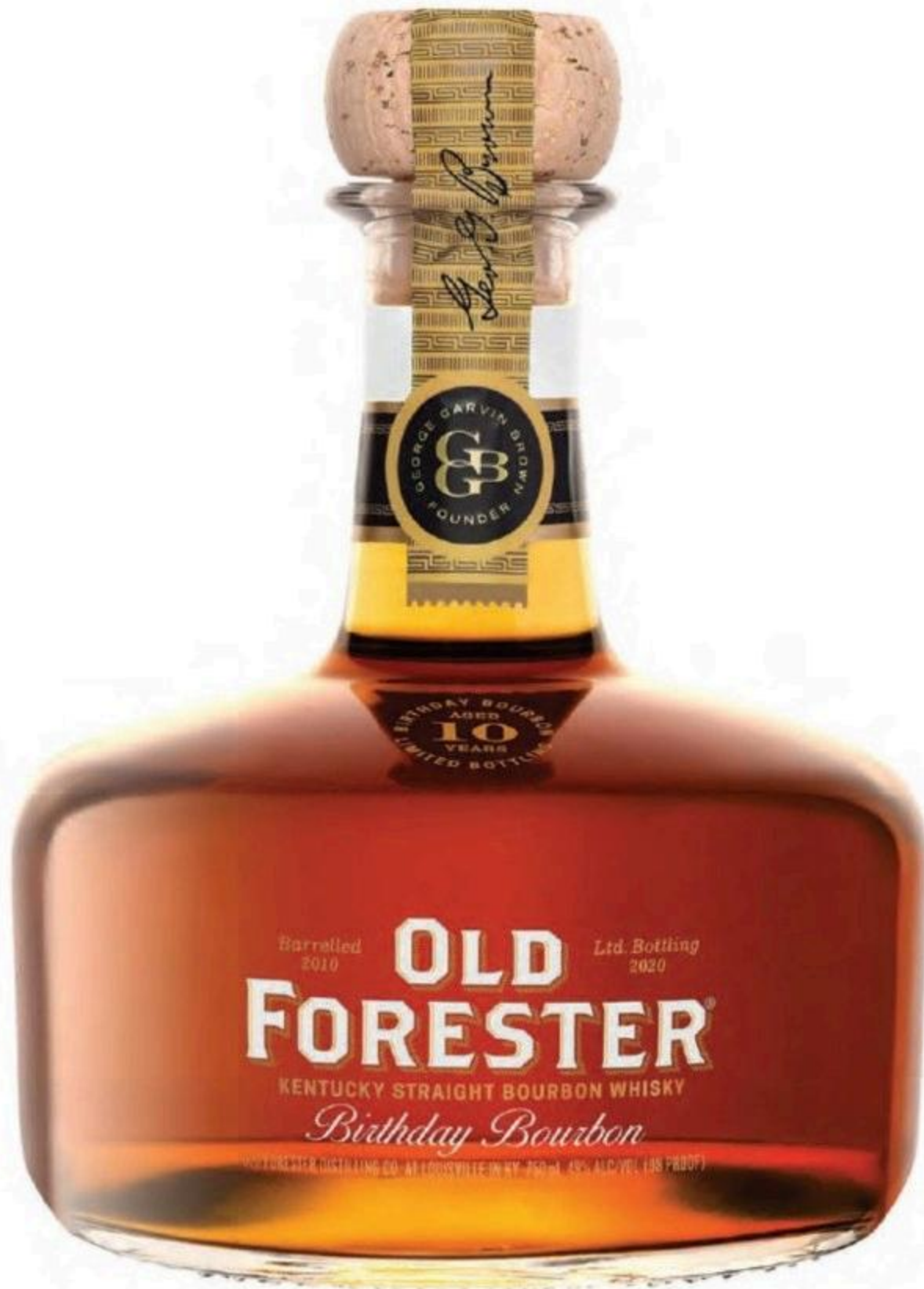
Zykan was also instrumental in the highly acclaimed Whiskey Row Series from Old Forester. “Whiskey Row is a little bit more elevated craft, a little bit smaller batch, definitely a lot more labor intensive and filtered quite a bit less.” This was the introduction of the numerous more craft like expressions of Old Forester. Zykan also collaborated with Bourbon Barrel Foods to produce a line of Old Forester Cocktail Provisions, a collection of bitters and syrups.

In 2020, Brown-Forman celebrated its 150th Anniversary, and Zykan was charged with debuting Old Forester Birthday Bourbon, an annual release honoring company founder George Garvin Brown. She has worked on a number of those releases with master distiller Chris Morris. It is one of the high points of the Brown-Forman calendar.

“It’s more about this concept of blending practice than it is the exact flavor profile definition,” Zykan explained.

The Old Forester Birthday Bourbon 2020 (98 proof) was released in September 2020. On June 5 of that year 95 barrels of the whiskey were barreled. This release was the third Birthday Bourbon to be bottled at the Old Forester Distilling Co.

“I think we could not have done a better job picking a lot that was going to be a bottle of escapism in the craziness of the world that’s going on right,” Zykan said of the 2020 release. “And it’s fantastic. There’s so much tropical fruit. There’s some nice macadamia nut qualities to it. It’s incredibly well-rounded.”



EARLY TIMES

Early Times was first established in 1860, created in Early Times Station, Kentucky, and centered on a spring that was filtered by local limestone. The Early Times line remained

quiet for many years, and was bought for strategic purposes by Brown-Forman in 1923, as a preparation against the Volstead Act (also known as Prohibition). After Prohibition was rescinded, Early Times became the bestselling whiskey in the United States, and remained in the top spot for many years.

Today, Early Times is marketed and sold in more than 40 countries around the world. While not as popular at home, it is one of the top-selling Kentucky bourbons in the world, and is the bestselling one in Japan.

In 1983, Brown-Forman, following an industry trend (Four Roses was another example), started selling Early Times in two tiers: the best quality Kentucky bourbons made by the company were sold internationally. While Early Times' reputation soared abroad, it fell off the face of the earth in the United States, where it was judged to be inferior whiskey. In 2011, with interest in bourbons on the rise, Brown-Forman started making higher quality bourbon for the US market. Since then, the brand's reputation has been recovering domestically.

It is important to note that Early Times Mint Juleps have been the "official drink" of the Kentucky Derby for more than 40 years! More than 100,000 of these cocktails are imbibed during Derby Week annually!

