

“The relationship between a Russian and a bottle of vodka is almost mystical.”

— Richard Owen, British scientist and drinking buddy of Charles Darwin

VODKA



A colorful array of craft vodkas on display, on ice, ready to be enjoyed responsibly

AS THE STORY goes, in 988, the Grand Prince of Kiev (Ukraine) decided it was time for his people to be converted from their pagan ways to one of the monotheistic religions that held sway to the south. First came the Jewish rabbis. He listened to their arguments, was impressed, but ultimately sent them away after noting that the followers of Judaism did not control any land. Next came the Muslim mullahs. Again he was impressed,

both with their intellectual arguments and the success of Islam as a political and military force. But when he was told that Islam proscribed alcohol, he was dismayed and sent them away. Finally came the Christian priests, who informed him that not only could good Christians drink alcohol, but also that wine was required for church rituals such as communion. That was good enough for the Grand Prince, and on his command his subjects converted en masse to Christianity.

THE HISTORY OF VODKA

HISTORICALLY, the Slavic peoples of the north and their Scandinavian neighbors took alcoholic drinks very seriously. The extreme cold temperatures of winter inhibited the shipment of wines and beers, because these low-proof beverages could freeze during transit. Until the introduction of distilling into Eastern Europe in the 1400s, strong drink was made by fermenting wines, meads, and beers, freezing them, and then drawing off the alcoholic slush from the frozen water.

The earliest distilled spirit in Eastern Europe was made from mead (honey wine) or beer and was called *perevara*. The word *vodka* (from the Russian word *voda*, meaning “water”) was originally used to describe grain distillates that were used for medicinal purposes. As distilling techniques improved, vodka (*wodka* in Polish) gradually came to be the accepted term for beverage spirit, regardless of its origin.

VODKA IN RUSSIA

Russians firmly believe that vodka was created in their land. Commercial production was established by the fourteenth century. In 1540, Czar Ivan the Terrible established the first government vodka monopoly. Distilling licenses were handed out to the boyars (the nobility), all other distilleries were banned, and moonshining became endemic.

Vodka production became an integral part of Russian society. Landowners operated stills on



Three Holstein stills at *St. George Spirits/Hangar One Vodka*.

their estates and produced high-quality vodkas that were flavored with everything from acorns to horseradish to mint. The czars maintained test distilleries at their country palaces. In 1780, a scientist at one such distillery invented charcoal filtration to purify vodka.

By the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, the Russian vodka industry was considered technologically advanced. New stills and production techniques from Western Europe were eagerly imported and utilized. State funding and control of vodka research continued. Under a 1902 law, “Moscow vodka,” a clear 40 percent ABV rye vodka without added flavorings and soft “living” (undistilled) water, was

established as the benchmark for Russian vodka.

The Soviet Union continued government control of vodka production. All distilleries became government-owned, and while the Communist Party apparatchiks continued to enjoy high-quality rye vodka, the proletariat masses had to make do with cheap spirits.

Vodka production in the current Russian Federation has returned to the pre-Revolutionary pattern. High-quality brands are again being produced for the new social elite and for export, while the popularly priced brands are still being consumed, well, like *voda*.



Putting labels over the caps of freshly filled bottles of **Prezydent Vodka** at **Polmos Lodz** in Lodz, Poland

VODKA IN POLAND

The earliest written records of vodka production in Poland date from the 1400s, though some Polish historians claim that it was being produced around the southern city of Krakow at least a century earlier. Originally known as *okowita* (from the Latin *aqua vita*, “water of life”), it was used for a variety of purposes in addition to beverages. A 1534 medical text defined an aftershave lotion as “vodka for washing the chin after shaving.” Herbal-infused vodkas were particularly popular as liniments for the aches and pains of life.

In 1546, King Jan Olbracht granted the right to distill and sell in spirits to every adult citizen. The Polish aristocracy, taking a cue from their Russian peers, soon lobbied to have this privilege revoked and replaced by a royal decree that reserved to them the right to make vodka.

Commercial vodka distilleries were well established by the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, a thriving export trade had developed, with Polish vodkas, particularly

those infused with small quantities of fruit spirit, being shipped throughout northern Europe and even into Russia.

With the fall of Communism in the late 1980s, the vodka distilleries soon returned to private ownership. Nowadays, high-quality Polish vodkas are exported throughout the world.

VODKA IN SWEDEN

Vodka production in Sweden, which dates from the fifteenth century, has its origins in the local gunpowder industry, where high-proof spirit (originally called *brännvin*) was used as a component of black powder for muskets. When distilleries were licensed to produce beverage alcohol (primarily spice-flavored aquavit, but also vodka), it was with the understanding that gunpowder makers had first priority over beverage consumers.

Home distilling was long a part of Swedish society. In 1830, there were more than 175,000 registered stills in a country of fewer than three million people. This tradition, in a much diminished and



Spirits dance in the still at the **Weyermann Distillery** in Bamberg, Germany.

VODKA AND THE CLASS SYSTEM

The societal attitude toward cheap spirits meant for the proletariat could be summed up by the curious fact that mass-produced vodka was sold in liter bottles with a non-screw cap. Once you opened the bottle, it couldn't be resealed. You had to drink it all in one session.



Charcoal filtration used in making vodka at Colorado Pure Distilling

illegal form, still continues to this day. Modern Swedish vodka is produced by the Vin & Sprit state monopoly.

VODKA IN THE UNITED STATES

Vodka was first imported into the United States in significant quantities around the turn of the twentieth century. Its market was immigrants from Eastern Europe. After the repeal of National Prohibition in 1933, the Heublein Company bought the rights to the Smirnoff brand of vodka from its White Russian émigré owners and relaunched vodka into the U.S. market. Sales languished until an enterprising liquor salesman in South Carolina started promoting it as “Smirnoff White Whisky—No

taste. No smell.” Sales boomed and American vodka, after marking time during World War II, was on its way to marketing success. The first popular vodka-based cocktail was a combination of vodka and ginger ale called the Moscow mule. It was marketed with its own special copper mug, examples of which can still be found on the back shelves of liquor cabinets throughout the United States

Today, vodka is the dominant white spirit in the United States, helped along by its versatility as a mixer and some very clever advertising campaigns. The most famous of these was the classic double entendre tagline: “Smirnoff—It leaves you breathless.”

The majority of American craft distillers are vodka producers.

They are divided between those who purchase neutral grain spirit (NGS) from a third party supplier and then rectify it in their own facility, and a relative handful of operations that produce and distill their own wash to make vodka. This is actually a serious challenge for craft distillers with pot stills, because it is difficult to produce a high-proof neutral grain spirit without using a column still.

The best-known, and best-selling, craft-distilled vodka is Tito’s Handmade Vodka from the distillery of the same name in Austin, Texas.

THE BASIS OF VODKA

“A vodka martini, please. Polish, not Russian. Shaken, not stirred.”

—James Bond, Agent 007, plunging a stake into the heart of gin sales

VODKA is made by fermenting and then distilling the simple sugars from a mash of pale grain or vegetal matter, which can be potatoes, molasses, beets, or a variety of other plants. Rye is the classic grain for vodka, and most of the best Russian and Polish brands are made exclusively from a rye mash. Swedish and Baltic distillers are partial to wheat mashes, although wheat is also used farther east. Potatoes are looked down on by Russian distillers, but they are held in high esteem by some of their Polish counterparts. Molasses is widely used for inexpensive, mass-produced brands of vodka. American distillers use the full range of base ingredients.

DISTILLATION OF VODKA

Vodka is distilled in the manner described in the introductory chapter of this book. (See page 24.) The choice of pot or column stills does, however, have a fundamental effect on the final character of the vodka. All vodka comes out of the still as a clear, colorless spirit. But vodka from a pot still (the sort used for cognac and Scotch whisky) will contain some of the delicate aromatics, congeners, and flavor elements of the crop from which it was produced. Pot stills are relatively inefficient, and the resulting spirit from the first distillation is usually redistilled (rectified) to increase the proof of the spirit. Vodka from a more efficient column still is usu-



Maine Distilleries uses locally sourced potatoes to make its Cold River Vodka.

ally a neutral, characterless spirit.

Except for a few minor exceptions, vodka is not put into wooden casks or aged for any extensive period of time. It can, however, be flavored or colored with a wide variety of fruits, herbs, and spices.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF VODKA

There are no uniform classifications of vodka. In Poland, vodkas are graded according to their degree of purity: standard (*zwykly*), premium (*wyborowy*), and deluxe (*lüksusowy*). In Russia, vodka that is labeled *osobaya* (special) is usually a superior-quality product that

can be exported, while *krepkaya* (strong) denotes an overproof vodka of at least 56 percent ABV.

In the United States, domestic vodkas are defined by U.S. government regulation as “neutral spirits, so distilled, or so treated after distillation with charcoal or other materials, as to be without distinctive character, aroma, taste or color.” Because American vodka is, by law, neutral in taste, there are only very subtle distinctions between brands. Many drinkers feel that the only real way of differentiating between them is by alcohol content and price.

VODKA REGIONS

EASTERN EUROPE

This is the homeland of vodka production. Every country produces vodka, and most also have local flavored specialties.

Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus produce the full range of vodka types, and they are generally acknowledged to be the leaders in vodka production. Only the better brands, all of which are distilled from rye and wheat, are exported to the West.



Zubrowka vodka by **Polmos Bialystocka** is flavored with buffalo grass from the Bialowieza forest in Poland. The vodka has a yellow-green tinge (not shown) from the grass infusion.

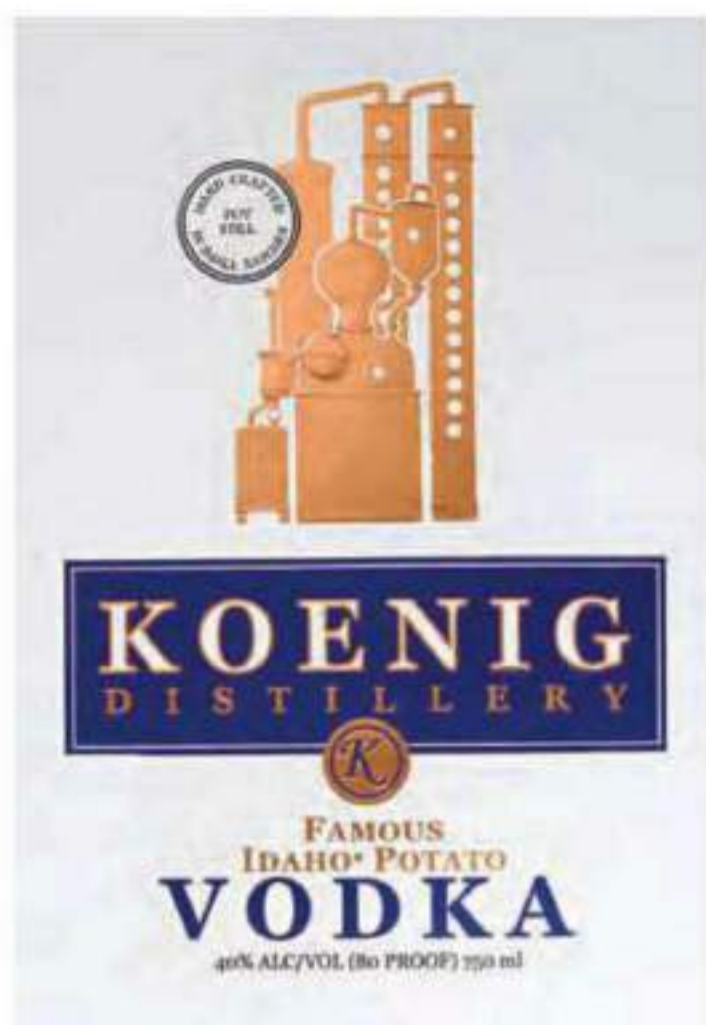
FLAVORED VODKA

As a neutral spirit, vodka lends itself to blending with flavors and fortifying other beverages. In the nineteenth century, high-proof “Russian spirit” was held in high esteem by sherry producers in Spain, who imported it to fortify their wines. Neutral spirits are still used to fortify port, sherry, and other types of fortified wines, although the source of alcohol for such purposes these days tends to be the vast “wine lake” that has been created by European Union agricultural practices.

Flavored vodkas were originally used to mask the flavor of the first primitive vodkas, but they were later considered a mark of the distiller’s skill. The Russians and Poles, in particular, still market dozens of flavors. Some of the better-known types are:

- Kubanskaya:** Vodka flavored with an infusion of dried lemon and orange peels
- Limonnaya:** Lemon-flavored vodka, usually with a touch of sugar added
- Okhotnichya:** “Hunter’s” vodka is flavored with a mix of ginger, cloves, lemon peel, coffee, anise, and other herbs and spices. It is then blended with sugar and a touch of a wine similar to white port. It’s a most unusual vodka.
- Pertsovka:** Pepper-flavored vodka, made with both black peppercorns and red chile peppers
- Starka:** “Old” vodka, a holdover from the early centuries of vodka production, which can be infused with everything from fruit tree leaves to brandy, port, Malaga wine, and dried fruit. Some brands are aged in oak casks.
- Zubrovka:** Zubrowka in Polish; vodka flavored with buffalo (or more properly “bison”) grass, an aromatic grass favored by the herds of the rare European bison

In recent years, numerous flavored vodkas have been launched on the world market. The most successful of these have been fruit flavors, such as currant and orange.



Label for *Koenig's Famous Idaho Potato Vodka*, by the *Koenig Distillery and Winery*

Poland produces and exports both grain- and potato-based vodkas. Most of the high-quality brands are produced in pot stills.

The Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, along with Finland, produce primarily grain-based vodkas, mostly from wheat.

WESTERN EUROPE

This region has local brands of vodka wherever there are distilleries. The base for these vodkas can vary from grains in northern countries, such as the United Kingdom, Holland, and Germany, to grapes and other fruits in the winemaking regions of France and Italy. Sweden has, in recent decades, developed a substantial export market for its straight and flavored wheat-based vodkas.

NORTH AMERICA

The United States and Canada produce vodkas, both from various grains (including corn) and from molasses. American vodkas are, by law, neutral spirits, so the distinction between nonflavored brands is more a matter of price and perception than taste. A

number of flavored vodkas are also produced, both by the major distillers and by an assortment of craft distillers.

OTHER REGIONS

The Caribbean produces a surprising amount of vodka, all of it from molasses. Most of it is exported for blending and bottling in other countries.

Australia produces molasses-based vodkas, but few are exported.

Asia has a smattering of local vodkas, with the best coming from Japan.



Vermont White and Gold Vodka by *Vermont Spirits*

VODKA COCKTAILS

SCREWDRIVER

Fill a tall glass with ice. Add:

- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) vodka
- Orange juice to fill

Stir and serve.

BLOODY MARY

Fill a short glass with ice. Add:

- 1½ ounces (45 ml) vodka
- Dash Worcestershire sauce
- Dash Tabasco sauce
- Dash lemon or lime juice
- Tomato juice to fill

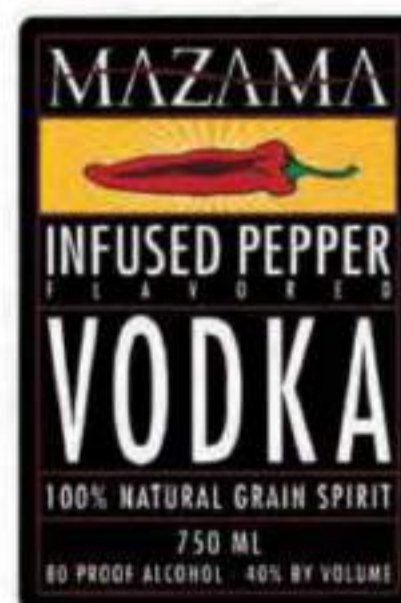
Stir and garnish with celery salt on top.

