

WHISKEY & LEISURE

MARCH 2023

MAGAZINE

EXPLORE WHISKEY TASTING CLUBS

✧ *Featuring* ✧
Bourbon Brotherhood
Bourbon Women
Charlotte Bourbon Society
Los Angeles Whisky Club
Missouri Whiskey Society
Jax Bourbon Society
Phoenix Social Club
The Whiskey Club

SPECIAL INSIDE:

START OR JOIN A WHISKEY CLUB

COMPLETE GUIDE TO WHISKEY TASTING

Plus

Q&A *With* **COMPANY**
DISTILLING™

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W&L
WHISKEY & LEISURE
MAGAZINE

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Publisher

Editor/Designer

Chuck Branch

whiskey.leisuremagazine@gmail.com

P.O. Box 88 Ozark, Missouri 65721

417-569-3525

Creative Consultant

Photographer

Karen Branch

KebSpot20@gmail.com

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MISSION STATEMENT
The Whiskey & Leisure Magazine is an exploration into the world of spirits for your enjoyment, relaxation & introspection. Our goal is to provide you with useful information, industry news, history, and interesting articles about the world of whiskey, spirits and leisure. Sláinte.

ON THE COVER



Image: depositphotos.com

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY

The publishers of Whiskey & Leisure Magazine ask that you enjoy in moderation and drink responsibly. Always be sure and arrange for a designated driver.



plus

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COMPANY

DISTILLING™



Buffalo Trace Distillery Dedicates New Stillhouse and Unveils Expanded Tours

FRANKFORT, Ky., — Whiskey making will be at an all-time high at Buffalo Trace Distillery now that its new still house has officially been commissioned. The new still stands 40 feet tall and can produce 60,000 gallons a day. It is a duplicate of Buffalo Trace's existing still, allowing the Distillery to double production on fan favorites such as Buffalo Trace, Eagle Rare, Weller, Blanton's, E.H. Taylor Jr., and the rest of the whiskies in its portfolio.

"We are really looking forward to starting up our new still so we can make more bourbon whiskey for our fans," said Harlen Wheatley, master distiller. "The new stillhouse is adjacent to the existing stillhouse. We put a lot of work into matching our existing still to ensure the whiskey we produce remains consistent. We will be in full production with both stills in the coming days."

Fans will be able to see the new stillhouse up close when they take Buffalo Trace's new Hard Hat tour, expanded with a new tour route and new sites. The Hard Hat tour has always been a "must see" when visiting Buffalo Trace, but due to the Distillery's on-going construction of the still house and other key elements of the tour, it has been unavailable since 2019. Now guests will not only get to see the new still house, but some of Buffalo Trace's other additions as part of its \$1.2 billion expansion, including its new awe-inspiring cookers, which span three floors at 22

feet tall, peek inside the Distillery's 93,000 gallon fermenters, and explore the new dry house, which can produce



The new still stands 40 feet tall and can produce 60,000 gallons a day.

12,000 pounds of dried grain per hour. The new Hard Hat tour will last approximately 90 minutes and includes a tasting after the tour. There is no charge for the tour or tasting.

Buffalo Trace's Trace Tour, long the stalwart of bourbon tour offerings, has

also been expanded, and will include more insight into the bourbon process and production through a mix of technology and new tour stops in the barrel filling and dumping areas. The Trace Tour and Hard Hat Tour join Buffalo Trace's Old Taylor Tour. All tours and tastings are complimentary and start and end in Buffalo Trace's Visitor Center, which was expanded in 2020 and now encompasses 33,000 square feet total, which has come in handy as Buffalo Trace welcomed 470,507 guests in 2022 to its Distillery!

"We are so excited to welcome new and repeat guests to come see our new stillhouse and experience our new tour offerings," said Tyler Adams, general manager, homeplace. "The major expansion projects are now complete, so we have lots of new areas visitors can see on both our Hard Hat Tour and our expanded Trace Tour. Plus, we're really looking forward to having more bourbon for our thirsty fans in a few years, now that we're doubling production."

Guests who would like to visit Buffalo Trace are encouraged to visit its FAQ page on its website to learn about its product offerings for tasting and purchasing, recommendations on tour companies, and other tips and tricks. Tour reservations are recommended and can be made here. Reservations for each of the tours, including the newly expanded Trace and Hard Hat Tours, are currently being accepted through March. Visitors interested in any tour should join the waitlist on the reservation site if they do not see availability.

Source/Image courtesy Buffalo Trace Distillery

Scotland Whisky Tourism Industry 'Under Fire' from Alcohol Advertising Ban

Industry bosses from Scotland's whisky tourism sector have warned that proposed measures to tackle Scotland's 'troubled relationship with alcohol' could put it at risk.

February 7, 2023 (excerpt)—The whisky tourism industry in Scotland is at risk from plans to ban alcohol advertising, industry leaders have warned.

Gordon Morrison, the CEO of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions, said that the proposals, which include the scrapping of sponsorship and memorabilia, could have a major impact on international tourism and rural communities.

Experts said that other countries are envious of Scotland's whisky industry and warned that Scotland could lose a significant part of its heritage and culture overnight. They also noted that the industry was an important economic asset, with alcohol firms sponsoring Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the Book Festival, the Film Festival,

and Scottish Ballet.

It follows the news that First Minister Nicola Sturgeon stated that she would "consider carefully" a request from

t-shirts and glassware. Additionally, it has suggested that drinks firms be banned from sponsoring sporting and cultural events.

"The fact that you are effectively prohibiting the sale of any alcohol branded merchandise of any kind would impact many, many tourism businesses, not just the distilleries." ~ Gordon Morrison

Mr. Morrison commented: "The fact that you are effectively prohibiting the sale of any alcohol branded merchandise of any kind would impact

drinks companies to reconsider the proposed measures.

The consultation, which runs until March 9, proposes a number of measures to try and tackle what it describes as Scotland's "troubled relationship with alcohol." These include banning adverts on billboards and in newspapers and magazines.

It also proposes an end to merchandise with alcohol branding, which could see distilleries and breweries unable to sell

many, many tourism businesses, not just the distilleries.

"The distilleries are often in parts of Scotland that are quite remote. There's often not a lot else to do.

"They bring visitors to these communities. These visitors then spend money in other shops and restaurants and cafes, and hotels.

"It is fundamental to the tourism offering in Scotland," Morrison said.

Source: MarkBrown_Industrynewsupdate.com/via dailyrecord.com By Ellie Forbes, Andrew Learmonth, Alexander Smail

Oregon: Lawmakers Benefited from Diversion of Rare Whisky, Investigation Says

Director Steve Marks and five other senior agency officials confirm diversion of Pappy Van Winkle and other bourbons. No lawmakers were named.

February 8, 2023- (Excerpt) The Oregon Liquor Control and Cannabis Commission released the results of a potentially explosive investigation.

The investigation found six senior agency officials, including longtime director Steve Marks, diverted rare and valuable whiskey from public sale to their personal use and unnamed lawmakers. (Gov. Tina Kotek forced Marks out last month before learning

about the investigation).

One of the officials, Chris Mayton, the director of distilled spirits for the agency that has a monopoly on hard liquor in Oregon, told an investigator that it was agency practice to divert some rare bottles to legislators.

In the summary of his investigation, investigator Travis Hampton wrote:

"Mayton wanted to reiterate how widespread this practice is and what his position requires, procuring product for individuals-which including OLCC employees and legislators."

Hampton further wrote, "[Mayton] qualified he has served as a "facilitator"

for customers, OLCC employees and legislators hundreds of times as part of his work duties." (There are no lawmakers named in any of the investigative materials the OLCC released to WW. The Oregonian first reported the internal investigation.)

The whiskies in question, according to the investigation, include some of the nation's rarest and most valuable bourbons including "Elmer T. Lee Single Barrel; Pappy Van Winkle 10-year; Pappy Van Winkle 12-year; Pappy Van Winkle 15-year; Pappy Van Winkle 20-year; and, Pappy Van Winkle 23-year."

Source: MarkBrown_Industrynewsupdate.com/via week.com By Nigel Jaquiss

HAPPY

St. Patrick's

DAY

A festive St. Patrick's Day graphic. The background is a light green color with a repeating pattern of small shamrocks. The word "HAPPY" is written in a simple, green, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the words "St. Patrick's" are written in a large, elegant, dark green cursive script. Underneath "St. Patrick's", the word "DAY" is written in a smaller, green, sans-serif font, positioned within a decorative flourish that resembles a ribbon or a scroll. The entire graphic is framed by a thin green border.

March 17, 2023

INSIDE

THE CULTURE OF WHISKEY & LEISURE



Straight Talk | Whiskey & Whisky Reviews | Cigars |
Across the Pond | Around the World | A Closer Look |
Wine | Sustainability

Whisky Rating System

- 🍷 Below Average
- 🍷🍷 Average
- 🍷🍷🍷 Good
- 🍷🍷🍷🍷 Excellent
- 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷 Exceptional

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Scotch Whisky Exports Over \$7 Billion in 2022



Global exports of Scotch Whisky grew to more than £6bn (\$7.2 billion) for the first time in 2022, according to figures released by the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA).

In 2022, the Scotch Whisky industry continued to anchor growth, supporting investment and job creation across Scotland and the UK, as exports were up 37% by value to \$7.2 billion. The number of 700-milliliter bottles exported also grew by 21%.

The Asia-Pacific region overtook the EU as the industry's largest regional market, with double-digit growth in Taiwan, Singapore, India, and China as the post-Covid recovery continued.

While established EU markets such as France, Germany, and Spain continued their post-pandemic bounce-back with solid growth in 2022, India replaced France as the largest Scotch Whisky market by volume.

In North America, the United States continued its recovery following the impacts of tariffs on Single Malt Scotch Whisky to be again the industry's only market with exports valued at over \$1.2 Billion. Mexico and Canada also saw growth, underlining the importance of securing further market access wins through renegotiating the UK's Free Trade Agreements with both countries.

Chief Executive of the Scotch Whisky Association Mark Kent said: "During a year of significant economic headwinds and global supply chain disruption, the Scotch Whisky industry continued to anchor growth, supporting investment and job creation across Scotland and the UK."

Source: Scotch Whisky Association /Image: depositphotos

TOP 10 MARKETS

The largest export destinations for Scotch Whisky (defined by value) in 2022 (vs 2021) were:

1. USA: \$1.2b +33% (\$943m in 2021)
2. France: \$583m +26% (\$462m in 2021)
3. Singapore: \$377m +50% (\$253m in 2021)
4. Taiwan: \$376m +39% (\$270m in 2021)
5. India: \$336m +93% (\$174m in 2021)
6. China: \$278m +18% (\$236m in 2021)
7. Panama: \$242m +165% (\$92m in 2021)
8. Germany: \$241m +36% (\$176m in 2021)
9. Japan: \$209m +32% (\$158m in 2021)
10. Spain: \$206m +46% (\$141m in 2021)

CATEGORY DATA

In 2022, Scotch Whisky exports by category (defined by value) were:

- Bottled Blend \$4,515m +43% vs 2021 (59%).
- Single Malt \$2,389m +30% vs 2021 (32%).
- Bulk Blend \$228m +13% vs 2021 (3%).
- Bottled Blended Malt \$168m +22% vs 2021 (2%).
- Bulk Blended Malt \$156m +37% vs 2021 (2%).
- Bulk Single & Blended Grain \$69m +39% vs 2021 (1%).
- Bottled Single & Blended Grain \$22m +150% vs 2021 (0.3%).

70% of Young People in Ireland are Considering Seeking Opportunities Abroad

According to new research commissioned by the Jameson International Graduate Program, almost a third of young people in Ireland are considering seeking opportunities abroad in the next five years.

The desire to travel is cited as one of the primary motivators to move abroad. The research also found that most young people (73%) would like the security and familiarity of working for an Irish brand abroad. This rises to 89% among those who are actively considering moving.

The opportunity to travel and experience new cultures is one of the critical characteristics of the Jameson International Graduate Program. It empowers graduates from all backgrounds to kickstart their careers with a global Irish brand on an international stage.

Sinéad D'Arcy, Head of the Jameson International Graduate Program, said: "At Irish Distillers, we have a history of supporting, nurturing, and mentoring young talent. It can be a challenging environment for graduates leaving university and entering the workforce. As the workplace and graduate landscape evolve, we continue to adapt the Jameson International Graduate Program to meet the needs and expectations of graduates. The program is a unique offering that provides graduates with the tools and opportunity to realize their personal and professional

goals while working for an Irish brand as part of a global community."

The research also highlights changing expectations when it comes to ways of working. Hybrid working is now critical for young people when considering a role. Three in four deem hybrid working necessary, which rises to over four in five among those considering moving overseas.

The Jameson International Graduate Program has always offered graduates the freedom and flexibility to shape their work schedules. The Brand Ambassador role is focused on building brand awareness and brand advocacy for Jameson, therefore appealing to those looking for a position that is not necessarily a 'regular 9-5'.

"Following a milestone year for Jameson, with record global growth of 22%, it has never been a more exciting time to join the program.

"Jameson Brand Ambassadors have played a critical role in the growth of Irish whiskey on the world stage over the past 30 years. Many have remained in the broader network, with some program alumni progressing into leadership positions within Irish Distillers domestically and Pernod Ricard globally. We look for graduates who are creative, innovative, and self-starters with an entrepreneurial mindset. We call this 'Serious Character,'" D'Arcy added.



Source/Image: courtesy JamesonWhiskey.com /Fennell Photography



THE HOUSE OF SUNTORY ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF ITS FIRST-EVER WORLD BLENDED WHISKY: WORLD WHISKY 'AO'

Blended using whisky from Suntory Group's distilleries in five of the world's most renowned whisky regions: Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Japan, and the US. Suntory World Whisky 'Ao,' meaning blue, is named after the oceans connecting these five world's whisky regions.

This one-of-a-kind whisky is a tribute to the liquids' long history, perfectly capturing the heathery flavor of Ardmore and Glen Garioch in Scotland, the complexity of Cooley in Ireland, the smoothness of Alberta in Canada, the vibrance of Jim Beam in the US, and the subtlety of Yamazaki and Hakushu in Japan. With notes of vanilla, tropical fruit, and cinnamon, the distinctive climate, fermentation, and distillation processes in each whisky-making region give the whisky its unique taste.

Fifth-generation Suntory Chief Blender Shinji Fukuyo carefully selected the liquids used based on Suntory's globally recognized Monozukuri craftsmanship – a relentless pursuit of perfection, meticulous attention to detail, and commitment to quality. Building on Suntory's history of craftsmanship,

Source/image: courtesy Suntory

this innovative, multi-faceted, premium blended whisky embodies the spirit of Suntory and is a tribute to the liquid's long history.

Shinji Fukuyo said, "Ao is an exceptional whisky which, through the art of Suntory blending, allows you to enjoy the unique characteristics of each of the five major whisky-making regions."

Suntory World Whisky Ao is available in 700ml bottles (43% ABV) at a suggested retail price of \$104.95 and is available at most retailers.

