

SPIRITS News

Make a splash with new casks, cocktails, and more.



SEPTEMBER 20, 2021 FEATURES

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Fall 2021 Spirits: Chaos Is a Friend of Mine

By David Othenin-Girard and Andrew Whiteley

Change, despite the chaos it brings, is a good thing. It brings new flavors, experiences, and innovation. Like everything else, we've had our fair share of shakeups in the booze world over the last few years. Covid-19 has made of mess of production lines and supply chains while driving demand for alcohol to the moon. Previously obscure categories of spirits have found themselves at the forefront of popular drinking culture. Hard seltzer has come and gone, but other innovations are here to stay. Once only made in the sickly sweet and artificially flavored variety, canned cocktails are now being crafted by first-rate bartenders who find themselves out of work due to Covid. It has become serious

business with some very high-quality options hitting the market. Sake, a long underappreciated beverage category in the United States, is gaining converts with every sip. Mezcal continues to wow drinkers with its traditional production and wide variety of flavors. Shipping upheaval and changing tariffs have made Scotch imports more complex than ever. And the American whiskey boom that began 20 years ago is now coming of age. In short, there is no shortage of great drinking available to the American consumer today—especially, we like to think, to the K&L customer. We've rounded up some of the best in this newsletter and we hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

Rock Steady Spirits Tepache Hi-Ball Canned Cocktail (12oz \$8.99)

Rock Steady is easily the most exciting canned cocktail on the market today.

Renowned spirits guru Gino Pellarin starts by making a fresh Tepache. This calls for tons of pineapple skins fermented with raw cane sugar in water. Then he adds

spices, high-quality 100% agave tequila, lactic and citric acids, and carbonates the entire thing. No adjuncts or chemical flavorings. The resulting tittle is canned at 7.5% and is delicious. When we drink our cocktails canned, it's probably going to be this one.



Kokuryu "Nine Headed Dragon" Junmai Sake (720ml \$29.99)

The incredible Kokuryu

Brewery is one of Japan's cult producers. Extremely difficult to get in Japan, it's still flying well under the radar in the U.S. Their water is sourced from an underground river below the brewery. The mineral-rich waters give this sake a structure and bright tension unseen in much of the sake that is made using softer water. This can be served warm with richer foods, but does great paired with fat and protein at cooler temps.



2010 Dailuaine 10 Year Old "Sovereign" K&L Exclusive Single Sherry

Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$54.99)

Sherried Dailuaine has been a fan favorite at K&L for years. Stylistically it sits somewhere between Clynelish and Blair Athol, showing both a waxy character associated with the former and an inherent sherryiness associated with the latter. This makes it a perfect candidate to stand up to a big ol' sherry butt in just a matter of 10 years. The price-to-quality ratio makes it one of the best deals of the year.



Canned Cocktails Climb Up the Shelf

The world is going nuts for ready-to-drink cocktails. There's an absolute crush of new brands. But honestly, so many of them are so below our standards for quality that the convenience they offer is completely moot. While every supermarket and liquor store is stacking hard seltzers to the ceiling, we're a bit more discerning when it comes to getting a quick cocktail out of the fridge. We don't want you to have to settle just because you don't feel like pulling the old cocktail shaker off the shelf. A choice few brands have managed to put astonishingly good things in one of the industry's most convenient packages. Here are the best we've found in the past year.

Salt Point

Locally owned (they're based in Mill Valley, not far from K&L's Northern California stores) and extremely popular, Salt Point makes excellent products that are straightforward but ultra-appealing.

They're not making anything groundbreaking, but they're offering solid cocktails at an affordable price. Their mixes are familiar and scratch the itch when you just can't bring yourself to squeeze a lime or measure a jigger. Heather Wyatt, founder and president, spent years trialing ingredients to dial in just the right flavor and balance. Read: They aren't too sweet! **Sold as 12-ounce cocktail cans.**

Salt Point Margarita (\$4.99)

Salt Point Greyhound (\$4.99)

Salt Point Highball (\$4.99)

Salt Point Moscow Mule (\$4.99)



