

# SPIRITS News

*Drink in the years: there's no time like today for well-aged spirits.*



## JUNE 10, 2019 FEATURES

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## Starting from the Top: New Classic Spirits from Scotland

By David Othenin-Girard

Every year, we travel to Scotland, in search of the very best that this legendary drinking culture has to offer. The inspiration to approach this category differently came out of my own experience as a lover of spirits; my examination of the history of American drinking culture; and my delving into the once-shrouded world of collectible spirits that has always flourished in certain circles. We knew that if we spent more time and energy exploring, we could offer our customers better products at better prices than anyone else in the country. This model has been extremely successful, and if you've followed our adventures over the last 10 years, you'll remember some exceptional finds.

The most important thing I've learned over the past decade of exploring the world of whisky is that what really counts are the experiences you have with the people you love. Our suppliers are our business partners, yes, but first they're our dear friends. And just as I feel a somewhat sacred duty to my customers when picking out every single cask, similarly, I feel a similar obligation to the wonderful individuals who make this all possible. Nothing in the world makes for better memories than opening a special bottle and sharing it with friends. But if everything out there becomes a treasure—too precious to consume—we'll never create those experiences. Our suppliers get it, and we're incredibly grateful for that.

### A Rare Distillery-Direct Offering

With that in mind, we want you to enjoy our offerings, because that's what this stuff is all about. Our exclusive offerings have never been better than they are today. We continue to find extremely rare casks,

as well as unprecedented values within the humid warehouses of our Scottish partners, and we're excited to share a wide array of special offers with you. First, an unusual and delicious offer, direct from one of Scotland's finest distillers...

### Old Pulteney 13 Year Old "K&L Exclusive" Single Cask No. 231 Cask Strength Highland Single Malt Whisky (\$109.99)

As with many Pulteney, the nose is pure salt, malt, herbal tea, and cardamom. The palate is deep with roasted cocoa, fudge, touches of anise, fennel, and vanilla. But of course, with water this thing erupts. Now, on the nose, the ripest Bartlett pears (smashed), lemon peel, mirabelle, dried apricot, salted butter on toast. The anise is moving much more toward mint and fennel flavors and the long, creamy texture is pointed with cotton candy, lemon oils, and the tiniest hints of diesel smoke. Too good to put down!



### Extreme Values from Our Favorite Suppliers

Now on to some of the finest values we've ever put together. The Old Particular Brand is an exceptional line of single cask malts and grains from the famous Douglas Laing Company. We've had an incredible decade-long partnership with this exceptional bottler and they're still putting out the very best malt you can buy for your dollar, every year.

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**Balmenach 11 Year Old “Old Particular” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$44.99)** The whisky opens to an inviting array of malty flavors, grainy and fresh. It takes a drop of water to tease out the exceptional nuance of this awesome cask. With water, there’s marmalade on warm biscuits, freshly picked pears and leaves, digestive cookies and tea. On the palate, it’s equally appealing and still on the gorgeous breakfast flavors. Baby’s bum really, smooth and soft. And an easygoing one (with water), but sometimes it’s best to just drink, not think.



**Benrinnes 11 Year Old “Old Particular” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$54.99)** As with all these young cask strength malts, the bold malt and pepper that shows right out of the bottle is just a mask to something much more complex beneath. One drop of water and this thing goes absolutely bonkers. The hard edge is replaced by pungent orange fruit aromas—apricots, tangerines, persimmons, every orange thing you can think of. The palate is *very* rich and sweet, with more malt than on the nose, and subtle bits of bitter herbs (gentian root, angelica) balancing out the sweet grain. While I’ll admit this is not quite the same character as some of the previous Benrinnes, it is still full of life and the purity that we crave from this special little place. And what an incredible value for such a drinkable and complex whisky.