SEX ON THE BEACH

Fill a tall glass with ice. Add:

- 1 ounce (30 ml) vodka
- 1 ounce (30 ml) peach liqueur
- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) orange juice
- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) cranberry juice

Stir and serve.



Mazama Infused Pepper Vodka by *Bendistillery*

LENELL SMOTHERS

Former owner of LeNell's, Brooklyn, New York



WHEN craft distillers Tuthilltown Spirits from Upstate New York launched their first barrel-aged whiskey, they called it Manhattan Rye, and they threw a party at the Four Season's Restaurant in the Seagrams Building on Park Avenue in Manhattan. In a big, open room, with bars at both ends and a mash of people laughing and drinking, they toasted their accomplishment and poured samples of their excellent whiskeys and vodkas (made from 100 percent New York State apples). When it came time to clink glasses and hear announcements, the crowd was treated to a raucous tutorial on mixing a Manhattan. Standing on a balcony above the crowd, like a hillbilly Juliet before a throng of devotees, LeNell Smothers cackled and cracked wise. She wore a battered cowboy hat, bandannas around her wrists, tight jeans, and a mile of attitude.

She took the crowd through the recipe: jigger of rye, shot of sweet vermouth, dash of bitters, shake, twist. She talked variation: The perfect Manhattan is half dry and half sweet vermouth. If they wanted to drink them on the rocks, do it. If they wanted to drink them straight up, go ahead. Do what you like, but do it with good booze.

Smother's moved from Alabama to New York City in 2000 and spent three years toiling in sales while her dream to open up a shop simmered. Her boutique wine and spirits shop in Red Hook, Brooklyn, opened in 2003. Red Hook is a rough, hip

neighborhood on the waterfront, and her place fits right in. Small, eclectic, and very much driven by her personality, Smother's store never wanted to have everything. For years, her vermouth selection was limited to one brand, Vya, the American vermouth made by Andy Quady of the Quady Winery in Madera, California, because it was made by a small producer.

Smother's was accepted into the bourbon community wholeheartedly, and her selection of American whiskey was breathtaking. When Jimmy Russell of Wild Turkey did a bottle signing in New York, he did it at her tiny shop.

Smother's, however tight she gets with the big producers, remains a champion of craft distilling. "When I go Charbay, I've got four generations of distillers there, hands on. Someplace like Stoli isn't going to have the same quality control."

Where some people call micro-distilling practices such as making 100 percent barley whiskeys or making whiskey from beer instead of from mash as controversial, Smother's believes that change and adventure are something to celebrate. "What is the American tradition anyway? All we do is our own thing."

In early 2009, after a trying struggle with her landlord, Smother's lost the lease to her shop. Next time, she's going to buy the building, she says, and expand the whiskey selection.

“The proper union of gin and vermouth is a great and sudden glory; it is one of the happiest marriages on earth, and one of the shortest lived.”

—Bernard DeVoto, American essayist and drinks philosopher

GIN



GIN is a juniper berry-flavored grain spirit. The word is an English shortening of *genever*, the Dutch word for juniper. The origins of gin are a bit murky. In the late 1580s, a juniper-flavored spirit of some sort was found in Holland by British troops who were fighting against the Spanish in the Dutch War of Independence. They gratefully drank it to give them what they soon came to call “Dutch courage” in battle. The Dutch themselves were encouraged by their government to favor such grain spirits over imported wine and brandy by lack of excise taxes on local drinks.

*This gooseneck still at **Philadelphia Distilling** was custom made by Forsyths of Scotland.*

THE HISTORY OF GIN

Sonja Kassebaum of North Shore Distillery stands in front of the "helmet" of her gin still.



IN the 1600s, a Dr. Franciscus de la Boë in the university town of Leiden created a juniper- and spice-flavored medicinal spirit that he promoted as a diuretic. Geneva soon found favor across the English Channel, first as a medicine (Samuel Pepys wrote in 1660 of curing a case of "colic" with a dose of "strong water made with juniper") and then as a beverage.

When the Dutch Protestant William of Orange became king of England in 1689, he moved to discourage the importation of brandy from the Catholic winemaking countries by setting high tariffs. As a replacement, he promoted the production of grain spirits ("corn brandy," as it was known at the time) by abolishing taxes and licensing fees for the manufacture of such local products as gin. History has shown that prohibi-

tion never works, but unfettered production of alcohol has its problems, too. By the 1720s, it was estimated that a quarter of the houses in London were used for the production or sale of gin. Mass drunkenness became a serious problem. The cartoonist Hogarth's famous depiction of such behavior in *Gin Lane* shows a sign above a gin shop that states, "Drunk for a penny/Dead drunk for twopence/Clean straw for Nothing." Panicky attempts by the government to prohibit gin production, such as the Gin Act of 1736, resulted in massive illicit distilling and the cynical marketing of "medicinal" spirits with such fanciful names as Cuckold's Comfort and My Lady's Eye Water.

A combination of reimposed government controls, the growth of high-quality commercial gin

distillers, the increasing popularity of imported rum, and a general feeling of public exhaustion gradually brought this mass hysteria under control, although the problems caused by the combination of cheap gin and extreme poverty extended well into the nineteenth century. Fagin's irritable comment to a child in the film *Oliver*—"Shut up and drink your gin!"—had a basis in historical fact.

Wherever the British Empire went, English-style gins followed. In British colonies in North America, such celebrated Americans as Paul Revere and George Washington were notably fond of gin, and the Quakers were well known for their habit of drinking gin toddies after funerals.

The mid-nineteenth century ushered in a low-key rehabilitation of gin's reputation in England. The harsh, sweetened "Old Tom" styles of gin of the early 1700s slowly gave way to a new, cleaner style called dry gin. This style of gin became identified with the city of London to the extent that "London dry" became a generic term for the style, regardless of where it was actually produced.



Fritz Maytag, right, at Anchor Distilling. With a small overhead crane, Anchor Distilling can interchange the columns of their three stills.

Bluecoat gin leaves the bottling line at Philadelphia Distilling.

Genteel middle-class ladies sipped their sloe gin (gin flavored with sloe berries) while consulting *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* (a wildly popular Victorian cross between the *Joy of Cooking* and Martha Stewart lifestyle books) for gin-based mixed drink recipes. The British military, particularly the officer corps, became a hotbed of gin consumption. Hundreds of gin-based mixed drinks were invented, and the mastery of their making was considered a part of a young officer's training. The best known of these cocktails, the gin and tonic, was created as a way for Englishmen in tropical colonies to take their daily dose of quinine, a very bitter medicine, to ward off malaria. (Modern tonic water still contains quinine, though as a flavoring rather than a medicine.)



BATHTUB GIN

Gin production in the United States dates back to Colonial times, but the great boost to gin production was the advent of National Prohibition in 1920. Moonshining quickly moved in to fill the gap left by the shutdown of commercial distilleries. But the furtive nature of illicit distilling worked against the production of the then-dominant whiskies, all of which required some aging in oak casks. Bootleggers were not in a position to store and age illegal whiskey, and the caramel-colored, prune-juice-dosed grain alcohol substitutes were generally considered to be vile.

Gin, on the other hand, did not require any aging, and it was relatively easy to make by

mixing raw alcohol with juniper berry extract and other flavorings and spices in a large container such as a bathtub (thus the origin of the term bathtub gin). These gins were generally of poor quality and taste, a fact that gave rise to the popularity of cocktails in which the mixers served to disguise the taste of the base gin. Repeal of Prohibition at the end of 1933 ended the production of bootleg gin, but gin remained a part of the American beverage scene. It was the dominant white spirit in the United States until the rise of vodka in the 1960s. It still remains popular, helped along recently by the revived popularity of the martini.

Spruce Gin
by *Rogue*
Distillery and
Ale House



THE BASIS OF GIN

In Holland, the production of genever was quickly integrated into the vast Dutch trading system. Rotterdam became the center of genever distilling as distilleries opened there to take advantage of the abundance of needed spices that were arriving from the Dutch colonies in the East Indies (present-day Indonesia). Many of today's leading Dutch genever distillers can trace their origins back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Examples include such firms as Bols (founded 1575) and de Kuyper (1695).

Belgium developed its own juniper-flavored spirit, called jenever (with a j), in a manner similar to that in Holland (which controlled Belgium for a time in the early nineteenth century). The two German invasions of Belgium in World Wars I and II had a particularly hard effect on jenever producers as the occupying Germans stripped the distilleries of their copper stills and piping to use in the production of shell casings. The present-day remaining handful of Belgian jenever distillers produce primarily for the local domestic market.

Gin may have originated in Holland and developed into its most popular style in England, but its most enthusiastic modern-day consumers are to be found in Spain, which has the highest per capita consumption in the world. Production of London dry-style gin began in the 1930s, but serious consumption did not begin until the mix of gin and cola became inexplicably popular in the 1960s.

GIN and its Dutch cousin genever (jenever in Belgium) are white spirits that are flavored with juniper berries and so-called botanicals (a varied assortment of herbs and spices). The spirit base of gin is primarily grain (usually wheat or rye), which results in a light-bodied spirit. Genever is made primarily from "malt wine" (a mixture of malted barley, wheat, corn, and rye), which produces a fuller-bodied spirit similar to malt whisky. A small number of genevers in Holland and Belgium are distilled directly from fermented juniper berries, which produces a particularly intensely flavored spirit.



Bluecoat Gin by *Philadelphia Distilling*

The chief flavoring agent in both gin and genever is the highly aromatic blue-green berry of the juniper, a low-slung evergreen bush (genus *Juniperus*) that is commercially grown in northern Italy, Croatia, the United States, and Canada. Additional botanicals can include anise, angelica root, cinnamon, orange peel, coriander, and cassia bark. All gin and genever makers have their own secret combination of botanicals, the number of which can range from as few as four to as many as fifteen.

THE DISTILLATION OF GIN

Most gin is initially distilled in efficient column stills. The resulting spirit is high proof, light-bodied, and clean, with a minimal amount of congeners (flavor compounds) and flavoring agents. Genever is distilled in less-efficient pot stills, which results in a lower-proof, more flavorful spirit.

Low-quality "compound" gins are made by simply mixing the base spirit with juniper and botanical extracts. Mass-market gins are produced by soaking juniper berries and botanicals in the base spirit and then redistilling the mixture.

Top-quality gins and genevers are flavored in a unique manner. After one or more distillations, the base spirit is redistilled one last time. During this final distillation, the alcohol vapor wafts through a chamber in which the dried juniper berries and botanicals are

Guy Rehorst of the **Great Lakes Distillery** uses a wooden dipstick to measure the volume of spirit in a tank.



suspended. The vapor gently extracts aromatic and flavoring oils and compounds from the berries and spices as it travels through the chamber on its way to the condenser. The resulting flavored spirit has a noticeable degree of complexity.

THE COLORFUL ORIGINS OF OLD TOM GIN

The name of Old Tom Gin comes from what may be the first example of a beverage vending machine. In the 1700s, some pubs in England had a wooden plaque shaped like a black cat (an “Old Tom”) mounted on the outside wall. Thirsty passersby would deposit a penny in the cat’s mouth and place their lips around a small tube between the cat’s paws. The bartender inside would then pour a shot of gin through the tube and into the customer’s waiting mouth.

STYLE	DEFINITION	HOWEVER...
London Dry Gin	The dominant English style of gin in the United Kingdom, former British colonies, the United States, and Spain	It need not be truly “dry,” and it lends itself well to mixing.
Plymouth Gin	Relatively full-bodied (compared to London dry gin). It is clear, slightly fruity, and very aromatic.	Originally the local gin style of Plymouth, England, modern Plymouth gin is made only by one distillery in Plymouth, Coates & Co., which also controls the right to the name Plymouth Gin.
Old Tom Gin	The last remaining example of the original lightly sweetened gins that were popular in eighteenth-century England	Limited quantities of Old Tom–style gin are still made by a few British distillers and several American craft distillers, but it is, at best, a curiosity item.
Genever or Hollands	The Dutch style of gin, distilled from a malted grain mash similar to that used for whiskey. Oude (old) genever is the original style. It is straw-hued, relatively sweet, and aromatic. Jonge (young) genever has a drier palate and lighter body. Some genevers are aged for one to three years in oak casks. Genevers tend to be lower proof than English gins (72 to 80 percent ABV is typical). They are usually served straight up and chilled.	The classic accompaniment to a shot of genever is a dried green herring. Genever is traditionally sold in a cylindrical stoneware crock. Genever-style gins are produced in Holland, Belgium, Germany, and the United States.

GIN REGIONS

EUROPE

The United Kingdom produces mostly dry gin, primarily from column stills. British gins tend to be high proof (90° proof or 45 percent ABV) and citrus-accented from the use of dried lemon and Seville orange peels in the mix of botanicals. British gins are usually combined into mixed drinks.

Holland and Belgium produce genever, mostly from pot stills. Genevers are distilled at lower proof levels than English gins and are generally fuller in body. Many of these gins are aged for one to three years in oak casks. Some genever producers now market fruit-flavored genevers, the best known being black currant. Dutch and Belgian genevers are usually chilled and served neat.

Germany produces a genever-style gin called dornkaat in the North Sea coast region of Frisia.