Livewire

Bartender Aaron Polsky is a gosh-darned rockstar! He believes that the best cocktails are created by bartenders, and he's hired some of the most talented to create his line. They all get a healthy cut of proceeds. The offerings are diverse, affordable, and extremely well thought-out. **Sold as 4-pack of 12-ounce cocktail cans.**

Livewire "Golden God By Aaron Polsky" (\$17.99)

Livewire "Honeydew Collins by Joey Bernardo" (\$17.99)

Livewire "Rocket Queen by Erin Hayes" (\$17.99)

Livewire "Heart Breaker by Aaron Polsky" (\$17.99)



Drifter

These are some of the most popular new cocktails in the store. Made with ultra-high-quality base spirits and interesting twists on classic recipes, they are next to impossible to replicate at home. Drifter cocktails out-perform nearly any other classic cocktail brand. **Sold as 4-pack of 12-ounce cocktail cans.**

Drifter Moscow Mule (\$15.99)

Drifter Spicy Margarita (\$15.99)

Drifter Passion Fruit Caipirinha (\$15.99)

Empirical

The big daddy of experimental distillers, Empirical Spirits has been making waves in the drinks world. Known for their koji malted spirits and Noma-style adventurousness, this Danish distiller has created a line of canned drinks of unbelievable complexity and character. Even the best bartenders in the world would have trouble replicating these wild recipes. **Sold as 4-pack of 12-ounce cocktail cans.**

Empirical Spirits "CAN 1" Oolong Tea (\$39.99)

Empirical Spirits "CAN 2" Sour Cherry (\$39.99)

Empirical Spirits "CAN 3" Carob & Coffee (\$29.99)



Sake Explosion!

One of the largest growth categories in our store over the last year is sake. This complex and diverse fermented beverage is absolutely on fire, and many of our customers are drinking it with every meal. The recent interest is likely tied to the incredible proliferation of excellent Japanese food and the realization that, unlike wine, most bottles of sake can stay fresh in the fridge for weeks or more.

One importer stands out from the crowd for their commitment to quality, opening our eyes to the diversity and complexity of this special category: World Sake Imports. Their portfolio highlights a single brewery from each prefecture, attracting brewers who otherwise would not be willing to export or compete in a single book with their local peers. Each brewer represents the very finest and often most classic expression of the region. They're bringing in regular containers each month, so the sake is as fresh as humanly possible. You don't have to wait for sushi night to drink sake any longer—this incredibly diverse group of sakes can go with anything from fried chicken to Bolognese!

Tamagawa “Red Label” Heirloom Yamahai Genshu Sake (720ml \$34.99) Tamagawa Red Label is not for everyone. This is the sake for lovers of funky Georgian orange wine. This is the sake for



lovers of Springbank or Laphroaig. This is the sake for lovers of the funkier En Rama Fino Sherry. This is the “natural wine” of sake. Made in the traditional yamahai style without any water added after brewing, it's designed to go with grilled meats and salty preserved foods. Produced by Japan's first Western toji (master brewer), Philip Harper, who's committed to tradition like few other toji in Japan, this is fermented entirely with ambient yeast and never filtered or diluted. It's the cask-strength single barrel of sake. Not everyone will like it, but if the above describes you, you're sure to fall in love.

Tedorigawa Iki Na Onna “Lady Luck” Daiginjo Sake (720ml \$44.99) Tedorigawa brand from the Yoshida Brewery has become famous thanks to being highlighted in the popular documentary, *Birth of Sake*, but they haven't rested on their laurels. The brewery is incredibly traditional and exacting to an almost outrageous degree, yet their flagship Daiginjo still remains extremely affordable. This ultra-delicate style is the most classic we're featuring here and offers wonderful pungent aromas while staying lifted and bright with exceptional acidity. The addition of brewer's alcohol here is not intended to add a boozy character, but cut the rice-y texture and offer the drinker a more elegant and arguably wine-like body and texture.



Maguery Melate K&L Exclusive Mezcal

The fabulous Maguery Melate has long been the darling of mezcal geek circles. Founded by a group of Mexicans and Americans committed to keeping mezcal small and supporting high-quality producers, the brand has bottled an enormous diversity of spirits from all over Mexico. It has never before been available in California and we're honored to be the exclusive source for this spectacular project here. The tiny batches they've bottled for us were hand-selected by Founder Dalton Kreiss and highlight some of his favorite producers in their broad portfolio. Very few bottlers are more committed to the traditional style of production and supporting their distillers. Only a handful of bottles of each expression will be available.

