

SPIRITS News

We've got a fresh crop of rare and exclusive gin, rye, bourbon, and single malt.



JUNE 14, 2021 FEATURES

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The Spirit of Summer

By David Othenin-Girard and Andrew Whiteley

Here in the Spirits Department at K&L Wine Merchants, our goal is to find the most exciting and delicious spirits from across the world and bring them to you at the absolute best possible price. Despite the challenges the past year has brought, we've scoured Scotland's warehouses for single malt of the highest quality. We've worked with the finest American craft distillers to identify the very best new whiskey available amidst an impossible sea of new craft products. And we've worked with the finest distillers to create exclusive products and Direct Imports that no one else in the world can offer. There's perhaps never been a better time to be a lover of quality booze, thanks to the vibrant and diverse selections we've searched out and selected.

Jumping for Joy, Re: Gin

Summer is upon us, and as things start to heat up, we've got just the stuff to keep you cool. Few spirits are more effective in the battle against boredom and perspiration than the spirituous extraction of that special plant, *Juniperus communis*. Its fruit is not a berry at all, but an unusually corpulent cone of this ubiquitous conifer. The dried spice was an obvious choice when the first distillers were trying to mask the wretched flavor of the earliest tipples, thanks to its powerful aroma and abundant availability. It would be a crucial step in the evolution of drinks making—the extraction of flavors from plants via distillation. Now, centuries later, the palate continues to crave the clean, vibrant character that this fragrant plant imparts on our drink. The ebb and flow of personal preferences has pointed us back toward this unbelievably diverse beverage, and a new era of “terroir gin” is going full steam. Here are the best we have to offer to beat the summer heat.

Isle of Harris Sugar Kelp Infused Gin (\$59.99) Never judge a book by its cover, they say—unless it's gorgeously appointed and unrivaled in its beauty, I'd add. There is no question that in the booze business, your bottle is nearly as important as the stuff that goes in it. Indeed, it was the striking package that drew my eye to this product on the back bar of a Glasgow pub a half decade ago. I asked to see the bottle and realized that this was not some crass, overdesigned marketing exercise. This was a legitimate and thoughtfully crafted Scottish gin with a character unlike any other I'd tasted. One sniff out of that bottle and I knew I needed to have this stuff—*every day*, if possible. But there was one massive hurdle: the tiny distillery on a far-flung island in the outer Hebrides was already struggling to keep up with local demand, and the incredible care in the design of the bottle meant that creating a bottle suitable for the US market—which only recently allowed the sale of spirits in 700-milliliter bottles—was next to impossible. So, we waited. I staged a relentless campaign with emails and phone calls to the distillery to make clear our interest. And when this special product finally popped up with a small distributor, I bought every single bottle they had on hand.



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*Lavender fields in the south of... England? Yes indeed, near the village of Snowhill, a short drive away from the distillery that employs the herb in their gin.
(Photo: Cotswolds Distillery)*

Four Pillars “Faultline” K&L Exclusive Australian Gin (\$34.99)

The stupendous Four Pillars distillery was just declared Australia’s number one premium gin brand, beating out Scottish behemoth Hendrick’s in recent sales data. That is an incredible feat for the team of three who created and launched this unique operation, of which we were lucky to have been early adopters and great supporters.

Four Pillars did something few other craft distillers are willing to do—they focused their efforts entirely on one category. Their thoughtful, terroir-driven approach revolved around one principle: make damned delicious gin. They included unusual local botanicals, which offered a subtle riff on the classic gin flavors without alienating the classic gin lover. Thanks to our strong relationship, we were able to craft this exclusive expression, which turns the volume up on those rare and unusual flavors. The result is one of our most successful exclusive efforts to date. We, and Four Pillars, get requests for this product from around the world, but it is sold *only* here.



Inverroche

A K&L Exclusive in California, Inverroche makes South Africa’s finest gins with a unique set of botanicals. Fynbos, part of the Cape Floristic Region, grow nowhere else on earth. These plants, endemic to South Africa’s Cape, are highly adapted to unique microclimates and soils and wildly diverse. Some 6,000 species of fynbos are unique to just the Cape. Each of these three gins highlights a different terroir.

The **Inverroche Classic Gin (\$39.99)** is really built around a typical London Dry profile—lots of juniper, coriander, and citrus, but with an added herbal complexity from the fynbos. It is also crystal-clear in color like a traditional gin. If you don’t want to stray too far into the unknown, this is the place to start.