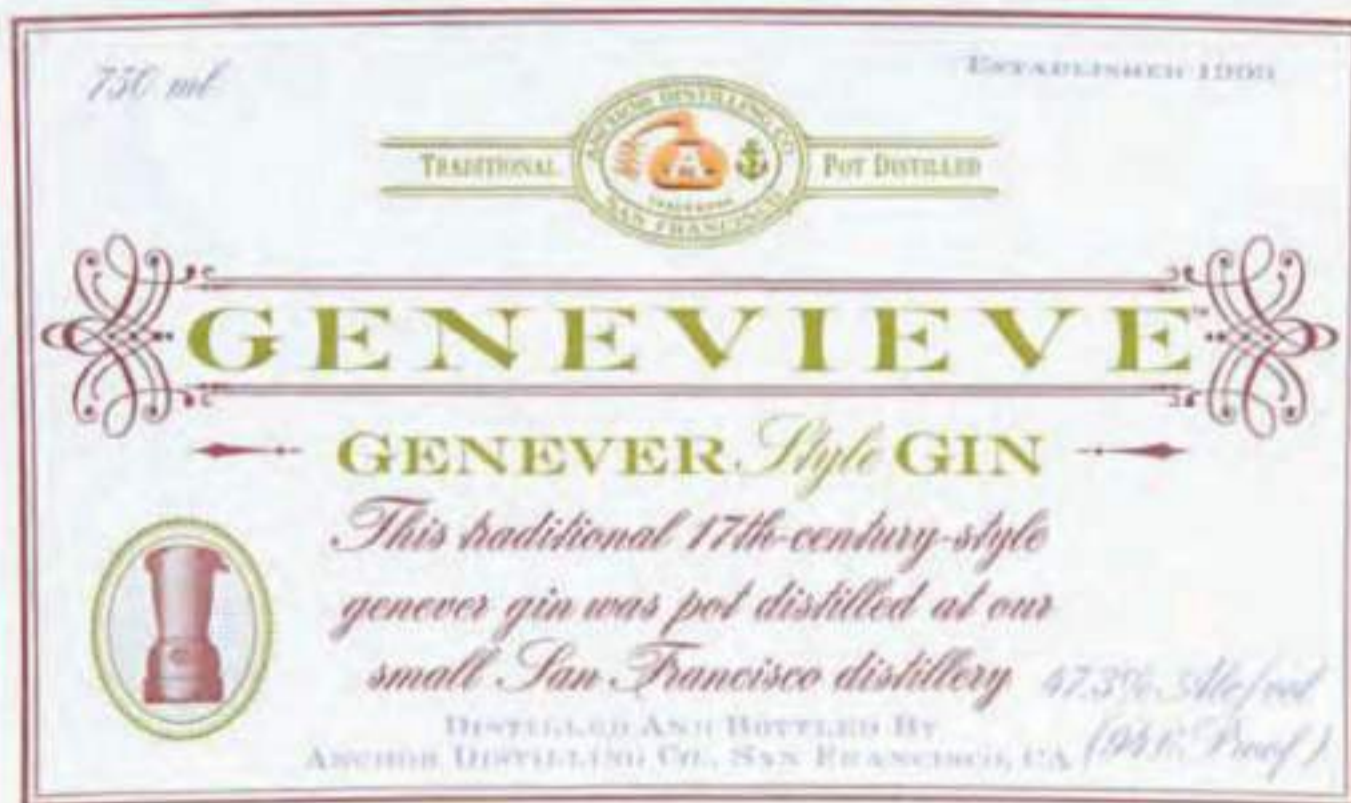
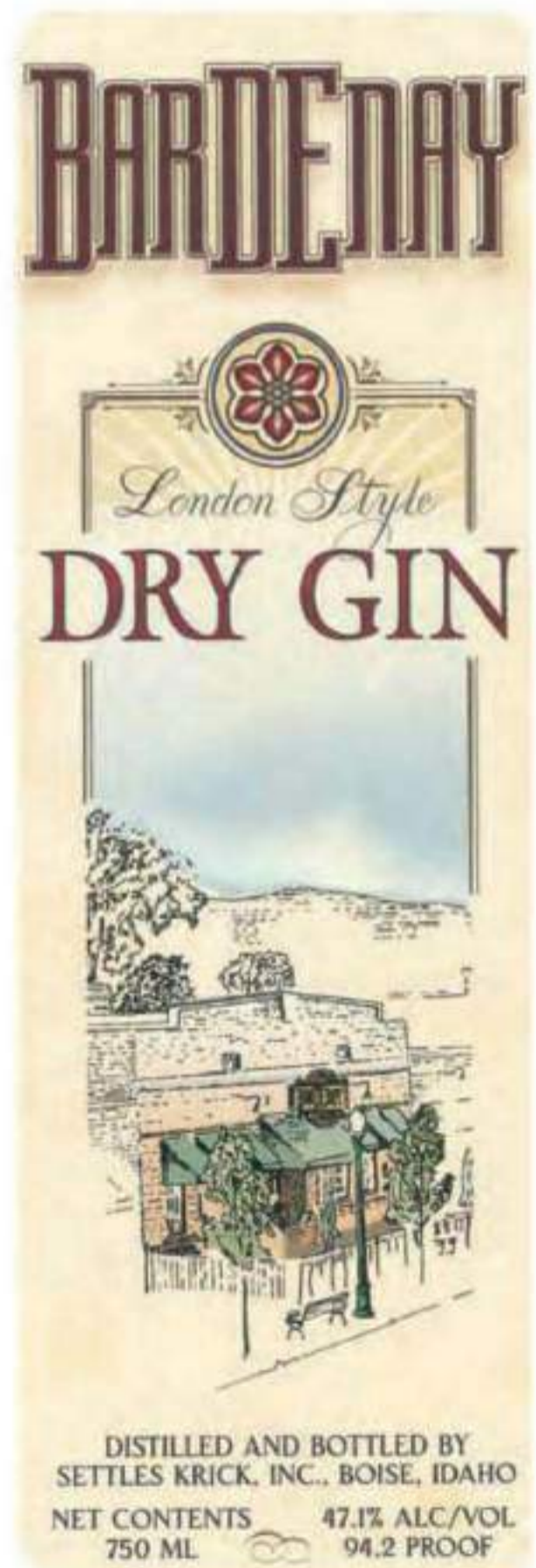
This spirit is lighter in body and more delicate in flavor than both Dutch genever and English dry gin. German gin is usually served straight up and cold.

Spain produces a substantial amount of gin, all of it in the London dry style from column stills. Most of it is sold for mixing with cola.

NORTH AMERICA

The United States is the world's largest gin market. London dry gin accounts for the bulk of domestic gin production, with most of it produced in column stills. American dry gins tend to be lower proof (80° proof or 40 percent ABV) and less flavorful than their English counterparts. This rule applies even to brands such as Gordon's and Gilbey's, which originated in England. The United States's best-selling gin,

Greylock
Gin



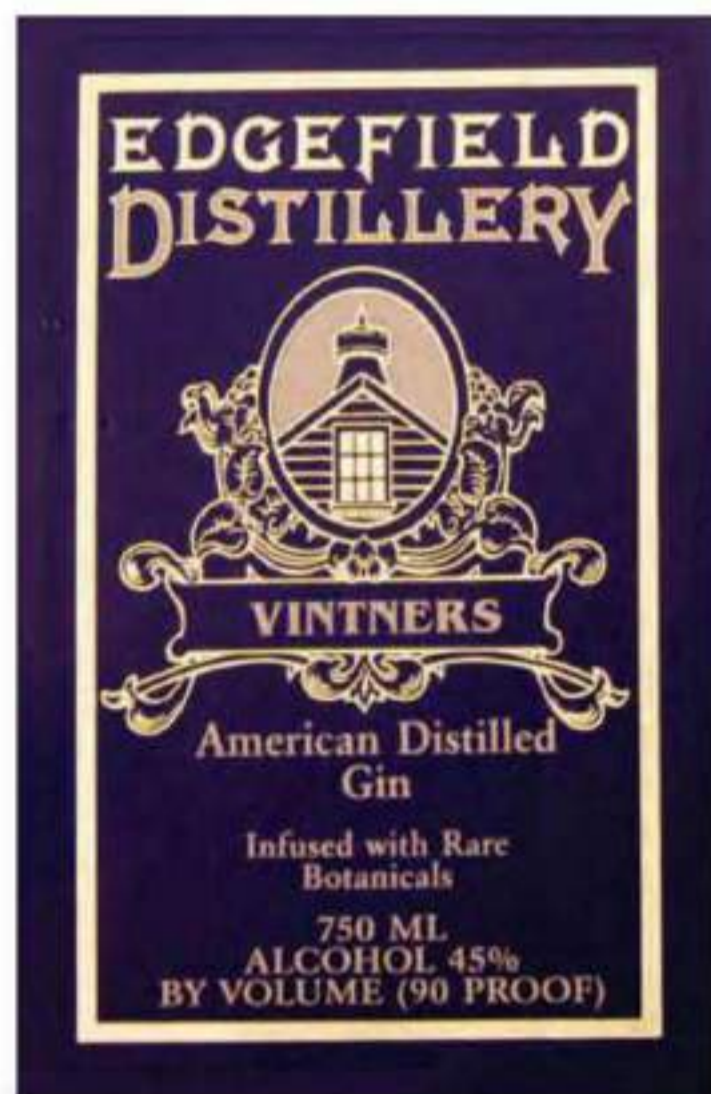
Label for **Genevieve** Genever style gin

Bardenay London Style Dry Gin

Aviation Gin
by **House**
Spirits
Distillery



Seagram's Extra Dry, is a rare cask-aged dry gin. Three months of aging in charred oak barrels gives the gin a pale straw color and a smooth palate. American craft distilleries have taken to gin in a major way, with such noteworthy examples as Distiller's Gin #6 from North Shore Distillery in Lake Bluff, Illinois, and Rehorst Premium Milwaukee Gin from the Great Lakes Distillery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Label for *American Distilled Gin* infused with *Rare Botanicals* by *McMenamins Edgefield Distillery*

THE MARTINI AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

The best known of hundreds of gin-based mixed drinks is the gin and white vermouth combination called the martini. As is usually the case with most popular mixed drinks, the origins of the martini are disputed. One school of thought holds that it evolved from the late-nineteenth-century martinez cocktail, a rather cloying mixture of Old Tom-style gin and sweet vermouth. A dissenting sect holds that it was created in the bar of the Knickerbocker Hotel in New York City in the early twentieth century. The ratio of gin to vermouth started out at about two to one, and it has been getting drier ever since. The famed British statesman Winston Churchill, who devoted a great deal of thought and time to drinking, was of the opinion that passing the cork from the vermouth bottle over the glass of gin was sufficient.



Sarticious Gin by *Sarticious Spirits*

GIN COCKTAILS

CLASSIC MARTINI

In a shaker combine:

- 2 ounces (60 ml) gin
- Dash white vermouth
- Ice to fill

Shake and strain and into a martini glass or a short glass. Garnish with an olive.

TOM COLLINS

In a tall glass combine:

- 2 ounces (60 ml) gin
- 1 ounce (30 ml) lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon (15 g) sugar

Stir, and then fill the glass with ice. Fill with club soda.

GIN AND TONIC

Fill a tall glass with ice. Add:

- 1½ ounces (45 ml) gin
- Tonic water to fill

Garnish with a lime slice.

CHRIS WELD

Berkshire Mountain Distillers,
Great Barrington, Massachusetts



It is hard to imagine Chris Weld in an emergency room, where he worked in California for sixteen years as a physician's assistant. He seems too young to have sixteen years of work behind him, and on his land in western Massachusetts, he is perfectly at ease with a dog at his side, light in his eyes, and mud on his boots.

He and his wife, Tyler, moved back to the East Coast—after having developed into serious foodies—and bought an orchard.

"Our water comes from an old spring here on the property that the *Pittsfield Sun* in 1901 said had 'few equals and none superior.'"

The farm that is now the Berkshire Mountain Distillery was once, in fact, a springwater bottling plant. (One former owner used it as a base of operations for a sanitarium in town, and it has also been a hotel.)

Building the Berkshire Mountain Distillery was not easy. When Weld arrived, the would-be still house was a barn in shambles. Weld did as much of the work as he could himself and hired local builders and craftspeople to do the rest. Keeping things local is important to Weld.

"When I need to expand, I'll build another barn, and I'll hire local people to build it." This implies a direct contrast to what happens when a big international distiller expands.

He talks enthusiastically about the "local multiplier" effect: "Every dollar you spend locally is worth three spent in a chain store."

Weld is an enthusiastic partici-

pant in the Berkshares program (local money accepted by hundreds of merchants in western Massachusetts, including restaurants). He hired a local designer to design labels. He sourced his glass out of nearby Lenox.

Weld looked further afield for help with his rum, and he brought in a consultant. Together they worked on test batches and perfected the recipe. He'd have worked for more than a year, he said, solving the problems that an expert solved in a few days, and the adjustments to fermentation temperatures and expert knowledge of different flavor compounds was priceless.

Weld describes his rum as more like Armagnac than a typical molasses distillate. He has fifty barrels aging.

"I've got a big still," he says. Indeed, he bought an 800-gallon stainless steel tank secondhand from Brown Foreman. (He assures anyone who asks that all the other work, including the custom columns and the piping, was done by local craftspeople.) "If I had a small still, I'd be at capacity." As it stands, he's able to make bourbon and rum for aging, bring out new products such as a second gin with a heavier flavor and more botanicals than his first, and still satisfy the 400 accounts he's developed in his first year.

For Weld, however, it's still the community that's important. He recently met into a man who had brought some of his Greylock Gin to a party. "Seeing it at parties . . . that's really it," he said, glowing.

“No sir, claret is the liquor for boys; port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy.”

—Samuel Johnson, eighteenth-century British writer who loved brandy and hated whisky

BRANDY AND EAU DE VIE



Brandy in a classic brandy snifter casts a shadow on a linen tablecloth.

THE word *brandy* comes from the Dutch word *brandewijn* (burnt wine), which is how the straightforward Dutch traders who introduced it to northern Europe in the sixteenth century described wine that had been “burnt,” or boiled, to distill it.

The origins of brandy can be traced back to the growing Muslim Mediterranean states in the seventh and eighth centuries. Alchemists in the region experimented with distilling grapes and other fruits to make medicinal spirits. Their knowledge and techniques soon spread beyond the borders of the territory, with grape brandy production appearing in Spain and probably Ireland (via missionary monks) by the end of the eighth century.

TYPES OF BRANDY



A bottle of brandy distilled from 100 percent Viognier wine by **Germain-Robin**

BRANDY, in its broadest definition, is a spirit made from fruit juice or fruit pulp and skin. More specifically, it is broken down into three basic groupings.

Grape brandy is brandy distilled from fermented grape juice or crushed but not pressed grape pulp and skin. This spirit is aged in wooden casks (usually oak), which colors it, mellows out the palate, and adds aromas and flavors.

Pomace brandy (Italian *grappa* and French *marc* are the best-known examples) is made from the pressed grape pulp, skins, and stems that remain after the grapes are crushed and pressed to extract most of the juice for wine. Pomace brandies, which are usually minimally aged and seldom see wood, are an acquired taste. They often tend to be rather raw, although they can offer a fresh, fruity aroma of the type of grape used, a characteristic that is lost in regular oak-aged brandy.

Fruit brandy is the default term for all brandies that are made from fermenting fruit other than grapes. (It should not be confused with **fruit-flavored brandy**, which is grape brandy that has been flavored with the extract of another fruit.) Fruit brandies, except those made from berries, are generally distilled from fruit wines. Berries tend to lack enough sugar to make a wine with sufficient alcohol for proper distillation, and thus are soaked



Apples on the tree, raw materials for brandy

(macerated) in a high-proof spirit to extract their flavor and aroma. The extract is then distilled once at a low proof. **Calvados**, the apple brandy from the Normandy region of northwestern France, is probably the best-known type of fruit brandy. **Eau de vie** ("water of life") is a colorless fruit brandy, particularly from the Alsace region of France and from California.



Grapes enter the still for the making of grappa.

BRANDIES BY REGION

FRANCE

French brandy is the catchall designation for brandy produced from grapes grown in other regions. These brandies are usually distilled in column stills and aged in oak casks for varying periods of time. They are frequently blended with wine, grape juice, oak flavorings, and other brandies, including cognac, to smooth out the rough edges. Cognac-like quality designations such as V.S.O.P. and Napoleon are often used (see page 83), but they have no legal standing.

COGNAC

Cognac is the best-known type of brandy in the world, a benchmark by which most other brandies are judged. The Cognac region is located on the south-

central coast of France, just north of Bordeaux, in the departments of Charente and Charente-Maritime. The region is further subdivided into six growing zones: Grande Champagne, Petite Champagne, Bois Ordinaires, Borderies, Fins Bois, and Bons Bois. The first two of these regions produce the best cognac and will frequently be so designated on bottle labels. The primary grapes used in making cognac are the Ugni Blanc, Folle Blanche, and Colombard. The wines made from these grapes are thin, tart, and low in alcohol, which are poor characteristics for table wines but perfect for making brandy.

Cognac is double distilled in specially designed pot stills and then aged in casks made from Limousin or Tronçais oak. All

cognacs start out in new oak to mellow the fiery spirit and give them color. Batches chosen for long-term aging are, after a few years, transferred to used, or “seasoned,” casks that impart less of the oak flavor notes while the brandy matures.