Maguery Melate “Cuixe” German Oaxaca Uncertified Mezcal (375ml \$39.99)

Maguery Melate “Pulquero” Felix Oaxaca Uncertified Mezcal (375ml \$47.99)

Maguery Melate “Papalometl” Erubiel La Mixteca Uncertified Mezcal (375ml \$47.99)

1999 Maguery Melate “Espadin” Augustin Oaxaca Uncertified Mezcal (375ml \$64.99)



Maguery Melate “Papalometl” David La Mixteca Uncertified Mezcal (375ml \$59.99)

Maguery Melate “Signature Box” Uncertified Mezcal Gift Pack (3x375ml \$249.99)

Maguery Melate “Sacatoro” Apolinar Atenango del Río, Guerrero Uncertified Mezcal (375ml \$59.99)

Maguery Melate “Pechuga Tasting Box” Uncertified Mezcal Tastings Kit (11x50ml \$119.99)



The Water of Life from O'er the Pond: Scotch Casks



Over the past year we've suffered one of the most complicated environments for bringing in unique spirits. The shipping crisis has delayed our offers by months. Luckily our plan to bring in two containers of single malt Scotch whisky this year began early, or we might not have *any* single malt to sell. Despite the challenges, we've found a huge variety of exceptional malts to offer this past year. Normally, we'd have a boat leaving Scotland to arrive just in time for the holiday push, but what once took 10 weeks now takes 25. So as our spring container is just finally being processed—with several incredible Pre-Arrivals still available—our normal fall container, filled to the brim with amazing single malt, will not arrive until spring of 2022. Nevertheless, we've secured some of the most interesting stock we've seen in years. Here's just a tiny taste of our expected Pre-Arrival offer.

Single Malt Scotch Whisky

2012 Caol Ila 8 Year Old "Redacted Bros." (Thompson/Dornoch) Single Refill Hogshead Cask Strength (700ml \$49.99)

2009 Ledaig 12 Year Old "Old Particular" K&L Exclusive Single Hogshead Cak Strength (750ml \$89.99)

2008 Caol Ila 12 Year Old "Old Particular" K&L Exclusive Single Refill Sherry Butt Cask Strength (750ml \$74.99)

1991 Caol Ila 30 Year Old "Old Particular" K&L Exclusive Single Hogshead Cask Strength (750ml \$379.99)

2006 Craigellachie 15 Year Old "Old Particular" K&L Exclusive Single Sherry Butt Cask Strength Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky (750ml \$89.99)

2004 Glenturret 17 Year Old "Old Particular" K&L Exclusive Single Sherry Puncheon Cask Strength (750ml \$99.99)

2013 Glen Ord 8 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Sherry Butt (700ml \$49.99)

Glendronach 12 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Sherry Butt (700ml \$99.99)

Benriach 15 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Port Pipe (700ml \$109.99)

2009 Benriach 12 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Sherry Butt (700ml \$99.99)

1997 Mortlach 24 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Sherry Butt (700ml \$279.99)

1995 Glenallachie 25 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Sherry Butt (700ml \$349.99)

Rum Cask

2005 JMWP (Worthy Park) 15 Year Old "Redacted Bros." (Thompson/Dornoch) K&L Exclusive Single Refill Hogshead Cask Strength Jamaican Rum (750ml \$69.99)

Water of Life In Stock Now

2002 Linkwood 18 Year Old "Hepburn's Choice" K&L Exclusive Single Hogshead Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (750ml \$99.99) The splendid Linkwood Distillery is the unsung hero of the Diageo portfolio, but is such a crucial element in their core blends, it is not sold regularly as a single malt. Fortunately for us, we have access to the occasional barrel from our sources in Scotland—and we rarely say no to Linkwood. Expect the distillery's classic character, full of fruit, pure maltiness, and the tiniest tingle of peat, with drops of licorice, heather, honey, and citrus. An exceptional value and a safe bet for that pure Speyside character.