The **Inverroche Verdant Gin (\$39.99)** utilizes fynbos specifically from mountainous terrain. The liquid has a subtle and elegant green hue to it from a post-distillation maceration of these mountain fynbos. The Verdant is floral and soft. The unique botanical components are difficult to describe, but are reminiscent of lavender, chamomile, and elderflowers.

The **Inverroche Amber Gin (\$39.99)** is perhaps the most striking of the three in flavor and appearance. It has also proved to be the most popular expression with our customers. A deep amber color, the gin employs fynbos from the Cape’s sandy, coastal dunes. It doesn’t lack for a juniper and citrus backbone but it includes a remarkable combination of fruity and woody notes, all from the fynbos selection. While most people look at the color and assume this is a barrel-aged gin, it has seen no wood aging—just a post-distillation maceration of fynbos that imparts color as well as flavor. This is truly the most unique gin in the store and one of our most popular to boot.

If you’re interested in all three bottles and simply can’t decide, we’ve recently been able to add a tasting pack to our shelves.

The **Inverroche South African Gin Gift Pack (1 x 750ml, 2 x 50ml \$59.99)** has one full-sized bottle of the popular Inverroche Amber and two 50-milliliter bottles—one of the Classic and one Verdant. The perfect gift for a gin lover or just a great way to try something new.



Cotswolds Dry Gin (\$34.99) The Cotswolds Distillery has quietly become a K&L fan favorite over the last several years. At first they were only importing miniscule quantities and their gin was one of our best-kept secrets. Fortunately we were able to secure a large parcel for this summer’s G&T season. Don’t miss one of the best takes on London Dry gin from this beautiful distillery. A heavy dose of grapefruit zest in the botanical recipe gives it a lively flair and just enough of a difference in the citrus profile to really set it apart from the crowd. The mouthfeel is silky and the flavor robust. It’s sure to be a new workhorse in your stable for every gin cocktail you fancy.



All-American Affair: Craft Whiskey Comes of Age

The world of American whiskey continues to expand exponentially, but it is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. Considering the hundreds of new distilleries that have opened over the last decade, it is quite literally impossible to keep up with every new brand and release. On top of that, prices for many of the legacy producers are skyrocketing faster than meme stocks going to the moon. Fortunately, we are here to help. While we continue to fight the good fight on holding prices down, we are also working our supplier relationships for the finest single casks and access to the most exciting new whiskies the American craft whiskey scene has to offer. Here we highlight four exceptional distilleries that are expanding the conversation about whiskey without forgetting the most important part—it's got to taste delicious! These are some of the best-drinking barrels we've found from across the United States.

Kentucky Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon and Rye Whiskey for Just \$39.99

New Riff Bottled-In-Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$39.99)

New Riff Bottled In Bond Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey (\$39.99)

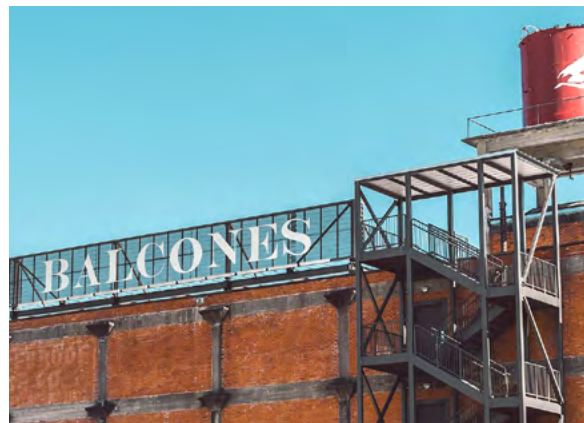
New Riff in Newport, Kentucky has changed the game for craft distilling. While most craft producers are quite small at first, New Riff set out to build a mid-sized distillery. Their still setup looks not unlike many of the big Kentucky producers. This is very intentional, as they conceived a distillery that, at its core, is a classic Kentucky bourbon and rye distillery. No fancy combination pot and column do-it-all still. Just a beautiful Kentucky column beer still and continuous doubler. They are fiercely committed to the rigorous standards set forth by the Bottled-In-Bond Act and even take it one step further: they chill-filter nothing. The only deviation from that famous legislation is in their single barrels, which they leave at cask strength instead of bottling at 100 proof as required to be Bottled-In-Bond. If you want to taste the future of quality craft Kentucky distillation, offered by the most caring and thoughtful team in the industry, try the Bottled-in-Bond products from this exceptional distillery. If you want a unique and idiosyncratic experience, you should try their a single-barrel, full-proof selection—we've got those, too. Find all of our New Riff products in stock [here](#).