**Glen Garioch 8 Year Old “Old Particular” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$49.99)** Absolutely nothing tastes like Glen Garioch and this one deserves to be judged without the preconception of age. The nose is gorgeously old school, with big, inviting malt; deep, earthy wood; and a complex mixture of sweet and savory aromas. On the palate that “almost peaty” feeling adds complexity and nuance. Snappy malt, but not sulfured, it exhibits a gorgeous texture and unsurpassed purity. With water it becomes the quintessential Eastern Highlander. The malt is on display, offering a tense aromatic battle between expensive teas and spices, complex fruit, and earthy, dark malt. On the palate the feeling of fresh peat (not smoke, but actual turf) is on full display. There’s absolutely nothing in the store that tastes anything like this special whisky. For people who are enamored by top-quality distillates in their purest form, you’ll definitely appreciate this special bottle.



**Caol Ila 8 Year Old “Signatory” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$89.99)** We’ve done lots of young Caol Ila over the years because, well, it’s absolutely delicious. This intense little offering from our good friends at Signatory proves why this bottler commands a bit of a premium. This is classic Caol Ila on the nose with ashy, smoldering smoke, crystalline citrus, and deep, sweet maltiness. It starts at a blistering 61% abv and needs a bit of water to tame the smoky beast, but few malts deliver this kind of intensity and depth. Even at this young age this whisky is the total package.



**Isle of Jura 12 Year Old “Old Particular” K&L Exclusive Single Refill Sherry Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$64.99)** The incredibly oily, rich malt of Jura is perfectly suited for a nice refill sherry butt. And, without the chill-filtration and low proof of the distillery bottlings, we’ve entered a whole different territory for this wild malt. First whiff is all candied apple, sea spray, roasted malt, and hints of speedway. The malt is big and the sherry character is not obvious. But with air the complexity really explodes. This one demands a touch of water and some time to breathe because behind those odd flavors is a wealth of complex flavors: salted fruit, ozone, fennel, oyster shell, and camphor.



### Pre-Arrival Old Malt Cask and Sovereign Wax Top

Finally, a quick preview of our next shipment, sold in pre-arrival format so as to whet your interest before they arrive. These incredible bottlings represent some of the best values we’ve ever seen out of Scotland. None are inexpensive, but compared to the rest of the market, no other bottler will be able to touch these incredible prices.

**Braes of Glenlivet 28 Year Old “Sovereign Wax Top” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength (\$199.99)**

**Springbank 22 Year Old “Sovereign Wax Top” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$399.99)**

**Clynelish 21 Year Old “Sovereign Wax Top” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$249.99)**

**Highland Park 21 Year Old “Sovereign Wax Top” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$199.99)**

**Laphroaig 20 Year Old “Sovereign Wax Top” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$249.99)**

**Auchroisk 24 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$149.99)**

**Longmorn 14 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$59.99)**

**Mortlach 9 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$49.99)**





*The historic Château de Vacquié in Haut-Armagnac.*

## Awesomely Armagnac

By David Othenin-Girard

**After years in the shadow of its better-dressed cousin to the north, France's other great brandy is finally starting to have its moment.**

That may be, in no small part, thanks to the exploration we've done in the region with the help of the incredible connections developed by our friend and partner, Charles Neal. We've been lucky enough to tag along with the "Armagnac Man" himself—truly a man of Gasconne, he's been accepted into this tight-knit society not only due to his familial relations there, but also his unrelenting pursuit of excellent brandy from the region—many times in our trips to the region, which is not the easiest place to get around.

There's never been a better time to drink Armagnac. An incredible array of exceptional and affordable old brandy is flowing like never before. We might even be in the new golden age of brandy, but only you can make that call for yourself.

### L'Encantada Armagnac

**This group of amateur brandy lovers has developed themselves into one of the most intriguing and sought-after bottlers of single-estate Armagnac.** These guys are born and bred Gasconne and they've found access to stocks where others haven't. Their bottles fly off of the shelves the globe over, and many stores charge more than double our prices. But we got in early and we buy direct, so no one, worldwide, gets close to these prices. These are easily the most exciting brandies on the market today and represent incredible value when you take into account the age, quality, labor, and scarcity of these incredible spirits.