COOPERS' CRAFT

Coopers' Craft Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Brown-Forman's first new bourbon brand since the introduction of Woodford Reserve, is a blend of a number of Brown-Forman bourbons. First, the bourbon is properly matured for four to six years. The whiskey is then passed through a charcoal made from beech and birch wood. The idea, according to the company, is to add extra smoothness and extra oak to the whiskey to produce a lighter, softer bourbon.



BROWN-FORMAN

COOPERAGE



In 2009, Brown-Forman opened the doors to the Brown-Forman Cooperage. Originally named the Blue Grass Cooperage, the name was changed to honor the company for which it makes barrels. The Brown-Forman Cooperage is where barrels are handcrafted for the aging of spirits such as Jack Daniel's, Woodford Reserve, Old Forester, Early Times, Canadian Mist, El Jimador, and Herradura. Brown-Forman is the only spirits company in the world to make its own barrels. They are made from American white oak. The plant currently produces more than 2,500 barrels a day.

Public tours include the lumberyard, a view of how the staves are selected, and insight into how barrels are assembled. The tour also provides a look at the charring and finishing process.

“The aromatic smells are the best part of the tour,” Brown-Forman master distiller Chris Morris told the press. “By toasting and charring these barrels, we activate natural flavors and aromas in the wood which give our spirits such distinct tastes. We know oak barrels were introduced to the world by the Romans more than 2,000 years ago. The Romans obviously didn’t have the technology we have available today, but we are still following the same processes they followed back then.”



BUFFALO TRACE

When you first get to Buffalo Trace, you are instantly overwhelmed by the size of the place. It almost resembles a steel mill more than it resembles a distillery. It is one of the largest distilleries in the region. It is also the oldest continually operating distillery in the United States.

There is something steampunk about Buffalo Trace. To walk around its distillery is to step back in time. All the stairs are well worn. All the walls are smooth from wear. Portions of the operation have the look of 19th century industry. But here it’s not marketing. It is authentic.

To give you a sense of the enormity of the place, Buffalo Trace has twelve 39,000-gallon fermenters. That’s almost half-a-million gallons of distiller’s beer! It has a continuous still that runs 24/7. The feed grain that exits the process is warehoused in a tank the size of an eight-story building. Its production line fills its 17 rickhouses with 400,000 barrels of spirits every year!

Located in Frankfort, Kentucky, the distillery is believed to have been founded on the banks of the Kentucky River, in Franklin County, at the site of a centuries-old buffalo

crossing. Another name for where American bison trails cross is a trace, giving the distillery its distinctive name. However, the distillery has operated under many names, including the George T. Stagg Distillery and the O.F.C. Distillery. The distillery and grounds were officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 2, 2001, and designated as a National Historic Landmark two years later.

Records show that Hancock Lee and his brother Willis Lee began distilling on this spot in 1775. Commodore Richard Taylor constructed the first building on the site in 1792, Riverside House, which still stands today. Harrison Blanton built the first full distillery in 1812, and Edmund H. Taylor bought the distillery in 1870. Taylor named the distillery the Old Fashioned Copper (O.F.C.) Distillery. George T. Stagg bought the distillery, along with the Old Oscar Pepper Distillery, eight years later. Stagg built the first steam-fitted, climate-controlled warehouse for whiskey aging in the United States.

Today, Buffalo Trace's 17 rickhouses are chock full with barrels, and the company believes that each floor has its own

terroir, its own unique climate. A small-batch whiskey at Buffalo Trace is somewhere around 1,000 barrels. A large run could reach up to 50,000 barrels. But a single barrel is still a single barrel.

Sazerac Company, based in New Orleans, Louisiana, bought the distillery in 1992. It is hard to believe that one of the oldest and largest distilleries in the nation will undergo a complete renovation and expansion, totaling \$200 million in costs, but that is what the distillery announced in 2016. Harlen Wheatley is currently the master distiller, taking over the reins in 2005 from Gary Grayheart, who had been with the company since 1972.

Buffalo Trace produces numerous bourbons and whiskeys, including such brands as Buffalo Trace, E. H. Taylor, W. L. Weller, Sazerac, Pappy Van Winkle, Rare Eagle, and George T. Stagg.

BUFFALO TRACE ANTIQUE COLLECTION

Each fall, Buffalo Trace Distillery releases its Antique Collection of whiskeys. The Antique Collection was



introduced in 2000, and has become a cult favorite among whiskey connoisseurs. These whiskeys are eagerly anticipated, and have received scads of medals, high ratings, and praise from around the world. The highly regarded collection features five limited-release whiskeys of various ages, recipes, and proofs. The George T. Stagg whiskeys (approx. 120-130 proof) are usually around 15 years old and present cinnamon, caramel, and cherries on the nose, and a creamy vanilla, dark cherry, and spicy palate. The 2020 release of William Larue Weller Wheated Whiskey (approx. 130 proof) was around 12 years old, and displayed soft caramel chew and spices. The Thomas H. Handy Sazerac Rye (129 proof) was a 16-year-old uncut and unfiltered straight rye whiskey. It exhibited notes of cinnamon, anise, and honey. The Eagle Rare 17-Year-Old (101 proof) had a nose of ripe cherries, vanilla cream, and oak, finishing with caramel, coffee, and pepper. The Sazerac Rye 18-Year-Old (90 proof) had notes of oak, caramel, and dark chocolate, with a finish of coffee, black pepper, and cherries.

O.F.C. VINTAGES

Colonel E.H. Taylor Jr. christened the Old Fire Copper (O.F.C.) Distillery in 1870. Each year, honoring the heritage of the O.F.C. Distillery, Buffalo Trace releases a very rare and collectable bourbon. Each hand-cut crystal bottle is vintage dated according to the specific year in which the bourbon was distilled.

O.F.C. Vintage whiskeys are packaged in a wooden display box containing a provenance card. Nestled inside the wooden box is a crystal bottle with real copper lettering inlaid in the bottle and a paper label applied by hand. The label on the back of the bottle as well as the provenance card note the milestones for that expression.