TASTING NOTES:

Color: Amber

Nose: Profound vanilla, pineapple-like fruitiness on top, creamy sweetness and depth with a lingering woody aroma.

Palate: Smooth and sweet mouthfeel, gradually followed by the smokiness and cinnamon-like spiciness.

Finish: Sweet and smoky, spicy and woody, a layered complexity.

<https://www.wine-searcher.com/find/suntory+ao+blend+world+whisky>

Suntory Celebrates its 100th Anniversary of Whisky Making



“Brilliance of Life’ Through ‘Creating Harmony with People and Nature.’

Suntory, a global leader in the beverage industry with iconic whisky brands such as Yamazaki, Hibiki, and Hakushu, celebrated its 100th Anniversary of whisky making in Japan.

In 1923, Suntory founder Shinjiro Torii began his whisky-making journey at Yamazaki Distillery, located on the periphery of Kyoto. Since then, Suntory has been pioneering the art of Japanese Whisky by crafting with a relentless pursuit of perfection, striving to cultivate whisky drinking culture and produce the highest quality spirits. In 2003, this devotion bore fruit when Yamazaki, 12 Years Old, was awarded Gold at the International Spirits Challenge, leading to the international reputation of other Japanese Whisky brands such as Hibiki and Hakushu.

To enhance quality craftsmanship by focusing on processes before maturing whiskies and to elevate its visitor experience,

Suntory will invest approximately 10 billion JPY (equivalent to around 77 million USD) by 2024 into its Yamazaki and Hakushu Distilleries.

Quality ingredients are essential in whisky production.

Suntory will invest approximately 10 billion JPY (equivalent to around 77 million USD) by 2024 into its Yamazaki and Hakushu Distilleries.

Suntory will operate “floor malting*2”, a traditional process of malting barley, at both the Yamazaki and Hakushu Distilleries. The Hakushu Distillery will also introduce an approach to cultivate yeast*3, a

fundamental ingredient to produce alcohol.

The whisky business embodies Suntory’s philosophy to inspire the “Brilliance of life” through “creating harmony with people and nature” and “creating a rich and prosperous lifestyle.” As Suntory looks forward to the next 100 years, the company will take on challenges to develop innovation while coexisting with people worldwide and the global environment and aspire to produce Suntory Whisky beloved by all.

Source/image: courtesy Suntory

WILD MUSTARD SEASON



Mustard season is one of the best-kept secrets in NAPA wine country.

Each year from February through March, Napa Valley springs to life with an explosion of wild mustard blooms, carpeting rows of vineyards in electric yellow flowers, and ushering in a new growing season. In honor of the “season between the seasons,”

Visit Napa Valley, the official destination management organization for Napa County, created the ultimate Napa Valley Wild Mustard Days online field guide, helping visitors and residents alike get off line this season to experience Napa Valley’s good life.

“It’s a great time to get outside and enjoy one of the best kept secrets in wine country,” said Linsey Gallagher, President & CEO of Visit Napa Valley. “Our hotels, restaurants, and attractions are open for business, and Mother Nature is putting on quite a show in our vineyards and open spaces – a perfect combination.”

The Napa Valley Wild Mustard Days field guide can be found at www.visitnapavalley.com/mustard.



Source/images courtesy visitnapa.com/media

'Blend Bar by Davidoff' Comes Together With Willett Distillery for Once in a Lifetime Bourbon Whiskey

This single barrel Willett Bourbon is a one-of-a-kind blend exclusively offered at Blend Bar by Davidoff.



Willett Distillery located in Bardstown Kentucky.



A bottle of the Willett one-of-a-kind whiskey and Davidoff Cigar.

Blend Bar by Davidoff, an Internationally renowned upscale cigar and bourbon lounge, hosted a one of a kind excursion which brought together Davidoff Cigars and Willett Distillery (considered by many the premier bourbon whiskey in the world). The event culminated in choosing a limited-edition one-of-a-kind Willett Bourbon barrel, which will only be available at Blend Bar by Davidoff's four locations.

Kentucky, home to Willett Distillery, was ground zero for a first-of-its-kind weekend-long celebration of all things luxury. Blend Bar by Davidoff, boasting four locations spanning four states, handpicked their top roster of VIP members and Davidoff executives to sample and choose a one-of-a-kind 10-year-aged barrel of Willett Bourbon.

The two-day excursion brought spirits and cigar aficionados to the famed distillery for a day-long tasting guided by fifth-generation distiller Drew Kulsveen. After the barrel was selected, the occasion was celebrated with dinner at the renowned Harrison Smith House, with specially selected limited edition Davidoff Cigars and Willett Bourbon.

Partner at Blend Bar by Davidoff Corey Johnston said: "We understand that Willett Distillery does not offer single barrels, so this was an honor for us at Blend Bar. We want

to make clear that the bourbon from this barrel is truly one of a kind. Once it is gone, it is gone forever. We invite the public to one of our Blend Bar locations for this exquisite bourbon."

About Blend Bar by Davidoff

BLEND Bar with Davidoff Cigars is an internationally recognized upscale cigar and bourbon bar in *Indianapolis, Nashville, Pittsburgh, and The Woodlands, TX*. During the day, BLEND is the perfect meeting place to close an important business deal or entertain a client. At night, BLEND is a trendy, sophisticated nightspot where you can enjoy old friends while making new ones.

However, BLEND's partnership with Davidoff of Geneva, USA, was most notable, which began in 2015. The partnership made BLEND the first and only licensed Davidoff Cigar Lounge in the world.

For more information about Blend Bar by Davidoff, please visit www.BlendBarCigar.com

For more information about Willett Distillery, please visit www.KentuckyBourbonWhiskey.com

For more information about Davidoff Cigars, please visit www.Davidoff.com



Seven Decades of Nicaraguan Tobacco Experience

CASA DE ORTEZ



**Indiana Ortez,
the youngest
of the third
generation
of the Ortez
tobacco family
launches Casa
De Ortez.**

Indiana Ortez, the youngest of the third generation of the Ortez tobacco family based in Condega, Nicaragua, has recently launched Casa De Ortez, a company celebrating the quality and experience of Nicaragua's oldest tobacco family.

The company, founded in 2022, is what Ortez considers the rightly timed release of a culmination of seven decades of Nicaraguan tobacco experience.

Ortez has taken the reins in dedicating herself to telling the world the story started by her grandfather at the first family farm in Condega many decades ago.

De Ortez and youngest of the third generation of Ortez states, "One of the more important things I have learned is in tobacco you have to do things correctly to last. Casa De Ortez is the way the history of my family and our work can be told and shared. I am so excited to finally launch and work even closer alongside my family, and I will humbly try to do Condega justice and work to make it a household name for cigar enjoyers everywhere."

Ortez says her first line will be called Primavera, saying that it will debut in the spring of 2023 with details forthcoming by March. Thus far, she has only said that the line will have three vitolas and blends that have already been completed.

Source/images courtesy Casa De Ortez

COMPANY

DISTILLING™

Q&A



Tennessee Whiskey Made For Sharing



Jeff Arnett, Master Distiller & Founder

“We love welcoming guests into our distilleries. When you visit us at one of our tasting rooms in Thompson’s Station and Townsend, Tenn., you will find we offer product portfolio tastings, cocktails, distillery tours, and shopping.”
~Jenna Wagner



Gather around at Thompson’s Station.

Tennessee is known for many things. It’s the home to country music, the Grand Ole Opry, the Great Smokies, Elvis, barbecue, hot chicken, and Tennessee Whiskey. And even though there are nearly 30 distilleries today, up until 2009, the Volunteer State was home to only three.

Thanks to Heath Clark, one of Company Distilling founders’ efforts, all that changed in 2014 when H. Clark

Distillery became the first legal distillery in Williams County in over 100 years.

Clark wrote and championed Tennessee Senate Bill 1955—the law that changed the legislation, reading in part: any county where both retail package liquor sales and liquor-by-the-drink have been approved through voter referendum within the county, it shall be lawful to manufacture intoxicating liquors and/or intoxicating drinks

within the boundaries of such county.

The Tennessee Distillers Guild heralded this new legislation as it bolstered Tennesseans’ creativity and passion for whiskey-making, thus waking a sleeping giant: Craft distillers.

In 2020, H. Clark Distillery officially became Company Distilling when Clark joined forces with Jeff Arnett, former Jack Daniel’s Master Distiller, and Kris Tatum, former President of

the Tennessee Distillers Guild and co-owner of Old Forge Distillery.

Another tradition Tennessee is known for is its southern hospitality; people in Tennessee are very cordial and polite. And that purely American charm was the motivation for the name Company Distilling.

“We felt that the thought of having ‘company’ over was one of the primary objectives we wanted to achieve as we launched as a brand; to offer spirits that you would be proud to offer your best company and make products worthy of those occasions in your life when you are gathered with people who are important to you. It was out of that desire and sentiment that Company Distilling was born,” said Master Distiller and Founder, Jeff Arnett.

W&L wanted to learn more about Company Distilling, its founders, and its operation, so we asked their team to give our readers some insight into a distiller led by, arguably, the best in the business.

W&L: Much has been written about the collaboration between founders Jeff Arnett, Kris Tatum, and Heath Clark, their combined experience, and their

professional history. Can you take us back to the moment the three came together and decided to move forward with such a monumental plan?

CD: The exact moment it came together is unknown. The founders and team connected through the Tennessee Distillers Guild and built relationships and trust over the years. *(Kris Tatum, President & Founder)*

W&L: With the varied backgrounds of the founders, what “new” innovations did they bring to the discussions to “make a whiskey we always wanted to make?”

CD: During my time as Master Distiller, I brought eight new products into Jack Daniel’s portfolio. One of those products was called the No 27 Gold, double-barreled and double mellowed using maple barrels and maple charcoal in addition to the original white oak barrel. Although the production process was slightly flawed in that maple barrels tended to leak excessively and were driving the product cost up, I thought it was one of the better liquids we were making at the time if the process issues could be solved. Company Bourbon is produced

using a modified process developed over several years, hoping to fix the No 27 Gold. Still, it has also opened up many possibilities to confidently replicate a double-barreling process using non-traditional barrel woods that offer a new range of character and flavors to explore. Because we have several partners with industry experience, we have been able to steer this process utilizing our collective skills to perfect the finished product. *(Jeff Arnett, Master Distiller & Founder.)*

W&L: Can you share with our readers the origin of the name Company Distilling?

CD: The pandemic impacted us all and made us rethink how and when we gathered with those we hold closest. We felt that the thought of having “company” over was one of the primary objectives we wanted to achieve as we launched as a brand; to offer spirits that you would be proud to offer your best company and make products worthy of those occasions in your life when you are gathered with people who are important to you. It was out of that desire and sentiment that Company Distilling was born. *(Jeff Arnett)*



Townsend - Tasting Room

W&L: What would you say was the most challenging aspect in the formation of Company Distilling?

CD: Starting a business during a pandemic, with supply chain challenges, took a lot of work. Our team has persevered through delays and unforeseen circumstances and has come out on the other side stronger for it. (*Kris Tatum*)

“Our team is incredibly diverse and brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the table.”

~ Kris Tatum

W&L: As we are clearly in a craft whiskey boom while developing the model for Company Distilling, what was the end game? Was the initial interest to go statewide, then nationwide, or even distribution opportunities in the EU?

CD: When we started Company Distilling, the end game was always to be a nationwide brand. The key for us was growing smartly. We wanted to win our home state of Tennessee first and expand to other states as opportunities arose while ensuring we could live up to our commitments not to be out of stock with our current wholesale or retail partners. (*Nathan Osborne, Director of Sales & Founder*)

W&L: Without giving away propriety information, are you currently in talks with a distributor to get your products to a broader audience?

CD: We’ve always envisioned Company Distilling as a national brand. Our Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished with Maple Wood is currently distributed in Tennessee and Georgia [beginning in Feb. 2023, Company Distilling Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished with Maple Wood is now available in Texas], with plans to add additional states in 2023. We also work with Seelbach’s, an online retailer, to distribute to select states. (*Nathan Osborne*)

W&L: Can you share some of the challenges Heath Clark had to overcome in getting legislation changed to enhance the “creativity” of Tennessee Whiskey, allowing the development and freedom to build the craft distillery industry in Tennessee?

CD: Heath was a key part of the conversation in the law changes of 2009 that afforded us all the opportunity to get into the industry. The creative freedom you ask about in our industry and business came through a collective effort led by the Tennessee Distillers Guild and the legislative body of the state of Tennessee. We worked hand-in-hand with



When company comes, it's time to break out the Company.



In good hands. Company Distilling Whiskey in front of the historic Tennessee Theater, Knoxville, Tenn.

Experience Good Company

Taste Award-Winning Spirits &
Tour the Distilleries:

Thompson's Station

1557 Thompson's Station Rd. W
Thompson's Station, Tenn. 37179
(615) 478-2191

Townsend

8351 TN-73
Townsend, Tenn. 37882
(865) 366-4360

Using toasted maple as a finishing wood definitely represents a unique spin beyond the traditional charcoal mellowing process that defines Tennessee Whiskey. ~ Jeff Arnett

our legislators, other members of the alcohol industry, and distilleries, large and small, to ensure parity.

Jeff and I worked tirelessly on the Tennessee Distillers Guild board as President and Vice President and are very proud of the results that came about during our time serving. *(Kris Tatum)*

W&L: Staying with the Legislative process, does management have a position on the recent discussions around the country on the DTC movement?

CD: Our team will use the same philosophy we had from the beginning. We're going to listen, research, and speak with one voice through our industry leaders. *(Kris Tatum)*

W&L: Can you tell us more about the team at Company Distilling?

CD: Our team is incredibly diverse and brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the table. We have people who have been in the industry for years and are new to the spirits world. Our leadership team has been selective in building the team to ensure we have a diverse set of skills and backgrounds. I've known most of the team for years and have cultivated those relationships. There's nothing quite like coming to work and seeing your best friends every day. *(Kris Tatum)*

W&L: Let's talk a bit about your products. Am I correct that you source your distillate from three states? If so, are

there plans to distill all your products in-house? Do you allow the States and distilleries to be public knowledge?

CD: As a start-up bourbon brand, we needed to source mature barrels of liquid for our initial product offering. Before acquiring any barrels, we took more of a "back to front" approach in considering the liquid we would be making years down the road and then backing into the decision of which grain bills and barrels that could be sourced at the time would be the best representation of our future. That process led us to source only wheated bourbons, and to get the right balance and mouthfeel; we had to source three distinctly different bourbons produced in three different states that could be married together to



Sit back and put another log on the fire. Memories are made with good friends and good whiskey.

create a fourth liquid. We don't typically mention the distillers by name who have sold us mature liquid to protect both their brand and ours. Still, we have entered a new make contract with a distiller in Ohio that will ultimately switch our base bourbon liquid to a four-grain style mash. We plan to bring that liquid in-house as soon as our primary distillery location in Tennessee is complete. *(Jeff Arnett)*

W&L: Regarding the Straight Bourbon Finished in Maple Wood. Was the concept to finish the whiskey in maple wood, in part, to honor the famed Tennessee Lincoln County Process?