#### 1997 L'Encantada 20 Year Old "Bellair #36" Bas-Armagnac (\$79.99)

Bellair is a well-regarded estate that has sold brandies via the Darroze brand as well. Encantada, through some personal connections, was able to secure a few casks of various ages, which were made in a unique style. While the domaine would normally use very little new oak, they do regularly use extra-large foudres and it seems that they purchased a new 600-liter barrel in the year or so before this brandy was distilled. The larger size has a completely different effect on the

brandy than we're used to, showing much stronger oxidation and a more integrated addition of oak tannin. I fell in love with this cask because it offered something completely different from anything else on the shelf.

#### 1990 L'Encantada 27 Year Old "Domaine le Parre #18" Tenarèze Armagnac (\$89.99)

Tons of dried stone fruits, apricots, and dates. Hints of roasted nuts, wild honey, and dried spices. The savory quality on the nose braces you for a powerful, dry entry, but this stuff goes completely the other way. It's supple and round, without a hard tannin in sight. The rancio fruit and candied nuts take over from the spice and herbs. Textured, warm, and long on the palate, it's no lightweight, but has unexpected finesse for a Tenarèze. I feel like this deserves to be more expensive, but I just can't bring myself to be that greedy, and pray that anyone who loves good brandy is able to afford a bottle of this benchmark offering from this special estate.

#### 1987 L'Encantada 30 Year Old "Del Cassou #14" Bas-Armagnac (\$119.99)

The nose is an inviting mixture of baked apple tart (tatin!), exotic old wood, and baking spices. Not as sweet and rich as the '82—drier and more traditional here. Super vibrant and almost refreshing, with tons of dark cherry and brambly wild berries, dark roasting cocoa, and beautiful old varnished furniture. Maybe not for the bourbon guy looking for a massive explosion—but a brandy filled with elegance and precision. In context easily one of the best values in the store.



#### 1987 L'Encantada 35 Year Old "Del Cassou #187" Bas-Armagnac (\$139.99)

This bold, masculine style Baco expresses the grape perfectly. Here we're covered in blackberry fruit compote sprinkled with pepper. The sweet-savory balance continues with roasted pecan and maple, with a hint of freshly moistened forest floor. The woody, almost green quality on the nose isn't quite minty, but we're close. On the palate, it's medium-bodied and surprisingly lifted for the age. Caramelized sugar drizzled over a basket of spices and underbrush. No harsh tannins, but a big, warming spice that builds to a long, sweet crescendo at the back of the palate.



*The L'Encantada team evaluates casks.*

## A Fabulous Secret In a New Terroir

**Armagnac is a complicated place with distinct regional personalities.** In the far eastern part of the region, brandy plays second fiddle to wine production. However, a small estate outside of the medieval village of Lectoure proves that this under-appreciated region can make world-class brandy. Very few in the renowned regions of Bas-Armagnac and Tenarèze offer such quality and complexity for your dollar.

### 1998 Château de Vacquié 20 Year Old Unfiltered

**Haut-Armagnac (\$79.99)** The nose on the '98 is packed full of dark, dried fruit, bitter herbs, cacao, coffee, anise, gentian, and fudge. It's so dark and intense, you worry about the palate going bitter, but the opposite is true—it's very rich and textured, with the perfect amount of wood sugar to keep it balanced. Long, spicy, peppery, and powerful. This is one that should appeal to nearly any drinker of dark spirit although it's likely too intense for the typical Cognac drinker. An absolutely unbelievable value and a welcome entry to our exquisite portfolio of exclusive Armagnac.