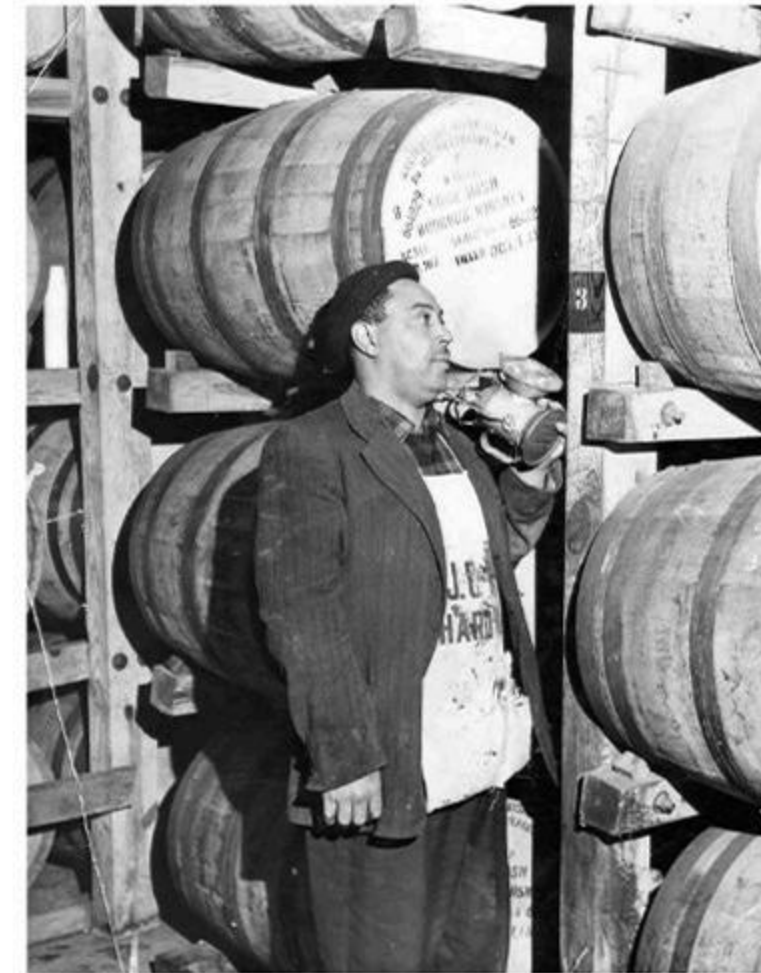
The first release in 2016 was a whiskey laid down in 1980 (100 bottles); a whiskey laid down in 1982 (50 bottles); and one laid down in 1983 (50 bottles). Releases two and three (April and December) weren't until 2018 when they released one whiskey laid down in 1985 (61 bottles), one from 1989 (18 bottles), one from 1990 (63 bottles), and a 1993 (882 bottles). The fourth release in 2019 saw a whiskey from 1994

(1,095 bottles). The 2020 release saw a whiskey laid down in 1995 (1,500 bottles).



THE JOHNSON FAMILY

One of the biggest secrets about Buffalo Trace is its employees, a surprising number of whom are second- or even third-generation. If you are lucky enough, you will be given the tour by bourbon industry legend Freddie Johnson, whose grandfather and father were invaluable employees at Buffalo Trace during the 20th century. Freddie's grandfather, James B. "Jimmy" Johnson Sr., was the first Black foreman in Kentucky and stayed with the distillery until 1964.





Jimmy Johnson Jr.

In 1936, James B. “Jimmy” Johnson Jr. joined the distillery, following in his father’s footsteps. Jimmy Jr. was as adept at the distilling business as his father, and was soon inspecting warehouses across the industry. He was a master barrel repairer, able to fix them while keeping the whiskey inside, a rare skill. He also had an uncanny knack for finding “honey barrels,” those special barrels that are good enough

to be used for select bourbons or single barrel bottlings. He became the first Black warehouse supervisor in Kentucky. After 40 years at Buffalo Trace, Jimmy Jr. retired in 1978, but remained active with the distillery until his passing in 2011.

Jimmy Jr. was a decorated veteran. He served a five-year tour with the Army Air Corps during World War II, and was stationed in Guam. It was the only time he was away from the distillery for any extended period.

One of the things Jimmy Jr. was most proud of was “his participation in loading the barrels into Warehouse V—the world’s smallest bonded warehouse—holding only one barrel of bourbon. Warehouse V was built in 1952 to house the two millionth barrel of bourbon produced after Prohibition, and has housed every millionth barrel since,” the company proudly proclaims. Jimmy Jr. helped load all of these barrels—six in total—into Warehouse V, including the six millionth barrel in 2009.

“I’m thrilled to be able to come back to the distillery and help with the six millionth barrel,” said Johnson. “This is history and I’m honored to be a part of it.”

Johnson was so well-loved and so highly respected that the distillery threw a lavish party for his 90th birthday. He commented, “To be able to celebrate my 90th birthday here with my family and friends is just icing on the cake.”

Today Freddie Johnson, who grew up playing in the stockyards of the distillery, and who later became an engineer at AT&T, is easily one of the most recognizable figures roaming among the many buildings on this huge campus.

“It is very special for me to be able to continue the Johnson family legacy at Buffalo Trace,” said Freddie. “I’m very proud of my family and their accomplishments.” At one point during our tour with Freddie, we watched the cooper mending barrels. The cooper was also second generation. The cooper’s father and Freddie’s grandfather had worked there together, just like these two were working together now. That is Buffalo Trace’s secret weapon.



Freddie Johnson

BUFFALO TRACE EXPERIMENTAL

Buffalo Trace has more than 5,000 experimental barrels of whiskey now aging in its warehouses. According to the distillery: “Each of the barrels has unique characteristics and experimental changes in the mash bill, types of wood, barrel

toasts, and more. Periodically, an experimental whiskey is bottled and sold on a limited basis.” The first expressions of these whiskeys were released in 2006. It has been a well-received series, both critically



BUFFALO TRACE: FREDDIE JOHNSON AND THE 7 MILLIONTH BARREL

In April 2018, Buffalo Trace No. 43 “V” – the world’s smallest bonded warehouse – rolled away its 6 millionth barrel to make room for its 7 millionth barrel. Warehouse No. 43 “V” sits on the banks of the Kentucky River in Frankfort. This

single rick barrel warehouse was built in 1952 to house the company's two millionth barrel of bourbon whiskey and has held every millionth barrel produced at the distillery ever since.

"These special barrels have raised over \$2 million for charities," said Distillery President and CEO Mark Brown. "The 6 millionth barrel, which was in this warehouse, has been put away to age a little bit longer and it will be released for charity as will the 7 millionth barrel. The irony of the millionth barrel celebration is getting to be quite amusing. It took us forever to get from 5 million to 6 million. It's taken us eight years to get from 6 to 7. We will get to 8 in four years. We will get to 9 in two years and eventually we will be doing them every year and a half."

Freddie Johnson is a third-generation Buffalo Trace employee and well-known tour guide at the distillery. Freddie and his grandson, Osiris Johnson, took part in the millionth barrel celebration by carrying on a family tradition started by his father Jimmy.

