

# The Review *of* **Beers, Spirits, & Wines**



## **A Tasting of Irish Whiskies**

**Irish Moonshine Comes to America**

**A Bum of a Cocktail**

**Australian Wine Invasion**

**Brews from Australia & England**

**Single Barrel Bourbon**

*News On:*

**Stoli, Guinness, & New Products to Market**

The Review of  
**BEERS, SPIRITS, & WINES**

MARCH 2002

*Editor*

Kevin R. Kosar

*Writers*

Cecily C. Criminale  
F. S. Fitzgerald  
Greg Kitzmiller  
William Loob  
Peter Millar  
Charles Westbrook  
Ken Wohlrob

*Advertising Inquiries*

advertising@alcoholreviews.com

*Getting Products Reviewed*

Companies wishing to have their products considered for review or mention in The Review of Beers, Spirits & Wines should email kkosar@alcoholreviews.com.

*World Wide Web*

<http://www.AlcoholReviews.com>

*Subscriptions*

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The Review of Beers, Spirits, & Wines  
AlcoholReviews.com Inc.  
109 N. 8th St. #1r  
Brooklyn, NY 11211

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A Bum Well Worth Meeting

Rating System:

\*Horrid- Won't drink unless threatened with violence.

\*\*Tolerable- Will drink if it is free. \*\*\*Good- Will drink and even pay for.

\*\*\*\*Very Good- Will seek out for purchase. \*\*\*\*\*Superb- Will walk miles to acquire.

# Editorial

## EERIE RUMBLINGS FROM THE BACKWOODS

### MORE ON THE LIQUOR ON TV CONTROVERSY

Last issue we wrote of the controversy and essentially said that it was not a big deal: few companies can afford broadcast network commercials, so there would be no great seismic shift in advertising dollars from print to television. Moreover, the whole debate ignores the question of running commercials on cable television and the Internet.

Culturally, though, it is a big deal. NBC, who was the first to breach the self-ban, is already under assault. A number of busy bodies, emboldened by a fury akin to that of the Scientific Temperance movement a century back, have run up the "Save the Children" flag. Wine can be advertised on TV, so can beer- but no, not that nectar of Satan, liquor. Why? Because, as Dr. J. David Hill, incoming chairman of the American Medical Association (AMA) declares, it "is not the right thing to do for the children." Uh-huh. The AMA, whose members gleefully prescribe billions of dollars in addictive substances to Americans each year (Ritalin, anyone?), purchased a big ad in *the New York Times*, wailing over the evils of liquor ads on the tube.

We laud DISCUS and others for fighting this silly, backwoods nonsense. DISCUS is right: the problem is not liquor, rather, it's the demonization of it. Liquor needs to be normalized, that is, we need to quit treating it as if it is the drink of gunslingers, pagans, and fiends. Liquor needs to be integrated into the diet, as a small pleasure. It does, we remind the AMA, have health benefits if consumed sensibly.

This, though, is a larger cultural war, and it it won't be won any time soon. The backwoods-damn-liquor-to-hell mentality runs deep in America. Crazy, atavistic teetotalers like Strom Thurmond and Robert Byrd still wobble about the Senate. If it weren't for the war on terrorism you can be sure that one of them or their publicity crazed colleagues would have already called for congressional hearings and new laws. As in our February issue, we urge spirits companies to think bigger: forget network TV, the smart money is on radio, cable, and the Internet.

### SO MUCH FOR OBJECTIVE RESEARCH

Joseph Califano, a man whose fear and loathing of alcohol is second only to crusty old Strom Thurmond's, and his National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, recently were humiliated. The center, which is headquartered at Columbia University, turned out a report that over estimated the amount of underage drinking by a whopping 140%.

"Teen Tiplers," a sensationalistic bit of scare mongering masquerading as public health research, declared that 25% of all alcohol in America was swallowed by underage drinkers. The number was patently false, yet Califano's center released the report to the public. A few days later, the media wised up and found a basic mathematical error: in fact, only 11.4% of alcoholic beverages was consumed by those under age 21. When caught, the vp of the center, Sue Foster, declared to *the New York Times* that it was "very unfortunate...But we think the 11.4% number is way too low, since there is so much underreporting." Uh-huh. So, never mind what the data you collected says, the number is higher. This raises the obvious question: why bother to collect data?