### Château de Vacquié 27 Year Old Unfiltered Haut-Armagnac

**(\$99.99)** The excellent Château de Vacquié Armagnacs are setting a precedent which I'm not sure can be matched elsewhere in the Haut. The 1991 is much more fruit-forward than the '98. Big notes of stewed peaches, dark tea, high-end cocoa powder, and maple syrup. The palate is lifted, but bold, with big baking spice and cinnamon. An oolong tea thing comes back on the back end but not enough to bring it into bitter territory. Ultra-decadent and pretty polished. A very approachable yet very complex offering from this new domaine.

## Single Estate, Single Vintage, Single Barrel

When we talk about "single barrel, single vintage," we're usually referring to a selection from a producer's many barrels in a single vintage. In traditional Armagnac production there's typically significant continuity between vintages and barrels because producers regularly blend stocks from each vintage to avoid evaporation and create homogeneity. But when a supplier makes



*Traditional Armagnac style continues: an alembic still.*



one barrel at a time that's just not an option. Here we have true single barrel Armagnacs from a small farmer who was paid in stocks from his employer in exchange for his help in the vineyards. One cask per year for six years. No ullage, no reduction, no work done at all. He made his money back 30 years later selling us two barrels and has decided to keep the rest for his own consumption. The bottler, Fitte & Laterrade, is a contemporary of the famous L'Encantada bottlers and both are pioneering the future of Armagnac, barrel by barrel.

### 1988 Fitte et Laterrade 30 Year Old "Domaine Le Chaou"

**Bas-Armagnac (\$129.99)** The color is pure mahogany. The nose is a huge bundle of roasted nuts, dried fruits, oloroso sherry, prune purée, mocha, fig jam, clove, cinnamon. Ultra-thick and a bit hot on entry, it feels like it's going to go astringent, but backs off the edge with dense, sweet fruit, dark chocolate, burnt sugar, and exotic wood. This is a big, bold brandy that almost reminds me more of Kavalan (or something in that intensity level) than anything I've ever had from France.



*The finest chai in the Gers.*

### 1987 Fitte et Laterrade 31 Year Old "Domaine Le Chaou" Bas-Armagnac (\$139.99)

The '87 is savory in a way that the '88 is not. The color is an identical shade of reddish mahogany, but the nose goes in a different direction! Tanned hide, sweet herbs, fresh roasted coffee, red currants, wild honey, and lacquer box. The palate has a freshness that contrasts the deep, savory quality of the nose. An almost tangy acidity carries through the structured palate, moving toward those tangy red fruits in a very unusual way. The spicy peppery oak builds on the finish. Shockingly different from its sibling, this shows a strange balance between zippy structure and tense savoriness. An altogether exhausting but wonderful experience.





## David's Spirits Roundup: Amaro, Rum, Agave

By David Othenin-Girard

### Locavore's Delight

Few spirits have been more affected by a single cocktail than the impeccable Aperol was by the introduction of the Spritz. That summer tiple has been served in Italy for decades, but over the past few summers this cocktail has taken the States by storm. There aren't many places left, even the seediest little dive, that can't throw together a Spritz on a hot summer day. But after gallons of pinkish plonk, it can get a bit hackneyed. That doesn't mean I want a fresh, low alcohol summer cocktail any less, just that it's fun to mix things up, especially if the product in question is made right here in sunny Southern California.

Enter **Amaro Angeleno (\$34.99)**. Some of the die-hard bitters lovers might dismiss this gorgeous tiple because it doesn't fit into their narrow definition of "Amaro," but the bitter liqueur produced and bottled right here in the Southland tastes pretty darn delicious despite any nitpicking. Few modern concoctions rival the understated grace that we can all acknowledge Aperol processes, but Angeleno adds the perfect twist to the famous tiple. A bold nose of locally grown Valencia orange peel coupled with a dense bouquet of chamomile, exotic herbs, spice, and bitter roots create the perfect backbone for what can sometimes be an over-cloying choice on a hot summer day. The Angeleno Spritz is sure to suit anyone who is familiar with the Italian tradition but provides enough nuance and versatility to intrigue even the most jaded cocktail snob.



### Exciting Cocktail Rum

The world of rum has been poised for a complete makeover.