Nearly all cognacs are a blend of brandies from different vintages and frequently different growing zones. Even those from single vineyards or distilleries have a mix of brandies from different casks. As with champagne, the products of local vineyards are sold to cognac houses, each of which stores and ages cognacs from different suppliers. The suppliers then employ master blenders to create and maintain continuity in the house blends drawn from disparate sources.



Pear-in-bottle brandy

BRANDY'S SEASONAL NATURE

*Brandy, like rum and tequila, is an agricultural spirit. Unlike grain spirits such as whiskey, vodka, and gin, which are made throughout the year from grain that can be harvested and stored, brandy is dependent on the seasons, the ripening of the base fruit, and the production of the wine from which it is made. Types of brandies, originally at least, tended to be location-specific. (Cognac, for example, is a town and region in France that gave its name to the local brandy.) Important brandy-making regions, particularly in Europe, further differentiate their local spirits by specifying the types of grapes that can be used and the specific areas (**appellation**) in which the grapes used for making the base wine can be grown.*



Barrels of brandy stored for aging

ARMAGNAC

Armagnac is the oldest type of brandy in France, with documented references to distillation dating back to the early fifteenth century. The Armagnac region is located in the heart of the ancient province of Gascony in the southwest corner of France. As with cognac, there are regional growing zones: Bas-Armagnac, Haut Armagnac, and Tenareze. The primary grapes used in making Armagnac are also the Ugni Blanc, Folle Blanche, and Colombard. But distillation takes place in the unique alambic armagnacais, a type of column still that is even more inefficient than a typical cognac pot still. The resulting brandy has a rustic, assertive character and aroma that requires additional cask aging to mellow out and distinguish it from cognac. The best Armagnac is aged in casks made from the local Monlezun oak. In recent years, Limousin and Tronçais oak

INDUSTRY STANDARDS FOR COGNAC

Because there are no age statements on cognacs, the industry has adopted some generally accepted terms to differentiate cognacs. It is important to note that these terms have no legal status, and each cognac shipper uses them according to his or her own criteria.

V.S./V.S.P./Three Star: (V.S.: very superior; V.S.P.: very superior pale) A minimum of two years aging in a cask, although the industry average is four to five years

V.S.O.P.: (very superior old pale) A minimum of four years' cask aging for the youngest cognac in the blend, with the industry average between ten and fifteen years

X.O./Napoleon: (X.O.: extra old) A minimum of six years' aging for the youngest cognac in the blend, with the average age running twenty years or older. All cognac houses maintain inventories of old vintage cognacs to use in blending these top-of-the-line brands. The oldest cognacs are removed from their casks in time and stored in glass demijohns (large jugs) to prevent further loss from evaporation and to limit excessively woody flavor notes.



Detail from a bottle of **Pierre Ferrand Reserve Cognac**

casks have been added to the mix of casks as suitable Monlezun oak becomes harder to find.

Most Armagnacs are blends, but unlike cognac, single vintages and single vineyard bottlings can be found. The categories of Armagnac are generally the same as those of cognac (V.S., V.S.O.P., X.O., and so on; see sidebar on page 83). Blended Armagnacs frequently have a greater percent-

age of older vintages in their mix than comparable cognacs, making them a better value for the discerning buyer.

SPAIN

BRANDY DE JEREZ

Brandy de Jerez is made by the sherry houses centered around the city of Jerez de la Frontera in the southwest corner of Spain.

But virtually all Brandy de Jerez is made from wines produced elsewhere in Spain, primarily from the Airen grape in La Mancha and Extremadura, because the local sherry grapes are too valuable to divert into brandy production. Nowadays, most of the distilling is likewise done elsewhere in Spain in column stills. It is then shipped to Jerez for aging in used sherry casks in a solera system similar to that used for sherry wine. A *solera* is a series of large casks (called butts), each holding a slightly older spirit than the previous one beside it. When brandy is drawn off (racked) from the last butt (no more than a third of the volume

HAVE STILL, WILL TRAVEL

*Until the 1970s, portable alambic armagnacais mounted on two-wheel carts were hauled among small vineyards in Armagnac by itinerant distillers called **bouilleurs de cru**. These traveling stills, alas, have mostly given way to larger fixed-in-place setups operated by farmer cooperatives and individual operators.*



Christian Drouin, who produces some of the finest Calvados, stands beside a portable still built in 1946 that is now permanently stationed in front of the pressroom at **Domaine Coeur de Lion**. It is probably the only portable double distillation in working order. It is normally used from February to June. A second still now operates inside the pressroom.



Brandy bottle detail from a brandy whose flavor profile leans more towards bourbon (Huber Starlight Distillery).

is removed), it is replenished with brandy drawn from the next butt all the way down the solera line to the first butt, where newly distilled brandy is added. This system of racking the brandy through a series of casks blends together a variety of vintages (some soleras have more than thirty stages) and results in a speeding up of the maturation process.

PENEDÈS BRANDY

Penedès Brandy is from the Penedès region of Catalonia in the northeast corner of Spain

AGING TIMELINE

Basic Brandy de Jerez Solera must age for a minimum of six months, Reserva for one year, and Gran Reserva for a minimum of three years.

In practice, the best Reservas and Gran Reservas are frequently aged for twelve to fifteen years. The lush, slightly sweet and fruity notes to be found in Brandy de Jerez come not only from aging in sherry casks but also from the judicious use of fruit-based flavor concentrates and oak essence (boise).



The sample bottles display the effects of different types of barrels and aging processes at **Germain-Robin**.

near Barcelona. Modeled after the cognacs of France and made from a mix of local grapes and the Ugni Blanc of cognac, it is distilled in pot stills. One of the two local producers (Torres) ages in soleras consisting of butts made from French Limousin oak, whereas the other (Mascaro) ages in the standard non-solera manner, but also in Limousin oak. The resulting brandy is heartier than cognac, but leaner and drier than Brandy de Jerez.

ITALY

Italy has a long history of brandy production dating back to at least the sixteenth century, but unlike Spain or France there are no specific brandy-producing regions. Italian brandies are made from regional wine grapes, and most are produced in column stills, although there are now a number of small artisanal producers using pot stills. They are aged in oak for a minimum of one to two years, with six to eight years being the industry average. Italian brandies tend to be on the light and delicate side with a touch of residual sweetness.

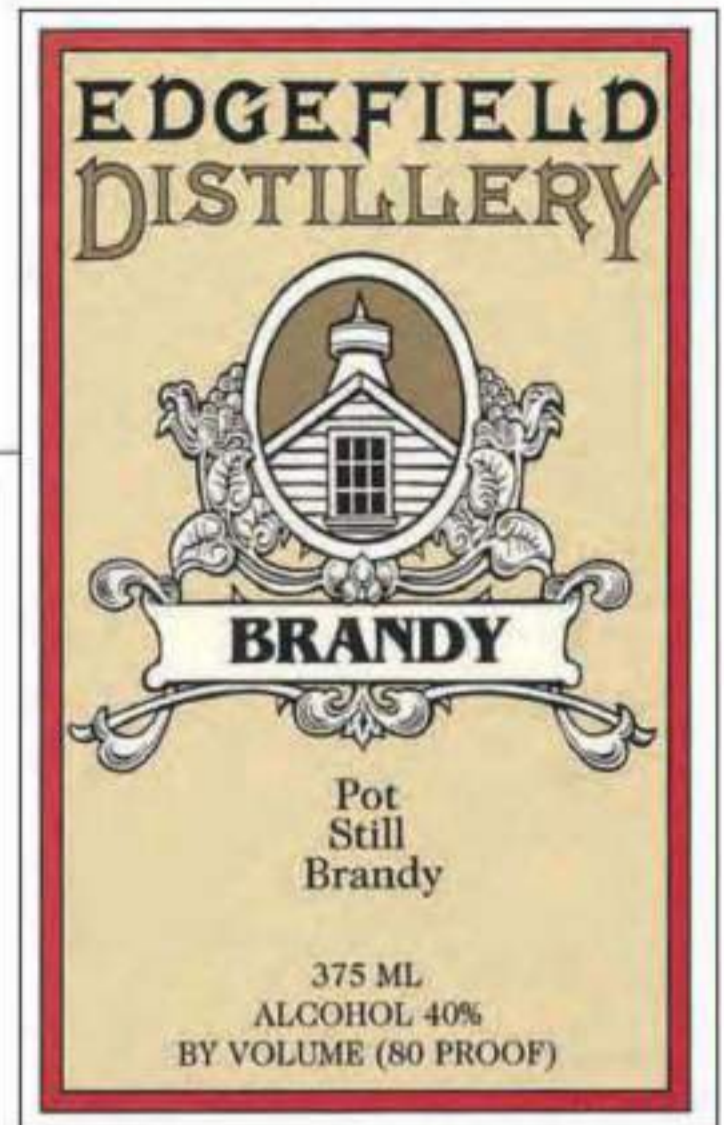
GERMANY

German monks were distilling brandy by the fourteenth century, and German distillers had organized their own guild as early as 1588. Yet almost from the start, German brandy (called *weinbrand*) has been made from imported wine rather than the more valuable local varieties. Most German brandies are produced in pot stills and must be aged for a minimum of six months in oak. Brandies that have been aged in oak for at least one year are called *uralt* or *alter* (meaning “older”). The best German brandies are smooth, somewhat lighter than cognac, and finish with a touch of sweetness.



The tasting room at a distillery is a popular stop on the tour. **Rick Moersch** at the **Round Barn Distillery** pours some apricot brandy at the tasting room in his winery/brewery/distillery.

*Label for Pot Still
Brandy from
McMenamins
Edgefield
Distillery*



UNITED STATES

Grape brandy production in the United States, which until the advent of modern craft distilleries was mostly confined to California, dates back to the Spanish missions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A substantial amount of peach brandy was made by whiskey distillers in Southern states prior to National Prohibition, however, and apple brandy distilling continued into modern times on a modest scale in New Jersey and Virginia. In the years following the Civil War, brandy became a major industry, with a substantial export trade to Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. For a time, Leland

Stanford, founder of Stanford University, was the world's largest brandy producer. Phylloxera and National Prohibition almost shut down the industry in the 1920s.

Repeal started things up again, but as with the bourbon industry, the advent of World War II resulted in brandy producers further marking time. Soon after the end of the war, the industry commissioned the University of California at Davis Department of Viticulture and Oenology to develop a prototype "California-style" brandy. It had a clean palate, was lighter in style than most European brandies, and had a flavor profile that made it a good mixer. Starting in the late 1940s, California brandy



An alambic still

producers began to change over to this new style.

CONTEMPORARY BRANDIES

Contemporary commercial California grape brandies are made primarily in column stills from table grape varieties such as the Thompson Seedless and Flame Tokay. California brandies are aged for two to twelve years in used American oak (both brandy and bourbon casks) to limit woodiness in the palate, although pot distillers also use French oak. Several California distillers, most notably Korbel, have utilized the Spanish solera method for maturing their brandy. California brandies do not use quality designations such as V.S.O.P. or stars. The more expensive brands will usually contain a percentage of older vintages and pot-distilled brandies in the blend.

Craft-distilled brandies, including grape, pomace, and fruit, were the first of the modern generation of craft spirits to enter the U.S. market, starting in California in the late 1980s with producers such as RMS (a venture of

Pisco Style Brandy by Leopold Bros.



cognac producer Remy Martin), Jepson Vineyards, and the idiosyncratic Santa Cruz winemaker Randall Graham at Bonny Doone Vineyards. From the start, these grape brandy producers generally followed a French-themed muse, with producers such as Germaine-Robin in Mendocino County and Osocalis in the Santa Cruz Mountains going so far as to use the classic Ugni Blanc, Colombard, and Folle Blanche grapes to make their base wine. They installed special cognac-style pot stills to distill it, and then aged their brandies in casks made from imported Limousin or Tronçais oak. The resulting brandies, particularly as longer-aged examples come on to the market, have, in some cases, shown levels of complexity and

flavor intensity that put them on par with their European counterparts.

LATIN AMERICAN

MEXICO

In Mexico a surprising amount of wine is made, but it is little known outside of the country because most of it is used for brandy production. Mexican brandies are made from a mix of grapes, including the Thompson Seedless, Palomino, and Ugni Blanc. Both column and pot stills are used in production, whereas the solera system is generally used for aging. Brandy now outsells tequila and rum in Mexico.

SOUTH AMERICA

South American brandies are generally confined to their domestic markets. The best-known type is *pisco*, a clear, raw brandy from Peru and Chile that is made from Muscat grapes and double distilled in pot stills. The resulting brandy has a perfumed fragrance and serves as the base for a variety of mixed drinks, including the famous Pisco Punch.

OTHER REGIONS

Greece produces pot-distilled brandies, many of which, such as the well-known *Metaxa*, are flavored with Muscat wine, anise, or other spices.

Winemaking in Israel is a well-established tradition dating back thousands of years. But brandy production dates back only to the

1880s when the French Jewish philanthropist Baron Edmond de Rothschild established what has become the modern Israeli wine industry. Israeli brandy is made in the manner of cognac from Colombard grapes, with distillation in both pot and column stills and maturation in French Limousin oak casks.

In the Caucasus region, along the eastern shore of the Black Sea, the ancient nations of Georgia and Armenia draw on monastic traditions to produce rich, intensely flavored pot still brandies both from local grapes and from such imported varieties as the Muscadine (from France) and the Sercial and Verdelho (most famously from Madeira).

South Africa has produced brandies since the arrival of the first Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century, but these early spirits from the Cape Colony earned a reputation for being harsh firewater (*witblits*—white lightning—was a typical nickname). The introduction of modern production techniques and government regulations in the early twentieth century gradually led to an improvement in the quality of local brandies. Modern South African brandies are made from Ugni Blanc, Colombard, Chenin Blanc, and Palomino grapes, produced in both pot and column stills, and aged for a minimum of three years in oak.

POMACE BRANDIES

Oro de Mazzetti
liqueur, gold
suspended
in a grappa
base (Italy)



Craft pomace brandies from the United States, from producers such as Domaine Charbay in Napa County and Mosby Vineyards in Sonoma, are in the Italian style, and they are usually called grappas, even when they are made from non-Italian grape varieties. This is also true of the pomace brandies from Canada.

ITALY produces a substantial amount of grappa, both the raw, firewater variety and the more elegant, artisanal efforts that are made from one designated grape type and packaged in hand-blown bottles. Both types of grappa can be unaged or aged for a few years in old casks that will tame the hard edge of the spirit without imparting much flavor or color. Marc from France is produced in all of the nation's wine-producing regions, but it is mostly consumed locally. *Marc de Gewürztraminer* from Alsace is noteworthy because it retains some of the distinctive perfume nose and spicy character of the grape.



Poli Bassano del Grappa (Italy)

GRAPPA: NOT YOUR GRANDPA'S PHLEGM CUTTER

The U.S. government calls it pomace brandy, but ever since immigrants from winemaking countries began arriving in the United States and started to make wine, they were soon refermenting the pressed grape skins from their winemaking, and distilling it to make a quick and simple type of brandy. The French call it marc, but it is the Italian term grappa that has caught on with distillers of every ethnic background.

Craft distillers in the United States have taken to the distilling of grappa from the very start of the industry. Pioneer brandy distillers such as Clear Creek and St. George Spirits have developed specific varietal grappas that are carefully distilled to capture the subtle aromatic notes of the base fruit. These are spirits to delight the nose as much as the taste buds.