1995 GlenAllachie 19 Year Old "Hart Brothers Finest Collection" Single American Oak Barrel Cask Strength Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky (700ml \$109.99) This is listed as aged for 19 years in American oak, but there are obvious sherry flavors here. A gorgeous chestnut color with a nose of dark cocoa, medium roast arabica, bright stone fruit, and mint. A powerful palate of spicy oak, dark red fruit, and a slight nuttiness. Definitely on the drier side of sherried 'allachie, but overtly delightful and an absolutely exceptional price point for the quality and rarity of barrels this age. Only 180 bottles available from this excellent cask.



An Embarrassment of Riches: the State of American Whiskey

The American whiskey renaissance is still hurtling forward at full steam and shows no signs of slowing down. Just a few short years ago there were three distinct categories in American whiskey: the big boys, stalwart producers who were pumping out large quantities of excellent quality hooch (we won't talk about the oceans of other stuff...), but often extremely difficult to find for fair and affordable prices; the upstarts, young distilleries trying to shake up the game by making their own awesome whiskeys, but often with stocks too young for anyone to take notice; and the outsourcers, those who were sourcing well-aged, but often overlooked stocks from the likes of MGP in Indiana or undisclosed distilleries in Kentucky. All three are viable avenues to explore for the whiskey enthusiast—although each has its own difficulties.

While some people love to hunt for those rare and allocated bottles, it can be a frustrating endeavor for drinkers who just want to try something cool they may have read about, or saw on Instagram, to even get ahold of a bottle—or find an affordable pour in a bar. Sadly, this hasn't changed a lick in the last few years—if anything it has only gotten worse. In that category, all we can say is, good luck in the upcoming holiday season! Yes we will get that bottle, but it will sell out quickly on a first-come, first-served basis. It's the other two categories where we've seen a huge leap forward and have cask after cask of outstanding whiskey to highlight.



Now that the upstarts of a few years back are beginning to enter their teenage years, those who made it through the long, hard slog of starting a whiskey distillery are really starting to shine with interesting and respectably aged whiskeys that are every bit as good (or better) than what you find from the big guys. We're fortunate enough to have secured a number of choice barrels from luminaries like LAWS, Balcones, Hillrock, Sonoma Distilling, Westward, and Wyoming Whiskey.

As regards the brands sourcing whiskey, we have really come full circle in a long, arcing story. When bourbon first began to boom there were a few producers who made their name buying extremely well-aged and fabulously good whiskey from MGP (then LDI) in Indiana. This old Seagram's plant is one of the largest and most advanced spirit production facilities in the world—they make a *ton* of great whiskey and they had a ton to sell. A few of these new brands, however, made the grave mistake of trying to pass this whiskey off as their own distillate. They learned the hard way that wasn't a good idea and, unfortunately, for a time, everyone was wary of LDI because of this scandal—not because of the whiskey.

Like in most endeavors, true quality production always shines through, and people quickly got over it. As long as the bottler was open about the fact they got the whiskey from somewhere else, if it tasted good and was priced right, that was perfectly acceptable. The massive backstock of MGP whiskeys dried up faster than a California reservoir. The pendulum swung so far that barrels of 10-plus-year-old MGP whiskey, which could be had for \$30 to \$50 per bottle fairly easily a few years before, were often going for well over \$100 a bottle. Today in 2021, they're all but gone (at least at anything passing for a reasonable price point).

Some folks saw the writing on the wall earlier than others and began to lay down stocks of new make spirit from MGP and others in 2014–2017. These whiskeys are now coming of age in the respectable four-to-six-year age frame, and they taste great! Add to that mix the occasional Kentucky-sourced distillate and the growing love for Tennessee's big distillery not named Jack, and we are seeing a ton of interesting single barrels of sourced whiskey that taste great and are easy on the pocketbook.

It's a veritable treasure trove of great drinkers and great prices—whether your thing is handmade, tradition-pushing, small production or classically styled big-production whiskey, we've got a single cask (or two) for you!