Once relegated to jungle juice and cheap well cocktails, rum is having somewhat of a renaissance. The charge is led by two standout distillers offering unique and terroir-driven spirits from historically important locales. But, few of their offerings have been available enough or affordable enough to merit regular use behind the bar. Their new offering, a collaboration between the exquisite Hampden Estate of Trelawny Parish, Jamaica, and the insurmountable Four Square Distillery in Barbados, offers more than any other product on the market. Deep, complex flavors without adulteration of any kind, at an affordable price. There's no question that any self-respecting lover of cocktails should have a bottle of this special spirit in the back bar. Don't wait to be the last to taste the incredible Probitas.



### Foursquare/Hampden "Probitas" White Blended Rum (\$24.99)

It begins with a base of unaged, molasses-based single blended rums. These are mingled with two rare rums from Jamaica's most authentic distillery. Those two "low-ester" rums from the OWH marque are distilled in the same way but one is an unaged pot still rum and the other the same, rested in the tropical climate for two years. The resulting blend is completely devoid of any additives save for water, but is filled to the brim with explosive flavors and unprecedented depth. The finest white rum on the market by any measure and an affordable luxury that all rum nerds, cocktailians, and serious drinkers of any ilk should seek it out.

### Not Mezcal — Mezonte

In the heart of the vibrant metropolis of Guadalajara, a small wooden bar stands as monument to the world's finest agave spirits. Mezonte's producers typically can't legally call their spirit "mezcal," despite centuries of using that word to describe the product that they make. Mezonte's proprietor, Pedro Jiminez, has devoted his life to the betterment of the traditional distillers of Jalisco and several surrounding states. The Tequila denomination of origin dominates the state's agave production to the detriment of the other agave spirits of this region. Señor Jiminez has become one of the few champions of these spirits of Jalisco and its legendary producers. His company, Mezonte, is devoted to the historical and cultural preservation of these spirits and the communities that produce them. Mezonte is a non-governmental organization designed to create value for the distillers by offering them fair compensation for the extremely labor intensive and time-consuming production. Every single dollar that goes into Mezonte goes back into the communities that create these magical products. While they may be some of the most expensive agave products on the market, they represent some of the most complex drinking experiences available in any category and at any price point. If you're ready to go beyond mezcal, it's time to try Mezonte.



*The ancient Filipino-style stills carved from the sacred oyamel trunk.*

### Mezonte "Lorenzo" Jalisco Spirit Distilled From Agave (\$159.99)

### Mezonte "Raicilla Japo" Jalisco Spirit Distilled From Agave (\$149.99)

### Mezonte "Santo Juarez" Jalisco Spirit Distilled From Agave (\$149.99)

# In the Catbird Seat: Bourbon Consumers Have Their Day

By Andrew Whiteley

**The landscape in Kentucky is finally beginning to open up.** Since the start of the bourbon boom 10-plus years ago there has been a massive race to secure aged stocks, collect precious rare bottles, and build new sources of production. The story goes that the supplies of old bourbon have dwindled and the prices have correspondingly skyrocketed. We've worked tirelessly at K&L throughout the years to keep our customers in supply of quality American whiskey at reasonable prices, just as we've striven to keep the Scotch trains running on time. And while every trip to Kentucky was bound to bring home a few good casks, no visit in many years has been as successful as 2019. The times they are finally a changin'. While consumers scrambled to buy every exciting bottle, producers bent over backwards to meet the growing demand. The change to 24-hour production schedules and construction of new stills and rickhouses, in combination with strong growth in demand for bottles has (as we knew it would) delivered us into a paradise of pickin's for good hooch. The tables are finally beginning to turn toward the drinker's favor as high quality whiskey is no longer in such short supply. This summer we will see some 20 or more casks of whiskey come out of America's heartland and grace our shelves. Some are from distilleries and brands we haven't seen available in years, others are making their first appearance ever.