Grappa by Huber Starlight Distillery

APPLE AND OTHER FRUIT BRANDIES

Bottles of kirsch and framboise eau de vie from **Westford Hills Distillers**

NORMANDY is one of the few regions in **France** that does not have a substantial grape wine industry. Instead, it is apple country, with a substantial tradition of hard and sweet ciders that in turn can be distilled into an apple brandy known as *Calvados*. The local cider apples, which tend to be small and tart, are closer in type to crab apples than to modern table apples. This spirit has its own appellations, with the

best brands coming from Appellation Controlee Pays d'Auge near the seaport of Deauville, and the rest in ten adjacent regions that are designated Appellation Reglementee. Most Pays d'Auge and some of the better Appellation Reglementee are produced in pot stills. All varieties of Calvados are aged in oak casks for a minimum of two years. Cognac-style quality and age terms such as V.S.O.P. and Hors d'Age are frequently used on labels, but have no legal meaning.

The fruit-growing regions of the upper Rhine River are the prime eau de vie production areas of Europe. The Black Forest region of Bavaria in Germany, and Alsace in France are known for their cherry brandies (*kir* in France, *kirschwasser* in Germany), raspberry brandies (*framboise* and *himbeergeist*), and pear brandies



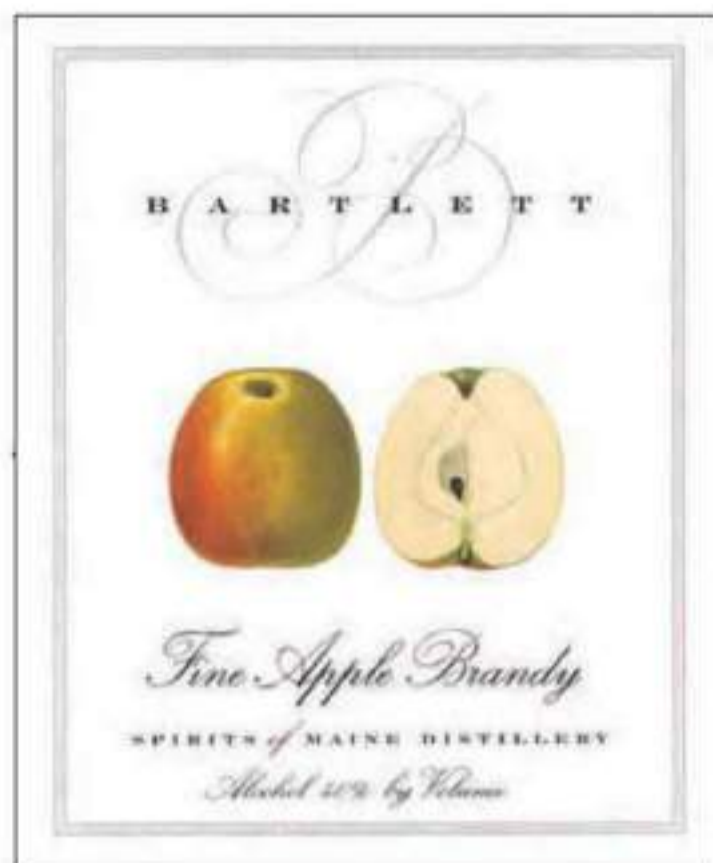
(*poire*). Similar eaux de vie are now being produced in the United States in California and Oregon. Some plum brandy is also made in these regions (*mirabelle* from France is an example), but the



Apple brandy



Exterior shot of **Laird & Company**, the oldest distillery in the United States



Apple brandy label

Apricot brandy

best-known type of plum brandy is *slivovitz*, which is made from the small blue *sljiva* plum throughout Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

In the United States, *applejack*, as apple brandy is called locally, is thought by many to be the first spirit produced in the British colonies. This colonial tradition has continued with Laird's Distillery, established in 1780 in New Jersey and the oldest distilling company in the United States, and with distilleries in New Jersey and Virginia.

Artisan fruit brandy distilling started in California, but in recent years it has spread across the United States, with Calvados-styled apple brandies from Clear Creek Distillery in Portland, Oregon, leading the way, while Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay, St. Julian in Paw Paw, and a bevy of other Michigan artisan distillers have released a wide range of delicate, highly aromatic cherry, plum, and other fruit brandies that draw an obvious inspiration from the Kirsch and plum brandies of the Black Forest region of southern Germany.

BRANDY COCKTAILS

SIDECAR

Fill a short glass with ice. In a shaker combine:

- 1 ounce (30 ml) brandy
- 1 ounce (30 ml) Triple Sec
- 1 ounce (30 ml) lemon juice
- Ice to fill

Shake and strain into the glass.

STINGER

Fill a short glass with ice. Add:

- 1 ounce (30 ml) brandy
- 1 ounce (30 ml) white *crème de menthe*

Stir and serve.

BRANDY ALEXANDER

In a shaker combine:

- 1 ounce (30 ml) brandy
- 1 ounce (30 ml) dark *crème de cacao*
- 1 ounce (30 ml) cream
- Ice to fill

Shake and strain into a large brandy snifter. Dust with nutmeg.



Label for Acqua di Lamponi, Raspberry Eau de Vie



“There’s nought no doubt so much the spirit calms as rum and true religion.”

—Lord Byron

RUM, TEQUILA, LIQUEURS, AND MORE

INCLUDING SCHNAPPS,
ANISE, AND BITTERS



*Bottles of rum of different ages (youngest to oldest, left to right) at **Celebration Distillation** in New Orleans*

GRAPES AND GRAIN may be the two major raw materials for distillation, but they are by no means the only ones. Sugarcane provides two different fermentables: sugarcane juice and molasses, which is a by-product of sugar refining. Both are used as the basis of rum production, which, as a spirit, ranges across the color and taste spectrum from the almost vodkalike Blancos of Puerto Rico to the hearty deep-hued Demeraras of Guyana, with some very distinctive variations in between.

RUM

Bottle of **Thomas Tew Rum**



The agave plant, a native of Central America, provides the fermentable basis for a variety of distilled spirits, of which tequila is the best known, but by no means the only example.

Liquors can refer generically to distilled spirits, but they can also be specifically flavored spirits. Add a sweetener, and they become liqueurs. Add certain herbs, and you now have bitters. At the end of the day, if something can be fermented and then distilled, people will drink it.

GROG

The British navy adopted a daily ration of a half-pint of 160° proof rum by the 1730s. This ration was subsequently modified by mixing it with an equal amount of water to produce a drink called grog. The grog ration remained a staple of British naval life until 1969.

THE HISTORY of rum is the history of sugar. Sugar is a sweet crystalline carbohydrate that occurs naturally in a variety of plants. One of those is the sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*), a tall, thick grass that has its origins in the islands of present-day Indonesia in the East Indies. Chinese traders spread its cultivation to Asia and on to India. Arabs in turn brought it to the Middle East and North Africa, where it came to the attention of Europeans during the Crusades in the eleventh century.

As the Spanish and Portuguese began to venture out into the Atlantic Ocean, they planted sugarcane in the Canary and Azores Islands. In 1493, Christopher Columbus picked up cane cuttings from the Canaries while on his second voyage to the Americas and transplanted them to Hispaniola, the Caribbean island now shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Portuguese explorers soon did likewise in Brazil.

The Caribbean basin proved to have an ideal climate for growing sugarcane, and sugar production quickly spread around the islands. The insatiable demand in Europe for sugar soon led to the establishment of hundreds of sugarcane plantations and mills in the

various English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Dutch colonies. These mills crushed the harvested cane and extracted the juice. Boiling this juice caused chunks of crystallized sugar to form. The remaining unsolidified juice was called *melazas* (from the Spanish word for honey, *miel*); in English this became molasses.

Molasses is a sticky syrup that still contains a significant amount of sugar. Sugar mill operators soon noticed that when it was

HUDSON RIVER RUM

375 ml 46% alc/vol
Pot Distilled From 100% Blackstrap Molasses

PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY TUTHILLTOWN SPIRITS, GARDINER, NY
WWW.TUTHILLTOWN.COM

The character of HUDSON RIVER RUM is as rich and deep as the history of rum in the Northeastern U.S. Molasses shipped from the islands was fermented and distilled in stills from the New England coast to Canada. Tuthilltown has produced a hearty rum with no doubt of its origin. We use heavy blackstrap molasses that leaves its mark on the nose and taste of this imposing spirit. Aged with American and European oak, River Rum is infused with the smoky feel of a northeastern night by the campfire. Try serving warm with a touch of cream to ward off the chill. We're happy to offer you this delicious rum. It speaks for itself.

Year _____ Batch _____ Bottle _____

GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL, WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS. (2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY, AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

Label for **Hudson River Rum** by **Tuthilltown Spirits**

*Prichard's Crystal Rum
from Prichards' Distillery*



*Prichard's Fine Rum from
Prichards' Distillery*



mixed with water and left out in the sun it fermented. By the 1650s this former waste product was being distilled into a spirit. In the English colonies it was called *Kill Devil* (from its tendency to cause a nasty hangover or its perceived medicinal power, take your choice) or *rumbullion* (origins uncertain), which was shortened over the years to our modern word *rum*. The French render this word as *rhum*, while the Spanish call it *ron*.

Rum was used as a cure-all for many of the aches and pains that afflicted those living in the tropics. Sugar plantation owners sold it, at discounted prices, to naval

ships that were on station in the Caribbean in order to encourage their presence in local waters and thus discourage the attentions of marauding pirates.

This naval-rum connection introduced rum to the outside world, and by the late seventeenth century a thriving export trade developed. The British islands shipped rum to Great Britain (where it was mixed into rum punches and replaced gin as the dominant spirit in the eighteenth century) and to the British colonies in North America, where it became very popular. This export of rum to North America, in exchange for New England lumber and dried cod (still a culinary staple in the Caribbean), soon changed over to the export of molasses to distilleries in New England. This was done to avoid



Bob Ryan and partner Dave Wood at Ryan and Wood Distilleries in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

*Dark Rum, Spruce
Gin, White Rum, and
Hazelnut Spice Rum by
Rogue Distillery*



laws from the British parliament, which protected British distillers by forbidding the trade in spirits directly between colonies. This law was, at best, honored in the breach, and smuggling soon became rampant.

The shipping of molasses to make rum in New England distilleries became part of the infamous “slavery triangle.” The first leg was the shipment of molasses to New England to make rum. The second leg was the shipment of rum to the ports of West Africa to trade for slaves. The final leg was the passage of slave ships to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean and South America, where many of the slaves were put to work in the sugarcane fields.

The disruption of trade caused by the American Revolution and the rise of whiskey production in North America resulted in the slow decline of rum’s dominance as the American national tippie. Rum production in the United States slowly declined through the nineteenth century, with the last New England rum distilleries closing at the advent of National Prohibition in 1920. The famed rumrunners of the Prohibition era were smuggling primarily whiskey into the United States.

In Europe, the invention of sugar extraction from the sugar beet lessened the demand for Caribbean sugar, reducing the amount of molasses being produced and the resulting amount of rum being distilled. Many small plantations and their stills were closed. Rum production receded,

STYLE	DEFINITION
White Rums	Generally light-bodied (although there are a few heavy-bodied white rums in the French islands). They are usually clear and have a very subtle flavor profile. If they are aged in oak casks to create a smooth palate, they are then usually filtered to remove any color. White rums are primarily used as mixers and blend particularly well with fruit flavors.
Golden Rums	Also known as amber rums, these are generally medium-bodied. Most have spent several years aging in oak casks, which give them smooth, mellow palates.
Dark Rums	Traditionally, full-bodied, rich caramel-dominated rums, the best are produced mostly from pot stills and frequently aged in oak casks for extended periods. The richest of these rums are consumed straight up.
Spiced Rums	White, golden, or dark rums, they are infused with spices or fruit flavors. Rum punches (such as planter’s punch) are blends of rum and fruit juices that are very popular in the Caribbean.
Age-Dated Blended Rums	These are aged rums from different vintages or batches that are mixed together to ensure a continuity of flavor in brands of rum from year to year. Some aged rums will give age statements stating the youngest rum in the blend (e.g., a ten-year-old rum contains a blend of rums that are at least ten years old). A small number of French island rums are vintage dated.



Chris Weld of Berkshire Mountain Distillers

gnacs, and small-batch bourbons, who are learning to appreciate the subtle complexities of these rums. The pot still rums of Guyana and Jamaica have a particular appeal for Scotch whisky drinkers. (It is no accident that the Scottish whisky merchant and bottler Cadenhead also ages and bottles Demerara rum.) The subtle and complex *rhums* of Martinique and Guadeloupe mirror the flavor profiles of the top French brandies in Cognac and Armagnac.

THE BASIS OF RUM

Rum, and its fraternal twin, cane spirit, are made by distilling fermented sugar and water. This sugar comes from the sugarcane and is fermented from cane juice, concentrated cane juice, or molasses. Molasses is the sweet, sticky residue that remains after sugarcane juice is boiled and the crystallized sugar is extracted.

Most rum is made from molasses. Molasses is more than 50 percent sugar, but it also contains significant amounts of minerals and other trace elements, which can contribute to the final flavor. Rums made from cane juice, primarily on Haiti and Martinique, have a naturally smooth palate.

Depending on the recipe, the “wash” (the cane juice, or molasses and water) is fermented, using either cultured yeast or airborne wild yeasts, for a period ranging from twenty-four hours for light rums up to several weeks for heavy, full varieties.

for the most part, to countries where sugarcane was grown.

The modern history of rum owes a lot to the spread of air-conditioning and the growth of tourism. In the second half of the twentieth century, modern air-conditioning made it possible for large numbers of people to migrate to warm-weather regions where rum remained the dominant spirit. Additionally, the

explosive increase in the number of North American and European tourists into rum-drinking regions led to a steady increase in the popularity of rum-based mixed drinks. Nowadays, white rum gives vodka serious competition as the mixer of choice in a number of distinctively nontropical markets.

Aged rums are gaining new standing among consumers of single malt Scotch whiskies, co-



Old New Orleans Crystal Rum by Celebration Distillation



Coaster for Ragged Mountain Rum by Berkshire Mountain Distillers: "Think Globally, Drink Locally"

DISTILLATION OF RUM

Rum can be distilled in either pot or column stills. The choice of stills has a profound effect on the final character of the rum. All rums come out of the still as clear, colorless spirits. Barrel aging and the use of added caramel determine the final color. Because caramel is burnt sugar, it is true that only natural coloring agents are used.

Lighter rums are highly rectified (purified) and are produced in column or continuous stills, then usually charcoal filtered and sometimes aged in old oak casks for a few months to add smoothness. Most light rums have minimal flavors and aroma and are very similar to vodka. Heavier rums are usually distilled in pot stills, similar to those used to produce cognacs and Scotch whiskies. Pot stills are less efficient than column stills and some congeners (fusel oils and other flavor elements) are carried over with the alcohol. These heavier rums are used for making golden and dark rums.

Some brands of rum are made by blending pot- and column-distilled rums in a manner similar to that of Armagnac production.

RUM COCKTAILS

RUM AND COKE (Cuba Libre)

Fill a tall glass with ice. Add:

- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) dark rum
- Juice of half a lime
- Cola to fill

Stir and garnish with a lime wedge.

DAIQUIRI

Fill a short glass with ice. In a shaker combine:

- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) white rum
- 1 ounce (30 ml) lime juice
- 1 tablespoon (15 g) sugar
- Ice to fill

Shake and strain into the glass.

PLANTER'S PUNCH

Fill a tall glass with ice. In a shaker combine:

- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) dark rum
- ½ ounce (15 ml) lime juice
- ½ ounce (15 ml) lemon juice
- 3 ounces (90 ml) orange juice
- 1 teaspoon (5 g) sugar
- Dash grenadine syrup
- Ice to fill

Shake and strain into the glass.