American Craft Spirits: Coming of Age

Balcones took the industry by storm shortly after they began distilling in 2009. Their speciality is American single malt from Texas. Aged in brutally hot Waco summers and chilly winters, the whiskey penetrates the wood in a hurry, imparting flavors that, like everything in Texas, are *big*. The combination of this incredibly quick aging and the ensuing, insatiable demand meant that most of their releases remained around two years old when released. Very good, but young by any whiskey standard. Today production is such that there are casks beginning to creep up in age and the distillery is humming along with a full lineup of excellent spirits. Their flagship single malt continues to wow. When you get the glory of a perfect single cask it's a sure-fire winner.

Balcones K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Barrel #16584 Texas Single Malt Whisky (\$79.99)

This American single malt single cask is superlative in every way. It's one of the oldest casks from Balcones at four years old and aged in virgin European oak with a heavy char. Those four long trips around the sun in harsh Texas weather have left this whiskey a veritable powerhouse of fruit and spice and bottled at a massive 65% ABV cask strength.



One of the most ambitious projects from the late Dave Pickerell, Hillrock is the first estate distillery model after Prohibition. Situated in Hudson Valley, New York, they grow everything for their spirits right on the farm and process everything themselves. In addition to that special feat, they also reintroduced Americans to the concept of solera aging. Famous in sherry production, the solera allows for a continuous stream of very high average-age liquid if well managed. It just so happens Hillrock has knocked it out of the park. Their high average-age bourbon can then be drawn out of the solera for bottling or to fill choice finishing casks.

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

Our exclusive cask of Hillrock bourbon was finished in a best-of-the-best Oregon Pinot Noir barrel. Not only did this barrel come from the famed Shea Wine Cellars, but it previously held single-vineyard Pinot from the prestigious Homer Vineyard. The exceptional flavors range from sweet corn to layered baking spices, freshly cut grass, and bright cherry fruits. It’s a worthy expression of the insane amount of hard work that goes into the estate-grown grain, solera management, and cask finishing program.



The LAWS Whiskey house has quickly become one of the most prominent craft spirits producers in the country. They do everything grain-to-glass in partnership with local Colorado farmers. All of their mash bills are excellent, but it’s the San Luis Valley rye that truly stands out. It’s so good we bought two distinct barrels of their older stocks. Both over five years old, these barrels showcase the remarkable Secale heirloom variety of rye — half malted, half raw. The high-protein rye paired with the dry, high-elevation maturation in Colorado make for special drinking.

LAWS Whiskey House “Barrel Select” K&L Exclusive Barrel #504 Cask Strength Single Barrel San Luis Valley Straight Rye Whiskey (\$74.99)

Barrel 504’s nose is all about baking spices — sweet cinnamon and nutmeg intermingle with mace and cardamom. A slight grassy note gives away the rye. At a relatively high 61.75% ABV, it’s incredibly soft on the palate. It moves into a more peppery mouthfeel with a wallop of sweet American oak and a long finish with a touch of coffee.

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

Barrel 508 is 58.9% ABV, nearly three points lower than the 504, but it drinks bigger and hotter. It’s all spice all the time. It’s pepper and thyme on the nose, sawdust and cedar, and



sweet gossamer ribbons of wood shavings. Savor and spice drive the whiskey, but it works because a thread of sweet caramel and candy corn weaves throughout.

Many new distilleries have pushed the boundaries of traditional bourbon in the last 15 years, but have only rarely produced exceptional results. Sonoma Distilling has managed to stuff that proverbial camel through the eye of the needle. They’ve long been distilling a terrific smoked bourbon (and rye), but not in the way most newcomers have approached the category. We’ve seen everything from mesquite-smoked corn to peated cask aging to imported Scottish barley in the bourbon world. They’re always interesting but rarely truly pleasurable to drink. Sonoma Distilling, rather than trying to make an Islay Scotch interpretation of bourbon, took a more delicate approach. Their mash bill looks quite traditional: 67% corn, 20% rye, 13% barley. The twist is small, but compelling: the barley is smoked in Petaluma over cherrywood. It’s a favorite among fans of the distillery, and for anyone who hasn’t tasted it, there is no better place to start than a choice single cask.