No brand better exemplifies this new availability than Colonel E.H. Taylor. Historically, this legendary label from Buffalo Trace has been available to us in minuscule quantities. We would receive 6 or 12 bottles a month and moments later they'd be gone, snapped up by the quickest fingers with a web browser. Today, we've secured enough stock to have it physically on our shelves and print it in this newsletter!

The **Colonel E.H. Taylor Small Batch Bottled In Bond Straight Kentucky Bourbon (\$39.99)** is one of the single best values available from Kentucky—as long as you can find it at the reasonable price of forty bucks, not the \$60–\$100 or more you'll see it sold for at many retailers. The legendary high quality of E.H. Taylor rightly puts these bottles in the same league as Blanton's, Elmer T. Lee, and George T. Stagg. It's easy to see this whiskey falling into the category of, "I wish I had bought more when..." if supply tightens up again. Try it on the rocks and enjoy a magical, hedonistic drinking experience.

While the Buffalo Trace distillery and their powerhouse lineup continues to capture the hearts and minds of bourbon drinkers the world over, Kentucky is full of other great distilleries that have also spent the last decade trying to meet future demand with their proven, high-quality recipes. The Wild Turkey distillery has delivered yet again. Bottled as single barrels under the Russell's Reserve label, our two current casks offer an amazing sneak preview to three more casks coming this summer. The most common question we get whenever we bring in multiple barrels from the same label is, "How are they different?" The answer couldn't be more clear between barrels #399 and #927.



*These forlorn-looking rickhouses are actually brimming with bourbon.*

**Russell's Reserve Single Barrel #17-927 (\$64.99)** is loaded on the nose, a perfect balance of spice and fruitiness. There are gobs of cinnamon, cotton candy, sweet fresh fruit, and whipped cream. The palate is rich and carries all of the spiciness and sweetness right on through to the finish. **Barrel #17-399 (\$64.99)** attacks in an almost opposite way. The nose is lovely, but the explosion of flavor happens on the palate. One sip and your mouth is coated with rich caramel and cassia bark. Black pepper tingles from the tip of your tongue to the back of your throat and the warming sensation of fresh baked American pie is stunning.



Bourbon is an industry steeped in history like no other, yet stalwarts like Buffalo Trace and Wild Turkey have had to cede some ground to newcomers such as Bardstown Bourbon Company. Their stunning new facility in the bourbon capital of Kentucky is a triumph of the modern whiskey industry and a blueprint to the future. With the advent of whiskey tourism, the old timers have had to retrofit their facilities to include tasting bars, gift shops, cafes, and a visitor-friendly experience. No small task when you consider most of these facilities are decades-old factories that existed long before OSHA came on the scene. BBC, on the other hand, has built a gleaming new property from the ground up to exemplify what the Kentucky experience will become, as the Bourbon Trail transforms from a whiskey enthusiast's loosely organized set of visits to scattered producers around the Bluegrass State to a destination for luxurious, Napa-style indulgence, replete with five-star hotels, Michelin-starred dining experiences, and horseback rides through the countryside's famous farms. It's easy to see your future Kentucky trips beginning in Bardstown. The property is stunning and boasts an incredible restaurant and cocktail program. The distillery is even more impressive. Under Steve Nally's direction (formerly the master distiller at Maker's Mark), Bardstown Bourbon Company is quickly putting together some of the most exciting bottles of whiskey to hit the market.



While their young bourbon is terrific, it's not quite ready for the spotlight. However, the new **Bardstown Collaboration Series Phifer Pavitt Reserve Bourbon (\$129.99)** absolutely is! Bottled at 107 proof, this 9-year-old Tennessee straight bourbon has been finished for 19 months in Phifer Pavitt Cabernet barrels from Napa Valley. The bringing together of these two worlds is more than a gesture—it's a glorious medley of rich corn, caramel, and vanilla mixed with bold, blue fruits, chocolates, and a touch of tannin, made for the sheer sake of being delicious. The new Collaboration showcases the creativity and attention to detail that sets Bardstown Bourbon Company apart from the rest of the newcomers in a crowded field.

