

Life Water

VODKA 101

by Danny Ward

Vodka, which until the 1930's was practically unknown in the US, has been "life-water" for much of Eastern and Northern Europe for centuries. The name actually stems from the Russian word Voda (or Woda in Polish) meaning "**water**." There are reports of vodka being used as a medicine in Poland as early as the 8th century and in Russia throughout the 9th and 10th centuries.

Early production of vodka was unrefined. The distillation process had not been perfected and most vodka was harsh and full of impurities, which is why, for centuries, people in Russia and the surrounding countries called it "**goryashchee vino**" meaning

"**burning wine**." It is because of this "burn" that, even today, the spirit is often double, triple, and in some cases up to six-times distilled, increasing the strength but also removing most flavor and aroma.

Part of what has made vodka so popular since has been the simplicity of it. It can be made from essentially any fermentable ingredients – including potatoes, grains, bison grass, rice, grapes, cactus, corn, and recently, even milk. While it is, in most cases, quite strong, it is light and virtually flavorless. This has been one reason that in the US it became such a popular cocktail base.

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DID YOU KNOW? VODKA CAN BE MADE FROM:



POTATOES



CORN



GRAINS



GRAPES



BISON GRASS



RICE



CACTUS



MILK



Elsewhere in the world, vodka is primarily drunk straight, most often as a shot. This is partially due to tradition and partially because, in some of those areas, the common mixers (orange juice, grapefruit juice, cranberry, etc...) are more expensive than the vodka itself.

The 1930 British publication of the Savoy Cocktail Book first printed “Vodka Recipes,” thus introducing the western world, on a large scale, to vodka. The publication suggested a “Blue Monday” in which the spirit is combined with Cointreau and blue vegetable juice or a “Russian Cocktail” where vodka is combined with crème de cacao and dry gin. Soon after, drinks such as The Moscow Mule (vodka, lime and ginger beer), The Screwdriver (vodka and orange juice), and the Gypsy Queen (vodka, Benedictine, and Angostura bitters) became commonplace at corner bars and nightclubs.

By the 1950's vodka's annual sales in the US had grown from a couple hundred thousand cases to 4.5 million. It quickly surpassed gin as the second most consumed spirit in the country - even everyone's favorite British secret agent was drinking it. And in 1976, it topped whiskey to take the number one slot.

Today, more and more brands and labels come out each year, promising new hints, aromas, and flavors – which now vary from lemon to blueberry to caramel and everything in between. It's currently considered the official drink of Russia, Poland, Finland, and a number of other countries located along “The Vodka Belt” – a region that stretches from Scandinavia across Eurasia.

In 2007, Noah Rothbaum published a book titled *The Business of Spirits: How Savvy Marketers, Innovative Distillers, and Entrepreneurs Changed How We Drink*, in which he reported that over 55 million cases of vodka were sold that year in the US alone, saying, **“Vodka is head and shoulders the No. 1 category in the United States. Americans' thirst for vodka is crazy.”**

Vintage Vodka

Moscow Mule

1 oz Vodka
1 bar spoon Simple Syrup (sugar syrup)
½ oz Fresh Lime Juice
Ginger Beer

Shake the first three ingredients and serve in a highball glass with ice (or a copper mug if you have one). Top with ginger beer and garnish with a mint leaf and a lime zest.



Russian Cocktail

¾ oz Vodka
¾ oz Dry Gin
¾ oz White Crème de Cacao

Shake and serve in a martini glass with no garnish.



Gypsy Queen

2 oz Vodka
1 oz Benedictine
2 dashes Angostura Bitters
Stir with large chunks of ice and serve in a martini glass with a lemon zest as garnish.



FEATURED MASTER DISTILLER



Chris Morris – Master Distiller, Woodford Reserve

It was 37 years ago that Chris Morris entered the bourbon business. Though, in reality, he had been a part of it for most of his life - his dad was a production manager at Brown-Forman, one of the largest American-owned companies in the wine and spirits business, and his mom had worked in their art department. Along with owning Jack Daniel's, Chambord, Finlandia, Korbel, Southern Comfort, and an assortment of others, Brown-Forman's catalogue of brands also includes the premium bourbon, Woodford Reserve. And that is where, for the last 16 years, Chris Morris has put his expertise to use as Master Distiller.

Located on the banks of Glenn's Creek in Woodford County, Kentucky, an area known to most as the "epicenter of the thoroughbred horse breeding industry in North America," Woodford Reserve traces its origins back nearly as far as America itself.