CD: Before we had the first product models generated for Company Bourbon, we had discussions among our team members about what we hoped its character would be. The two words that we settled on were "approachable complexity," which meant that we wanted it to bridge the flavor and character gap between what new and more mature bourbon drinkers typically describe as desirable traits for a bourbon. By using wheat, we maintained an approachable product. Then by using toasted maple to finish it, we created a pleasant depth of character on the nose and palate and offered more complexity than your typical wheated bourbon. *(Jeff Arnett)*

W&L: I was intrigued by the release of the Seismic Rye Single Barrel. The name Seismic Rye brings with it a fascinating story. To give our readers a little background, the seismic monitoring station AS107 was built in the Tuckaleeche Caverns in Townsend, Tennessee, in 1978. The station was initially designed during the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) dam construction to detect what water displacement would do to tectonic plates. It was then used to detect nuclear testing around the world. So, who gets the credit for choosing the name Seismic Rye Single Barrel? Are there plans to continue this expression, and is

One of Company Bourbon's best characteristics is that it is flavorful with a nice savory mouthfeel without being too much or overwhelming for a new drinker to enjoy.

~Jeff Arnett

What are the unique flavor profiles of a whiskey finished in maple wood?

CD: Using toasted maple as a finishing wood definitely represents a unique spin beyond the traditional charcoal mellowing process that defines Tennessee Whiskey. Maple is a great indigenous tree species available throughout our state that we have discovered has many uses beyond the creation of charcoal for whiskey filtration. As a toasted finishing wood, maple offers an additional layer of flavor with an abundance of sweet notes and a mild spice character that makes Company Bourbon unlike anything else in the market. *(Jeff Arnett)*

W&L: What was the thought process for using wheat as the secondary grain in your Straight Bourbon? It is common knowledge that wheat is frequently considered a grain that softens, the typically high-corn distillate giving it a gentle sweetness. Do you find that to be the case?

W&L: As a 90-proof 30% wheated bourbon aged between 3 years and ten months to 6 years, how would you best describe this expression to those looking for something new and exciting to try or those who have never tasted a wheated bourbon?

CD: I often tell people that many bourbon drinkers love wheat due to its "softer than rye" character, but there are also drinkers who dislike wheated bourbon because they view them as being low in character or lacking the depth or spiciness of the rye grain that wheat replaces in the mash bill.

One of Company Bourbon's best characteristics is that it is flavorful with a nice savory mouthfeel without being too much or overwhelming for a new drinker to enjoy. I think it has the right balance of sweetness and spice on the palate and warmth in the finish, making it an excellent choice for drinkers regardless of where they may be in their whiskey journey. *(Jeff Arnett)*

it available outside the distillery?

CD: We are so glad to hear you are intrigued by not only the name but the story behind the name. At Company Distilling, we are passionate about our heritage and evoking a true sense of place. The naming was a team effort, as all things are at Company. At this time, it is unavailable outside of our two distillery locations, but we expect it to become a long-term addition to our portfolio of products. *(Jenna Wagner, Director of Marketing & Brand Strategy.)*

W&L: Can you share with our readers what is in the pipeline for future bourbon releases?

CD: We recently released our wheated bourbon in Cask Strength, in addition to the aforementioned Seismic Rye Single Barrel (Straight Rye Whiskey Finished with Cherry Wood). Both of these products have been very well received and applauded by visitors to our distilleries. *(Jenna Wagner)*



Townsend - Distilling Room

In early 2023, we will offer a Tennessee Whiskey Finished with Apple Wood as our third expression. And although each of these new products are initially launching as experimental offerings, we expect both the cherry wood and apple wood liquids to become long-term additions to our portfolio. We will continue exploring additional wood finishes and are excited at all the possibilities we can achieve using our proprietary finishing process. (*Jeff Arnett*)

W&L: Tell us about the Ghost Rail Tennessee Dry Gin. With just using six botanicals, is there a particular flavor profile you want your customers to detect?

CD: A lot of heart and soul goes into making our award-winning gin in the simplest ways. We have focused on keeping Ghost Rail Tennessee Dry Gin perfectly balanced and take an artisanal approach when distilling. As you mentioned, we only use six botanicals and a small, open-fired, Alembic still.

We don't have a particular flavor profile we want the customers to detect; our gin has the signature juniper-forward notes without overpowering, which points to our passion for creating a subtle and well-balanced gin. This gin is for the gin connoisseur and the self-proclaimed non-gin drinker. (*Jenna Wagner*)

W&L: Can you share the distillation process of the Ghost Rail Tennessee Dry Gin?

CD: Modern gins can be produced using various fermentation substrates and using a wide diversity of distillation techniques. But if you appreciate tradition, our Ghost Rail distilled gin utilizes methods that date back to the 11th century and reflect the earliest recorded gin distillation processes. That is because we utilize an alembic still and a simple recipe of limited and traditional botanicals. Our distillation process is simple and elegant. It certainly isn't the most efficient or highest-yielding process, but the result is a delicate and

balanced expression of traditional gin character. Modern gin distillers tend to chase after ever more complex botanical blends and exotic ingredients. We have chosen to limit our recipe to six traditional botanical ingredients, used in moderation to produce a balanced gin resulting in just the right juniper content in a citrus-forward expression. (*Kevin Smith, Director of Production*)

W&L: Is there a difference between Tennessee Dry Gin and London Dry Gin?

CD: Gin history goes back much further, but England is credited with bringing the spirit to prominence over the past four centuries. London Dry Gin is the culmination of process evolution and change over those centuries and is typified in the world's best-selling gin brands. London Dry Gin is heavily juniper dominant and can come across as being rather pungent, harsh, or medicinal to some tasters.

Tennessee Dry Gin is much less juniper-forward, although that

characteristic is easily recognizable as it must be for a proper gin. However, the juniper character is more in balance with the other botanicals. The balanced juniper character allows other botanicals to influence and define the overall character of the gin. The end result is our Ghost Rail Gin which is balanced, pleasant, and even delicious “neat.” Its balance and citrus-forward character make it exceptional for use in standard gin cocktails. It also opens a door of opportunity for creating fantastic new gin cocktails. *(Kevin Smith)*

W&L: Is there a preferred “Tennessee” way to enjoy Ghost Rail Tennessee Dry Gin?

CD: We recommend you drink our spirits as you prefer. We always say less is more. At our two distillery locations, we invite guests to try one of our tastings with straight spirits and then enjoy a cocktail developed by our team. If you need inspiration for ways to savor Ghost Rail Tennessee Dry Gin, [visit our product page](#) for simple and approachable cocktail recipes. Invite some friends to gather around and try out your bartending skills. *(Jenna Wagner)*

W&L: Flavored spirits are among the fastest-growing segments in the spirits industry. You currently have eight expressions available. I am particularly interested in the Chocolate Truffle release. Can you talk briefly about your flavored spirits and how you came up with the different profiles?

CD: The flavored spirits category is a creative and innovative space, and Tennessee (specifically eastern Tennessee) is definitely leading the category growth. Company Distilling is refining the category by offering elegant and sophisticated expressions of flavored spirits and formulating inspired cocktails that utilize our Ace Gap products. These cocktails can be experienced in our

tasting rooms. We also educate our customers on using our Ace Gap products at social gatherings.

We’ve focused our Ace Gap line of products on flavors that are amenable to use as components of traditional cocktails or in creating new, creative cocktails recipes. For this purpose, we offer a range of flavors. These include several fruited flavors such as Peach, Apple Harvest, and Blackberry; some sweet-inspired flavors such as Oatmeal Cookie and Chocolate Truffle; and other staple flavors such as Espresso, Coconut, and Vanilla Bean.

Our Chocolate Truffle is delicious and one of my personal favorites! An example of how Chocolate Truffle can be used to enhance a traditional Manhattan is to replace the standard sweet vermouth with our Ace Gap Chocolate Truffle while also replacing standard bitters with chocolate bitters. Our Chocolate Manhattan offers a delicious new twist on a longstanding cocktail favorite. *(Kevin Smith)*

W&L: Tell us about your two locations: Thompson’s Station and Townsend. Is there a visitors center at both locations? Are there distilling operations occurring at both?

CD: Yes, and yes. Both distilleries have tasting rooms, a bottle shop, a full cocktail menu, and the ability to book unique experiences. Both facilities are in full production, and guests can expect to see our team distilling our award-winning spirits, working on experimental projects, and even brewing beer. We can leave the beer discussion for another story. *(Jenna Wagner)*

W&L: W&L: What can visitors expect as they tour both facilities? Do visitors need reservations?

CD: We love welcoming guests into our distilleries. When you visit us at one of our tasting rooms in Thompson’s Station and Townsend,

DISTILLER NOTES: *Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished with Maple Wood*



Complex and smooth, column and pot stillled, this wheated bourbon opens with sweet notes of caramel and cinnamon toast paired with green apple and finishes with a silky blend of oak and maple. It’s the whiskey Company Distilling always wanted to make. A spirit well worth gathering over.

750ml | Proof: 90 | ABV: 45%

*See Page 62 for a full
Whiskey & Leisure Magazine review.*

TN, you will find we offer product portfolio tastings, cocktails, distillery tours, and shopping. Select experiences require reservations.

The Fill Your Own Bottle plus Premium Tasting with Master Distiller experience is available at our Townsend, Tennessee distillery in the Great Smoky Mountains. This tour takes you beyond the basics of bourbon, and guests will learn more about distilling award-winning spirits. Then, the tour will cap off with a premium tasting and filling your own bottle. (Jenna Wagner)

W&L: How can those outside Tennessee purchase your products?

CD: Company Distilling products are currently distributed in Tennessee, Georgia, and Texas. You can find our spirits in those states on liquor store shelves and on the back bar of your favorite restaurant or bar. If you reside outside the aforementioned states and aren't planning a trip to one of our distilleries soon, you can order Company Distilling products on Seelbachs.com. (Jenna Wagner)

W&L: Tell us about the "Distilling Greatness" podcast. Briefly share the founder's vision for what listeners will hear and learn about Tennessee's rich and uniquely American whiskey-making history.

CD: As you know, the founders of

Company Distilling have a deep passion for the state of Tennessee, its rich history, and the distilling industry past and present. The Company Distilling team will have friends join them in

"It's because of our team that we've had the successes we've had and that we believe we'll still meet our ultimate goal of bringing people together over high-quality spirits and spaces to gather."

~ Kris Tatum

each episode to share the rich stories of Tennessee and Tennessee Whiskey. Upcoming episodes include the science of Tennessee Whiskey, the Tennessee Whiskey Trail, and whiskey tourism. Each month will bring a new topic near and dear to the founders' hearts and the listeners' interests. (Jenna Wagner)

W&L: With over two years of operations underway, have you fulfilled your initial goals or milestones? If so, what was the most challenging process you had to overcome?

CD: Since our first bottle was distributed in November of 2021, we've faced the same ups and downs, peaks, and valleys of any other startup. It's because of our team that we've had the successes we've had and that we believe we'll still meet our ultimate goal of bringing people together over high-quality spirits and spaces to gather. (Kris Tatum)

W&L: What's next for Company Distilling?

CD: We will focus on our primary production facility and development of the surrounding grounds in the year ahead and opening up distribution in several new states for both Company Bourbon and Ghost Rail Gin. (Jeff Arnett)

To book an experience or learn more, visit: <https://companydistilling.com/distilleries/townsend-distillery/townsend-distillery-booking/>



Publisher's note: We would like to thank Jeff, Kris, Nathan, Kevin, and Jenna for their cooperation and assistance in presenting Company Distilling to our readers. A special thank you to Courtney for her patience and kindness in navigating this feature. All images in this article are courtesy of Company Distilling.



Jeff Arnett
Master Distiller
& Founder



Kris Tatum
President & Founder



Kevin Smith
Director of Brewing
& Distilling



Nathan Osborne
Director of Sales & Distri-
bution



Jenna Wagner
Director of Marketing
& Brand Strategy

SPECIAL SECTION

WHISKEY & LEISURE

MARCH 2023

MAGAZINE

WHISKEY TASTING CLUBS

❧ *Featuring* ❧

Bourbon Brotherhood

Bourbon Women

Charlotte Bourbon Society

Los Angeles Whisky Club

Missouri Whiskey Society

Jax Bourbon Society

Phoenix Social Club

The Whiskey Club

Plus

In Their Words | How to Host a Tasting Party And More

from the publisher

Chuck Branch



The Ties That Bind

From California to Maine, Washington to Florida, research shows that more and more people are becoming increasingly interested in and knowledgeable about the whiskey world.

As imbibers' palates become increasingly sophisticated folks are discovering new and intriguing flavor profiles. Now more than ever, they are fascinated with the prospect of trying different brands, be they well-known traditional brands, one-offs, small-batch whiskeys, craft whiskeys, or single malts.

There is something quite magical about how whiskey brings people together. It inspires camaraderie, fellowship, and often fantastic storytelling; some tiny tales, some whoppers, but always fun.

There is little doubt that whiskey clubs spanning the nation are rising. Those wanting to learn more about the whiskey-making process, those wishing to share their knowledge, or those yearning for fellowship continue to explore across the fruited plains. With today's plunging and bitter societal divisions, some still believe bringing people together is the answer, no matter the reason.

Taking the lead from Kevin Switick, founder of The Whiskey Club based in St Mary's County, Maryland, we decided to reach out to a few tasting/social clubs around the country, asking if they would share their path, their story and the inner workings of their club.

We discovered no matter the state, region, or town, tasting/social clubs around the country have similar beginnings and stories to tell. The common threads are fellowship, education, philanthropy,

and whiskey. This is apparent in each of the eight clubs profiled in this section.

So, how do you start your whiskey-tasting/social club or join those well-established ones? There are options for finding existing clubs; all it takes is a little research; we found ten with little effort.

Conversely, if you are considering gathering a few friends and creating a tasting/social club, we have a few ideas and suggestions learned over the past ten years that may encourage you to move forward.

A word of caution. If you are serious about starting a tasting/social club, you first need to understand that it's not just about the tittle; it's much more than that.

There is an equal balance of research, education, trial, and error, and perhaps most importantly, appreciating friends spending quality time together. Throw in a few food pairings and good cigars, and you will experience something extraordinary.

When deciding what experience level to write about, we decided to start at the novice level. This approach would also help the whiskey aficionado who might enjoy a refresher course. You never know what tidbit someone might pick up and expand their experience.

We invite you to pour a glass of your favorite whiskey, kick back, and continue reading as we present the passion exhibited through a few successful clubs, as well as a few pointers about organizing a tasting club: the basics, tasting techniques, a tutorial on whiskey production and the grains used, tools of the trade, and finally hosting a tasting.

~Slàinte

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Publisher

Editor/Designer

Chuck Branch

whiskey.leisuremagazine@gmail.com

P.O. Box 88 Ozark, Missouri 65721

417-569-3525

Creative Consultant

Karen Branch

KebSpot20@gmail.com

Contributor

David Collignon

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Whiskey & Leisure Magazine is an exploration into the world of spirits for your enjoyment, relaxation & introspection.

Our goal is to provide you with useful information, industry news, history, and interesting articles about the world of whiskey, spirits and leisure.