If you're thinking, "That's all great, but what does their own whiskey taste like?" then you must check out the Fusion Series. **Fusion #1 (\$59.99)** is BBC's first release of their own juice in conjunction with some very old Kentucky-sourced bourbon. Fully 60% of the blend was made at BBC: 18% is 2-year-old wheated bourbon, and 42% is 2-year high rye. Blend that with the 40% 11-year-old Kentucky juice and you've got yourself another example of incredible creativity, blending prowess, and distilling magic. I'll venture to say that no whiskey made from majority 2-year-old juice has ever been this good. Just another sign of the great things to come as the new whiskey landscape matures.

Four Roses, a staple in our Kentucky visits over the years due to their long-standing and truly impressive single cask and multi-recipe program, has once again set us up with some of the most exciting casks of the year. While our single barrel picks won't show up for a few more weeks, master distiller Brent Elliot's **Small Batch Select Bourbon (\$54.99)** is here now. While he has been involved in production since 2005 and master distiller since 2015, the Small Batch Select is the first whiskey he designed as the star of the show, and it's the first addition to the core lineup in 12 years. The bourbon is made up of six recipes: yeast strains V, K, and F made in both high-rye and low-rye mashbills. Bottled at 104 proof, the resulting whiskey is a blend of fruitiness from the V and F strains matched to the spiciness of the K yeast. It's a powerful whiskey showing raspberry compote, cinnamon, and nutmeg on the nose, with fresh berries and vanilla on the palate, finishing with a hint of bright mint and dark chocolate.

The old school Old Forester facility in Shively, just outside of Louisville proper, is producing one of the richest and most flavorful single cask programs on the market. The old plant still utilizes a "thumper" for their second distillation. After the stripping run on the column still, the live steam is injected into the thumper, and upon rapid condensation and reheating, it produces a loud bang, or "thump." This old way of doing things seems to result in a full and mouth-coating spirit. Combine that with the old warehouses that Old Forester uses, and you have a whiskey that tastes like a step back in time. **Old Forester Barrel #4093 (\$39.99)** was aged



in warehouse H on floor 5 for between four and six years, being gently heat-cycled throughout the cold Kentucky winters. Tons of stewed fruits give way to exotic wood spices and layers of dark cocoa and caramelized sugar. Exceptionally soft and approachable, the whiskey is velvety and warm with holiday spices.

When you think about American whiskey, it's nearly impossible to not think of Kentucky first, but you'd be closing your mind if you didn't also consider the many great producers that have sprung up outside of the Bluegrass State in the last 10 years. One of the best resides on the east shore of Lake Seneca in upstate New York. The Finger Lakes Distillery is home to McKenzie bourbon. Made entirely from New York State grown grain, **McKenzie Wheated Bottled In Bond Bourbon (\$44.99)** is the best wheated bourbon to hit our shelves since Weller. It has the hallmark creamy texture of wheated bourbon, but adds so much more on top of that. It's surprisingly dark in color and flavor, packed with cocoa, chocolate, and caramel, and the body is dense and rich, smooth as satin. The distillation for this whiskey finishes at a lower-than-normal proof, which retains even more of the impeccably sourced raw material's flavor. They also age at 100 proof, instead of the 110–125 that is common in Kentucky. By aging a lower-proofed spirit, less water is needed for the final proofing, leading to a more cohesive and flavorful whiskey in the bottle. By doing things a little differently, McKenzie has set themselves apart as the best wheated bourbon on our shelves.