"This tradition started with the first 1 millionth barrel that was made after Prohibition and that barrel was rolled away by Jimmy Johnson," said Mark Brown. "He then rolled away the 2nd million one and the 3rd and the 4th and the 5th. And I met him somewhere around 5.1 million barrels. And I said to Jimmy, well, you've got to carry on the family tradition. And he said, 'What do you mean?' I said you've got to roll away the 6th millionth barrel. And he said, 'When do you think you are going to do that?' I said about nine years from now. He said, 'But I'm 83.' I said I don't care, you're just going to have to figure out how to make it. Thrillingly, Jimmy, his son Freddie, and I, eight years ago, nine years ago now, stood here and rolled away that 6th millionth barrel. Unfortunately, Jimmy refused to do the 7 millionth barrel."

"So, in the spirit of honoring tradition and embracing change, today marks the day when Freddie takes over that mantel. And originally, Freddie had signed up for 7, 8, 9 and 10. However, at the pace we're going, we've redone those numbers and he's now on the hook all the way up to number 20. Freddie is the 3rd generation of his family, and there are

many 2nd and 3rd generation folks that work for us. It's one of the things that we are very thankful for which is to have a family company with family members working in it through the generations. I think that's a very nice part of who we are and what we do. And I'm particularly proud to have Osiris Johnson, the fifth generation, to participate in this. And I'm figuring that Osiris should be able to carry the Johnson name all the way to the 50 millionth barrel."



WAREHOUSE X

For years, Buffalo Trace Distillery has been conducting whiskey experiments by exploring such variables as unique mash bills, barrel char levels, and types of wood. "We push the envelope here at Buffalo Trace. We have crazy ideas and aren't afraid to try them. The possibilities for bourbon here are endless," said Harlen Wheatley, master distiller.

One example is how Buffalo Trace constructed a one-of-a-kind experimental warehouse, called Warehouse X. It was custom built with four distinct chambers. The distillery has planned numerous experiments over the next 20 years. Barrels are wired with temperature gauges, they are studying the effects of light, temperature effects due to location, air flow, barometric pressure, humidity, you name it. Several of these studies will be multi-year, while others should produce results in one year's time.

The study started in 2014, and yielded in a short time more than 3.5 million data points. By 2020 their experiments and studies had pushed those results to more than 6 million data points.

“I admire the willingness of Sazerac/ Buffalo Trace to invest real money in experiments that won’t yield any useful results for decades, and maybe not even then,” wrote industry journalist Chuck Cowdrey. “That’s what companies do when ‘long-term thinking’ is more than just a commercially-attractive catch phrase.” High praise indeed. And former *Whisky Advocate* editor and whiskey legend Lew Bryson wrote at the time: “Distillery president Mark Brown has likened the multi-decade experimental project to a car company’s Formula 1 racing program: technical innovation to improve the general process and product.”



COLONEL E. H. TAYLOR

Buffalo Trace first introduced this line of fine bourbons in 2011. Colonel Edmund Haynes Taylor Jr. was the descendant of two American presidents: James Madison and Zachary Taylor. In his lifetime he served as a mayor, a state representative, and a senator. He was first introduced to the bourbon industry as a banker, but by 1870 he purchased a small Leestown distillery that he named Old Fashioned Copper, or O.F.C. He was among the first to modernize

whiskey distilleries in the America, and is credited for such innovations as copper fermentation tanks, state-of-the-art grain equipment, column stills, a more efficient sour mash technique, and a first-of-its-kind steam heating system that is still used in the warehouses today. He also pushed for the Bottled-in-Bond Act of 1897.

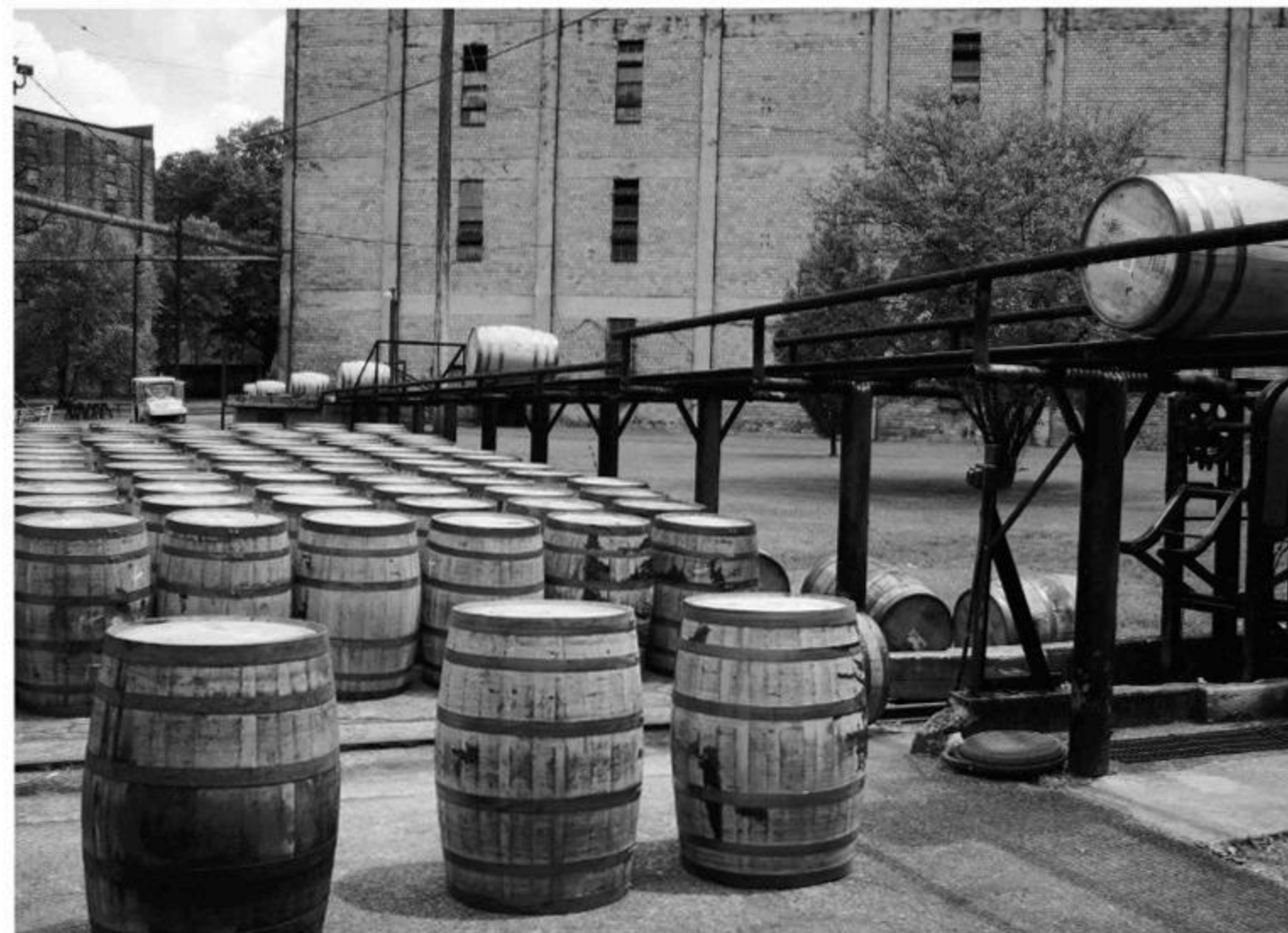
Colonel E.H. Taylor Single Barrel and Colonel E.H. Taylor Four Grain Bourbon are two exceptional offerings from a long line of Taylor whiskeys. They are special indeed. The Single Barrel is one of the most highly rated, and the Four Grain was among the first-such releases from a distillery in Kentucky.