Sláinte.



The publishers of the Whiskey & Leisure Magazine ask that you enjoy in moderation and drink responsibly. Always be sure and arrange for a designated driver.

WHISKEY TASTING CLUBS

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A JOURNEY WORTH EXPLORING

“After more than 500 tastings, we have discovered a big difference between tasting whiskey and drinking whiskey. Join us as we take you on a journey of exploring the world of whiskey clubs and how to host a tasting.”

~ Chuck Branch, Phoenix Social Club



Image, depositphotos

By Chuck Branch

Nothing brings friends together like a shared love, in this case, a love of whiskey.

In this special section, we will dive into what a tasting club is and how to join a local club or society in your area. We will introduce you to several clubs around the country as they each

share their story of how and why they began their journey.

We will examine the dos and don'ts of tastings, pairings (both food and whiskey), and the tools of the trade needed to host your tastings. And we will discuss the whiskey-making process from grain to glass.

CHAPTER 1: IN THEIR WORDS

In Their Words: We wanted to learn more about how other whiskey clubs operate—so we reached out to whiskey clubs across the country. Eight clubs responded and shared their inspiration of how they started their clubs, their membership, how their club operates, philanthropic responsibilities, and advice for those

wanting to start a whiskey tasting club. We learned that no matter the region, these social clubs are mostly about fellowship and friendship—with a shared love for whiskey.

We want to thank each of the members for being willing to share their passion with us.



LOS ANGELES

WHISKY CLUB

CA



BOURBON BROTHERHOOD

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY



Images courtesy of Bourbon Brotherhood

CLUB: BOURBON BROTHERHOOD

Your name: Bruce Corwin

Location: Louisville, Kentucky

Year founded: 2014

Number of Members: 1,600

How often do you meet: Monthly

Dues: None

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whiskey club?

CORWIN: We're located in Louisville, Kentucky, and bourbon is big here. There were a couple of women's bourbon groups in the city but no men's group. It seemed like there should be one!

W&L: How did you start your whiskey club?

CORWIN: I invited a bunch of guys to meet in a hidden speakeasy at a downtown bourbon bar. Twenty-three guys showed up, and it took off from there.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

CORWIN: We don't have a formal mission statement, but our purpose is embodied by these four keys: Fun, Camaraderie, Education, and Philanthropy.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws? If so, what is your number one or most important rule? If you have rules, has there been a necessity to enforce them? If so, how was this accomplished?

CORWIN: We have no rules or bylaws and have never had a problem.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members? Do you have a cap on membership?

CORWIN: Membership is free. People sign up through our website. We currently have no cap on membership, but each event has a limited capacity, determined by the venue size.

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members' homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

CORWIN: Our events are held at very unique venues throughout the Louisville area, including bars, restaurants, distilleries, and private venues.

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works? Is your club purely social? Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back? Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

CORWIN: We typically meet from 5:30 to 7:30 on the fourth Wednesday of each month. We kick things off at 6:00 with an opening toast. Then we introduce our speaker, who spends about a half hour talking about their brand and bringing us through a tasting of their products. After that, we announce upcoming events and give out door prizes. After that, it's mostly just social and casual.

W&L: Who decides on the tittle for the presentation? Typically, how many expressions are presented? Do you have a regularly scheduled "host" calendar for a given year?

CORWIN: We feature a different distillery each month, and a presentation is made by a representative from the distillery, often the Master Distiller. We typically start with a welcome cocktail and then do a tasting of 4 or 5 expressions.

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

CORWIN: We always provide food at our events. Sometimes it's done as a pairing; other times, it's simply food.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

CORWIN: We typically do a few barrel picks each year.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

CORWIN: It's lots of fun but also tons of work. Event planning, emails, social media, website, merchandise, managing membership. It all takes work, but it's a labor of love.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

CORWIN: Amazing friendships can be made over a pour of whiskey. We're currently celebrating our 10th year of hosting monthly bourbon tastings, and part of that is celebrating the great friends we've made along the way, along with the good we've done in our community.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whiskey club?

CORWIN: There are many different types of whiskey clubs. Talk with your friends to decide what your vision will be. Will you meet at the same place or at different venues? How many members do you want to have? Are you targeting a specific demographic? Will it be a bottle-share situation, or will whiskey be provided by the host? Having a clear vision of what you want the club to be is important. Other advice would be to always have food and water available and remember to take lots of photos.



Images courtesy of Bourbon Brotherhood

W&L: We always end our Q&As with the following question: Is there a question we have not asked we should have?

CORWIN: Here are a few other questions you could ask:

In my experience, most clubs are involved in some form of philanthropy. That would be a good question to ask about. This has been an important component of the Bourbon Brotherhood. This year we will be hosting our 10th annual Bourbon Mixer event in partnership with the Whiskey Chicks (a ladies' group). We have raised over \$450,000 to support local charities.

<https://www.bourbonbrotherhood.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/Louisvillebourbon>

MISSOURI WHISKEY SOCIETY

EUREKA, MISSOURI



CLUB: MISSOURI WHISKEY SOCIETY

Your name: Elizabeth Arway

Location: Eureka, Missouri

Year founded: 2014

Number of Members: over 1,400

How often do you meet: 1x month

Dues: Lifetime Membership \$45, Select Membership Upgrade \$15/month

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whiskey club?

ARWAY: Established in 2014, the Missouri Whiskey Society is an illustrious group of individuals who are passionate about the world of whiskey.

W&L: How did you start your whiskey club?

ARWAY: The founders started the society within Gamlin Whiskey House; in 2020, GWH closed, but the society has continued.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

ARWAY: Our mission is to have fun while learning more about every aspect of our favorite spirit.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws? If so, what is your number one or most important rule? If you have rules, has there been a necessity to enforce them? If so, how was this accomplished?

ARWAY: The only rule, our events, tastings, and trips are members-only.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members? Do you have a cap on membership?

ARWAY: No membership cap. Most of our new members are friends of current members. We attend the annual Whiskey In The Winter event to market to new members.

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members' homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

ARWAY: We meet at various locations in the St. Louis metro area—private tasting rooms and event spaces.



Images courtesy of Missouri Whiskey Society

Missouri Whiskey Society on a road trip to Maker's Mark Distillery.



Pictured right, Elizabeth Arway, managing founder of the Missouri Whiskey Society displaying Canadian Club Classic.



Elizabeth Arway, far right, and members of the Missouri Whiskey Society on a visit to Four Roses Distillery.

Images courtesy of Missouri Whiskey Society

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works? Is your club purely social? Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back? Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

ARWAY: Missouri Whiskey Society is more than whiskey. It's honestly become a family. Since 2014, we have watched amazing friendships get formed – all around a single spirit – whiskey. It's the community of people that makes our group so special. Whiskey is just the excuse to bring us all together. Our focus is education. We want to introduce new whiskeys through educational tastings to let our members experience something they may not have tried before.

W&L: Who decides on the tipples for the presentation? Typically, how many expressions are presented? Do you have a regularly scheduled “host” calendar for a given year?

ARWAY: Elizabeth Arway and Derek Gamlin, managing founders of the MWS, schedule the tasting events for their members. They have 15-20 years of experience in the spirits industry, with many stories to share. They have led many of the educational tastings themselves and invite brand representatives to lead the members through the tastings.

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

ARWAY: Sometimes, but most of the time, it's spirits only.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

ARWAY: We have in the past, but it's not our focus.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

ARWAY: The challenge for us is time. The club is a side project for us, and when our work schedules get busy, it's hard to manage.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

ARWAY: Our goal is education in a fun and inviting community.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whiskey club?

ARWAY: Have fun. Focus on the people! Ask for help when you need it.

<https://missouriwhiskeysociety.com>

BOURBON • WOMEN ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL



Marianne Eaves speaks at the 2022 Bourbon Women SIPosium.

Photo courtesy: Bourbon Women Association

CLUB: BOURBON WOMEN ASSOCIATION

Your name: Heather Wibbels, managing director

Location: National

Year founded: 2011

Number of Members: Bourbon Women reaches thousands across the U.S. each year.

How often do you meet: With 16 branches, it feels like several times a month.

Dues: yes

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whiskey club?

WIBBELS: Bourbon Women was founded in 2011 by Peggy Noe Stevens and a group of charter members who

recognized that women were not being included in the conversations around whiskey. Women have always sipped whiskey, and women have always been involved in the production, sales, and success of whiskey. Bourbon Women brings curated education and the fun of connections made over whiskey to women across the country. Today our members in our 16 branches across the country revel in the connections made to spirits brands, spirits professionals, and the other women who embrace bourbon culture. You can find out more about us at <https://bourbonwomen.org>.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

WIBBELS: Bourbon Women is THE organization for women who

are passionate about Bourbon culture, women, and the promise of adventure when the two are combined. As an independent forum bringing women from all walks of life together over a glass of bourbon, our focus is to: Initiate, cultivate & inspire deep, meaningful relationships. Encourage the development of women personally, professionally, and courageously, supporting members in their journey to become the best versions of themselves. Provide a safe, inclusive environment for fun, discovery, and learning.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws?

WIBBELS: If so, what is your number one or most important rule? If you have rules, has there been a necessity to

enforce them? If so, how was this accomplished?

As a 501(c)6 nonprofit, we have official bylaws that direct the functions of the organization. We encourage members to sip responsibly and enjoy the whiskey that was so carefully made by distillers across the country. But we also celebrate that each person has their own palate, their own preferences, and their own connection to bourbon and bourbon culture. If there's one thing our members love, it's sharing a sip in a room full of women and learning about bourbon while we do.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members? Do you have a cap on membership?

Wibbels: Membership is open to anyone. You can join us at <https://bourbonwomen.org>.

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members' homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

WIBBELS: Bourbon Women events often take place in restaurants, distilleries, cultural venues, or places where there's a strong connection to bourbon or spirits history. Each event is different, whether it's a virtual event to connect women across the country to a small local Meet and Neat to bring members together to visit for a quick taste and education of a new spirit. Plus, our annual SIPosium conference which brings hundreds together for a weekend each August. We meet anywhere the bourbon adventure takes us.

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works? Is your club purely social? Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back? Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

WIBBELS: We are not a drinking club or a social club. But we do have fun when we gather. Every event is educational and curated to facilitate women's connection and inspire meaningful relationships that happen any place women gather with sips of whiskey. Our organization isn't a moment, it's a movement, and each day we hear from members who are thrilled to be a part of an organization that introduces women to bourbon but also brings women to the bourbon industry. We are passionate that whiskey should be made by and represent all the people who drink it, and diversity is the way that happens.

W&L: Who decides on the tittle for the presentation? Typically, how many expressions are presented? Do you have a regularly scheduled "host" calendar for a given year?

WIBBELS: In a given year, Bourbon Women may host between 35 to 45 events across our 16 branches spread all over the country. Our branches are run by volunteer Branch Ambassadors who plan and execute events at local venues. Our larger branches might have 6 to 10 events a year, while our smaller branches aim for 4 to 6 – but we make sure each event is fun and educational. We often work with brand partners who provide the education, spirits, or venue for the events.

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?



Photos courtesy: Bourbon Women Association.

Members of the Bourbon Women Association offer up a toast at a membership tasting.

WIBBELS: Given that Peggy Noe Stevens and Susan Reigler are members and leaders of the organization, absolutely, yes. Their book, "Which Fork Do I Use with My Bourbon?" Focuses on the whys and hows of creating fun bourbon events and exciting food pairings at home. Even if there is no formal food pairing, members often pair bites of small food with different spirits or cocktails to see how food affects the flavor of the whiskey.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

WIBBELS: We have a bottle club called Bourbon Women Peacock Preferred (<https://bourbonwomen.org/peacock-preferred-experience/>) where bottles selected by women for women are available to the Peacock Preferred membership. Peggy Noe Stevens, the world's first Master Bourbon Taster, and Susan Reigler, bourbon author and overall bourbon authority, are the experts behind the bottle picks and coordinate with distilleries across the country to select barrels that appeal that are delicious, complex, and fun.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

WIBBELS: First, I would never describe our organization

as a whiskey club because it's more than that. We have a mission to lift women and underrepresented communities up, and our 'why' drives us to make a change to the industry and the spirits world every day. But just logistically, event venues and partners find the complicated regulations of the alcohol industry inhibiting, and we spend a good deal of time working with our members and partners to make sure they know how to create great events and stay within the law. It can also be challenging to convince brands to bring in a new presentation or topic that they may think is too geeky or esoteric for a group of whiskey drinkers (especially women). But our women love those presentations and often surprise the speakers by their attention and their questions. They're passionate about bourbon and want to dive deep into the specifics.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

WIBBELS: We want our members to feel like they've found a home — a place where people who love whiskey can come and sip together without judgment. A place where they can ask questions, learn new things, and above all, make those glorious connections you make when two strangers meet over a glass of great bourbon. Our members make this organization what it is, not the bourbon. We hope to help them all find a place in the whiskey community where they belong, where they can be themselves, and where they can connect with other whiskey-minded sippers.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whiskey club?

WIBBELS: Be intentional about the reason behind your group. The "why" of a group can be what makes it meaningful to new members and drive engagement and interaction.

W&L: We always end our Q&A; As with the question: Is there a question we have not asked we should haven't? What's something you do differently from other whiskey groups?

WIBBELS: Once a year, women gather in Louisville in August for the Bourbon Women SIPosium National Conference for, the only consumer-based, female-focused whiskey conference in the U.S. Over four days, close to 400 women from 36 states attend specialty excursions, curated workshops, keynotes, themed dinners and food pairings, tasting events and special receptions to connect women to the whiskey world and to one another. Last year we had 47 sponsors, 36 whiskey brands represented, and 31 female industry speakers and presenters. We start our full days with a whiskey or cocktail toast with breakfast and learn and sip our way through the day. It is a magical experience to raise a toast and sip a whiskey in a room filled with women, and it's an experience we treasure year after year.

A Special Note from the Founder:

"From one Bourbon woman to another, it was more of a pent-up feeling, knowing for my entire life that I watched women enjoying bourbon, yet the industry did not recognize this market.

"As a Master Bourbon Taster, I felt awkward conducting tasting programs around the world where women sat in the back of the room and only asked questions afterward.

"Working both inside and outside of the industry, a quest began to design the perfect platform to start the conversation with women, not a commercial sales pitch, and advance their interest in spirits.

"A tremendous, generous, and accomplished pool of Kentucky women gathered together to brainstorm on the question: what do women want when it comes to whiskey education and time with their friends?

"Over many Manhattans and a sincere desire to raise women's awareness and celebrate their love for our amber elixir, Bourbon Women was born.

"We wanted to debunk some myths about women and whiskey and relay to the industry that brands did not need to 'pinkify' the product for females. We love our brands just the way you are, and actually, we now know through Bourbon Women's research that women go for stronger, spicier, higher-proof, and more robust flavors. Proudly, Bourbon Women was the first female consumer group in the industry and, since 2011, serves not only as a network of women across the nation but showcases the lifestyle and culture for which we choose. We are not a club; we are a movement. We work hard to help the industry and create a unique environment that is savored by the moments we share together.