In 1812, Elijah Pepper, who had been distilling corn whiskey behind the county courthouse in Versailles, Kentucky for nearly 15 years, moved his operation to Woodford's current location off of Glenn's Creek to take advantage of the now famous limestone water that proved to be ideal for bourbon making.

Two years after his death, in 1831, his son, Oscar, hired James Crow to work at the "Old Pepper Distillery," as it was called for a short time before being renamed the Oscar Pepper Distillery. Crow had made a name for himself at a number of other Woodford County distilleries and throughout his 29 years as master distiller with Oscar Pepper, their whiskey became known as favorite to Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and, most notably, President Andrew Jackson.

In 1870, the distillery was sold to James Graham and Leopold Labrot; it took a new name (Labrot & Graham), and aside from the prohibition years, produced bourbon until 1940, when it closed. Brown-Forman purchased the distillery and did its best to operate it until 1972, when due to a failing bourbon industry, it sold the small distillery on the banks of Glenn's Creek to Freeman Hockensmith, with a proviso that they could repurchase it in the future, which they did in 1994.

The distillery's long history is almost as rich as the bourbon it produces. And hearing Chris tell it makes every part feel equally as important, though the re-opening of the Glenn's Creek location has to be noted as special. "In the late 80's and early 90's, when Brown-Forman decided to enter the growing super premium whiskey business with a new product, the first step was to have this new bourbon have it's own home-place - was it going to come from any of the other Brown-Forman distilleries? And the fact that we had acquired the old Labrot & Graham Distillery, which had been gutted and abandoned for over 20 years, meant that we got

to choose basically from scratch how we were going to make this stuff. The sky was the limit. We had dirt floors & empty buildings. And we got to ask, what are we going to put in here to make this product? That allowed for us to shop around the world. How do certain flavors come about? Where do these flavors come from? Because the only flavor that was on the site, of course, was the original limestone water. Everything else, we had to figure out."

In 2003, Woodford Reserve took its current name, deciding to don the name of the county in which it's located. It quickly became a favorite amongst bourbon fanatics, and in 2006 became "the official bourbon of The Kentucky Derby," having been used to make the Derby's \$1000 ultra-premium Mint Julep.

Chris, a Louisville native, gives a lot of the credit for Woodford's success and unique flavor to the fact that "it was created on purpose... we were able to take the five areas of flavor: grain,

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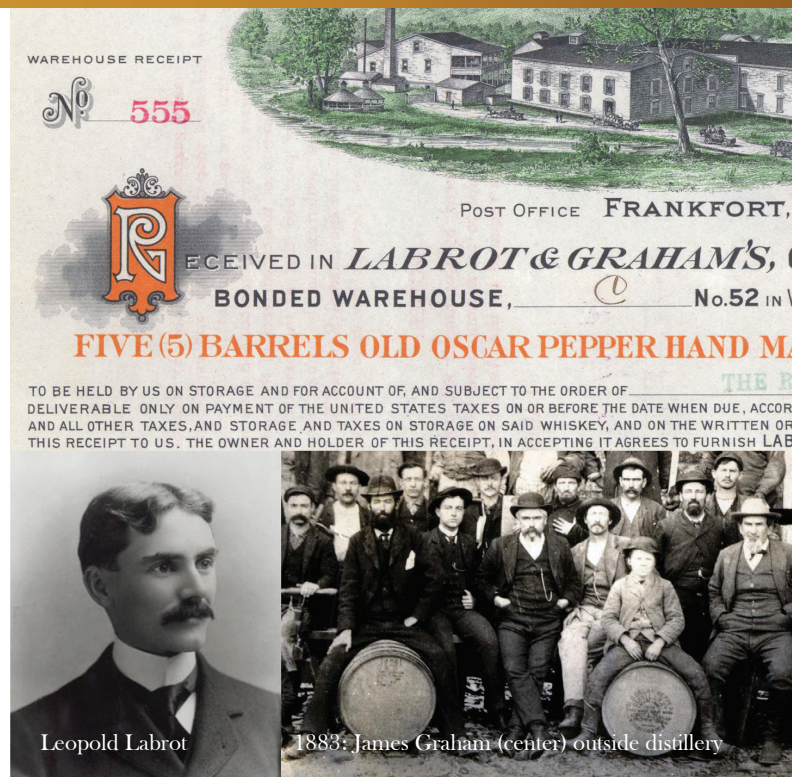
water, fermentation, distillation, and maturation - one of which, the water, was already a given - and work together to create a flavor profile that was unique and considered." And it is with this same thought process in mind that he creates Woodford's new releases and Master's Collections today, though as he admits, in the current bourbon-boom that is sweeping the world, "just keeping up with the demand is the toughest part."