RUM REGIONS

THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean is the epicenter of world rum production. Virtually every major island group produces its own distinct rum style.

Barbados produces light, sweetish rums from both pot and column stills. Rum distillation began here, and the Mount Gay Distillery, dating from 1663, is probably the oldest operating rum producer in the world.

Cuba produces light-bodied, crisp, clean rums from column stills. It is currently illegal to ship Cuban rums into the United States.

The Dominican Republic is notable for its full-bodied, aged rums from column stills.

Guyana is justly famous for its rich, heavy Demerara rums, named for a local river, which are produced from both pot and column stills. Demerara rums can be aged for extended periods (twenty-five-year-old varieties are on the market) and are frequently used for blending with lighter rums from other regions. Neighboring Surinam and French Guyana produce similar full-bodied rums.

Haiti follows the French tradition of heavier rums that are double distilled in pot stills and aged in oak casks for three or more years to produce full-flavored, exceptionally smooth-tasting rums. Haiti also still has an extensive underground moonshine industry that supplies the voodoo religious ritual trade.



Jamaica is well known for its rich, aromatic rums, most of which are produced in pot stills. Jamaica has official classifications of rum, ranging from light to very full-flavored. Jamaican rums are used extensively for blending.

Martinique is a French island with the largest number of distilleries in the Eastern Caribbean. Both pot and column stills are used. As on other French islands such as Guadeloupe, both *rhum agricole* (made from sugarcane juice) and *rhum industriel* (made from molasses) are produced. These rums are frequently aged in used French brandy casks for a minimum of three years. *Rhum vieux* (aged rum) is frequently compared to high-quality French brandies.

Puerto Rico is known primarily for light, very dry rums from column stills. All Puerto Rican rums must, by law, be aged for a minimum of one year.

Trinidad produces mainly light rums from column stills and has an extensive export trade.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The Virgin Islands, which are divided between the United States Virgin Islands and the British Virgin Islands, both produce light, mixing rums from column stills. These rums, and those of nearby Grenada, also serve as the base for bay rum, a classic aftershave lotion.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Central America has a variety of primarily medium-bodied rums from column stills that lend them-

Distiller **Stefan Hafen** at the **Weyermann Distillery** (Germany)



selves well to aging. They have recently begun to gain international recognition.

SOUTH AMERICA

South America produces vast quantities of mostly light rums from column stills, with unaged cane spirit from Brazil, called *cachaça*, being the best-known example. Venezuela bucks this general trend with a number of well-respected barrel-aged golden and dark rums.

NORTH AMERICA

North America has a handful of traditional rum distilleries in the southern United States, producing a range of light- and medium-bodied rums that are generally marketed with Caribbean-themed names. Modern craft distilleries producing rum have sprung up in some more unusual locations, with particularly noteworthy producers including Prichard's Distillery in Kelso, Tennessee; the Rogue Distillery in Newport, Oregon; and the Triple 8 Distillery in Nantucket, Massachusetts.

CANADA

In Canada the 300-year-old tradition of trading rum for dried codfish continues in the Atlantic Maritime provinces of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, where golden rums from Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica are imported and aged for five years. The resulting hearty rum is known locally as *screech*.

mixed with neutral spirit at a 1:19 ratio to produce *rum verschnitt*. A similar product in Austria is called *inlander rum*.

AUSTRALIA

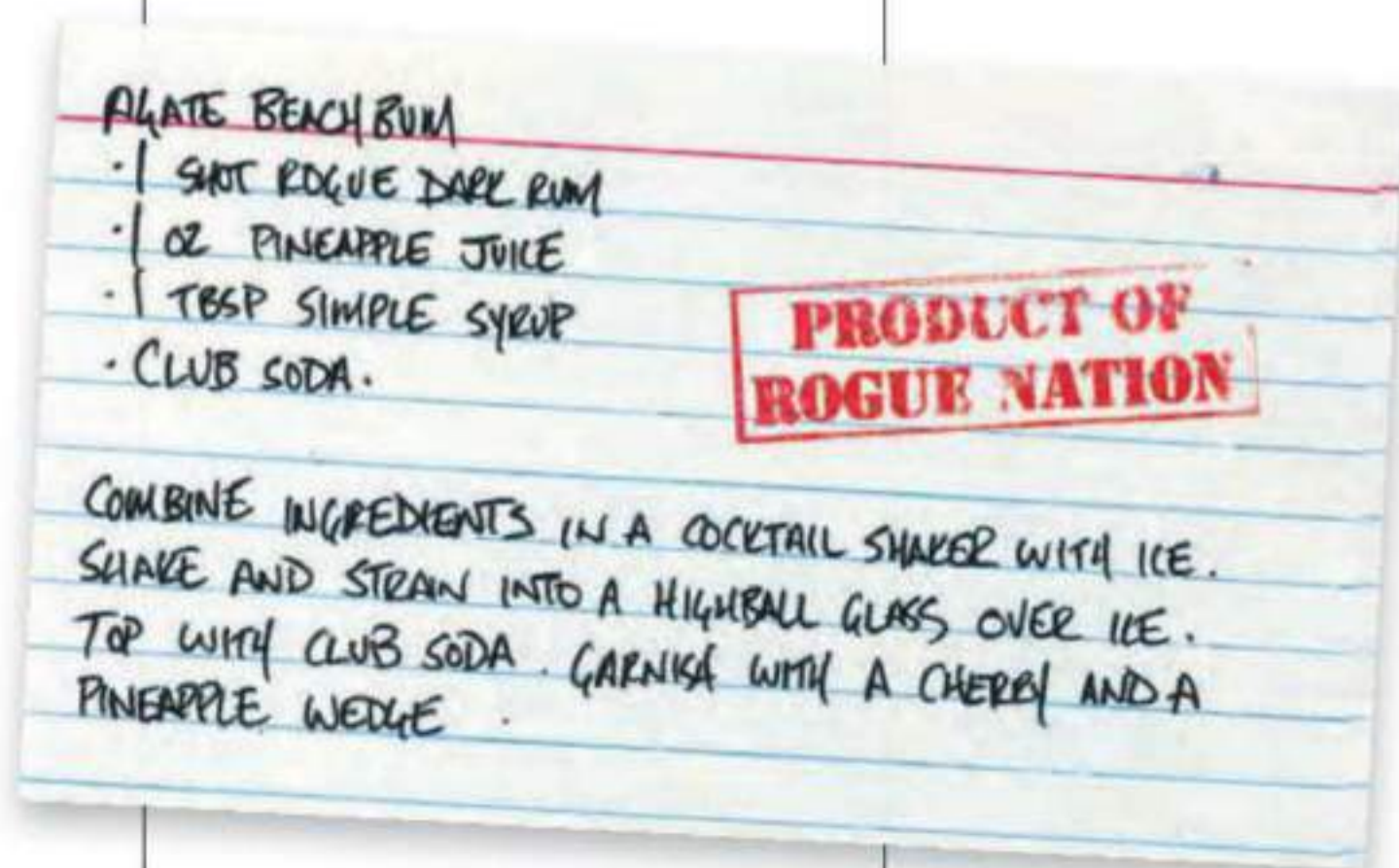
Australia produces a substantial amount of white and golden rums in a double-distillation method utilizing both column and pot stills. Rum is the second most popular alcoholic beverage in the country after beer. Light rums are also produced on some of the islands in the South Pacific such as Tahiti.

ASIA

In Asia, rums tend to follow regional sugarcane production, with white and golden rums from column stills being produced primarily in the Philippines and Thailand.

EUROPE

Europe is primarily a blender of imported rums. Both the United Kingdom and France import rums from their former colonies in the Caribbean for aging and bottling. Heavy, dark Jamaican rums are imported into Germany and



Recipe card from **Rogue Distillery**

TEQUILA, MEZCAL, AND OTHER AGAVE SPIRITS

*“All tequila is mezcal, but
not all mezcal is tequila.”*

—Tequila marketing mantra

TEQUILA, its sister spirit mezcal, and other agave spirits trace their origins back at least 2,000 years to when one or more of the Indian tribes that inhabited what is now central Mexico dis-

covered that the juice of the agave plant, if left exposed to air, would ferment and turn into a milky, mildly alcoholic drink. News of this discovery spread throughout agave-growing areas. The Aztecs

called this beverage *octili poliqhui*, a name that the Spaniards subsequently corrupted into *pulque* (POOL-kay).

In Aztec culture, pulque drinking had religious significance. Consumption by the masses was limited to specific holidays, when large tubs of pulque were set up in public squares. The ruling elite was not subject to the same restrictions, however, and drank pulque throughout the year—a privilege shared by captive warriors just before they were sacrificed to the gods.

When the Spanish arrived in Mexico in the early sixteenth century, they soon began to make and drink pulque. But the low alcohol content (around 3 percent ABV) and earthy, vegetal taste made it less popular among the conquistadors than European-style beers and brandies. Early attempts to distill pulque were unsuccessful, and the resulting spirit was harsh and acrid. It was soon discovered, however, that cooking the agave pulp resulted in a sweeter juice that, when fermented, became known as mezcal wine. This “wine” was then distilled into the spirit that we know today as mezcal.

Early mezcal distilleries in the Spanish colony of Mexico operated in a manner similar to modern-day brewpubs. The distilling plant was usually small, and its production was consumed primarily in the distillery tavern (*taberna*). As the colony grew, the mezcal wine industry followed apace and soon became an important source of tax



Blue agave, the raw material for tequila and mezcal

revenue for the Crown. Periodic attempts by Spanish brandy producers to shut down the mezcal industry were about as unsuccessful as similar efforts by English distillers to inhibit rum production in the British colonies in North America.

THE EVOLUTION OF TEQUILA

In 1656, the village of Tequila (named for the local Ticuilas Indians) was granted a charter by the governor of New Galicia. Tax records of the time show that mezcal was already being produced in the area. This mezcal, made from the local blue agave, established a reputation for having a superior taste, and barrels of the “mezcal wine from Tequila” were soon being shipped to nearby Guadalajara and more distant cities such as the silver-mining boomtowns of San Luis Potosí and Aguascalientes.

The oldest of the still-existing distilleries in Tequila dates back to 1795, when the Spanish Crown granted a distiller’s license to Jose Cuervo. In 1805, a distillery was established that would ultimately come under the control of the Sauza family. By the mid-1800s, there were dozens of distilleries and millions of agave plants under cultivation around Tequila in what had become the state of Jalisco. Gradually, the locally produced mezcal came to be known as tequila (just as the grape brandy from the Cognac region in France came to be known simply as cognac).



A jimador harvests blue agave for making tequila in Jalisco, Mexico.

Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1821. But until the 1870s it was a politically unstable country that experienced frequent changes in government, revolutions, and a disastrous war with the United States. Marauding bands of soldiers and *guerillas* extracted “revolutionary taxes” and “voluntary” contributions in kind from the tabernas and distilleries. In 1876 a general named Porfirio Díaz, who was from the mezcal-producing state of Oaxaca (oah-HA-kuh), came to power and ushered in a thirty-five-year period of relative peace and stability known as the *Porfiriato*.

It was during this period that the tequila industry became firmly established. Modest exports of tequila began to the United States and Europe, with Jose Cuervo shipping the first three barrels to El Paso, Texas, in 1873. By 1910 the number of agave distilleries in the state of Jalisco had grown to almost a hundred.

The collapse of the Díaz regime in 1910 led to a decade-long

period of revolution that inhibited the tequila industry. The return of peace in the 1920s led to the expansion of tequila production in Jalisco beyond the area around the town of Tequila, with growth being particularly noteworthy in the highlands around the village of Arandas. This period also saw the adoption of modern production techniques from the wine industry, such as cultivated yeast and microbiological sanitary practices.

In the 1930s, the practice of adding non-agave sugars to the *aguamiel*, or “honey water,” was introduced and quickly adopted by many tequila producers. These *mixto* (mixed) tequilas had a less intense taste than 100 percent blue agave tequilas. But this relative blandness also made them more appealing to nonnative consumers, particularly those in the United States.

THE BASIS OF TEQUILA AND MEZCAL

Tequila and mezcal are made by distilling the fermented juice of agave plants in Mexico. The agave is a spiky-leaved member of the lily family (it is not a cactus) and is related to the century plant. By Mexican law, the agave spirit called tequila can be made only from one particular type of agave, the blue agave (*Agave tequilana* Weber), and it can be produced only in specifically designated geographic areas, primarily the state of Jalisco in west-central Mexico. Mezcal is made from the



Fields of blue agave in Jalisco, Mexico

fermented juice of other species of agave. It is produced throughout most of Mexico.

Both tequila and mezcal are prepared for distillation in similar ways. The agave, also known as maguey (pronounced muh-GAY), is cultivated on plantations for eight to ten years, depending on the type of agave. When the plant reaches sexual maturity, it starts to grow a flower stalk. The agave farmer, or *campesino*, cuts off the stalk just as it is starting to grow. This redirects the plant growth into the central stalk, swelling it into a large bulbous shape that contains a sweet juicy pulp. When the swelling is completed, the *campesino* cuts the plant from its roots and removes the long sword-shaped leaves, using a razor-sharp pike-like tool called a *coa*. The remaining piña (“pineapple”—so-called because the cross-thatched denuded bulb resembles a giant green and white pineapple) weighs anywhere from twenty-five to one hundred pounds.

At the distillery, the piñas are cut into quarters. For tequila, they are then slowly baked in steam ovens or autoclaves until all of the starch has been converted to

sugars. For mezcal, they are baked in underground ovens heated with wood charcoal (which gives mezcal its distinctive smoky taste). They are then crushed (tradition-

ally with a stone wheel drawn around a circular trough by a mule) and shredded to extract the sweet juice, called *aguamiel* (honey water).

FERMENTATION: AGAVE OR MIXTO

The fermentation stage determines whether the final product will be 100 percent agave or mixed (“mixto”). The highest-quality tequila is made from fermenting and then distilling just agave juice mixed with some water. Mixto is made by fermenting and then

WHAT BING CROSBY AND JIMMY BUFFETT HAVE IN COMMON

Modest amounts of tequila had been exported into U.S. border towns since the late nineteenth century. The first major boost to tequila sales in the United States came in the late 1940s when the margarita cocktail, a blend of tequila, lime juice, orange liqueur, and ice, was invented. Its origins are uncertain, but Hollywood actors and cocktail parties in California and Mexican resorts seem to be involved in most of the genesis stories. It is known that crooner and actor Bing Crosby was so taken with one particular brand of tequila, Herradura, that he teamed up with fellow actor Phil Harris to import the brand into the United States. The margarita, along with the tequila sunrise and the tequila sour, have become highly popular in the United States; in fact, it is claimed by many in the liquor industry that the margarita is the single most popular cocktail in the nation. In the 1970s, when balladeer Jimmy Buffett sang of “wasting away in Margaritaville,” the success of the song enticed millions more Americans to sip from the salt-rimmed margarita glass.

Stills used for producing tequila

distilling a mix of agave juice and other sugars, usually cane sugar with water. Mixtos made and bottled in Mexico can contain up to 40 percent alcohol made from other sugars. Mixtos that have been shipped in bulk to other countries for bottling (primarily the United States) may have the agave content further reduced to 51 percent by the foreign bottler. By Mexican law, all 100 percent agave or aged tequilas must be bottled in Mexico. If a tequila is 100 percent agave, it will always say so on the bottle label. If it doesn't say 100 percent, it is a mixto, although that term is seldom used on bottle labels.