"Mothers, aunts, sisters, nieces, and daughters all gather together as individuals and [to] form a community of like-minded women, something I never saw in my 30 years of whiskey-soaked experiences.

"Seeing it now and seeing Bourbon Women spread across the nation and the globe has been a great joy to me. We are more than a demographic. Bourbon Women are confident and sophisticated with a love for adventure. The word 'experience' says it all with Bourbon Women because once you truly experience this organization, you know you are part of something special in our industry. To hear the stories of women in the industry and the brands that support our mission is fun but also so inspiring for those that may not have realized the historic past women have held as leaders and workers in the bourbon industry.

"It is with admiration and pure enjoyment that I meet our bourbon women across the nation because there is just something beautiful about a woman and her whiskey. By the response of support from the industry today, they think so too. I'm just one woman's story among this fabulous organization.

"Let us hear your Bourbon story; I know a few women who will listen"

- Peggy Noe Stevens, Founder and Chair Emeritus.

CHARLOTTE BOURBON SOCIETY

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA



Images courtesy: Charlotte Bourbon Society

CLUB: CHARLOTTE BOURBON SOCIETY (CBS)

Your name: Ken Bernardo

Location: Charlotte, NC

Year founded: 2018

Number of Members: 3,600+ (Exclusive to the Charlotte Metro Area)

Membership: Private

How often do you meet: We try to meet 6X+ a year

Dues: 3 Levels of Membership: Infinity Barrel (\$0), Single Barrel Select (\$150), and Private Reserve (\$1,000.)

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whiskey club?

BERNARDO: My father passed away in July 2017 from cardiovascular disease. I was the Greater Charlotte Chairman for the American Heart Association (AHA) Heart Walk. I had not raised any money after his passing, and the Walk was fast approaching (October). I called upon my good friend and former classmate at UNCC, John Little, Founder of Smooth Ambler Spirits, and asked him if he'd help me do a bourbon dinner fundraiser at my club. We raised \$18k after expenses our first year and just celebrated our 5th Anniversary this past

November. In total, we've raised over \$300,000 for the AHA and a local Heart Organization, HeartBright Foundation. The CBS was born in 2018 as a way to grow participation in my annual dinner. Needless to say, it grew legs and turned into something much bigger than I could have ever imagined (with some heartache along the way).

W&L: How did you start your whiskey club?

BERNARDO: Through my dinner... then took to Facebook/social media, built a website, created an LLC, and trademarked the name.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

BERNARDO: We are a community dedicated to bringing people together, sharing our passion for bourbon whiskey, and giving back to the Charlotte community. From the novice to the enthusiast, we welcome all who want to learn more about the spirit we love.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws? If so, what is your number one or most important rule? If you have rules, has there been a necessity to enforce them? If so, how was this accomplished?

BERNARDO: It's this simple – contribute positivity to the group. Our Rules are posted on our Facebook Group. If you can't be civil or follow our rules – you won't be in the group long.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members? Do you have a cap on membership?

BERNARDO: No cap. You must live in our 11-county MSA, agree to our rules, no flipping, buying/selling, or trading alcohol on our FB or IG forums (we live in a controlled state – we have to play by the rules).

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members' homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

BERNARDO: Local whiskey establishments

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works? Is your club purely social? Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back? Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

BERNARDO: Social, education, meet-ups, and celebrate spirits holidays (Repeal Day, National Bourbon Day, etc).

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

BERNARDO: Sometimes

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

BERNARDO: We have selected over 175 barrels over the past 3-4 years in partnership with our ABC board. Those barrels are selected by a pick panel comprised of the best bartenders in CLT and then offered to the public at select stores.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

BERNARDO: Time, dealing with irrational/uneducated whiskey trolls and keyboard warriors (we eventually boot them from our society).

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

BERNARDO: Embrace the spirit we've



Top: Left to right, Eli Privette, lead bar manager at Crunkleton-Charlotte whiskey bar, Ken Bernardo, Tracey Bernardo, and Jon Dressler (top restaurateur in the Charlotte market). **Bottom:** left to right, Tracey Bernardo, Ken Bernardo, and Freddie Johnson, 3rd Generation tour guide at Buffalo Trace Distillery.

come to love, meet like-minded people, create new friendships, and feel like we're a safe place if you're starting out learning about bourbon – we welcome all and strive to mirror the diversity of our city.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a

whiskey club?

BERNARDO: Create rules and stick to them. There's a group for everyone – find the one you feel comfortable in.

For information, or to join visit:

<https://cltbourbonsociety.com>

JAX BOURBON SOCIAL

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

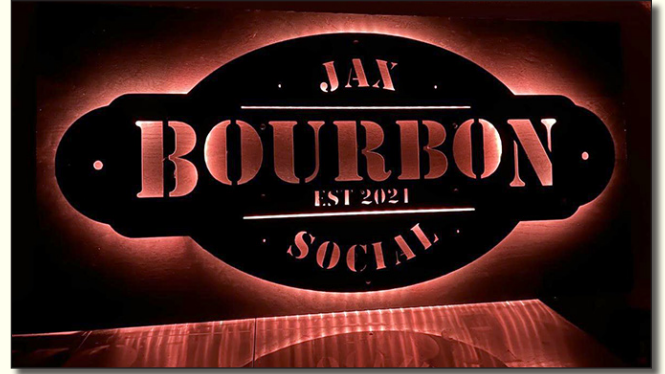


Photo credit: Teresa Eichner

CLUB: JAX BOURBON SOCIAL

Your name: Teresa Eichner

Location: Jacksonville, FL

Year founded: 2020

Number of Members: 5 board members

How often do you meet: Scheduled events only

Dues: No

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whiskey club?

EICHNER: We formed out of a desire to increase charitable contributions to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. I was diagnosed with MS in February 2016 after losing sight in my left eye overnight.

W&L: How did you start your whiskey club?

EICHNER: In 2020, at a mutual

friend's house, over a glass of Wild Turkey 101, I approached Andy Goethe and asked if he would help host a bourbon and whiskey tasting at my house. The event quickly grew too large to host at my house. In July 2021, we hosted our first event with 140 people in attendance and raised over \$23,000 for the MS Society. Cody Mitchko and Jordan Mulhbauer joined soon after, and in July 2022, our event hosted over 300 people and raised \$63,000 for the MS Society.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

EICHNER: Yes, Pour for a Cure

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws?

EICHNER: Yes, we have bylaws and are an IRS-registered exempt organization. *What is your number one or most*

important rule? We have a standard board of director bylaws on file and regularly review and update those as the organization grows. *If you have rules, has there been a necessity to enforce them?* Yes, we enforce rules among each other and discuss each event as they are planned and scheduled. *If so, how was this accomplished?* We work with each other and learn to lean on each other's strengths.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members?

EICHNER: A majority vote of the Board of Directors. *Do you have a cap on membership?* No, we don't have a cap on membership, but each event is capped at the number of tickets that can be sold.

W&L: Where do you typically meet:



Left to right, Cody Mitchko, Teresa Eichner, Andy Goethe and Jordan Mulhbauer.

Photo credit: Amanda Goethe



Jax Bourbon Society Auction—a sampling of donated items from friends and family.

Photo credit: Teresa Eichner

members' homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

EICHNER: We have met at each other homes and local establishments.

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works?

EICHNER: We are a nonprofit charitable organization that works to raise money to end the devastating effects of MS. *Is your club purely social?* Yes, our events include friends and family members and are growing to others who enjoy bourbon and whiskey. The growth we have experienced has been incredible, and the generosity has been unbelievable.

Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back? As we grow our organization, the more formal we become. None of us had ever hosted or created an event, so the experience we gained each year has been vital.

Is it equally about the spirit as well as education? Yes, while we focus on the bourbon-tasting portions of our event, we also have speakers from the MS Society educate people on what MS is, how it impacts those diagnosed with it and how the money they are spending to attend our event will be spent.

W&L: Who decides on the tipples for the presentation? This is a group effort.

EICHNER: The four of us work well together as each of us brings a different perspective to the organization. *Typically, how many expressions are presented?* For the first event, we had six tasting tables from a variety of local and national distilleries. In the second year, we hosted 15 tasting tables and added several national and craft distilleries. *Do you have a regularly scheduled "host" calendar for a given year?* We host an annual event in July, my birthday month, each year.

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

EICHNER: Yes, our catering partner and I work together to pair a menu that will pair well, and Jordan has smoked pork and brisket through the night for each of our events.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

EICHNER: In 2022, we were afforded an amazing opportunity to offer a barrel pick from New England Barrel

Company. James Saunders was an incredible host for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. He even attended our event and was on hand to sign bottles that our guests purchased. We are excited about our future to offer barrel picks with James and other distilleries as we grow.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

EICHNER: We all have "real" day jobs, and this requires we make time to plan, get sponsors, get bottles donated, and sell tickets when we aren't working. It's something we work on every day throughout the year.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

EICHNER: We want our community to have a better understanding of the mission of the National MS Society and how impactful they can really be toward finding a cure. Bourbon and whiskey brought us together, and finding a cure is made possible because they are willing to give their time, talent, and treasure (secret stashes) to improve the lives of people diagnosed with MS.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whiskey club?

EICHNER: Don't rush. Take your time, be picky and represent the brand you build. The trust and loyalty we have been given is not taken lightly, and we do our very best to communicate with each other so that our success remains a team effort and so we remain focused on the goal.

W&L: We always end our Q&As with the following question: Is there a question we have not asked we should have?

EICHNER: Yes, have you ever experienced a situation that was less desirable? The short answer is yes. The saying that "opinions are like..." is true. Not everyone has the same vision, mission, or heart as you. Stay the course, and don't let the haters stop you from reaching your goals.

Email: Tahreesahe@gmail.com. or visit:

<https://www.jaxbourbonsocial.com>

THE WHISKEY CLUB

ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

“WHERE FREEDOM AND WHISKY MEET”
ESTABLISHED IN 1785



CLUB: THE WHISKEY CLUB

Established 1785—“Where Freedom and Whiskey Meet.”

Your name: Commander Kevin G. Switick, USN(ret.)

Location: St. Mary's County, Maryland

Year founded: 2021

Number of Members: 131 as of 1/26/23

Membership: Private

How often do you meet: Monthly

Are there dues: No, everyone pays their own way

W&L: How did you start your whiskey club?

CDR SWITICK: I sent the above invite to 16 friends, and it grew from there.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement? We are a social club with the ‘definite purpose’ of getting friends together in

a social setting on a regular basis just to hang out, congratulate each other on our success, ask for guidance on our journeys, share stories, and lend new thoughts and ideas. Think of it as a good ol’ fashioned Navy Happy Hour with friends.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws?

CDR SWITICK: Yes, one rule; no bylaws.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members?

CDR SWITICK: If a current member recommends and vouches for a prospective new member, I send them an invite. So far, only one person has said ‘no.’

W&L: Do you have a cap on

membership?

CDR SWITICK: Not yet. Although we have 130+ members, we typically see around 25-30 at any one event.

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members’ homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

CDR SWITICK: All of the above. We rotate around the county to different restaurants, distilleries, bars, member businesses, and private homes (many of us have amazing bourbon bars in our homes that we want to share). My goal is to highlight new or amazing businesses in the area that people may not know about. Some community building.

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works?

CDR SWITICK: The idea is simple,

once a month, I send an email letting everybody know the day, time, and place of the next gathering. They come if they can; skip if they cannot. Each social event is a 'buy your own drink' event... Keep it simple.

W&L: Is your club purely social?

CDR SWITICK: Yes.

W&L: Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back?

CDR SWITICK: Very laid back, typically no presentations.

W&L: Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

CDR SWITICK: If we go to a distillery, they offer us an education and a free tasting. If a business, they give us a tour. It is equally about the spirit, the education, the community, and the love of bourbon (although we have many non-drinkers and beer lovers in the group – aghast!).

W&L: Who decides on the tipples for the presentation?

CDR SWITICK: The licensed owner of the establishment. If at a business, we bring in a licensed bartender to cater the event (it doesn't hurt that a few of our members are licensed bartenders) - e.g., <https://www.topshelfmixologyconsulting.com/events/>

W&L: Typically, how many expressions are presented?

CDR SWITICK: If at a distillery, we typically see 3-4. At one of our bourbon bars, the manager typically has 3-4 new (Special) bottles for us to try. Last time he offered a flight of three Pappy Van Winkles for \$150.

W&L: Do you have a regularly scheduled "host" calendar for a given year?

CDR SWITICK: Not yet, but we have open invitations from

the more popular bourbon distilleries (e.g., The Tobacco Barn Distillery) and bourbon bars (e.g., Barrel 9 in Lusby, MD).

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

CDR SWITICK: No, since everyone is paying their own way, food is on your own.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

CDR SWITICK: We have talked about it, and I reached out to a few distributors, but I am told that MD Laws basically prohibits it. If that's wrong, please let me know!

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

CDR SWITICK: Finding a variety of new places near people's offices such that they can easily stop on their way home from work (we meet once a month on the last Thursday of every month, 5:00-7:00 pm), and the care and feeding of the administration.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

CDR SWITICK: A love of bourbon, new friendships, and community.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whiskey club?

CDR SWITICK: Start very small and keep it very simple; grow into your shoes.

W&L: We always end our Q&As with the following question: Is there a question we have not asked we should have?

CDR SWITICK: Why are people in St Mary's so passionate about bourbon? Aren't you known for crabcakes?

Letter of Formal Invitation:

Dear John,

Wally thought you might enjoy this...

Over the past few years, amidst the COVID restrictions, I was noodling with the idea of starting a fun social club to get our friends in the local community back together like days of ole.

I finally decided to stop noodling, jump out on the limb, and start an informal social club, a 'Master-Mind Alliance' if you will, called The Whiskey Club. What is a Master-Mind Alliance, you ask? Great question... The Master-Mind concept, introduced in the 1937 book by Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*, is "the coordination of knowledge and effort in the spirit of harmony, between like-minded people, for the attainment of a definite purpose."

Andrew Carnegie's Master Mind group had 50 members. Including, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, John Burroughs, and Luther Burbank. "No individual may have great power without availing themselves of the 'Master Mind' surround yourself with women and men who are willing to lend wholehearted aid in the spirit of perfect harmony. This form of cooperative alliance has been the basis of nearly every great fortune," Hill wrote.

So, what is the 'definite purpose' of The Whiskey Club? To get friends together in a social setting on a regular basis to just hang out, congratulate each other on our success, ask for guidance on our journeys, share stories, and lend new thoughts and ideas. Think of it as a good ol' fashioned Navy Happy Hour with friends.

The idea is simple, once a month I send an email letting everybody know the day, time, and place of the next gathering. Come if you can; skip if you cannot. Each social event would be 'buy your own drink.' Keep it simple.

My hope is to grow The Whiskey Club slowly over time. As of today, there are over 130 members.

Who's eligible to join our social club? Anyone that a current member recommends and vouches for. I would be honored if you would join us.

Please let me know if you're interested, with gratitude, Kevin G. Switick, Founder | Plankowner | Friend.