Balcones K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Barrel #16584 Texas Single Malt Whisky (\$79.99) Stepping outside of Kentucky, we head to Texas and one of the earliest craft distilleries in America to focus on single malt: Balcones. This Waco staple has been making American single malt since distilling operations started up in 2009.

They began collecting huge awards and never-ending accolades almost immediately. The incredible diurnal temperature swings in Waco

means the spirit-to-wood interactions come hard and fast. The bulk of their bottlings are aged just a couple of years. While they taste great at just two years old, we wanted to dive deeper into the warehouse and grab something truly over the top. This malt was distilled from 100% Golden Promise Scottish barley and aged in new European oak for four long Texas years. It's an American single malt that offers a unique combination of American and Scottish traditions and clocks in at a massive 65.4% ABV.



Hillrock Estate Solera Aged Single Barrel K&L Exclusive Shea Vineyards "Homer Vineyard" Oregon Pinot Noir Finished Cask Strength Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$139.99)

Jumping to New York, Hillrock Estate has revived a centuries-old tradition of farm distilling. In addition to being the first farm distillery since Prohibition in the US, Hillrock also brought an aging tradition common in Spain into the American whiskey drinker's consciousness: the solera. This progressive aging technique allows for a consistent quality and high average liquid age over time. Add to that a unique finishing program and you've got a recipe for some fabulous bourbon.

When we had the opportunity to grab a barrel of this solera bourbon finished in Shea Vineyards Pinot Noir barrels from the famous Homer Vineyard in Oregon, we jumped. Bright cherry notes from the cask play perfectly with the sweet estate-grown corn and quality wood management in the solera.



LAWS Whiskey House “Barrel Select” K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Barrel #508 San Luis Valley Straight Rye Whiskey (\$74.99)

This delicious single barrel of craft San Luis Valley rye is one of the very best we’ve yet to try. Over the last decade, there has been a huge influx of craft distillers offering rye of various quality and character, but LAWS has found a formula that’s as delicious as it is rare. Using the heirloom variety of rye grown by farmers in South-Central Colorado, this bottling is derived from an equal blend of malted and unmalted rye. This semi-wild variety now being cultivated exclusively to produce this particular whiskey offers character unlike the industrial ryes grown in Canada and Germany for the rest of the industry. Expect a stupendous mixture of rich salted caramel, with a complex bouquet of mints and licorice bark on the nose. On the palate, you’ll find a vibrant mixture of sweet, earthy oak, bold cacao, tangy green herbs, and burnt Seville orange peel. It’s truly incredible what these distillers have managed to achieve in such a short time, and we couldn’t be more proud to be partnered with them.



Leopold Bros. 4 Year Old “Cask Select” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel #509 Cask Strength Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$49.99)

Few craft distillers across the country have been so committed to quality as the fabulous Leopold Bros. in Denver, Colorado. They’ve offered a number of unusual bottlings over the years, but have perfected the old-style straight bourbon thing as of late. These single casks, which are cask strength but come out of the barrel right at 100 proof, could technically be considered bottled in bond—which is super strange for single barrels. They are one of the few distillers to use indigenous yeast in open-top fermenters and true pot stills with no column stripping run. This is old school bourbon of the highest order and tastes unlike any of the traditional distillers in Kentucky. The high malt content (21%) and the heirloom grains, plus open floor dunnage-style warehousing, offers a different sort of take on the centuries-old category. It is, however, exceptionally delicious and offers a complexity and drinkability that few craft distillers have managed to create. Considering all that goes into a bottle of this stuff, this is one of the best values craft bourbon has to offer today.