Sonoma Distilling Co. “K&L Exclusive” Barrel #16-3022 Straight Cherrywood Smoked Cask Strength Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99)

The delightful thing about SDC’s cherrywood smoked bourbon is that it smells and tastes like bourbon! The smoking of the small barley component integrates perfectly into the whiskey. The use of cherrywood provides an altogether different smoke flavor profile than anything else on the market, as it actually marries with the corn and rye in a harmonious burst of flavor. A rich tapestry of allspice, vanilla, sarsaparilla, smoke, and maraschino cherries.

While Balcones stands out, in part, due to their incredibly different climate, Westward’s single malts hit the Scottish mark in terms of the aging conditions. But they offer a unique twist by bringing in the Pacific Northwest’s beer brewing chops to bear on malt production. The pale two-row barley is roasted to a high-color pale designation, akin to a medium or medium-plus coffee roast. The ferment then takes place with the famous Chico strain yeast — the very same yeast used in Sierra Nevada’s pale ale.

Westward “K&L Exclusive” Single Barrel #277 Cask Strength Single Barrel American Single Malt Whiskey (\$99.99)

The special beer yeast, in combination with a long five-day fermentation time, leads to a mash that is super high in fruity esters. This carries over into the distillate, so that after five years of Clackamas, Oregon’s mild winters and short, warm summers — similar to much of Scotland’s weather — the malt shines beautifully in



this single cask. The high-quality American oak is only charred to a No. 2 level, meaning you really get the glory of the spirit just perfectly framed by wood rather than a big bourbon-like experience. It's a beautiful single malt.

One of the most exciting craft whiskey projects in the U.S. was recently snapped up by Edrington. As the owners of The Macallan, they know good whiskey when they see it, and have the dollars to bring the very best to their own portfolio. Wyoming Whiskey's wheated bourbon is exceptional, especially as it starts to hit higher age marks.

Wyoming Whiskey "Private Stock" K&L Exclusive Barrel Strength Single Barrel #6113 Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99)

Our single cask is just shy of its sixth birthday — right around the same age as most bottles of Maker's Mark. It's got that same pretty, sweet cream note, but the very cold winters in Wyoming and unheated warehouses mean a very slow wood extraction. That really lets the sweet corn flavors shine up front while the vanilla of the American oak takes a little bit more of a backseat. A very special cask at 114.4 proof.



The Crossroads of America — and the Heart of Many a Whiskey Brand

Indiana whiskey has been at the heart of many famous brands since MGP was Seagram's, but today MGP's star is as high in the sky as it's ever been. Their whiskeys are fabulous, readily available, and well-priced. Drinkers long ago took note of their exceptional quality. Ironically, the four-to-six-year-old whiskeys that made many brands like Smooth Ambler famous are nearly exactly the same as the whiskeys we are now seeing age up today. As with all things in the whiskey world, discerning selection is key. Brands really make their name on sourced whiskey by first and foremost making sure they select only the best casks available to them.

Deadwood has bottled a number of famous and extremely limited collectibles in the past. This single cask is further proof of their selection prowess. The heavy rye mashbill is 60% corn, 36% rye, and 4% barley.

Deadwood "Tumblin' Dice" K&L Exclusive 5 Year Old Cask #58A Cask Strength MGP Indiana Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99)

This specific barrel comes from the same lot of barrels that recently won 2021's Best Non-Kentucky Single Barrel Bourbon at the World Whiskies Awards. Bottled at 117 proof, it's a big spice attack on the nose followed by sweet layer after layer of caramel, butterscotch, vanilla, cream, and honey-smothered corn bread.



Few things strike up as much controversy in the spirits world as celebrity-endorsed brands. Many people automatically assume they're trash because whatever that celebrity is famous for, it's certainly not whiskey (or Tequila, or rum, or vodka, or whatever). While the celebrity will undoubtedly pull their fans into new drinking arenas, for us at K&L it's all about the spirit quality first, not who is hawking it. In the case of Heaven's Door, there is a lot to love. This Bob Dylan brand brings a lot of the artist's personal endeavors into the striking packaging that features Dylan's visual arts and sensibilities. But the whiskey is impeccably selected from multiple sources, and to us that is what counts the most. We purchased three barrels in total, all from MGP as it turns out, despite three distilleries being in the mix. They're that good. All three barrels were bottled shortly after they turned six years of age. A magic number for MGP whiskey.