Whiskey & the US Navy in St. Mary's County, Maryland

By Commander Kevin Switick, USN Retired



Image: depositphotos.com

Lexington Park, Maryland, USA—A collection of planes at the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum.

Many (some) of the great Kentucky bourbon families immigrated to the Louisville/Bardstown area from St Mary's County, Md. It's true.

Basil Hayden, Sr. was a Maryland Catholic who led a group of twenty-five Catholic families from Maryland into Nelson County, Kentucky (near Bardstown) in 1785.

"Years ago, Hayden said that immigrants from Scotland and Ireland made their way to St. Mary's and Charles counties but were lured to the Kentucky territory by "corn grants." The grants, dispensed by the governor of Virginia, who then presided over the Kentucky territory, gave land to settlers who promised to grow corn.

"St Mary's County's history went back to 1634 and was a very populous tobacco and corn-growing area for centuries (corn continues today; tobacco is mainly gone).

"St. Mary's County is the birthplace of Maryland. Maryland was an idea of George Calvert, First Lord Baltimore, who wanted a place where all religions could practice freely. George Calvert petitioned King Charles I in the early 1600s for a land grant to establish a new colony. George Calvert died before he was able to see his idea come to life. His son, Cecilius Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore, inherited his estate.

"In November 1633, Cecilius Calvert sent his brothers George and Leonard Calvert, along with 140 passengers, aboard the Ark and the Dove bound for Maryland. The two ships landed on St. Clement's Island in March of 1634.

"On March 25, 1634, Father Andrew White, who sailed with the first colonists, celebrated the first Roman Catholic Mass on St. Clement's Island. The island was small, so the ships traveled further south. Leonard Calvert bought about 30 miles of land below the Wicomico River from the Yaocomaco Indians with bolts of fabric, axes, and other farm tools. The settlers moved in among the Indians, who assisted them while establishing their settlement. This area became the State's first capital, St. Mary's City.

"The capital was later moved to its permanent home in Annapolis. Colonial life was difficult, but settlers soon began to grow tobacco, which became the lifeblood of the colony. Tobacco was prosperous for many farmers, which allowed them to purchase land and build large plantation homes such as Sotterley Plantation."

One of the many early tobacco plantations in St Mary's County became Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River in 1943 at the height of World War II and the home of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) in 1945. Four of the

seven Mercury astronauts (The Mercury Seven) graduated from the USNTPS and lived in St Mary's County – Carpenter, Glenn, Schirra, and Shepard.

The seven original American astronauts were Navy Lieutenant Scott Carpenter, Air Force Captain Gordon Cooper, Marine Lieutenant Colonel John Glenn, Air Force Captain Gus Grissom, Navy Lieutenant Commander Wally Schirra, Navy Lieutenant Commander Alan Shepard, and Air Force Captain Deke Slayton. Today, over 100 USNTPS graduates have become NASA astronauts.

P.S. I'm a USNTPS Graduate and a retired Navy Test Pilot...Fly Navy.

Sources:

<https://www.navair.navy.mil/nawcad/usntps>

<https://www.visitstmarysmd.com/about/history/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_Seven

Publishers note: When *W&L* published an article featuring *Tobacco Barn Distillery* (in the Oct. 2022 issue), we wished we had included the rich history of St. Mary's County in the feature. The multi-generational residents of southern Maryland have an unapologetic frame of reverence for the history of whiskey and many of the founders of modern-day Kentucky Bourbon. We are glad we can correct the error and include the history in this article.

PHOENIX SOCIAL CLUB

OZARK, MISSOURI



Phoenix Social Club at The Mitchell Ranch, Ozark, Missouri.

Courtesy Phoenix Social Club

Club: Phoenix Social Club
Your name: David V. Collignon
Location: Ozark, Missouri
Year founded: 2021 (Originally 2013)
Number of Members: 26
Membership: Private
How often do you meet: Monthly
Dues: Yes—\$25 per person, per event.

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whiskey club?

COLLIGNON: To learn more about spirits. How are they made, and what to enjoy. And, equally important, is the fellowship, sharing the experience with close friends.

W&L: How did you start your whiskey club?

COLLIGNON: We gathered several close friends together and, over drinks, inquired if they were interested in forming a social club focusing on the world of spirits. We were interested in not only sampling different brands of whiskey but what was equally important, how it was made.

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

COLLIGNON: Yes. The Phoenix Social Club is an alliance of close friends looking to expand their knowledge and experiences while on a voyage of discovery in the world of Spirits.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws? If so, what is your number one or most important rule? If you have rules, has

there been a necessity to enforce them? If so, how was this accomplished?

COLLIGNON: Mostly, we have informal rules. Civility is the most important rule. A previous club had formal rules which one member violated. The club was dissolved, and a new one was formed. We also require all members to host an event in a given year. If there is one hard and fast rule, it is no politics.

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members? Do you have a cap on membership?

COLLIGNON: If a current member wishes to bring in a new member, they must invite them to one of our tasting events and make proper introductions.

“We set out for the Phoenix Social Club to be semi-formal—mostly educational, but equally important is the social aspect.” ~ David Collignon

Following the third event, a formal, written, secret ballot. The subsequent vote must be unanimous.

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members’ homes, local tavern, restaurant, etc.?

COLLIGNON: Usually, a member’s home, but it can be wherever the “Host” wants to make the presentation.

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works? Is your club purely social? Do you have formal presentations, or is it laid back? Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

COLLIGNON: We set out for the Phoenix Social Club to be semi-formal—mostly educational, but equally important is the social aspect. Occasionally, a member will have a themed event, everything from a Roaring '20s party to a cowboy cookout featuring a tribute to Yellowstone Bourbon.

W&L: Who decides on the tittle for the presentation? Typically, how many expressions are presented? Do you have a regularly scheduled “host” calendar for a given year?

COLLIGNON: “Host” decides the tittle—usually, three expressions in a theme. We do have an annual calendar. At the yearly December gathering, club membership information is discussed, and members select their host month for the following year.

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

COLLIGNON: Most of the time. This is part of the learning process. Some members go to great lengths to pair their tittle presentations with a food profile that mirrors the profiles of the expressions.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

COLLIGNON: Not yet.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whiskey club?

COLLIGNON: The primary challenge is ensuring each member hosts their event in a given year. During presentations, it's like herding cats... but it is always fun.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whiskey club?

COLLIGNON: The chance to sample something we may never purchase. Some members will pick a local expression in their travels and bring it back to the club to sample and

enjoy. Also, we want everyone to have a good time and learn something with each tasting.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whiskey club?

COLLIGNON: Please don't get too wrapped around the axle of complicated rules and their enforcement.



Roaring '20s is a themed event held in an actual speakeasy at The Finley Restaurant in Ozark, Missouri. **Pictured, left to right,** Mary Ann Campbell, Frank Lorenz, and Donna Osborn.

LOS ANGELES WHISKY CLUB

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

LOS
ANGELES

WHISKY CLUB

CA



CLUB: LOS ANGELES WHISKY CLUB

Your name: Beks Opperman

Location: Los Angeles, California

Year founded: 2019

Number of Members: 60

Membership (Private or public): Private

How often do you meet: At least monthly, sometimes a bit more often

Dues: Yes, \$125 per year

W&L: What was the inspiration for the formation of your whisky club?

OPPERMAN: Learning and experiencing together is why we meet. We all love learning, we enjoy sharing great experiences together, and we love the community that has formed around our mutual love of great whiskies. We also really love tasting our whiskies blind, which we find creates an equality across the group that is hard to achieve when you have a mix of experienced connoisseurs and those who are newer to their whisky journey.

W&L: How did you start your whisky club?

OPPERMAN: I had gotten really into whisky and had started sourcing and collecting a great deal of bottles, but was not drinking them fast enough. I love whisky and drink regularly, but don't drink a lot at once, so I was definitely buying more than I was consuming. I decided to start the club because I wanted to share these great bottles with like-minded folks, and I thought a club would be the best way to do that. It turns out I was right!

W&L: Do you have a mission statement?

OPPERMAN: No, not an official one.

W&L: Do you have rules or bylaws? If so, what is your number one or most important rule? If you have rules, has there been a necessity to enforce them? If so, how was this accomplished?

OPPERMAN: The biggest rule is that

we don't tolerate snobbery or anyone talking down to another member about their opinions on what we are tasting. We are inclusive first and foremost, and we want everyone to feel comfortable and at home when they are here. I am very willing to ask someone to leave the club if they violate this rule, but I have not had to do that yet. So far, everyone has been really delightful!

W&L: What is your process for bringing in new members? Do you have a cap on membership?

OPPERMAN: New members usually find us through an existing member or through Instagram. I usually ask people a bit about themselves and try to get a feel for what their like and if we are the right club for them. But we're not super exclusive. People can click to join our club right on our website.

W&L: Where do you typically meet: members' homes, local tavern,

restaurant, etc.?

OPPERMAN: We meet in my loft in downtown LA and simultaneously via zoom for members that are not in LA or don't want to join in person.

W&L: Can you tell our readers how your club works? Is your club purely social? Do you have formal presentations, or is it more laid back? Is it equally about the spirit as well as education?

OPPERMAN: It's a hybrid of all these things. We start with a welcome cocktail and some snacks at the bar, then move to a long table for the tasting. First, there is some history and education about what we are tasting, then we go through each sample together and discuss what we like or don't like about it, and we try to offer tasting notes to each other. We taste everything blind for the first round, which makes for a much more interesting tasting, in my opinion. We are free from bias about things we have had before or about knowing if a bottle is rare or expensive. It's really fun to taste this way because it equalizes everyone who is attending. Even very experienced drinkers can be stumped when forced to taste blind. From the beginning, our club has been about 60% women, which I think adds a really special element to it as well. We are a diverse group, and that only makes us stronger.

W&L: Who decides on the tipples for

the presentation? Typically, how many expressions are presented? Do you have a regularly scheduled "host" calendar for a given year?

OPPERMAN: The person leading the tasting decides the lineup. Most of the time that is me, but we do have guest hosts or teachers sometimes too. We taste between 6 and 8 samples each time. We schedule our tastings out about four months, and the calendar is available for the members to view when they like.

W&L: Do you pair foods with your presentations?

OPPERMAN: Yes, we start with a snack board and then have crackers and nuts available on the table during the tasting. Sometimes we do a meal as part of our tasting, but not always. For example, we did a taco cart with our mezcal tasting last summer, and we had a barbecue chef come in for us when we did our bourbon tasting in the Fall.

W&L: Does your club offer barrel picks to your membership?

OPPERMAN: No, we have not done that yet. Maybe one day.

W&L: What are the most challenging aspects of running a whisky club?

OPPERMAN: Running an event for 15-25 people every month can be a lot of work, what with the glass cleaning, food prep, cocktail prep, etc. But it's worth it. I just love this club so much,

and the community that has formed in it is wonderful.

W&L: Ultimately, what do you want your members to get from being a part of your whisky club?

OPPERMAN: I want them to come away with new friends, a deep appreciation for the craft of whisky making, and with the knowledge that helps them appreciate the spirit even more. The big focus is community, so I want everyone to feel like they are part of an awesome community of like-minded folk.

W&L: What advice would you give to a group of friends considering starting a whisky club?

OPPERMAN: Don't be afraid to take a stance that some might find controversial (like our blind-tasting method), and don't feel like you can't kick someone out if they're messing with the good vibes. The club should be safe and fun for your tribe that forms around it. It's a really fun thing to do, so don't be afraid to try if you are interested in it. Just find your people, remember why you started, and do the best you can to create a meaningful experience for your members.

Contact information:

cheers@losangeleswhiskyclub.com

or visit:

<https://www.losangeleswhiskyclub.com>



Los Angeles Whisky Club Bruichladdich tasting.

Images courtesy: Laurel Dailey

CHAPTER 2:

ORGANIZING A WHISKEY CLUB THE BASICS



Bourbon Brotherhood, Louisville, Kentucky.

Sometimes in everyone's journey, life's choices take a turn. The obvious options are when to get married, have children, change jobs, or retire. The less apparent options can be as simple as buying a car, going on vacation, or seeking commonality with friends.

As we have read, there is a burgeoning trend of social clubs focusing on whiskey rapidly materializing before our very eyes; whiskey clubs are forming in virtually every state.

After reading the stories of how whiskey clubs around the country began and operated, you're probably saying to yourself, now, that's an idea I can get behind. The follow-up question is, yeah, right, but how?

Before going "all-in" to organize a local whiskey club, there are a few things to consider. First, you need help if you're going to do it right. Many organizations have fallen flat when the organizer fails to seek help. Second, realizing it is much more than just opening and passing a bottle of whiskey. Whiskey is an experience to be shared. Appreciating whiskey can be as foreign to some as it is a passion for others. Learning and understanding whiskey's terminology, processes, and complexities are more accessible with a group of friends. Here is where a well-organized whiskey club can find common ground.

SO, LET'S GET STARTED.

STEP 1 | CORE GROUP:

Call a few of your closest friends and invite them for a cocktail; we suggest asking three to four of your closest friends. This initial group will become your club's core. During the evening discussions, each should demonstrate a willingness and an appreciation for learning about the whiskey-making process, from grain to glass. Consider serving a mid-range, moderate-proof bourbon at this strategy session; stay away from high-proofers. Consider also a charcuterie board and bottled water for your guests.

STEP 2 | PARAMETERS:

Things to consider: How often do you want to meet and where? Is this strictly a social group or a serious whiskey-tasting club? Are you going to charge dues? Who's responsible for the tipples presentations? Are you going to serve a meal? How many members, and do you have written rules? Having some structure and guidelines shows you are taking this endeavor seriously. However, remember, no one wants to be buried with senseless regulations, so keep them simple.

STEP 3 | MEMBERSHIP:

Do you intend to keep your club local or open it up to anyone wishing to join? Here, there are several rules of thought.

Some clubs have hundreds of members; others have thousands, while some have multiple chapters, while others

remain a small group of close-knit friends.

If you intend on the latter, here are a few suggestions. At the Phoenix Social Club, we recommend keeping the club manageable, especially initially, so having at most 12 charter members; that's one monthly presentation per year.

After the conclusion of the first-night strategy session, give each core member an assignment to write down five names.

Once a final list has been drafted, contact the finalists to determine their interest in joining your group. If you plan to include spouses, which is highly recommended, you now have 24 members.

It is essential to inform those you contact that this will be both a social club and a tasting club, everyone will be expected to participate. The "I just want to belong crowd" will most likely decline.

If your interest is in belonging to a national or international club, there are available resources for you to research:

<https://whiskeycast.com/whisky-clubs/>

<https://www.americanbourbonassociation.com/links>

<http://la.scotchclub.us/whisky-clubs-in-america/>

STEP 4 | KICK-OFF:

Once your group has been formed, you'll need a kick-off meeting to discuss the details of the club with the new members. One of the core members should kick off this initial meeting. This gathering should be less about spirits and more about forming the organization. That's not to say the host shouldn't provide a pleasant expression, or two, for the members' enjoyment. It is also the time to discuss the name of the club. Consider a name that will best represent the club. You can also discuss the depth of social networking you want to employ.