New Single Cask Single Malts from the Highlands to the Islands

If you’ve been paying attention to K&L’s Scotch program over the last decade, you know the Laing family. They’ve bottled countless legends for us over the years and remain one of the most important independent bottlers in the marketplace. Because of the excellent relationship we’ve built over the years, we get access to some of Scotland’s greatest casks and continue to find incredible barrels that blow away the competition in terms of value and quality. The current lineup of Hunter Laing’s prestigious Old & Rare casks is unmatched in our history. Our access to these casks is aided by expanded regulations which allow for the importation of the ever-so-slightly smaller European-style bottles. This has allowed us to access Hunter Laing’s bottled stock, which we are able to offer at a significant discount from where you’d see these exceptional malts on the European market.

Old & Rare Collection

Seven casks ranging between 25 and 47 years old, in top-notch wood, carefully cellared over the decades, and offered at incredible prices make for a mouthwatering selection that any collector or lover of Scotch will appreciate. All are currently being offered on *Pre-Arrival* with an estimated delivery date of August 2021. Most are in the new 700-milliliter format.

1988 Ardmore 31 Year “Hunter Laing Old & Rare Heritage Platinum Selection” Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$349.99) A platinum selection, a designation of the best of the best in the Hunter Laing warehouses, this old Highland peater is a true rarity and more than a cut above any Ardmore cask we’ve ever tasted. 50.2% ABV.

1987 Bunnahabhain 30 Year “Hunter Laing Old & Rare” Single Sherry Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$399.99) This magical cask has a superbly drinkable natural cask strength of 48.4% ABV. Considering the distillery’s own 25-year bottling regularly commands \$800-plus these days, this is a steal at half the price.

1973 Dailuaine 46 Year “Hunter Laing Old & Rare Platinum Selection” Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$999.99) Elsewhere \$2,000. This insane platinum selection is the oldest Dailuaine we’ve ever seen. We did not purchase the entire cask and it is going for \$2,000 elsewhere—not an unfair price given the quality, but at 1,000 bucks, we think this is an unbeatable deal. 45.1% ABV.

1982 Inchgowrie 37 Year “Hunter Laing Old & Rare Heritage Platinum Selection” Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$499.99) Caramel, milk chocolate, green apples, and tons of tropical fruit mark this unique whisky from Inchgowrie’s heyday. It’s a gorgeous example of the incredible potential of this rare and unusual distillery. 50.1% ABV.

1994 Tomatin 25 Year Old “Hunter Laing Old & Rare” Single Sherry Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$249.99) This sherry butt of Tomatin comes in at 49.3% ABV and is a decadently flavorful whisky. Dense, rich sherry coupled with Tomatin’s soft Highland character is a dream come true for any lover of old sherried malt.



Time on their side: deep in Speyside, casks of the region's plausibly finest whisky quietly age in a cool warehouse.

1988 Tormore 31 Year “Hunter Laing Old & Rare Heritage Platinum Selection” Single Sherry Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$349.99) A sister cask to last year's wildly popular Tormore 32. Robust and 49.1% ABV.

1989 Tullibardine 31 Year “Hunter Laing Old & Rare” K&L Exclusive Single Sherry Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (750ml \$299.99) Tullibardine has been a hit-or-miss distillery in terms of their official bottlings, but when you get a choice cask like this sherry butt, it truly shines. 53.3% ABV.

Old Malt Cask

We have six exceptional malts on this Scotch container bottled under the famous Old Malt Cask label. They represent some of the finest Scotch value plays available anywhere in the world and are carefully selected by our Spirits Department buyers. *Offered as Pre-Arrival.*

2002 Linkwood 18 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Hogshead Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$99.99)

It is exceedingly difficult to find any single malt with an 18-year age statement for \$100, let alone a blue chip like Linkwood. It wasn't long ago Mac 18 was 100 bucks. Now it's 3.5 times that. Linkwood is a distillery prized by blenders for its prominent and fruity nose, and therefore is rarely available as a single cask. We couldn't pass this one up and neither should you.

2000 Tamdhu 20 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$79.99) 20-year-old single cask, cask-strength malt for 80 bucks? It looks like a typo, but it isn't. This rich spirit comes from Tamdhu-malted barley—a true rarity these days, as the distillery hasn't operated its Saladin boxes in over a decade. Another great one to explore the true character of the distillery without the typical sherry influence.

1992 Plausibly Speyside's Finest (Glenfarclas) 28 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Refill Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$159.99) Glenfarclas is not only plausibly Speyside's finest, it's arguably the best bang-for-your-buck distillery in all of Scotland. While their official bottlings have remained insanely reasonable in price, we rarely get the chance to bottle this special distillery as a single cask, and we never get to use the name of the distillery on the bottle, as they don't trade casks with the distillery name. But we're confident of the provenance of these special malts.