EXPANSION LEADS TO HISTORY

When Buffalo Trace underwent an extensive expansion, construction crews started digging up the floors and foundation in the oldest part of the distillery, the section

closest to the river, and found a massive cement works underneath.

They had discovered the original works of Colonel E. H. Taylor's Old Fashion Copper distillery. Deep wells, which were used to house the bottom of copper stills, were used as large cement pool fermenters for the sour mash.





BLANTON'S

Albert B. Blanton joined the George T. Stagg Distillery as

an office boy in 1897, at the age of 16. In 1921, Col. Blanton was promoted to president of the distillery. He was with the distillery for a total of 55 years when he retired in 1952. According to the distillery: "Under Col. Blanton's direction, the Distillery survived and even thrived through Prohibition, the Great Depression, a devastating flood, and numerous other challenges throughout the early 20th century. Col. Blanton kept the distillery alive through Prohibition, obtaining a special government license to produce 'medicinal whiskey.' It was one of only four distilleries in the country to obtain this special permission."

According to whiskey authority Clay Risen, "In a way, the bourbon renaissance began with Blanton's." Introduced in 1984, Blanton's was the world's first single barrel bourbon, a concept that Blanton himself originally utilized for his own private stock. This is an exceptional bourbon, with rich deep flavors and a long-lasting aftertaste.

W. L. Weller

W. L. WELLER SPECIAL RESERVE

Born in 1825, William Larue Weller opened his Louisville wholesale liquor business in the 1840s and invented the first commercially sold bourbon to feature wheat instead of rye in the mash bill.

This orange-colored elixir is bottled at 90 proof and remains one of the best buys among all bourbons. Affordable and incredibly smooth, it is a treasured whiskey, and often a favorite among the whiskey cognoscenti.



SAZERAC RYE

In 1869, Thomas H. Handy founded a bar known as the Sazerac Coffee House in New Orleans. The bar had been named after the drink created in 1838 by a Creole immigrant named Antoine Amédée Peychaud, who owned a pharmacy on Royal Street in the French Quarter. According to the distillery: “Local patrons were served toddies made with Rye Whiskey and Peychaud’s Bitters. The libation became known as the ‘Sazerac’ and America’s first branded cocktail was born.” Handy and his company began to acquire and market brands of liquor—today they own and distribute more than 30.

Sazerac Rye Straight Rye Whiskey is one of the most iconic ryes made in North America. The whiskey has been lauded by Jim Murray, Malt Advocate, Wine Enthusiast, and numerous writers for more than a century. This is a 6-year-old whiskey that is not as spicy as many other ryes, and is noticeably sweeter and smoother, with lots of caramel, cinnamon, and pepper. “Baby Saz” (as insiders call it) is a

standard at any bar, and a great buy. In addition, Buffalo Trace Antique Collection’s 18-year-old Sazerac has been released in limited amounts annually since 2014.





VAN WINKLE

Julian P. "Pappy" Van Winkle Sr. was quoted as saying: "We

make fine bourbon at a profit if we can, at a loss if we must, but always fine bourbon." The highly collectible, long-aged bourbon that bears his name is among the most hotly acquired spirits in the United States.

Pappy started out as a traveling salesman for W. L. Weller and Sons in 1893. According to Buffalo Trace: "He and a friend, Alex Farnsley, eventually purchased the A. Ph. Stitzel Distillery, which produced bourbon for Weller. The two companies merged to form the Stitzel-Weller Distillery. Opened on Derby Day in 1935, Stitzel-Weller quickly became known for its wheated bourbon recipe, which used wheat instead of rye in the mash for a softer, smoother taste. Pappy remained highly involved with the distillery up until his death in 1965, at the age of 91."

Since 1935, four generations have continued his legacy, producing aged, wheated bourbons. The easiest one to get ahold of is the Old Rip Van Winkle 10-Year-Old. Then there is the Van Winkle Family Reserve series. The most coveted is the Pappy Van Winkle series, with age statements that run

10, 12, 15, 20, 23, and 25 years. There is also a Van Winkle Family Reserve Rye.

While every offering from this distillery is stellar, the Pappy Van Winkle 23-Year-Old is the granddaddy of all bourbon.

BULLIETT DISTILLING CO.

According to Tom Bulleit, his great-great-grandfather, the tavern keeper Augustus Bulleit, developed the first batch of Bulleit Bourbon around 1830. Augustus made and sold it up until 1860, when he died. The original Bulleit recipe was two-thirds rye and one-third corn in its mash bill (technically making it a rye by today's standards).

Tom Bulleit began distilling in 1987, making a high-rye version with a decent amount of aging. Seagram bought Bulleit in 1997 and moved the distilling operations to Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, where the whiskey was being produced at Kirin Brewing's Four Roses distillery. After

a successful rebranding, the whiskey sky rocketed to popularity in the early 2000s.

On March 14, 2017, Diageo opened a new Bulleit distillery in Shelbyville, Kentucky. The 300-acre, \$115 million facility is designed to eventually operate at a peak capacity of 1.8 million proof gallons annually.

In June 2019, Bulleit opened its visitors' center at the Shelbyville distillery, which features guided tours, tasting classes, a cocktail bar, and an opportunity for adult visitors to design a customized Bulleit label to apply to their own bottles.

Bulleit Bourbon maintains a consistent mash bill of roughly 68% corn, 28% rye, and 4% malted barley. Bulleit Rye (a sourced rye) is a high-rye with a mash bill of 95% rye and 5% malted barley. Both are very drinkable. The Bulliet 10-Year-Old and the Barrel Strength are imminently drinkable.