STEP 5 | HOSTING:

One reason for people to join a whiskey club is to try new and different expressions that are unattainable. Encourage members to design presentations around themes. A theme could be as simple as comparing a Kentucky Bourbon with a Tennessee Whiskey or hosting a blind tasting. If you want to take it up a notch, host a Prohibition Party or an evening at a Speakeasy. Truthfully, the list of possibilities is endless. Don't let your gatherings become stagnant.

STEP 6 | UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS HOST:

Each state has the authority to regulate the production, sale, and distribution of alcohol within its borders. Follow all local, city, county, state, and federal laws. Do your research.



Phoenix Social Club, Ozark, Missouri.



Los Angeles Whisky Club, Los Angeles, California.

Courtesy: Phoenix Social Club

Images courtesy: Laurel Dailey.

GUIDE TO TASTING



THE POUR:



For tastings, a standard whiskey pour is 1 to 1.5 ounces. Let it sit for a few seconds, then give it a swirl, allowing the aroma to open and the alcohol vapors to evaporate. For a group tasting, use identical glasses for each taster, filled with the exact amount of whiskey. For bourbon, use a whiskey tumbler like an Old Fashioned Glass. Use a closed-mouth glass, like a Glencairn Glass, for single malts. Whiskey should never be kept in the refrigerator or freezer. Whiskey should be served at room temperature (best between 64 to 72 degrees).

APPEARANCE:

Recently, much emphasis has been placed on the whiskey's color. The color of whiskey can range from pale yellow to gold to deep amber, even mahogany. As a rule, the longer the whiskey is aged (maturation), the darker it will become. Refrain from falling into the trap of believing lighter whiskeys are too young and immature, thus lacking traditional complexities. If you do, you will be mistaken. Once poured, tilt the glass upwards to get the full benefit of its color. Then rotate your glass sideways; this will test the legs of the whiskey—the more the legs, the higher the alcohol content.



THE NOSE, OR AROMA:

Nosing whiskey is essential because your sense of smell is 10,000 times more sensitive than your sense of taste. The idea behind nosing is to allow you to discover the whiskey profiles before taking a sip. We will discuss those profiles on page 53. See page 52 for a tongue-in-cheek view of nosing whiskey.

Here are a couple of tried and true options to try when nosing:

The first option is to gently swirl the glass two or three times, close your eyes with the glass about an inch from your nose, and gently rest it on your chin. Slightly inhale the whiskey through your mouth, breathing out through your nose.

The second option, start with your mouth slightly open, position the glass the same as above, gently inhale through your nose and blow out your mouth. Sometimes, understanding the aromas' complexities takes a little time. Make a note of the flavors you can identify. If you are new to tasting whiskey and need help remembering or finding those aromas, do not be alarmed; you are not also.



THE PALATE, OR TASTE:



If you have ever visited a distillery on the KBT or know someone who has, you may have heard of the term "Kentucky Chew." In this historically accurate phrase, chewing the whiskey helps you discover the complex flavors master distillers and blenders work a lifetime to create.

With your whiskey neat, take a sip and give it a good chew, allowing it to coat your tongue, then swallow it thoroughly. You should be able to notice the difference in the flavor profiles from the tip of your tongue to the back. The tongue has three distinctive zones: the tip, which picks up sweetness; the middle detects saltiness; and the back, where bitterness is found.

There is a school of thought that it often takes three sips to appreciate and fully detect the whiskey's complexities. The first sip can be hot, depending on the proof, and the second sip, although milder, should be able to detect certain flavors. But, it's the third step where you should unlock the deep flavors of the whiskey. Tasting whiskey is subjective; there is no right or wrong answer. One person will detect strong vanilla notes, while another detects cinnamon or caramel. If you are tasting a single malt, smoke comes into play. And, for a very

few, sadly, nothing at all. In any event, write down the flavor profiles you do discover. It also may be helpful to have a flavor wheel available. Before tackling the next whiskey, cleanse your palate with water or oyster crackers.

THE FINISH:

The finish describes the flavors you are left with and the duration those flavors remain in your mouth. Whiskey finish can be described as long, medium, or short. Think of "short" as a taste that leaves the senses almost instantly, "long" as one that lingers for several minutes after you swallow, and "medium" as any length in between. The finished flavor of a good whiskey will mirror or compliment the aromas and flavors you originally associated with the whiskey when nosing and tasting. Take a moment or two to savor the overall complexities of the whiskey before taking another sip.



“I CAN’T SMELL ... SCHLITZ”

By David Collignon

David Collignon is a founding member of the Phoenix Social Club and whiskey lover who shares his (tongue-in-cheek) thoughts on nosing—and his inability to nose whiskey.

As some or all of you may know, I belong to a relatively serious spirit-tasting group. While a significant portion of our time is spent socializing, each presentation has a serious educational aspect.

As with any serious spirit group, we have grade sheets, special glasses, water droppers, and, occasionally, paired foods. The serious portion of our events concerns information about the distillation process, the history of a distillery, new support products (glasses, etc.), and sampling new and different types of spirits.

While I enjoy every aspect of our gatherings, there is one area in which I find myself particularly inadequate, “nosing.” All of our spirits are presented with research discussing the body, nose, palate, and finish. In the “nose” area, it is suggested that you smell cinnamon, wood, leather, vanilla, or at least one of a hundred

other aromas. And I can’t smell any of them. We have members of the group (the ones that I call Super-Nosers) that pick out the most absurd nuances in every dram. My constant comment in each of our score sheets is, “I can’t smell ... Schlitz/Schwartz.” [The word that I use is considerably shorter than this, but I was told to keep this article PG], and I have used it so consistently that I have abbreviated it to ICSS, and everyone seems to understand the comment.

As it happened recently, I read an article in the *Smithsonian* magazine entitled Scents and Sensibility, written by Abigail Tucker, that touched upon what I thought was a unique and singular disability. It turns out that there is science behind my disability.

The article was related to a neuroscientist who had branched into “smell-based” art. Ms. Tucker takes a deep dive into our olfactory senses as it relates to art, but I found the conclusion just as relevant to my “nosing” inadequacies. She reports that research has found that color vision, in all its various hues, is produced by just three types of receptors in the retina. “Taste

would function differently than the person sitting next to me and, in some cases, may not function—leaving me “nose blind.”

I was assured, however, that this insufficiency is common. “Some gifted people can discern subtler differences in color than the rest of us, while about 5 percent of the population is color blind. But it is striking that pretty much everyone is nose blind to something or another.” [As a small boon, I did learn from the article that I am one of a few people in the world who can detect “asparagus pee”].

I had previously become so frustrated with my inability to participate in the tastings (being nose blind and all) that I asked one of my “Super Noser” friends to exclude me from the formal portions of the presentations because I had nothing to contribute. He refused, graciously, informing me that my contribution was

as equally significant to the group as any other. I explained that I am a social drinker enjoying the company and a relatively large dram of the spirit, and I couldn’t care less about the technical aspects of the distillation and aging process. I represented the “everyman” aspect of the consuming population. I may not care about legs or whether or not there is a hint of vanilla. I care about the drinkability of the spirit (it has a great beat and is dance-able) and my enjoyment. Is this something I would buy, sit around in my “tightly whities” with a decent cigar, and enjoy on a Saturday night?

Someone is interested in that opinion: that and my ability to discern asparagus pee.



File photo

“I still can’t smell Schlitz” David Collignon using bourbon nosing strips during a Phoenix Social Club event.

depends on a whole order of magnitude more receptor types on our tongues, but still a reasonable amount.

But... the clump of sensory neurons high inside our nostrils – boasts about 400 receptor types.

In published research in 2014 for science, a group of scientists “... estimated that humans can distinguish (give or take) at least a trillion distinct smells lurking here on planet Earth.

Complicating matters further, our legions of odorant receptors have many variants, some of which are less sensitive or entirely nonfunctional in large chunks of the population.” What struck me about the article is that the aforementioned study concluded that about 30 percent of my receptor arsenal

CORN



Corn is the seminal aroma of bourbon since it is the primary grain used in this drink. This particular aroma is exceedingly complex; thus, many different secondary aroma molecules are added to achieve the optimal corn aroma. At low levels, this aroma gives a sense of warmth.

EARTHY



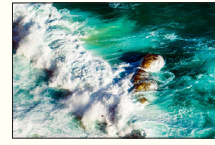
It is essential to understand that in bourbon, there is not the full-blown fresh earth smell you get following a nice rain. In bourbons, we find a charming but much weaker effect, and the level must be low; otherwise, this characteristic aroma note risks becoming too strong and undesirable.

FLORAL



The rose notes in bourbon come from three primary sources: the damascenones, or authentic aroma; the rose alcohols, including geraniol, citronellol, and nerol; and the rose molecule, which is the basis for rose water.

BRINY



You'll find the general descriptors of specific briny tasting notes: ocean spray, seaweed, brine, rock pools, shellfish, kelp, beach bonfires, etc., from the most intense iodine-rich algae through to a suggestion of a sea breeze and everything in between.

HONEY



Whiskey matured in American white oak and first-fill bourbon barrels often results in honey sweetness. Rich, with a full malty character, the fruitiness usually has a sweeter, honeyed tinge. Sugars in the wood layers below the charred surface of the cask staves also contribute notes of honey.

GREEN APPLE



A distinctive type of fruity note – a family of esters (a chemical compound derived from replacing acids or other organic groups) with between 8 and 10 carbon atoms gives this signature note—varying degrees of freshness and light green notes together with a slightly astringent sharp aroma.

BROWN SPICES



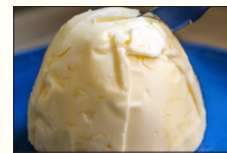
This flavor profile is a mixture of different spices such as cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, and pepper. The raw material delivers a warm, earthy aroma note, making it a perfect ingredient for gingerbread, soups, and stews. This flavor profile is part of the spicy backbone element of the bourbon aroma profile.

BUTTERSCOTCH



This flavor profile is defined by its title and is an incredibly enticing warm aroma that gives a distinct mellowness to bourbons. It may be sensed on the nose in the first tasting and plays a crucial role in the after-taste's unique, beautiful, and lingering aromas. This compelling element is vital to the nose for bourbons.

BUTTER TOFFEE



The butter toffee tone found in bourbons and whiskeys is due to the presence of a chemical called Diacetyl which is generated during the fermentation phase. The pure chemical is irritating and intense, but when diluted to the correct level, it manifests the alluring aroma of warm melted butter.

MALT



Malted barley produces nutty, smoky, some chocolate or cocoa flavors and a flavor often described as cereal or possibly toast. There's also a distinctive characteristic referred to as malt. Caramel is typically made with granulated sugar, milk, cream, butter, and sometimes vanilla.

CARAMEL



The primary flavors of caramel come from exceedingly complex chemical reactions between the molecules in the sugar and the even more complex molecules in the milk and cream.

CHARRED OAK



We combine the sensorial rich woody aromas with the trigeminally active aroma molecules produced during the heat-intensive charring step. The trigeminal sense is an independent sensory pathway with nerve endings in our mouth, nose, and eyes. A slight tingle-inducing element defines this aroma.

PEPPERY



Hot or peppery notes, such as chili, black or white pepper, or cayenne, can add a bite to the whiskey. Black Pepper has a sharp, pungent aroma and flavor. White Pepper is hotter, less subtle, and mildly fermented. Green Peppercorn is milder in flavor and has a fresh taste.

DARK CHOCOLATE



One of the most familiar aromas in Bourbon. The aroma is a variant of the beloved chocolate aroma. Cocoa is the heating of natural constituents in the cocoa bean. This style of bourbon aroma note reminds us at a deep level of the comforting scent associated with coffee or dark chocolate.

SMOKE



Peat is made from digging up earthy compounds found in peat bogs. Soapy, sulfuric, medicinal, and seaweed are how some profile smoky scotch. The peat fires dry malted barley giving the scotch a smoky, peaty taste.

Wood:

Nutty, sometimes earthy background.

Almond :

Nutty, earthy, and toasty flavor.

Pecan: Very nutty, sweet, buttery, and vanilla.

Hazelnut:

Sweet and musty. with a slight earthy flavor.

Cedar:

Slightly spicy, with hints of vanilla, butterscotch and cloves.

Oak:

Toasty, with cloves, nutmeg, and vanilla.

Cinnamon :

Spicy, minimally sweet and woody.

Nutmeg:

Warm, earthy and nutty flavor, with a sharp sweetness.

Coffee:

Bitterness with deep, acidic flavor. Caramel, vanilla. and chocolate.

Tobacco:

Earthy, with notes of dark chocolate, black pepper, and espresso.

Mint:

Sweet, fresh and aromatic, that brings a unique cooling sensation to the palate.

Anise:

Strong licorice taste. Slightly sweet.

Rye:

Nutty, earthy and malty. Pep-

pery. Once distilled, rye comes across spicy, fruity.

Sweet Aromatics:

Flavors can range from intense richness to subtle aromas. The maturation process imparts sweet aromatic notes. Just the right amount rounds off harsher flavor notes and ties everything together.

Clove:

Intense and aromatic, clove can be sweet with a minty spiciness.

CHAPTER 3: GRAIN TO GLASS

1. GRAINS



2. MASH TUN



3. FERMENTER



4. DISTILLATION



5. MATURATION



6. DILUTE & BOTTLING



THE PROCESS

1. GRAINS



Grains harvested for whiskey primarily consist of corn, rye, barley & wheat. Corn is often described as sweet, with vanilla and brown butter notes. Rye is drier and spicier, presenting notes of black pepper, anise, and those profiles found in rye bread. Barley is most commonly found in Scottish single malts, but many whiskey distillers use it because barley has a unique ability to change starches to sugar. It is thought within the industry and by those who love wheat wheated bourbons tend to be smooth with a sweeter profile making it easier to find the vanilla, honey, dried berries, and toffee notes

2. MASH TUN



The mash tun is a giant vat or grain cooker to prepare the bourbon mash. They have massive agitators or paddles, steam jackets, and built-in cold chillers. The mashing process aims to extract fermentable sugars, to produce alcohol. Once the mash bill has been mixed, the mash is added to the vat along with water and yeast. The mash is then heated at different temperatures and pressures to ensure the mash is ready to ferment. The mash is then cooled to between 76 and 85 degrees. A typical mashing process takes between 30 and 60 minutes.

3. FERMENTER



Following the mashing stage, the mash is transferred to a fermentation tank. The fermentation tanks can be either wooden or stainless steel. The fermentation process could take as little as three days or up to two weeks, depending on the distillers' specifications, and is intended to mix the mash thoroughly. During this process, the mash breaks down the sugars producing ethanol or ethyl alcohol. The final liquid is referred to as a distiller's beer.

4. DISTILLATION



The distillation process purifies the liquid by heating and vaporizing it, collecting the vapors as it re-condenses into liquid. Today, most bourbon distillers use column stills. These extended tubular stills can be 24 to 70 inches wide. Inside are stripping plates containing holes; as the liquid flows down the pipe and is heated, the vapor rises through the plates. This vapor-to-liquid-to-vapor process contains heavier compounds, such as carbon dioxide and harmful congeners. Once these impurities have been removed, the alcohol is fed into a copper doubler for a second distillation; this stage removes sulfur and other toxic compounds.