A true bourbon lover, Chris' passion for his product is clear upon first hearing him say the word "bourbon" through his soft, Kentucky accent. "There are so many things I love [about my job]. Getting to talk to people, talk to them about our product; it can sound like bragging, but it's not. It's just fun. And, for me, a lot of it is the conceptualization of new products and all the work that goes into testing those concepts, bringing them to life."

He jokes and laughs as he says he takes his Woodford Reserve Bourbon "anyway it comes to me. At home, being a little lazy, it's on the rocks, splash of water; neat in the winter. And I do,

occasionally, make an Old Fashioned or a Manhattan. You know, when I go out now, because Woodford has such great distribution, I love going to bars or restaurants and seeing an interesting Woodford drink on the menu - I always order that special Woodford drink, because if the bartender went to that trouble to create it, I'd love to try it." Creating and distilling using the limestone water at Glenn's Creek is an age-old tradition. Chris is Brown-Forman's seventh master distiller. He's stepped into shoes worn by men considered to be some of the shapers of what bourbon is today. And Chris wears them well. Having grown up in a bourbon household, then entering the industry with Brown-Forman in 1976, continuing on at the Glenmore Distilleries until he joined United Distillers (who acquired Glenmore) only to return to Brown-Forman in 1997, he has a great sense of pride, passion, and humor about his work. As he says, "I love keeping involved with the crafting of the brand."

by Danny Ward





HOLLY TURNER

Winemaker,
Three Rivers Winery

by Danny Ward

In the midst of Walla Walla, in the shadows of the beautiful

Blue Mountains, not far from the Whitman Mission, The Three Rivers Winery can be found. The 16-acre site lays home to an 18,000 sq. ft. facility where their 13 wines are hand crafted under the leadership of winemaker Holly Turner.

"I didn't grow up in a wine centric household. The first wine I ever remember trying was some medium bodied red at my parents dinner table, funny that all I remember is that I really didn't like it (I was in high school at the time)." With an introduction like that, it's almost unbelievable that after receiving her bachelors in biology from Western Oregon State, she began coursework in winemaking and wine grape production at U.C. Davis. But, thankfully, she did.

As she recalls, it was a 1969 vintage of the Robert Mondavi's Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, which she first sipped some time in the early '90s, years after those nights with her mom's table wine, that really left an impression on her. And it was perhaps that impression that led her to travel the world, expanding her knowledge and palate for wine.

Before finding a home at Three Rivers, Holly held positions at a number of acclaimed wineries, including Chateau Ste. Michelle's River Ridge Winery (where she held her first industry job as a tasting room associate) and Bodega la Rural Winery in Mendoza, Argentina.

The Three Rivers Winery itself gets its name from the three most prominent rivers of the appellations, from which they source their grapes – The Walla Walla, The Columbia, and The Snake. "The Columbia Valley, and the appellations of Washington, are rich with diversity – perhaps because of the scope of the appellations. It has areas that are cooler; some are warmer; this helps to create a more consistent, balanced wine for the market place. Rather than relying on just one region alone."

This diversity has helped Holly create a beautiful array of wines – from her personal favorite, the 2007 Svelte (a Bordeaux Style Blend, which won Gold Medal at the 2011 Seattle Wine Awards) to the 2012 Steel Chardonnay, their



newest wine, and the 2011 River's Red, which is their current best seller. Holly has a true passion and love for wine. She can barely talk about it without smiling and laughing. "I enjoy all sorts of things about wine making. The diversity, the artistic nuances, and the science. I suppose it's a unique position to be able to do all of these things. It's emotional; it's physical; it's mental. It's challenging. It's relationships with growers [and customers]. It's really a multi-faceted position. And being the caretaker for this fruit that comes in and making something magical from it."

Her passion isn't focused only on the office, either. She has travelled throughout South America, France, and the US, exploring and building her personal taste. "I really appreciate well made wines, wines with balance – not too much oak, not too much alcohol... I really enjoy drinking wines, and if it's not balanced that way, it's not as much fun. I like big wines, bold wines, but those with varietal character." She of course has her favorites – nice, balanced Cabernets (which often take her back to the '69 Mondavi) and Blanc de Blanc Champagnes. But for her, and as she recommends to others, it's more about balance and care. If she can taste the love, she'll return it in kind.