DISTILLATION AND AGING OF TEQUILA AND MEZCAL

Traditionally, tequila and mezcal have been distilled in pot stills at 110° proof (55 percent ABV). The resulting spirit is clear but contains a significant amount of congeners and other flavor elements. Some light-colored tequilas are now being rectified (redistilled) in column stills to produce a cleaner, blander spirit.

Color in tequila and mezcal comes mostly from the addition of caramel, although barrel aging is a factor in some high-quality brands. Additionally, some distillers add small amounts of natural flavorings such as sherry, prune concentrate, and coconut to manipulate the product's flavor profile. These added flavors do not stand out themselves, but instead



THE BLUE AGAVE STRIKES BACK

From the 1930s through the 1980s, the bulk of the tequila being produced was of the blended mixto variety. The original 100 percent agave tequilas were reduced to a minor specialty product in the market. In the late 1980s, the rising success of single malt Scotch whiskies and expensive cognacs in the international marketplace did not go unnoticed among tequila producers. New brands of 100 percent blue agave tequilas were introduced, and sales began a steady growth curve that continues to this day.



Barrels set for aging tequila in a warehouse/tasting room

serve to smooth out the often hard-edged palate of agave spirit.

MEZCAL AND THE WORM

The rules and regulations that govern the production and packaging of tequila do not apply to agave spirits produced outside of the designated areas in Mexico. Some mezcal distilleries are very primitive and very small. The best-known mezcals come from the southern state of Oaxaca, although they are produced in a number of other states. Eight varieties of agave are approved for mezcal production, but the chief variety used is the espadin agave (*Agave angustifolia* Haw).

The famous “worm” found in some bottles of mezcal (“*con gusano*”) is the larva of one of two moths that live on the agave plant. The reason for adding the worm to the bottle of mezcal is obscure. But one story, which at least has the appeal of logic to back it up, is that the worm serves as proof of high proof: the worm remains intact in the bottle if the percentage of alcohol in the spirit is high enough to preserve the pickled

CLASSIFICATIONS OF TEQUILA

Beyond the two basic designations of tequila—agave and mixto—there are four categories:

STYLE	DEFINITION	HOWEVER...
Silver or Blanco	Clear, with little (no more than sixty days in stainless steel tanks) or no aging. They can be either 100 percent agave or mixto. Silver tequilas are used primarily for mixing and blend particularly well into fruit-based drinks.	Once you have confirmed that it is 100 percent blue agave, a fancy bottle and a higher price do not necessarily mean that it is a better spirit.
Gold	Unaged silver tequila that has been colored and flavored with caramel. It is usually a mixto.	A product category produced primarily for silly gringos. Serious tequila drinkers go for reposados.
Reposado/ Rested	“Rested” tequila is aged in wooden tanks or casks for a legal minimum period of at least two months, with the better-quality brands spending three to nine months in wood. It can be either 100 percent agave or mixto.	Reposado tequilas are the best-selling tequilas in Mexico.
Añejo/Aged	“Old” tequila is aged in wooden barrels (usually old bourbon barrels) for a minimum of twelve months. The best-quality añejos are aged for eighteen months to three years for mixtos, and up to four years for 100 percent agaves.	Aging tequila for more than four years is a matter of controversy. Most tequila producers oppose doing so because they feel that “excessive” oak aging will overwhelm the distinctive earthy and vegetal agave flavor notes.

AS THE WORM TURNS

The upgrading and upscaling of tequila has, in turn, inspired mezcal producers to undertake similar measures. In the past few years, an increasing number of high-end mezcals, including some intriguing “single village” bottlings, have been introduced to the market. Mezcal now seems to be coming into its own as a distinctive, noteworthy spirit.



A bottle of *Agua Azul*, a blue agave eau de vie



Brendan Moylan holds up a couple of bottles of *JB Wagoner's 100 percent Blue Agave Spirits* in front of his well-stocked bar.

worm. Consuming the worm, which can be done without harm, has served as a rite of passage for generations of fraternity boys. Top-quality mezcals do not include a worm in the bottle.

NON-MEXICAN AGAVE SPIRITS

Federal excise tax records indicate that tequila-like agave spirits were produced in the 1930s in the southwestern United States. More recently, modern craft distillers have begun to experiment with their own agave spirits, such as JB Wagoner's Ultra Premium 100 percent Blue Agave Spirits by Skyrocket Distillers in Temucula, California; Agua Azul by St. George Spirits in Alameda, California; and Gold Agave by St. James Spirits in Irwindale, California.

TEQUILA COCKTAILS

CLASSIC MARGARITA

Take a short glass. Wet the rim with lime juice. Put the glass upside down in coarse salt, so that the salt clings to the rim. In a cocktail shaker combine:

- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) silver tequila
- ¾ ounce (23 ml) Triple Sec
- ¾ ounce (23 ml) lime juice
- Ice to fill

Shake and strain into the salt-rimmed glass and garnish with a lime slice.

FROZEN FRUIT MARGARITA

Take a short glass. Wet the rim with lime juice and put the glass upside down in coarse salt, so salt clings to the rim (this step is optional). Combine the ingredients for the Classic Margarita in a blender with very ripe fruit (6 to 7 ounces [170 to 200 g] fresh or 4 ounces [115 g] frozen). Add ¾ cup ice. Blend until smooth and pour into the glass.

TEQUILA SUNRISE

Fill a tall glass with ice. Add:

- 1 ½ ounces (45 ml) silver tequila
- Orange juice almost to fill

Slowly pour ½ ounce (15 ml) grenadine syrup over the top. (As it trickles down it creates the "sunrise" effect.)

LIQUEURS, SCHNAPPS, ANISE, AND BITTERS

LIQUEURS, schnapps, anise, and bitters are terms that cover a wide variety of types of spirits. What they all share in common is that they are flavored spirits.

LIQUEURS

Also known as cordials, liqueurs are sweet, flavor-infused spirits that are categorized according to the flavoring agent (fruits, nuts, herbal and spice blends, creams, and such). The word *liqueur* comes from the Latin *liquifacere* (“to dissolve”) and refers to the dissolving of flavorings in the spirits. Artificial flavorings are strictly regulated in most countries, and where allowed they must be prominently labeled as such.

BLENDED FAMILIES

All liqueurs are blends, even those with a primary flavor. A touch of vanilla is added to crème de cacao to emphasize the chocolate. Citrus flavor notes sharpen the presentation of anise. Herbal liqueurs may contain dozens of different flavor elements that a master blender manipulates to achieve the desired flavor profile.



Master distiller **Ted Huber** pours at **Huber Starlight Distillery**.

Top-quality liqueurs are produced by distillation of either the fermented flavor materials or the spirit in which they have been infused. Many liqueurs use fin-



Label for *Coffee Liqueur* by **McMennamins Edgefield Distillery**

ished spirits such as cognac, rum, or whiskey as their base. Others macerate fruit or other flavorings in a neutral spirit. Crèmes (crème de menthe, crème de cacao, etc.) are liqueurs with a primary flavor, while cream liqueurs combine dairy cream and alcohol in a homogenized, shelf-stable blend.

Liqueurs are not usually aged for any great length of time, but they may undergo resting stages during their production to allow the various flavors to “marry” into a harmonious blend.

Liqueurs can be hard to classify, but regardless of flavor they can be broadly divided into two categories. Generics are liqueurs of a particular type (crème de cacao or curaçao, for example)



**A. van Wees
De Ooievaar**
fruit liqueur
from the
Netherlands

**Rosolis Ziolywy
Gorzki** (stomach
bitters) from the
Lancut Distillery
in Poland



hat can be made by any producer. Proprietaries are liqueurs with trademarked names that are made according to a specific formula. Examples of such liqueurs include Kahlúa, Grand Marnier, and Southern Comfort.

SCHNAPPS

Schnapps is a general term used for an assortment of white and flavored spirits that have originated in northern countries or regions, such as Germany or Scandinavia. Schnapps can be made from grain, potatoes, or molasses and be flavored with virtually anything (watermelon and root beer schnapps from the United States being proof of that). The dividing line between schnapps and flavored vodka is vague and is more cultural than stylistic.

ANISE-FLAVORED SPIRITS

These spirits can vary widely in style depending on the country of origin. They can be dry or very sweet, low or high proof, distilled from fermented aniseed or macerated in neutral spirit. In France, anis (as produced by

Pernod) is produced by distilling anise and a variety of other botanicals together. Pastis is macerated, rather than distilled, and contains fewer botanicals than anis. In Italy, sambuca is distilled from anise and botanicals, but it is then heavily sweetened to make it a liqueur. Oil of fennel (also known as green anise) is frequently added to boost the aroma of the spirit. Greece has a drier, grappa-like liqueur called ouzo, which is stylistically close to pastis.



Tangerine Cello and **Spicy Ginger** organic liqueurs from **New Deal Distillery**

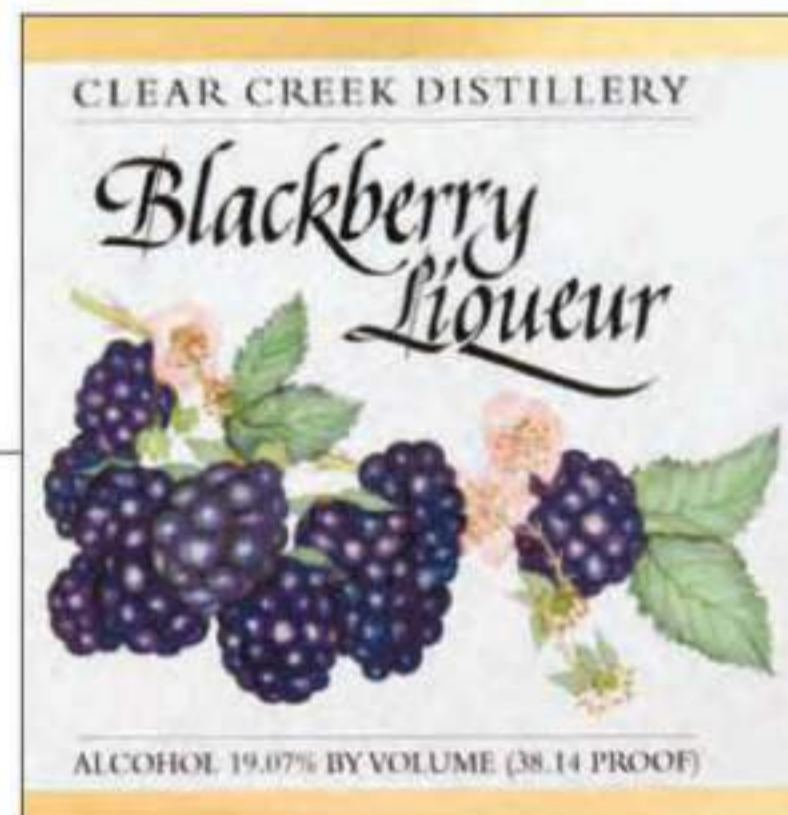
BITTERS

The modern-day descendents of medieval medical potions, bitters are marketed as having at least some vaguely therapeutic value (stomach settlers, hangover cures, and so on). They tend to be flavored with herbs, roots, and botanicals and contain lower quantities of fruit and sugar than liqueurs.

Although there are specialty liqueur producers, most brands are produced by general distillers as part of an extended product line. Among the new generation of craft distillers, some of the standout liqueur producers include Leopold Brothers Distillery of Denver, Colorado, with their unique whiskey-based fruit liqueurs (the Rocky Mountain Blackberry is particularly noteworthy), and the Flag Hill Distillery in Lee, New Hampshire, with their delicately tinged Sugar Maple Liqueur.



< Label for Johnny Ziegler Black Forest Style Apple Aux Pomme Schnaps Eau de Vie by Winegarden Estate in New Brunswick, Canada



> Label for Blackberry Liqueur by Clear Creek Distillery

ABSINTHE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER

Modern pastis is the genteel descendent of its much more raffish nineteenth-century ancestor absinthe, a high (sometimes very high) proof anise liquor (technically not a liqueur because no sugar is added) that included extract of wormwood in its list of botanicals. Wormwood contains the chemical compound thujone, whose alleged psychedelic effects made absinthe

very popular among the “Bohemian” counter-culture artists and intellectuals of France and Europe (Vincent van Gogh and

Oscar Wilde were devotees of what was termed “The Green Fairy”). Conversely, social conservatives and prohibitionists campaigned against it as the crack cocaine of the day and eventually got it outlawed in most European countries and the United States. Modern scientific analysis has found thujone’s

psychedelic potency to be, at best, greatly exaggerated.

Forbidden fruit is always appealing, and starting in the 1990s absinthe, which continued to be commercially produced in Eastern Europe, slowly started to return to the general marketplace, initially in “thujone-free” versions from France and Switzerland, and more recently from an increasing number of American craft distillers such as North Shore Distilling in Lake Bluff, Illinois, and St. George Distilling in Alameda, California. One thing that has not changed about absinthe is its high alcohol content.



Absinthe Verte by St. George Spirits



Le Tourment Vert, French Absinthe by Bruno Delannoy of Distillerie Vinet Ege



Absinthe Verte by Leopold Bros.

PHIL PRICHARD

Prichard's Distillery, Kelso, Tennessee



PHIL PRICHARD was still working in telecom sales in Memphis when he read the classic *The Lore of Still Building* and started teaching himself to make rum.

His first sale came in March of 2001 (thirty cases for \$2,929). It was the product of four years of work. His initial plan was to make a product from Tennessee sorghum, but he learned that rum had to come from sugarcane. He wasn't discouraged: "The transition was rather easy. By that time, I had researched the history of American rum, and we just slid into the new profile. It fit very well." Soon, tractor-trailer loads of molasses were being driven in. What sets Prichard's apart from other rum is the use of first-grade sweet molasses, rather than blackstrap. Using better molasses "focused our attention on the production of a traditional American rum," said Prichard. Blackstrap, as well as being used to make rum, is put on cattle and horse feed, and Prichard said: "In Africa they put it on the roads to keep the dust down! It's 32 percent sugar and 68 percent Lord knows what."

Ed Hamilton—noted scholar, author, and keeper of Ministry of Rum.com—said: "By using a high-grade molasses as the raw material, he reduces the need to distill to a high proof in order to reduce the sulfur compounds that are the distiller's bane." The results are evident. "Phil has managed to do what most molasses distillers only wish they could do," said Hamilton, "distill a good white rum and

make it drinkable without aging it. Phil makes an impressively smooth white rum that hasn't been aged yet retains the coconut and butterscotch flavors that are its signature."

Prichard takes some of this white rum and barrels it. While the rest of the industry saves money aging their product in used, fifty-two-gallon whiskey barrels, Prichard ages his rum in new, small barrels of fifteen gallons. This provides more surface area for the spirit to interact with the charred oak, and it develops serious flavors not typically found in a rum aged for just three years. Hamilton had more praise: "Prichard's Fine Rum is another great example of the small distiller's art. The relatively low distillation proof and high barrel surface area to volume yield a rum that reminds the imbiber of the other spirits for which Tennessee is more well known."

Prichard is expanding. He bought bourbon from Heaven Hill in Kentucky, aged it again in new barrels, and bottled it as Double Barrel Bourbon. Finishing bourbon this way is rare, (Beam and Buffalo Trace have both experimented with it) and Double Barrel Bourbon was well received. Building a distillery "was difficult beyond imagination. Building a nationwide distribution network has been our greatest challenge and the most costly!" Regardless of the challenges, Prichard moves ever forward: In March of 2009, the distillery began producing its own whiskey.