One of the early darlings in the craft spirits movement was Whistle Pig. This Vermont distillery made its name sourcing Canadian and Indiana rye and blending together some of the tastiest bottles on the market. As they've grown, so too have their stocks. The selection of aged rye in their warehouses has allowed them to offer some of the most compelling single barrels we've seen from a non-Kentucky distillery. While each of these barrels are labeled under the classic 10-year rye label, the truth is that they are all 13- to 14-year-old whiskey. While they have been unwilling to update the label to reflect the significantly older age statement, they have not raised the prices—so no complaints here. For just \$89.99 you can see how different this old rye is from barrel to barrel. We currently have six barrels in stock with proofs ranging from 111.3 to 118.3. Personally, I love the dark chocolate nature of the 111.3 proof, and the sweet baked bread and brioche notes of the 113.9 proof in particular. The higher-proof barrels show more spiciness and a surprisingly fresh fruit component that is to die for.

**Whistle Pig 10 Year Old "K&L Exclusive" 118 Proof Barrel #2338 Single Barrel Cask Strength Straight Rye Whiskey (\$89.99)**

**117.3 Proof Barrel #2447 (\$89.99)**

**113.9 Proof Barrel #2346 (\$89.99)**

**118.3 Proof Barrel #2347 (\$89.99)**

**111.3 Proof Barrel #2380 (\$89.99)**

**114.5 Proof Barrel #2444 (\$89.99)**



# Andrew's Spirits Roundup: Fynbos Gin and Highland Tequila

By Andrew Whiteley



While we have a tendency to focus on the insane growth and the wildly abundant, high-quality options now available in the whiskey market, the rest of the spirits world continues to grow at a rapid clip. There are more great things to drink at amazing prices from all around the world than we've ever had access to before.

## Inverroche Fynbos Gin

Gin consumption is sky high and rising, and with good reason. As people choose to focus on terroir and regionality in their spirits, from estate vodka on through mezcal and rum, gin stands out as a particularly interesting category. The ability to express place and quality through careful selection of botanicals lends itself naturally to the discussion of terroir. No gin better captures this than the lineup from Inverroche.

South African gins have a unique advantage—they're made with fynbos, a group of plants that make up about 80% of the Cape floral kingdom's biodiversity. Within the 100- to 200-kilometer-wide strip of land that is the Cape peninsula, fynbos includes roughly 8,500 species of plants. Inverroche has utilized this exceptional biodiversity to make three unique gins that focus on these plants from different soil types.

**Inverroche Classic Gin (\$39.99)** utilizes a selection of fynbos from limestone-rich soils. The result is a very clean, floral, and citrusy gin that can be used anywhere you'd use a classic London dry gin.

**Inverroche Verdant Gin (\$39.99)** focuses on fynbos grown in the mountains of the Cape. It takes on a slightly green hue due to the maceration of the fynbos after distillation. The gin is floral and elegant, reminiscent of chamomile and elder flowers.

Perhaps the most unique of the three is the **Inverroche Amber Gin (\$39.99)**. Dark mahogany in color from maceration, the Amber selects fynbos botanicals from the iron-rich desert soils on the Cape. It has a sweet, woody note, and a beguiling spice. All three are available exclusively at K&L in California.

## La Gritona Tequila

While we could easily devote an entire newsletter to the realm of agave spirits, we just don't have the space. But one of the newest tequilas to hit our shelves at an insane price point deserves being singled out.

**La Gritona Reposado Tequila (\$29.99)** is the brainchild of prolific hardcore guitarist Andy Coronado. It's a big leap from hardcore punk to old school tequila, but what Andy did right was focus on authenticity at a reasonable price. Then, he put it in one of the most distinctive bottles you'll ever see and began hawking it out of the back of his van. He searched for the perfect partner and eventually settled on the small Vinos y Licores Azteca to produce this special reposado. They start with mature highland agave and slow roast it in traditional clay and brick ovens. After crushing, the agave is naturally fermented and double distilled in copper pots. It's then aged for eight months in second- and third-fill American whiskey barrels before being bottled without any additives. It's a simple recipe that many modern tequila producers fail to replicate. The result is a delicious tequila that tastes of agave... imagine that! La Gritona is Spanish for "the screamer," and we're certain you'll be screaming for more of this new tequila as soon as you try it.



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