Holly lives and loves wine – even at home "if we don't drink a wine, or it's at the end of its life and really not worth drinking, we have multiple vinegar barrels it goes to; white & red." Her near two decades in the industry have given her some unique insights into not only how to make wine, but how to enjoy it. *(Continued next page...)*



HOLLY'S PICKS:



FOR SUMMER:

"Dry Rose." It's fresh, light, and just feels good on a warm summer day.



FOR ENTERTAINING:

"Some sort of medium bodied red, something versatile like our River's Red - a beautiful wine with highlights that include berries, cola, strawberries, blueberries and a palate that is soft, juicy and balanced."



FOR THOSE LOOKING TO SWITCH FROM RED TO WHITE AND VICE VERSA:

"The red drinker would get our barrel fermented Sauvignon Blanc - it's crisp and zingy. Very refreshing. And the white drinker would get this year's Rivers Red, which is a Bordeaux blend with a Rhone twist."



FOR WHITE DRINKERS THIS SUMMER:

The newly bottled 2012 Steel Chardonnay. This 100% Chardonnay is rich, aromatic and complex. "The season began cool and wet and ended hot and dry... Without the influence of oak, this wine shows crisp minerality and clean varietal fruit characteristics. The flavors are bright, zippy and viscous with notes of Asian pear and citrus."

Holly's goal with every new bottle is to create something balanced and cared for. She has been working with wine for too long to think every wine is for everyone, but she feels that if wine is made with care and love, it will be a success. And that is how every bottle from The Three Rivers Winery is created.





Tito's®



Handmade

VODKA

AUSTIN ★ TEXAS

**TITO
BEVERIDGE**

President and CEO, Tito's Vodka



So how does Tito take his Tito's?

"Most of the time, when I drink it, it's warm, because I'm at work, and I have to taste test the stills. But when I'm out I like to have my Tito's with some ice, a dash of sparkling water, and a wedge of lime and a wedge of orange."

Although, you can find a number of drink recipes, infusion ideas, and garnish suggestions on his website (titosvodka.com).

Everyone, at some point in their drinking life, has sat over a drink and had the thought, "I should start making my own liquor. I bet I could do it." Well, native Texan, Tito Beveridge, did just that. And his story from oilman to mortgage broker to vodka distiller is exactly as entertaining as it sounds.

"I've got a whole crew now. Up to about 73," he says in his soft, Austin drawl. That's quite a long way from where he started nearly two decades ago. Having graduated from The University of Texas in Austin with degrees in Geology and Geophysics, Tito went right into the oil business. This took him all over Texas and down into South America running crews, drilling, and surveying. After years of "chasing the buck," as he says, he returned to Austin. He did some ground water geology and, eventually, ended up in the mortgage business. Then, as he tells his story, "I started making flavored vodka for my friends for Christmas presents. That was in about, I guess, '92, '93. I was at a party one time and a stranger came up to me and said 'Hey you're the vodka guy' and I was like no, contraire, I am the mortgage guy. And that's when I kinda started thinking that this guy's telling me I need to go sell my flavored vodkas." So, one day Tito walked into a local liquor store and asked if he started making vodka, would it sell?

The answer he received changed his life. The store clerk said that if he could make a vodka smooth enough for anyone to drink straight, he would have something that would sell. And sell it has.

"I'm kind of a self-taught distiller. When I started it was before the Internet. I went to the library, but there wasn't anything in the library [on how to make your own vodka]". So, Tito gathered a collection of pictures of old stills and distillers, and using his abilities as "a tinkerer," built his first 16-gallon still. "I just kept modifying... Since I knew I didn't know anything, I just went ahead and tried anything I could think of to see what I could do."

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FEATURED SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

"I think the beauty of the micro-craft spirit business, that I had kind of a role in starting, is that you get all of these crazy ideas and just run with it." Tito's was one of the first, if not the first, micro-distillery. And he's still a rarity – producing only one product, Tito's Handmade Vodka. The Mockingbird Distillery, where this smooth, all around sipping vodka is made, produced 1,000 cases in 1997, the first year of commercial production. Within 10 years, that number was up to 160,000 cases and has not slowed down since.

He is the first to admit it hasn't been an easy road. He started the company with a pile of maxed out credit cards and a mountain of debt. "At one point, I think I had 19 credit cards, and it was tough just keeping up with the expiration dates, interest rates, and all of that... I would flip the card over and on the signature part, I would write how much it was for, what the interest rate was, and when the rate expired. And every month, I would sit there and have to flip them over, see which ones were expiring, go through the mail, apply for new ones, get the new one, activate it, transfer the balance, and start all over again."