Heaven's Door 6 Year Old K&L Exclusive Barrel #230 Indiana Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99) Barrel 230 is the lowest proof of the three barrels at 56.6% ABV. The lightest in alcohol, it's the heaviest in sweet bourbon flavors. It's all about fruit, caramel, and butterscotch. A little nuttiness and spicy on the finish round it out.

Heaven's Door 6 Year Old K&L Exclusive Barrel #297 Indiana Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99) Barrel 297 takes a little time to warm up in the glass. It starts off a bit closed but blossoms into a bouquet of pepper and herbs, slowly building into sweeter, but still savory notes of candied licorice and peppermint. The addition of water really turns the page into a sweeter whiskey. A perfect cask for the rocks drinker whether you love the folk rock hero or not.

Heaven's Door 6 Year Old K&L Exclusive Barrel #75 Indiana Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99) The highest proof of our three barrels, No. 75 takes after No. 297 in the savor department but with a bigger punch. It's loaded with tobacco and cedar flavors, a big shot of bold cherry fruit, and sweet spices. Hard caramel candy and milk chocolate on the palate, with a big, spicy finish. It's tough to find better cask-strength bourbon at 60 bucks.



The Old Pepper Distillery has a long and winding history that can be traced back to Elijah Pepper first distilling whiskey in Virginia during the American Revolution. After a move to Kentucky, James E. Pepper built his famous distillery in 1880. The distillery made its mark on the industry by being the first to bottle their own production. Since then it has seen some major ups and downs. The facility burned down in 1933, was rebuilt in the post-Prohibition period, but ultimately was shuttered in the 1960s. In 2008, Amir Peay began to resurrect the dream by recreating the old distillery recipes. While those whiskeys continue to be developed, they are selling excellently sourced product from Indiana and Kentucky.



Old Pepper K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Barrel Proof Straight Indiana Rye Whiskey (\$49.99) Our single cask rye comes from MGP and is bottled at 110 proof in Lexington at the Pepper facility. Made of MGP's famous 95% rye, 5% barley mash bill, it's remarkably sweet on the nose and the front of the palate, with a gripping, powerful spice on the back end. Big, bold rye that isn't shy on the sweeter barrel notes is one glorious thing—a \$50 price tag is another.

The wonderful Stellum whiskeys are fabulous additions to the current bourbon landscape. They're devoted to bringing American whiskey into the modern age with a dogmatic attention to detail. Stellum is a distinct project from Barrell, but uses the same exceptional team to select these special barrels with the utmost care. This team is renowned for selecting and blending exceptional casks (they've got the awards to prove it), but in order to create a great blend you need to start with excellent components. This is one of their finest, a bourbon distilled at MGP specifically for Barrell.

Stellum "Lyra A6" K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Barrel Indiana Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$54.99) The Lyra A6 barrel is MGP's 21% rye recipe. It's a nice balance between sweet corn and bold rye spice. The nose is distinctly grainy. The front palate opens up with a big, sweet caramel profile and a splash of maple syrup. It moves into a spicy back end, like apple pie filling



before it's cooked—a mix of sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and tart Granny Smith apples. At 56.73% ABV it's at just the right level of intensity that is supremely easy to sip on, but bold enough for any cocktail needs. For \$55 it's a slam dunk for anyone seeking great bourbon.

Amazing Armagnac

There are very few mysteries left in the world of spirits. And while we've been championing the special brandy from France's Gascogne region for decades, it remains widely underappreciated. That translates to incredible values on legendary spirits up and down the price spectrum. While we frequently bring in 10- to 40-year-old Armagnac at stunning prices, we rarely have a shot at the truly ancient spirits that are available. Few Armagnac producers have a track record as consistent as the Claverie family. They also have exquisite and rare spirits for sale going back more than a century. While these won't come in a crystal decanter or velvet-lined box, their importance and quality is equal to the greatest Cognac or Scotland has to offer, at an absolute fraction of the cost.



1933 Domaine de Baraillon K&L Exclusive Bas-Armagnac (\$800.00)

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