“Drinking young whiskey is something that is done only in stillhouses and bars in Italy. Let your spirit mature to a proper degree of ripeness.”

– Michael Jackson, critiquing an early example of craft distilled whiskey

A GALLERY OF ARTISAN DISTILLERS

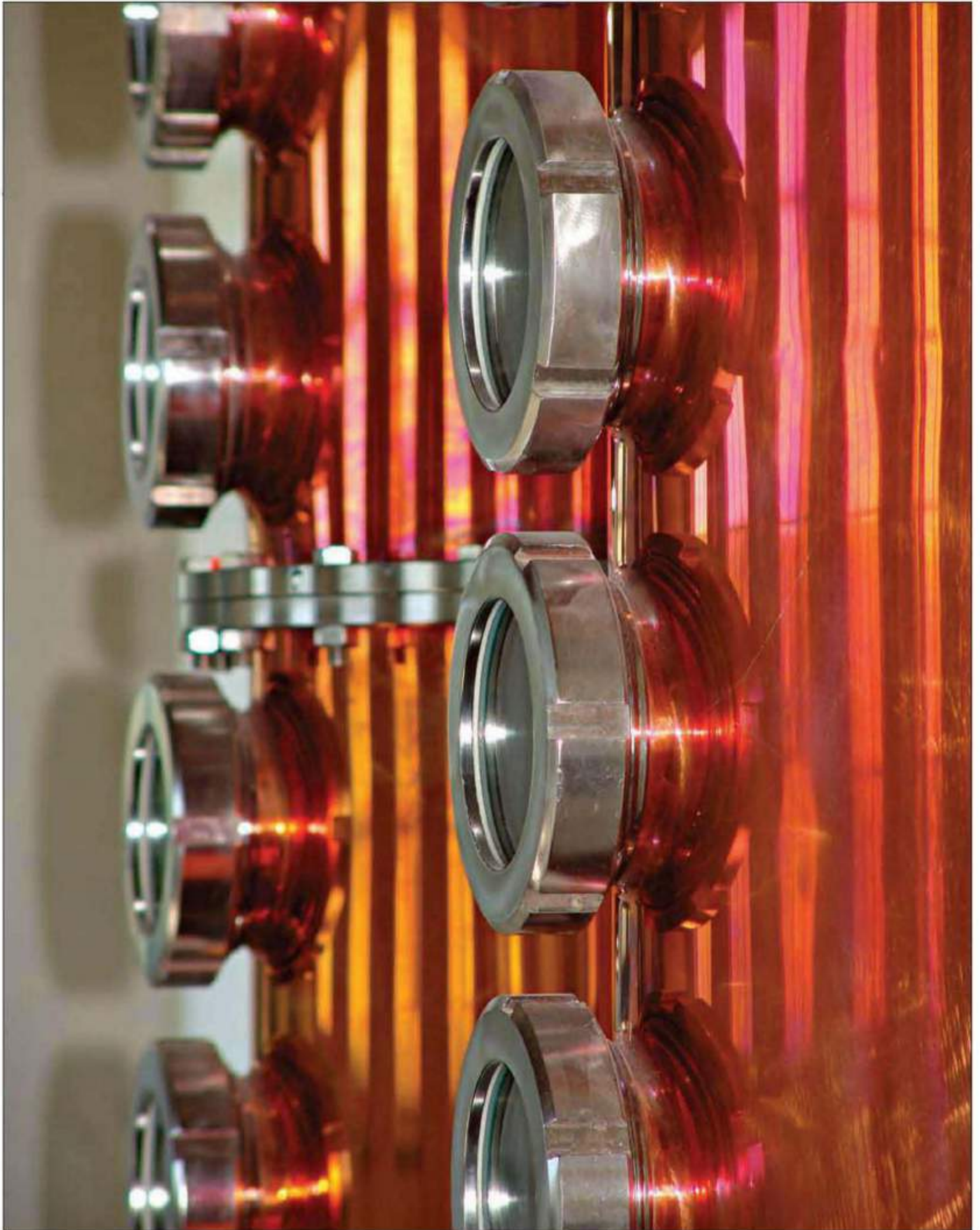
THERE is a spirit revolution happening in the United States, one that will change the entire spirit industry. Distillers with an intense passion for the craft lay their hearts, souls, and economic futures on the line for the purpose of making the ideal liquid spirit. These small companies, sometimes run by one or two people, create a variety of spirits too numerous to mention in a single breath. Their creations and blends are no less valuable or quality-driven than big name brands, some even more so. These niche spirits have the advantage of creativity that expands the scope of what the liquor industry has to offer not only to the U.S., but to the world. These micro-distillers lack the name recog-

When Iowa flooded, Jeff Quint of the Cedar Ridge Distillery, filled his still with water to keep it from floating away in the deluge.



nition and the funding that big name companies use to help market their products, but some of them will become the household names of the future—just as Jack Daniels and Johnny Walker, distillers from the past, have become in our time.

– Adapted from Cheri Loughlin's Intoxicologist blog, www.intoxicologist.wordpress.com



*The copper patina on the still reflects a variety of colors at **Koenig Distillery**.*

THE LEADERS OF THE PACK

ST. GEORGE SPIRITS/HANGAR ONE ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA



Each one of the four Holstein stills at Hangar 1 has a different purpose. The still on the right, which is being serviced here, is dedicated to the production of absinthe, the first legal absinthe produced in the United States since 1915. The facility is located in an airplane hangar on the former U.S. Naval Air Station in Alameda, California. Below, the self-pro-

claimed “Godfather of American artisan distillation,” **Jorg Rupf** (left), and **Lance Winters**, the “evil genius” behind **St. George Spirits/**

Hangar One Vodka, stand by a state-of-the-art Holstein still, on which Winters can distill brandy, whiskey, absinthe, and vodka.



ANCHOR DISTILLING
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



Fritz Maytag's stills at **Anchor Distilling** are unique in that the heads can be interchanged depending on what spirit is being distilled. Maytag has brought back historical recipes and classic ways of making spirits.

SPOTLIGHT ON CALIFORNIA DISTILLERS

STILLWATER SPIRITS

PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA

THE SPIRITS of California are as varied as the state. From the blue agave spirit produced by J.B. Wagoner on the southern end of the state to the brandy distilleries scattered through the wine regions, to many fine vodkas, gins, and whiskeys that come out of the San Francisco Bay Area, California is home to many of the pioneers of the artisan distilling movement.

DOMAINE CHARBAY

ST. HELENA, CALIFORNIA



Marko Karadesevic stands atop a French Chalvignac Prulho brandy still at **Domaine Charbay**.



Don Payne flushes the still at **Stillwater Spirits** by pushing a hose through a port window into the column of his Vendome still.

SKYROCKET DISTILLERS

TEMECULA, CALIFORNIA

Sticking above the blue agave is the heat exchanger for one of the four pot stills at **Skyrocket Distillers**, located on top of a mountain near Temecula, California.



MOSBY WINERY

BUELLTON, CALIFORNIA

After a day of distilling, **Bill Mosby** washes down the pot still at the **Mosby Winery** in Buellton, California.



ESSENTIAL SPIRITS

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA



The Moor's head provides a rectifying surface for a unique flavor for the grappa, rum, and other spirits that **Dave Classick** makes in his alambic pot still at **Essential Spirits**.

GERMAIN-ROBIN

REDWOOD, CALIFORNIA



Germain-Robin is one of the pioneers of the American craft spirits industry. Its X.O. brandy is considered one of the best brandies in the world. The still is a French Chalvignac Prulho.

Sauvignon blanc vines planted in the 1950s grow next to the distillery at **Germain-Robin**.



Joe Thomas Corley, head distiller at **Germain-Robin**, stands among the experimental racks containing 2.5- and 59-gallon barrels of different types of oak for experimenting with aging brandy.



JEPSON VINEYARDS

UKIAH, CALIFORNIA

A bucket for collecting samples of the wash sits on a spigot at **Jepson Vineyards**.

A Chavignac Prulho brandy still at **Jepson Vineyards**, one of the premier brandy producers in California



One of the few farm distilleries in California, **Osocalis Distillery** is located deep in the Redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

OSOCALIS DISTILLERY

SOQUEL, CALIFORNIA



Daniel Farber, one of the leading experts on aged brandy in the United States, noses his alambic brandy.

DISTILLING IN TEXAS

GARRISON BROTHERS DISTILLERY TEXAS



Garrison Brothers Distillery is located in the Texas Hill country, 5.5 miles (8.8 km) west of Austin, and it is the first legal bourbon distillery in the state. Not shown in this photo, but implied behind the scenes, is the cooking (maturation) of 325 barrels of whiskey, all under the hot Texas sun. **Dennis Todd**, the assistant distiller, is standing in front of the distillery, above.

DISTILLING IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

CLEAR CREEK DISTILLERY

PORTLAND, OREGON

IN THE 1970s, Oregon wineries started producing some of the best Pinot Noir in the world. The “good beer” movement took over in the late 1980s, and now Portland has found itself at the hub of the new spirits revolution. It is the only city in America that can boast a “Distillery Row,” seven distilleries within staggering distance of each other. This proximity has created a keener awareness of quality and a wider variety of unique spirits being produced than anywhere else in the country. Every August, Portland sponsors the Great American Distillers Festival.

Even outside Portland, Oregon is ahead of the curve in the spirits revolution. The state’s many distilleries produce organic spirits and many fruit- and honey-based spirits. Many of its fine brandies have yet to reach market and are sitting in barrels waiting to come of age.



Steve McCarthy stands in front of four Holstein stills at the **Clear Creek Distillery** in Portland, Oregon. One of the true pioneers in spirits, McCarthy produces more than thirty-two different spirits ranging from Pear-in-the-Bottle brandy to single malt whiskey.

HIGHBALL DISTILLERY

PORTLAND, OREGON



Michael Klinglesmith, founder of **Highball Distillery**. The Highball Distillery produces Elemental Vodka, a premium organic vodka that launched in June 2008 and is already distributed in three states.

HOUSE SPIRITS

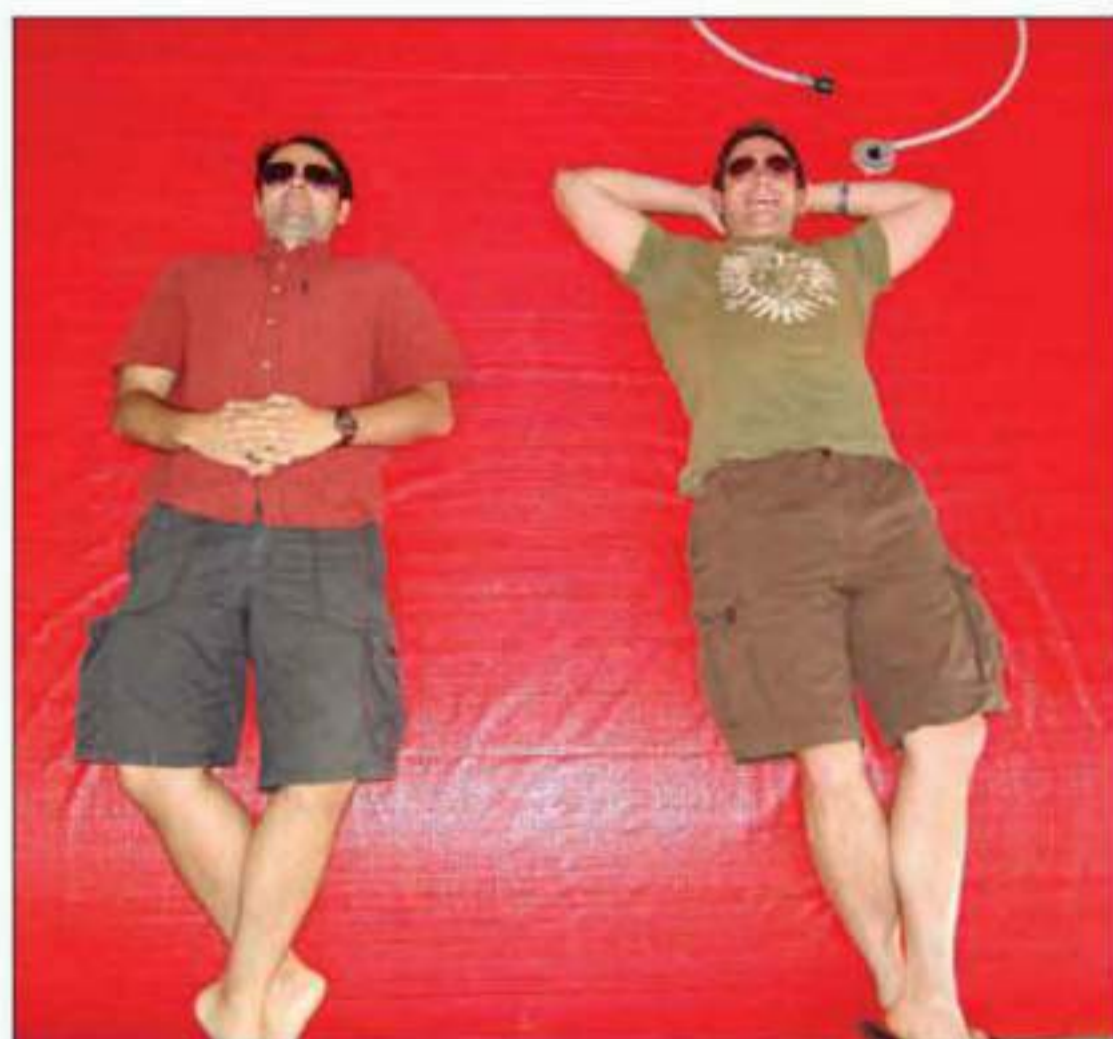
PORTLAND, OREGON



Lee Medoff takes a sample of spirit from the still at **House Spirits Distillery**.

ARTISAN SPIRITS

PORTLAND, OREGON



Ryan Csanky (right) and **Erik Martin**, of **Artisan Spirits**, which makes Apia Artisan Vodka and Martin Ryan Handmade Vodka, lay atop their wine “bladder,” which holds 6,000 gallons of Columbia Valley Syrah to be distilled.



The alambic still at **House Spirits Distillery**, whose products include an apothecary line of one-of-a-kind liqueurs available only at the distillery.

INTEGRITY SPIRITS

PORTLAND, OREGON



Rich Philips of **Integrity Spirits** in Portland, Oregon, standing in front of his still.

ROGUE DISTILLERY

PORTLAND, OREGON



Neon sign at the **Rogue Distillery & Public House**

Kieran Sienkiewicz takes a sample of rum from the barrels of the **Rogue Distillery**, whose products include Spruce gin, vodka, dark and white rums, and Hazelnut Spice Rum.

CASCADE PEAK SPIRITS

ASHLAND, OREGON



David Eliason and **Diane Paulson** stand behind the Oregon products at the Great American Distillers Festival, held each fall in Portland, Oregon.

BRANDY PEAK DISTILLERS

BROOKINGS, OREGON



Brandy Peak Distilleries is the only distillery in the United States that heats its still with a wood fire. Their Aged Pear Brandy personifies what a pear eau de vie ought to be and recently won the only double-gold medal awarded at the American Distilling Institutes 2009 judging of brandy, grappa, and eau de vie.

STRINGER ORCHARD WILD PLUM WINERY

NEW PINE CREEK, OREGON

Wild plums ferment in a stainless steel tank.