In 2001, Tito got his first breath of true success. He was invited to the San Francisco World Spirits Competition, and went up against 72 of the world's vodkas; Tito's was unanimously voted the Double Gold Medal winner. He has since won numerous other awards and honors, including Distiller of The Year this past year. And today, Tito's can be found throughout all fifty states, Canada, and the US Virgin Islands.

Tito's Vodka is made 100% from corn and is distilled six times in still pots (which he still makes himself). He says it took him about two years to really get the process down and get to the flavor he liked. But, it's a process. "People don't realize this, but it's an agricultural product. It's never exactly the same. You know, one side of the [corn] field is going to be slightly different from the other side. It's just like with [grapes for wine], they change from one place to another just in the same vineyard... Or like this year, in the prime corn belt, they didn't get that much rain, so their tanning was late. And, you see, there are all these different things, maybe they plant it and it doesn't rain, or there's sunshine or cloud-cover, or like last year, there was a drought, sometimes it'll just rain at the end of the season... and [the farmers] will leave it out there in the field until they get a certain moisture content." This is the difficulty and the beauty of micro-distilleries, and is why Tito is there everyday, overseeing the whole process.

"It's a full time job. It keeps us on our toes. You'd think after 18 years, you'd have seen everything, but we're always coming up against something that we're scratchin' our heads over. I'm usually pretty good at figuring them things out, but I mean, they call it spirits for a reason. It's just weird. There's a lot of stuff you can't explain. And you have to go, well, that's the way it is. Live with it... We kind of look at it like your great grandmother's kitchen. No matter what comes in the backdoor, by the time dinner's ready, when it hits the table, [she makes sure] it tastes really really good." And so does Tito.



Tito's  *Handmade*
VODKA



FEATURED MIXOLOGIST SPOTLIGHT

William Merritt, *Bar Manager at 9 Million in Unmarked Bills*

Off the MENU by Danny Ward

“What I love doing, is taking a few ingredients that a customer likes, and making something unique for them alone. Seeing their reaction, providing them with something new or special—off the menu—gives me satisfaction behind the bar. It’s something I picked up from watching many great bartenders in Seattle. Knowing the joy it brings when I’m the customer, when a great bartender takes time for me, inspires me to recreate that same experience for others.”

That’s William Merritt of Seattle’s 9 Million in Unmarked Bills. With over 15 years experience under his belt, this bar manager and tender always strives to give each customer a unique experience when they sit at his bar. “For some, they want to be left alone, some want to talk cocktails and others the news... It’s fun to explore new products with a customer who doesn’t have any background in spirits. But is also equally fun to chat with a seasoned vet, bounce ideas off of them and rejoice over the nuances only important to those who invest time in knowing a product.”

William started in the restaurant business as a dishwasher in a pizzeria in Southern Oregon. Throughout his time ‘behind the stick’ he’s taken a few breaks to travel, to work in other fields, and to see what else the world has to offer, but he has always found himself coming back to the bar as his primary passion.

“As a kid, I remember having a Jack Daniel’s pint glass in my parents’ house with the ingredients for a ‘Lynchburg Lemonade’ listed on the back. I memorized that recipe as a child, staring at it numerous times as I drank fruit-punch or water from it. So when I stepped behind the bar at the age of 21 for the first time—that was the only drink I had committed to memory.” His knowledge has expanded since then – vastly, in fact. And it continues to expand. “In my seven years behind the bar here in Seattle, the environment has changed. Overall I’ve seen a push on all types of bars to know more. Seeing Cynar on the shelf at a dive bar, or Amaro Nonino on the wall at a nightclub—is something I would never have expected five years ago. And to be honest, I like it. It’s pushing us all to do more, be more creative and to also talk to each other about what’s new.”



So what does William recommend for you?

“Old-fashioned’s, Tiki-style drinks, fizzes and sours tend to be more approachable for the beginner.” Or, for those looking for something really special, he recently designed a drink he calls “Over the Green”, featuring muddled and strained sugar snap peas, gin, white vermouth, hibiscus oil, soda water and garnished with full snap peas. “It’s a great refreshing drink for those summer days.” He loves using fresh fruits and ingredients as much as possible (especially in the summer months when they are in season). “I think the customers appreciate having a drink in front of them with fresh cut strawberries for example.”

It’s all about the guest for William. From the drinks they receive to the style of service, “first and foremost, a focus on hospitality is crucial in my opinion, everything falls into place after that.”