### KNOWLEDGE IS NOT A PREREQUISITE

Tamar Lewin of the *Times*, who reported the aforementioned story, seemed dismayed that the report was wrong. She declared that it is "beyond dispute" that teenage drinking is a problem. She also devoted well over a quarter of her column recounting the horrors of Natalie, a 17-year old who was an alcoholic by age 14; hardly, a typical youth. Lewin showed her bias and ignorance most clearly, though, when she listed Tequiza, the Budweiser beer with agave extract in it, as one of the "sweet" Alcopops that were luring kids to drink. **TRBSW**

# In the News

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## **The Job Drop in New York City**

Nearly 110,000 jobs were lost between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> in New York City. According to an analysis in the Daily News, a few sectors gained: heavy construction, health care workers, but these aren't surprising in light of the wreckage on September 11. In the past year, bars and restaurant employment dropped 3%, some 5100 jobs. A rotten thing, for sure, but in light of the damage done to downtown, it isn't too bad. One wonders whether said bar and restaurant job losses are spread out over the city or concentrated mostly around ground zero. We're estimating that the latter is the case, which would mean that outside Ground Zero, business isn't too bad. And spring is coming.

## **Anglo-Finnish-Russo Beer Alliance**

We've received a couple of letters from Baltic Business Service Ltd., who represents Baltic Beverages Holdings, distributor of the Russian mega-brand, Baltika (1,063 billion liters in the year 2000, they claim). They are looking for American importers. Those who have seen their Baltika beers in America might find that odd. Yet, so it is with this bunch. According to one American importer who brought in some Baltika brews (and they are fine beers), Baltika has been reportedly cut deals with multiple importers, without telling them. The result has been chaos. This importer felt not only ripped off, but he quickly squelched any ideas of putting ad dollars behind the brand. Why bother? The other importers would gain from it, free-riding as the economists say. So it is, one day one finds some Baltika beers available, the next one doesn't.

In late February Scottish and Newcastle, Britain's biggest brewer, bought Hartwell of Finland. Hartwell holds a hefty stake in, yep, Baltic Beverages. So this Scottish and New Castle stand poised to leverage their brands in Russia and Eastern Europe, and maybe increase Baltika sales in Western Europe. A brilliant idea, but the big question is, can they can bring some order to Baltika? If not, this could prove a debacle.

## **Beer: Russia's New Beverage**

Since 1999 the beer market has grown about 25% per annum in Russia. As the economy continues to grow, so will the beer market.

Those who visit our website at

<http://AlcoholReviews.com> won't find this surprising: we've carried a number of stories about Russia beer in the past two years and our Moscow correspondent, Erik DePoy, has written of the explosion of brands, the big beer fests, and how amazingly inexpensive beer is in Russia.

## **Hollando-Russo Alliance?**

O.K.- we promise, this is the last we'll say of the Russian beer market this issue. Heineken, N.V. purchased Bravo International, for \$400 million. Bravo's a new company-- it began in 1999-- but it has shown explosive growth, grabbing up 17% of the Russian beer market. Unless either company has Enron-ed its books or the Russian economy tanks, both companies seem poised for long, steady growth.

## **Odds of French Victory Plunge**

According to SOPEXA, the group that promotes French wines and foods abroad, France's World Cup Soccer Team has two official wines, Cotes du Rhone Villages Visan 2000, and Cotes du Rhone Villages St. Maurice 1998. Some 2000 bottles of each wine "will be delivered for use by the French team during the World Cup Soccer Tournament in Korea and Japan in May and June.

## **Nippo-Phillipo Alliance?**

Stockholders of San Miguel Corporation, a hefty beer and food producer in the Philippines, have gave the thumbs up to selling 15% of the company to Kirin of Japan.

## **More Strange Business With Stoli Vodka**

It wasn't long ago that Stoli was the super brand that could do no wrong. Then questions were raised about quality slippage and how Stoli could be called Russian vodka if it was made in Latvia and elsewhere. There's also a fight between the Russian government and a private Russian firm over ownership of the brand. Meanwhile, Allied Domecq, which just started a huge marketing campaign for Stoli, may lose its North and South American distribution rights to American Belarusian Import-Export Co., Ltd (<http://www.krystal.com>) of Massachusetts, which handles Charodei and Belaya Rus Luxe. Will the Stoli vodka end up separated from the Stoli brand? Will Allied Domecq lose big? Stay tuned.