HOW MAD MEN CREATED BULLEIT WHISKEY

According to Bulleit, it was Fran Taylor, at Meridian Communications, who suggested the family name. “Bulleit was a great name—why not go with Bulleit,” said Taylor. “And every time I see him, if he’s with a bunch of people, he’ll introduce me as the person who talked him into Bulleit Bourbon—to changing the name.” At the time, the whiskey was sold in a square brown bottle with a horse lightly sketched in the background.

In 1997, Bulleit sold his company to Seagram. According to Bulleit Seagram paid him a royalty on all products sold, and he maintained a consulting arrangement. It was then that the ad men stepped in. Seagram hired Jack Mariucci and Bob Mackall, at Doyle, Dane, and Bernbach. DDB was seen in many circles as the inspiration for the show Mad Men. “They were the quintessential Madison Avenue advertising firm,” said Bulleit. Ultimately, DDB hired Steve Sandstrom, of Sandstrom Designs out of Portland, Oregon, to spearhead the project. Sandstrom worked with Bulleit and the Seagram team to invent the new bottle and the new look for the whiskey.

Seemingly, intentionally or not, Sandstrom took a page out of an old Madison Avenue playbook. Marlboro cigarettes were initially named for the street Philip Morris Company was located on, and marketed as a cigarette for women with the slogan “Mild as May.” The filter had a printed red band around it to hide lipstick stains, calling it “Beauty Tips to Keep the Paper from Your Lips”. But the brand went bust.

Philip Morris went to Leo Burnett Worldwide. And in 1954 Burnett introduced the Marlboro Man and Marlboro Country, completely rebranding the cigarette toward men. The campaign centered around cowboys and ranch hands, positioning the cigarettes as masculine and rugged.

Bulleit received the same treatment as Sandstrom and his team created Wild West frontier marketing. Sandstrom’s team invented the bottle and the label pretty much as we know them today. Little more than 40 years later, the old trick had been reinvented and still worked like a charm. Bulleit Bourbon and Bulleit Rye were a sensation.



Company. In 1989, he launched a new line with a product called Thoroughbred. In 1992, after much consultation and thought, he rebranded it to Bulleit Bourbon.

“In Golden Pond, Kentucky, Casey Jones was a legend. In a time when it was a risk to be this kind of legend, Casey Jones built an estimated 150 stills from the 1930s to the late 1960s,” wrote local historian and moonshine expert Albert T. Joyce. Jones called his stills “outfits” or “docks,” and set them up in “just about every hollow between Grand Rivers and Dover, Tennessee.” He was brazen enough to build one in Lyon County, on a bank of the Cumberland River opposite from Eddyville Penitentiary. Even Jones admitted that this was “a little too close to the law for comfort.”

CASEY JONES DISTILLERY

It's hard not to like Casey Jones Distillery. This place is authentic.

In 1987, Tom Bulleit founded the Bulleit Distilling



Master distiller and Casey Jones's grandson, Arlon Casey "AJ" Jones, has gone back into the family business, albeit legally, and is paying homage to his infamous grandfather. Pictures of the old moonshiner are pasted everywhere in the distillery, where AJ produces a line of small batch moonshines and flavored moonshines.

Still Proof (118 proof) is made from a mash bill of 50% corn and 50% cane. It's got a little butter on the nose, and goes down super smooth. Despite the high proof, it doesn't drink like it. Casey Jones Kentucky Bourbon (118.9 proof) is a big cut of bourbon whiskey aged for 20 months in new oak, making this sweet and smoky, with some nice heat and a smooth caramel finish. Then there's the Barrel Cut Moonshine (102.7 proof), which is cane and corn whiskey aged in bourbon barrels. Hints of corn, caramel, and toasty oak, for an easy dram.

CASTLE & KEY DISTILLERY

Castle & Key Distillery is one of the most notable distilleries in Kentucky. It is located on the historic site of the iconic Old Taylor Distillery built by Colonel E. H. Taylor in 1887. Castle & Key was founded by owners Will Arvin and Wes Murry (and Brook Smith, who joined later). The Old Taylor Distillery, which produced the famous Old Taylor Bourbon, better known today as E. H. Taylor (which is now produced by Buffalo Trace), is situated by Glenss Creek, near Frankfort. It was created to look like a medieval castle, and has attracted tourists and picnickers for generations.

Work restoring the neglected citadel and accompanying buildings began in 2014. Vendome Copper & Brass Works installed a new still in October 2015. Original capacity was 12,000 barrels annually, which was upped to 45,000 barrels by 2020. The goal of the distillery is to work with local farmers for grains and botanicals. The goal of the new distillery is to produce bourbon, rye whiskey, single malt



whiskey, vodka, and gin. But the concentration is on bourbon and whiskey. Production began in the summer of 2016.

Under its own label, Castle & Key hasn't released any whiskey yet. But they have released several clear spirits, including gin and vodka. They have released London Dry Gin Spring Recipe and London Dry Gin Autumn Recipe. The Spring Recipe features lighter, more citrus-based notes, while the Autumn Recipe is spicier, bolder. The Restoration Gin is made using a rye base and is super aromatic. The Restoration Vodka is made from a whiskey, and is extremely fine and drinkable.

Castle & Key has made whiskey for other labels, most notably Pinhook.

In December 2020, Restoration Kentucky Rye Whiskey was released as a tribute to the restoration of the historic property originally built over a century ago. "We are more than excited to release our Restoration Rye, a spirit that is thoughtful in every detail, from grain to glass, and is a true representation of the team's hard work and attention to detail over the past five years," said Castle & Key quality

manager Jon Brown.

The whiskey was four years in the making and features two batches, both with unique flavor profiles. Batch #1 is created from a blend of 60 barrels, and Batch #2 is comprised of 57 barrels. During the blending process, barrels were grouped into pods with specific sensory profiles. Those pods were then blended together to achieve the unique, high-quality flavor profiles.

Restoration Rye Batch #1 (103 proof) has a mash bill of 63% rye, 17% yellow corn, 20% malted barley, with aromas of brown sugar, dried figs, tobacco, cocoa, and orange zest. Notes of baking spice, caramel, dried currants, with long lasting notes of maple syrup and dark honey.

Restoration Rye Batch #2 (99 proof) has a mash bill of 63% rye, 17% yellow corn, 20% malted barley with aromatic notes of lemon zest, apricot, and a lovely floral background. Graham cracker, honey, and stone fruits come across the palate, and it finishes with a lovely dry pop of white and black pepper.