This is one of four casks in the parcel of Speyside's Finest casks we've seen over the last year and remains one of the best drams you'll find at any price point. It's distinct from the distillery-bottled single casks, as it does not have any sherry influence.

1993 Glen Keith 28 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$149.99) We rarely see Glen Keith these days. It was closed in 1999 and not reopened until 2013, so we're just in the gap of this excellent distillery for mature malt that isn't prohibitively expensive. When we had the chance to snag a rare cask of 1993 Glen Keith we didn't blink.

2003 An Orkney Distillery 17 Year Old “Old Malt Cask” K&L Exclusive Single Hogshead Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$79.99) This unnamed Orkney malt comes from one of the world's most famous distilleries. At 17 years old and available for just eighty bucks it might be the best value we see all year.

Dornoch Distillery—Redacted Bros.

This stupendous team in the far north of Scotland has made waves in the whisky world with old school fermentation and distillation techniques at their tiny, hand-built distillery. After opening one of Scotland's finest whisky bars in the tiny town of Dornoch, brothers Simon and Phil Thompson built a distillery unlike any other in Scotland in the shed behind the house. As they wait for their malt spirit to mature, they're bottling barrels that they've acquired through various channels, many opened up by the good will that their famous bar has attracted. They have excellent taste and access to things that are simply not available elsewhere. You'll note that their name has been changed for the US market due to trademark concerns—their current labels read “Redacted Bros.” It's the same amazing juice.

Blended Malt 19 Year Old “Redacted Bros.” (Thompson/Dornoch) Sherry Cask Matured Blended Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$79.99) An unbelievable value by any measure. This is a blend of Edrington malts, with the youngest distilled in 2001, married for an undisclosed amount of time in ex-sherry casks. Bottled at a very approachable 44.8% ABV.

Caol Ila 10 Year Old “Redacted Bros.” (Thompson/Dornoch) Single Refill Hogshead Cask Strength Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$59.99) The quintessential ocean malt, Caol Ila remains one of the finest examples Islay has to offer. Not as medicinal as



Nice day—for a warming dram of peaty, cask-strength single malt. Caol Ila during one of our before-times buying tours.

Laphroaig, ashy as Ardbeg, or oily as Lagavulin, this is fresh and vibrant, but packing plenty of peat. This is a slightly aperitif-y style, but has the stuffing to keep it interesting for any peat lover.

Gordon & MacPhail

The incredible Elgin-based grocer turned famous independent bottler has Scotland's most diverse and broad stocks. Representing over 100 distilleries in their warehouses, they still have filling contracts that go back centuries. Because they're filling exclusively for single malt sale, and never to blend, their cask management is exceptional. This means a slight premium over some other bottlers on the market, but quality for your dollar is second to none.

Clynelish 14 Year Old "Gordon & MacPhail Connoisseur's Choice" K&L Exclusive Cask #310540 Single Refill Sherry Hogshead Nonchillfiltered Cask Strength Highlands Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$139.99)

This delicious cask from the famous North Highland distillery highlights the incredibly unctuous waxy quality that they're known for. Paired with a still active, but not overpowering, refill sherry hogshead, this gorgeous malt is easily one of the most intriguing and bewitching malts we'll bottle this year. You pay a premium over the regular distillery bottling, but considering there's not a cask-strength single barrel of this quality to be had on the market at any price point, this cask couldn't be more worth it.



Scapa 20 Year Old "Gordon & MacPhail Connoisseur's Choice" K&L Exclusive Cask #1098 Single Refill Sherry Hogshead Nonchillfiltered Cask Strength Orkney Island Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$179.99)

We've sold a total of seven different Scapas in the 45-year history of K&L. To say it's a rarity is an understatement. And since the standard 16-year is no more and the regular No Age Statement offering is basically always out of stock, there is no regular source for the underappreciated Orkney distillery. The fact that G&M are the owners of the original brand label, despite not being able to bottle cask-strength versions under that label, means that this is one of the only sources available for this wonderful malt. Add a just-perfect second fill sherry hogshead and you've got a recipe for one of the most exciting and rare whiskies we've offered in some time. Expect complex aromas of dark cocoa, marzipan, baked stone fruit, orange oil, rich spice, and roasted nuts.



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