# In the News

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## **MORE 9/11 FALL OUT**

According to a report by Motto Kryla & Fisher LLP, a wine-industry consulting and research firm, the September terrorists attacks cost California's wine industry about \$75 million. Though that sounds like a big number, yet, it represents only 1% of the previous year's revenues.

## **WORLD BEER CUP RECORD**

There have been nearly 1200 brews from 35 countries and 342 breweries entered in this year's World Beer Cup, the most ever. Judging for the event will take place at the Craft Brewers Conference and BrewExpo America in Cleveland, Ohio, April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. For further details surf to <http://www.beertown.org>.

## **WHALERS RUMS ACQUIRED**

Hulking Heaven Hill Distilleries, Inc. of Bardstown has snatched up Whaler's Rums. Heaven Hill is particularly beloved to us for their Evan Williams and Elijah Craig bourbons. Whalers flavored rums, which come in splashy, wacky colored bottles that remind one of the airbrushed t-shirts one found for sale on the boardwalk in Daytona Beach in the late 1970s and early 1980s, were acquired from Levecke Corporation, Mira Loma California.

## **BELGIANS BEHAVING BADLY**

According to the Real Beer webpage (and what *is* 'real' beer?), the mighty Interbrew and Alken-Maes beer companies were fined nearly \$100 million Euros by the European Union Commission for cartel activities.

## **GUINNESS SUES BUD**

Guinness UDV filed suit against Anheuser-Busch, claiming trademark infringement. Bud's crime? Daring to label a one of their new brews Red Label, a name, which Guinness UDV asserts, is that belongs to Johnnie Walker. Bud is being told to stop it and to pay damages. No word yet if they plans to sue the American Taliban fighter, John Walker for sullyng their name.

## **3,800 YEAR OLD BEER RECIPE**

Archeologists digging in Syria came across an ancient recipe for beer, among other things. No word yet as to the specifics of the recipe, if it has a proper name, or if Anheuser-Busch has acquired it and began a marketing campaign therefore.

## **CZECH REPUBLIC WINS AGAIN**

We lift our hats to the people of the Czech Republic. They may not win many Olympic medals, but who cares whether one can prance about on figure skates or hurtle downhill at a hundred miles per hour? Once again the Czechs have come out on top for per capita beer consumption: a whopping 158 liters per capita per year. The U.S. lagged in twelfth place, with a measly 82 liters per person.

## **BEER FOR DUMMIES**

In a recent column at his hugely popular, <http://WorldofBeer.com>, beer god Stephen Beaumont writes, "Contrary to what some people think, there really is such a thing as bad beer. I've sampled a bunch of them...Bad beer and boring beer are two completely different things, although both are best avoided." Next column's topic: how beer, if consumed too fast or in too great amounts, can make one drunk.

## **WEIRD EMAIL OF THE MONTH**

We get plenty of emails, a great number asking us for help finding a beer their grandpa drank in the 1950s, asking whether this or that distillery closed, and so forth. We're always happy to oblige, no matter how odd or esoteric the question. This one, though, spun our skulls: *Please help me to inquire about the factory of the wine which the driver use for special purpose, And how can I get in touch with them. Thank you ! TianJin of CHINA*

We invite anyone who can figure this one out to email us the answer. If we're convinced it's right, we'll award you a prize of some sort. **TRBSW**



# New to the Market

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**AND THE WINNER...**  
...of the edgy packaging award for year 2002 is...Sailor Jerry Rum. This "Virgin Island" rum is named after the famed tattoo

artist, Jerry Collins. The press release we got with it carried this cartoon, which



almost sent us tumbling from our chairs in laughter. Sailor Jerry rum is 92 proof and we'll let you know how it tastes soon. For info on it, head to <http://www.SailorJerry.com>.

## **GLEN BRETON COMES TO U.S.**

Lucky us. We're told that come spring Preiss Imports of California will be bringing in Canada's only single malt, pot still whisky. Glen Breton Single Malt Whisky is made by Glenora Distillery, which you can learn more about at <http://www.glenoradistillery.com>.