5. MATURATION



There are two considerations in the maturation process: char levels and length of the distillate ages in the barrel. By law, in America, bourbon must be aged a minimum of two years in new American oak charred barrels; most distillers age their whiskey for four years or more. The charring or toasting of the barrel over an open flame takes between 15 and 55 seconds and gives the whiskey its golden color and complexity of flavors. Once filled, the barrels are rolled into massive warehouses for aging. With the wide ranges of heat and humidity, many producers rotate the barrels so that each barrel can benefit by placement in the "sweet spot" of the warehouse.

6. DILUTE & BOTTLING



Unless you prefer your whiskey cask strength, meaning the whiskey is bottled directly from the barrel without being watered down. Once the barrel has been dumped, distillers dilute it with filtered water to reduce the proof to the desired specifications. Some distillers also chill-filter the whiskey to remove long-chain proteins and impurities, causing the whiskey to appear cloudy. Finally, the whiskey can be labeled, bottled, and shipped to a liquor store, local restaurant, or tavern for your enjoyment.

CHAPTER 4: GLASSWARE

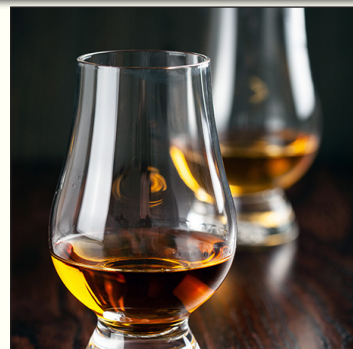
The Right Tool for the Job

In the world of whiskey, the right tool means the right glass. Selecting the proper glassware that will enhance the aromas and flavors of the whiskey can make all the difference between a mediocre experience and a remarkable one. After you've sipped your whiskey from an expertly crafted glass, you look back at the glass and say, "Aha! Now I get it."

Some believe the type of whiskey glass makes no difference whatsoever; others painstakingly select just the right glass as if it were a religion—the whiskey geeks, if you will—still others have a firm grasp on reality and the understanding and importance of the right glass without actually setting their hair on fire—or getting into a fistfight with their mates.

Simply put, whiskey glasses are shaped to enhance the experience of drinking and nosing whiskey. Each one complements the type of whiskey, from the short heavy-bottom glass (Old Fashioned Rocks Glass) to the bulbous body shape (Glencairn Glass); the right glass makes all the difference in the world.

The whiskey unapologetically ages in barrels or casks, in the deep, damp cavernous dunnage house, or the multi-levels of a rickhouse for years or even decades, so if the producers are going to that much effort to provide you with a complex spirit heaping with flavor, the least you can do is drink it out of a proper glass. Moreover, you are giving the whiskey and the craftsman who made it respect.



THE GLENCAIRN WHISKEY GLASS

The Glencairn Whiskey Glass is a revolutionary glass that lets one savor the taste and complexity of fine whiskey. The narrow opening holds the aromas.



THE GLENCAIRN "CANADIAN"

The wide bowl allows for the fullest appreciation of color, and the solid base is designed to be easy on the hand.



DOUBLE OLD-FASHIONED GLASS

The wide mouth of this glass allows the alcohol burn to evaporate quicker, giving the drinker a smoother taste of the nuances of the spirit.



THE GLENCAIRN STEMMED COPITA

The classic tulip shape bowl allows you to swirl the whiskey before nosing, and the narrow opening facilitates the retention of alcohol vapors.



NORLAN WHISKEY GLASS

Inspired by the whiskey decanter, this digitally crafted and meticulously refined glass has been designed to capture whiskey's complex flavors and aromatics.

CHAPTER 5: HOST A TASTING



We've learned the basics of tasting whiskey, the primary flavor notes, the process of distilling whiskey: of grains to glass, and the tools of the trade. In their own words, we've heard how to form and run a tasting club or society. Now it's time for the fun part: hosting a whiskey-tasting event.

When the Phoenix Social Club began in 2013, many of our members did not know a hell of a lot about whiskey, much less how to host a tasting event.

Sure, we all had experiences hosting Super Bowl parties, graduations, weddings, or simply gathering together with friends to enjoy a dram or two. But, to research, organize, and plan a tasting where the spotlight is shown on you all

evening, not so much.

In the early days, we still needed to learn the inherent faux pas or social blunders of pairing a 135-proof bourbon with an 86-proof, delightfully floral, and subtly smoky Speyside single malt or, even worse, a Lowlands Lady.

Eventually, we learned. We learned more through trial and error than anything else. Ten years later, we still come together each month to give our presentations: to learn a little, to share stories, some taller than others, to enjoy the foods the hosts prepare, but most importantly, the enjoyment of friends being with friends—all with a shared love for whiskey. So, what does it take to host a whiskey-tasting party?

We intend to educate those readers who may have limited exposure to tasting. This may seem remedial to some, but sometimes it's good to review the basics. Here are a few steps to help you get started.

STEP 1 | THE WHISKEY:

We have learned that whiskies contain many nuances, bringing a unique flavor profile. Keep that in mind as you make your selections. Decide what you plan to present and the number of expressions you will offer. (Our club typically presents three.)

TYPES OF PAIRINGS: Will your tasting be blind? What types of whiskies are you most interested in presenting? Will you pair the different regions of

Scotland? A Kentucky Bourbon vs. Tennessee whiskey, or a Texas vs. Colorado whiskey? Single-barrel vs. a cask strength? How about a wheater vs. rye? Truthfully, the options are endless. Once you decide, ensure you can obtain the expressions locally or have enough time to order them online.

STEP 2 | FOOD:

There are as many examples of the types of food to serve as whiskeys on the shelf. Some go the great lengths to pair a kind of whiskey with specific foods. For example, a Virginia Ham, pulled pork, or anything that includes bacon pairs exceptionally well with most bourbons. If you go the single-malt way, consider that many whiskeys have a traditional smoky, fruity, earthy, and subtly-salty profile. Fish, including rainbow trout and salmon, pair well with single malts' smoothness and fruitiness. There are also options if you consider yourself something other than a chef—a multi-layered, multi-variety charcuterie board, for example. But, be wary of overly spicy foods; you do not want to kill your guests' taste buds just before they sample your whiskey. And don't forget the chocolate.

Whatever food you decide to serve, it is essential to have food available to your guests. Make sure you have bottled water and something to cleanse the palate between expressions. (I prefer oyster crackers.)

STEP 3 | THE TOOLS:

Gather the tools necessary to ensure your presentation goes smoothly. Will you use a PowerPoint presentation, print off your research, or read your notes? Will you go to a local tavern, a restaurant, or a community gathering place? Will you host at home, use tables or gather around in the den, living room, or perhaps, weather permitting, outdoors?

Will you pre-pour and use a tasting mat? (We have included a sample tasting mat at the end of this story.)

It is best to have an old-fashioned glass or Glencairn for each expression, based on the whiskey served. You'll need a dump bucket, pens, and eye droppers (optional),

STEP 4 | THE TASTING:

You've made your whiskey selections and



devised a menu, and now you are ready for guests. It is critical to pay attention to the proof of the whiskeys you plan to serve. You'll want to serve the lowest proof to the highest. Decide if you plan to eat, taste first, or graze during the tasting. If you plan to pre-pour, have all the glasses ready for your guests in advance. The easier option is to pass around the bottle and allow guests to pour their own. A typical pour is 1 to 1.5 ounces.

Will you provide the tasting notes or ask your guests to determine the nose, palate, and finishing notes? Word of advice, do not get caught up or overthink the descriptors. Nosing and tasting whiskey is entirely subjective. One person's vanilla is another person's cinnamon; some will sense nothing at all, and that's okay too.

When you begin tasting, the first sip is generally a poor indicator of the whiskey, especially those with high proofs. Experts tell us it is only in the third sip that all the nuances and complexities appear. The Kentucky Chew will thoroughly coat the mouth and help find those complexities. With your eyes closed, study the mouthfeel as well as the finish. Make notes of the aromas and flavors each brings to your

palate, your tongue, and the back of your throat. You will be surprised that your olfactory senses will remember smells and aromas from days long ago, subconsciously helping you discover the flavors you are seeking.

Now, you can swallow or spit the sip in the dump bucket. Finally, compare notes; talk among the other guests about what aromas and tastes they discovered.

Don't forget to cleanse the palate between tastes. Then repeat. Again, compare notes at the end of the evening and talk about your likes and dislikes.

STEP 5 | THE FUN:

The final step is nothing more than to have fun. It is true that with knowledge comes understanding. Understanding all the stages of whiskey, from grain to glass, is essential. But what is equally important is for you to enjoy yourself. If COVID-19 taught us anything, it is that we are social beings, and we want to be around like-minded individuals.

Remember what William Faulkner said, "My own experience has been that the tools I need for my trade are paper, tobacco, food, and a little whiskey."



WHISKEY TASTING GUIDE

It is advised to taste the whiskey: Neat, then a drop of water, then ice.

STEP 1: APPEARANCE 5 points

Swirl the whiskey gently, and monitor the viscosity or thickness. Hold the glass to the light and observe the color, noticing the clarity and legs.

STEP 2: NOSE 25 points

Our sense of smell is 80% responsible for what we taste. Keep your lips slightly parted and inhale above the whiskey glass. Identify the dominant notes, e.g., smoky, spicy, herbal, floral, oak, etc.

STEP 3: PALATE & TASTE 25 points

Sip a small amount of whiskey, work it around your mouth for a few seconds, and smack your lips as if chewing on the liquid, also known as the Kentucky Chew. The first sip is always hot, so take a minute before taking the second. The second sip will be gentler, and the flavors will start coming through. The third sip will give you the deep characteristics of the whiskey you want.

STEP 4: FINISH 25 points

After swallowing the whiskey, the last thing you should consider is the finish. Does the whiskey have a short or long finish? Does it coat the tongue or quickly vanish? Observe if it lingers long, gives warmth throughout your body, or is it more of a burn.

STEP 5: COMPLEXITY/DRINKABILITY 20 points

The complexity of whiskey will give you the balanced flavors you want: vanilla, caramel, spice, honey, etc. Does the whiskey have a perfect body and mouthfeel? Is the depth of flavor subtle and approachable but not overpowering?

STEP 6: FINAL SCORE & DISCUSSION

Tally up your scores and place the number on the tasting sheet. Now, you can take the time to discuss your tasting results with your fellow tasters.

Before you move on to the additional tasting, take a moment to cleanse your palate with salt-free crackers and water.

APPEARANCE

All whiskey enters the barrel clear, it's the pigments in the wood that seep into the spirit, that causes the amber coloring that makes whiskey's color so distinctive. The longer the whiskey remains in its barrel, the darker it becomes. Color of whiskey can be: clear, Pale Straw, Light Gold, Pale Amber, Burnt Amber, Burnished Copper, Auburn, Mahogany, Old Oak, Brown Sherry, Dark Treacle

NOSE & PALATE

Wood: Oak, Cedar, Pine.

Grain: Corn, Rye, Wheat, Hops, Malty.

Spice: Anise, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Cloves, Basil, Rosemary, Black Pepper, Coffee, Tobacco.

Sweet Aromatics: Vanilla, Caramel, Maple Syrup, Butterscotch, Honey, Chocolate.

Floral: Rose Petal, Geranium, Orange Blossoms, Grass, Eucalyptus, Marzipan, Moss.

Fruity: Cherry, Blackberry, Citrus, Lemon, Orange, Green Apple, Peach, Pineapple, Pear, Cranberry, Lime.

Nut: Walnut, Pecan, Almond, Hazelnut.

Peaty: Smoky, Bonfire, Coal Tar, Medicinal.

FINISH

The finish is the culmination of all the sensations and goodness you have just nosed and tasted; the finish should mirror the flavor profiles you have experienced. A good whiskey will linger and enhance the flavors from the tip of your tongue to the back of your throat. The finish is

typically described as long, medium, or short. Questions you might ask yourself about the finish: Did the whiskey coat your tongue? Was it velvety, smooth, or harsh? Was it fresh, spicy, sweet, malty, salty, or smoky? Did it linger or dissipate quickly?

Tasting/Scoring Sheet

Score

Appearance: 5 Points
Nose: 25 Points
Palate: 25 Points
Complexity: 20 Points
Finish: 25 Points
Total: 100 Points

BRAND: _____

TASTER: _____

PROOF: _____

PRICE: _____

AGE: _____

DISTILLERY: _____

1st BARREL/FINISHING: _____

STATE/REGION: _____

MASHBILL: _____

1. APPEARANCE:

/5

2. NOSE:

/25

3. PALATE:

/25

4. FINISH:

/20

5. COMPLEXITY | DRINKABILITY

/25

OVERALL:

/100

Would you add this to your bar? _____

Could this be your daily whiskey? _____

Tasting Mat

1	2	3	4	5	6
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FINAL WORD

APPEARANCE | NOSE | PALATE | FINISH



Company Distilling Straight Bourbon Whiskey Finished with Maple Wood

By Chuck Branch

As I began this Company Distilling Straight Bourbon Whiskey review, I knew Jeff Arnett was the master distiller; and his stellar reputation preceded him. However, I set this information aside to be sure to give a fair, impartial, and honest review of this particular product. And I am here to report Company Distilling was one of the best, easy-sipping straight bourbon whiskeys I have ever tested. Yep, ever.

From the onset, the nose welcomed me with notes of cherry, caramel, light oak, a hint of brown spice, and lots of maple syrup. Not pour over your pancakes thick, just enough of a maple scent to entice me to get to the sipping part.

With that enticing nosing, I looked forward to the first taste, which did not disappoint. The initial profile was warm spice with an even mix of caramel and butterscotch. Following a good ole' Kentucky chew, my mouth was evenly coated with all the complexities expected from an American whiskey. As expected, the presence of maple syrup continued, as well as a subtle explosion of light spice,

followed by light oak on the back. The smoothness of the maple wood definitely sets this expression apart as a superior whiskey.

After the initial sip, butterscotch and maple syrup made last-minute appearances, tantalizing my senses. The light spice continued, as did the cherry and caramel. The finish was medium-to-long and warm, not hot, but warm.

As Arnett shared in his W&L interview, "... the two words that we settled on were "approachable complexity," which meant that we wanted it to bridge the flavor and character gap between what new and more mature bourbon drinkers typically describe as desirable traits for a bourbon."

In my opinion, I believe they have achieved their goal of approachable complexity in this whiskey.

At every tasting I host, my last question to participants is, "could this be your everyday whiskey, and would you stock this expression in your bar?" The answer to both questions for Company Distilling Straight Bourbon Whiskey is a resounding yes.

Mashbill: 30% wheated bourbon.

Blend: 3 wheated mash bills from 3 different states.

Aged: Between 3 years and ten months to 6 years.

Proof: 90.

ABV: 45%.

Price: \$64.99.

Editor's note: This product was provided to us at no cost by Company Distilling. Per our editorial policy, this in no way influenced the outcome of this review.

Chuck