JIM RUTLEDGE RETIRED? WHO'S RETIRED?

Hall of Fame Master Distiller Jim Rutledge retired from Four Roses in 2015. He'd been working in the whiskey business

for almost 50 years then, and had been a master distiller for 20 years. He'd already earned a Lifetime Achievement Award from *Malt Advocate* in 2007, and in 2008 *Whisky Magazine* honored him as Whisky Ambassador of the Year – American Whiskies. And in 2012, *Whisky Magazine* inducted him into its Icons of Whisky Hall of Fame.

"It took me about a week of retirement to realize a retirement week consisted of six Saturdays and one Sunday," he chuckled.

He started working on plans to create his own distillery, J W Rutledge, with his business partners, Jon Mowry, Will Conniff, and Stephen Camisa (all accomplished industry insiders). In late 2018, Rutledge unveiled plans for a new \$25 million, environmentally sustainable 69,000-square-foot distillery. Plans were for a site in Oldham County, east of Louisville.

"COVID-19 has put everything at a standstill, and quite a few investors needed their money back," said Rutledge in October 2020. "I've been approached by several other groups but made no commitments yet."

Then Peter Brook Smith of Castle & Key called him up. "Brook contacted me earlier last year and told me about his ideas for Reclamation Rye. The idea was reclaiming the lands of Eastern Kentucky for the people, which was so desolate after the coal mines had left the area," said Rutledge.

That began his run of making spirits at Castle & Key, first for his own brands Cream of Kentucky Bourbon and High Plains Whiskey, as well as contract distilling for clients like Blue Run Bourbon. He has several other projects as well. We're glad he's slowed down.



CREAM OF KENTUCKY

In 1888, I. Tragers & Co. in Cincinnati, Ohio, released for the first time The Cream of Kentucky Bourbon. The brand survived Prohibition, and soon found success in the 1930s and 1940s with the help of advertisements illustrated by Norman Rockwell.

The brand is now owned by Jim Rutledge, who was master distiller at Four Roses for 21 years, before branching off to found his own distillery, J.W. Rutledge Distillery. Cream of Kentucky is Rutledge's first release.

"It's one industry that has survived the great recession, and it's done well through COVID-19," Rutledge told the *Bourbon Review* in 2019, addressing the loss of financial backing for his own plans to build a distillery. He insisted the growth would continue through the next decade and a half. "We're still at the point where we're just catching up from where

the bourbon industry was in the late 1960s. The number of barrels ageing in 1968 reached the peak then it started dropping for about 20 years and levelled out."

Rutledge pointed out that back in the 1960s, 10% of the barrels were marked for export. "Today it's 40%. We've got a long, long way to go before we reach the peak and level out. I have no concerns about that. The future looks very bright for the industry."

Rutledge worked with the folks at Castle & Key to make his first whiskey. Cream of Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (approx. 102 proof) has come out in several batches. Each has been unique. One bottling was 11 years. Another bottling was 13 years. However, in the hand of Rutledge, the whiskeys have been elegant and smooth, and Cream of Kentucky has accomplished what Rutledge has set out to do. Most of his whiskeys were sold out before they were bottled. Cream of Kentucky has established J W Rutledge Distilling as a small house with a big reputation.



PINHOOK

Pinhook is possibly some of the most coveted boutique whiskey coming out of Kentucky today. However, it is at the same time an anomaly. Each year, Pinhook releases a new vintage of bourbons and ryes. They are master blenders. Through a combination of careful barrel selection, blending in small batches, and meticulous proofing, each Pinhook vintage has its own personality. And each bottle is named for a famous thoroughbred.

Pinhook was founded by Sean Josephs, along with Jay Peterson and Charles P. Fulford III. Josephs worked at such high-end restaurants as Chanterelle and Per Se in New York City. He then opened three American whiskey bars and restaurants: Char No. 4 and Maysville in New York and Kenton's in New Orleans. Pinhook Bourbon was started in 2010. Josephs wanted “to bring the concept of vintages to bourbon and celebrate the tradition of Kentucky horse racing.” The brand name comes from the thoroughbred industry term, “pinhooking.” Investors back a young horse and build its reputation, but generally sell for as much as



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possible before it turns three and is considered ready for racing.

The original whiskeys were sourced from MPG and were incredibly smooth and delicious. Josephs quickly developed a reputation for master blending. Starting in 2020 the bottlings of Pinhook have been produced by Castle & Key. Josephs's vintage bourbon approach has now come full circle. The first two releases were Pinhook 2020 Bohemian with a mash bill of 75% corn, 10% rye, and 15% malted barley. This 34-month bourbon (114.5 proof) was bottled from 100 barrels. The other was Pinhook 2020 Rye'd On (97 proof) with a mash bill of 60% rye, 20% corn, and 20% malt.

“Beginning three years ago, we’ve made our home at Castle & Key Distillery,” said Josephs. “The very first Pinhook barrels we’ve distilled there are now mature.”

These whiskeys have garnered incredible reviews, and are well worth searching out. The relationship between Castle & Key and Pinhook is one to watch.





BLUE RUN SPIRITS

Blue Run Spirits is a new spirits company, started in 2019 by a group of friends and bourbon lovers – a Nike designer, Facebook’s first director-level employee, a hospitality

executive, a political advisor, and a philanthropist. The Blue Run name is a nod to one of the founders being from Georgetown, the birthplace of bourbon in the Bluegrass State. It’s an interesting group, but only just that until you add the last ingredient: Jim Rutledge, who serves as the brand’s liquid advisor.

Their first whiskey was Blue Run Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Aged 13 Years (113 proof), a small-batch expression handcrafted by Rutledge. He carefully selects and distills every drop of liquid that goes into Blue Run Bourbons. Only 2,600 bottled were released in October 2020. On the nose, crisp vanilla and hints of herbs. Brown sugar and brown butter sauce on the palate give way to apricot and golden raisins.

“Blue Run is bottled at a higher proof than most extra-aged bourbons, providing more flavor because less water is added to reduce proof,” said Rutledge. “While the proof is almost as high as a barrel-strength bourbon, its smoothness could be compared to bourbons with proofs 10 to 20 points lower.”



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CHARLES MEDLEY DISTILLERY

Charles Medley Distillery is a throwback to the old Medley Distilling Company, which was first established in 1937 in Owensboro, Kentucky, by five brothers. The brothers sold the distillery in 1958, but stayed involved in the day-to-day operations until the 1970s. The last living member of the Medley family involved with the operation was Charles

Medley, who also happened to be the last master distiller at the facility, which was shuttered in the 1990s.

With the rebirth of bourbon, Charles was able to purchase the rights to the moribund label and brand. Along with his son Sam, he has renewed both the family name and the old label. Charles Medley Distillery does not produce anything. Instead, Charles has all the bourbon contract-made (probably by Heaven Hill) to his specifications, including his mash bill of 77% corn, 10% rye, and 13% malted barley. Note the unusual high-barley, low-rye recipe.

In 1996 Charles Medley Distillery released Wathen's Kentucky Bourbon Single Barrel Eight Generations 8-Year-Old (94 proof), which was aged in charred American oak. Several reviewers insist that a splash of water is necessary to enhance the caramel and grain on this whiskey, and I quite agree. A few drops open up the bourbon beautifully.

Medley released a limited, small-batch run of Medley Family Private Selection Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, part of an 11-barrel release (268 cases) coordinated by Sam Medley to celebrate his father's 75th birthday. There

is no age statement on the bottle, so the resulting whiskey is more than two years old, but probably less than six.

The other popular release from this distillery is Medley Bros. Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (102 proof). It has the same high-barley recipe as Wathen's and is a straightforward bourbon with no fancy gimmicks. It's easy to drink or mix. The distillery also released an Old Medley 12-year-old (86.8 proof) that has received some nice attention.

Plenty of solid offerings from this brand, but the keeper is the Eight Generations.



COPPER & KINGS AMERICAN BRANDY COMPANY

Without exaggeration, outside of the bourbon and whiskey business, there is no more respected distiller than Copper & Kings. While many of the region's distilleries are concentrating on whiskey, Copper & Kings Distillery is attempting to become the nation's premiere craft spirits and brandy producer. And so far the plan is being executed flawlessly.

The Copper & Kings distillery is located in Louisville's Butchertown section, and was founded in 2014 by famed beverage entrepreneurs Joe and Lesley Heron. The Herons created Nutrisoda (they sold it to PepsiAmericas in 2006) and the Crispin Hard Cider Company (sold to MillerCoors in 2012). Copper & Kings is their latest project.

Thus far, it has created a line of fine, high-end small-batch brandies, absinthe, and liqueurs that are available in more than 31 states.



“I’m from the South, the far South—South Africa,” joked Joe with Saveur magazine. “There was no \$35 brandy. More importantly, we wanted to create an American brandy that defines the American spirit culturally and physically.”

The distillery is segmented into four parts: the basement is a maturation cellar; the first floor is the distillery/production space; the second floor contains an art gallery and office space; and the top floor holds the tasting room and event space, providing incredible views of downtown Louisville. Most notable are the stacks of iconic orange-and-black shipping containers that form the distillery’s shop. Outside the shop is a butterfly garden and habitat certified as a registered Monarch Waystation.





According to its website, Copper & Kings uses “traditional copper pot-distillation to forge untraditional craft-distilled, natural, pure pot-still brandies. We make definitive American brandy influenced by American whiskey and American music. We do not make derivative brandy styled upon a European sensibility. Our brandies are batch distilled exclusively in copper pot-stills, and are non-chill filtered, with no added sugar, boisé (powdered oak, shavings or infusion), other flavors, synthetic chemicals, or caramel

colorants for an uncorrupted, authentic, natural flavor, nose, and color.”

The company makes an apple brandy using Michigan apples; two different absinthes (Absinthe Alembic Blanche and Absinthe Alembic Barrel Finished); five gins (American Dry, American Old Tom, The Moons of Juniper, Distilled Gin Finished in Orange Curacao Barrels, and Distilled Gin With Rose Hibiscus, Strawberry, and Honey). It also features several interesting liqueurs in its Destillaré series, including an Orange Curaçao, Café Liqueur, Chocolate Liqueur, and Pomegranate, as well as the CR&FTWERK series of brandies, each of which rests in craft beer barrels for no less than 12 months.

The company’s two standouts are the Copper & Kings American Brandy (62% ABV), which is a solera method brandy. Combining sourced, aged pot-stilled brandy from local distilleries with Copper & Kings own brandies, and aged in Kentucky bourbon barrels and American white oak, creates a lovely brandy with rich notes of caramel, fig, and stone fruits. The other is the outstanding Copper & Kings

Butchertown Reserve Casks Brandy (62% ABV), which is a small-batch brandy aged for 75% of the time in Kentucky bourbon barrels and 25% in new American oak. The result is deep and rich, with an incredibly long-lasting finish. This is a brandy that whiskey lovers can really appreciate!





DISTILLED SPIRITS EPICENTER

The brainchild of Scott Weddle, Distilled Spirits Epicenter is a fascinating place. It is not a distillery, but rather a learning center, custom distilling house, and bottler. It is comprised of three sections: Moonshine University, a learning center that teaches distilling as well as the business of how to

run a distillery; Greasemonkey Distillery, which is a custom distillery where it develops mash bills, creates prototype batches, and experiments with processing for full-

run productions; and Challenge Bottling, a flexible bottling line for small producers that are either quickly outgrowing their own bottling capacity, or want to outsource their packaging. It's a fascinating and much needed addition to the craft distilling scene.





DUELING BARRELS BREWERY & DISTILLERY

Pearse and Deirdre Lyons founded Dueling Barrels Brewery & Distillery in Pikeville, Kentucky. After immigrating to Appalachia from Ireland, Pearse and Diedre fell in love with the region because of the many ways it reminded them of home. Pikeville is close to the area of the legendary rivalry of the Hatfields and McCoys, the dawn of Bluegrass music.

Deirdre and Pearse co-founded Alltech in 1980 to help farmers feed the world, raise healthy animals, and protect the environment through natural, nutritional innovation. Today, Alltech is a \$2 billion company with more than 5,000 employees supporting its business presence in over 120 countries. Alltech also owns Town Branch in Lexington and Pearse Lyons Distillery in Dublin, Ireland.

The brewery offers more than a half dozen beers year-

round, as well as seasonal brews throughout the year. The distillery also offers Dueling Barrels Kentucky Mountain Flower Moonshine, Original Moonshine, Apple Orach Moonshine, and Bonfire Moonshine. Original is corn liquor, suitable for aging as bourbon. It is bottled at 100 proof, with a blend of corn, malted barley, and a pinch of rye for a hint of spice. Smooth and with a slightly sweet finish. Mountain Flower is infused with elderberry at 80 proof. Bonfire is infused with cinnamon, and Apple Orchard has notes of apple, caramel, and vanilla. The Original is for aficionados, and is a good harbinger of aged whiskeys to come.