## **GLENFIDDICH 1937**

Pssst- the good folks at [WhiskyPortal.com](http://WhiskyPortal.com) tell us that a few bottles of this single malt are available. For details surf to [http://www.glenfiddich.com/range/rare\\_collactable.html](http://www.glenfiddich.com/range/rare_collactable.html).

## **NEW DISTILLING NEWSLETTER**

Bill Owens, who published American Brewer for years, has formed The American Distilling Institute, which publishes the *American Distiller* newsletter 26 times per year. For details and to subscribe, surf to <http://www.AmericanDistiller.com> or email [Distilling@aol.com](mailto:Distilling@aol.com).

## **WORLD'S MOST POTENT BEER**

The Boston Beer Company, which brings us the Sam Adams line, have released a 24% alcohol beer. Called Utopias MMII, it retails for \$100 or more for a 24 ounce bottle. Some 3000 bottles were produced. We've not tasted it, nor has anyone we know, but we invite anyone who has to submit a brief essay to us describing its taste, body, texture and why they think it was worth every penny.

## **NEW CREAM LIQUEUR**

Brown Forman has brought Amarula to the U.S. Amarula boasts 500,000 cases sold outside the U.S., making it number two cream liqueur in the world. Though we've not received a sample, it sounds intriguing: it comes from Africa, is made with the fruit of the marula tree, aged in French Oak for two years, then mixed with cream and bottled. For more info, head to <http://www.BrownForman.com>.

## **NEW FLAVORED VODKAS**

**Burnett's**, which is turned out by the earlier mentioned Heaven Hill (see NEWS), has added two new flavors, Sour Apple and Coconut. Not long ago they released Raspberry, Orange, and Citrus vodkas. Ring Amy Preske at 502-348-3921 for further information.

Meanwhile, **Luctor International** appears to be taking aim at the popular Ukrainian Chocolate Vodka, **Goldenbarr**, which Preiss Imports brought to the U.S a couple years back. Luctor has announced the arrival of Van Gogh Dutch Chocolate flavored vodka. It Contact Margaret Kunkel at [margaret@luctor.com](mailto:margaret@luctor.com) for information.

## **A NEW BLONDE IN TOWN**

Global Beer Network announces that it is now bringing Double Enghien Belgian beer to America. It's 7.5% ABV, an ale, and is made in the Abbey style. Learn more at <http://www.GlobalBeer.com>.

# New to the Market

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## NEW WINES FROM CURTIS

Curtis Winery of Los Olivos, California has released their new Heritage series, the 1999 Heritage Cuvée and 2000 Heritage Blanc (\$12 retail each). "These wines are inspired by my appreciation for the delicious everyday table wines of the southern Rhône Valley," said Winemaker Chuck Carlson, who has been making Rhône-style wines locally for 20 years. "I established the Heritage Series because I felt that there was a need for flavorful, food-friendly and affordable Rhône-style wines from California." For further details, contact Christopher Weir at 805-688-3940 ext. 14.

## WALNUT CREST RELEASES SHIRAZ

The second most popular Chilean wine in America, Walnut Crest, now has a Shiraz on the market. It is made by Bodegas y Viñedos Santa Emiliana of Santiago, Chile and retails for just \$6. Contact Lars Leicht at 1-800-645-6511 to learn more and surf to <http://www.WalnutCrest.com> to learn how sipping Walnut Crest's merlot can win you \$1 million.

## NEW CABERNET FROM LAKE SONOMA

Fans of Lake Sonoma Winery of Geyserville, California can now enjoy a new vino, the 1998 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. It spent 30 months in French and American oak barrels. Just 3125 cases were produced and it retails for \$21. For more information, ring Margie Healy at 707-824-7715.

## NEW GIN ARRIVES

Hoorah- we love vodka, but it's nice to see a new gin in town. **Broker's London Dry Gin** (94 proof) is infused with ten herbs and spices and bill's itself as "the gin for gentlemen." It retails for \$20. Get further info from Broker's Imports at 503-245-3331.

## BEER, SPIRITS, & WINE CALENDAR

### WHISKEY FEST

WhiskeyFest Chicago is on April 17. Per usual, there will be a fantastic selection of whisk(e)ys to sample and famed distillers there (like Elmer T. Lee). Get your tickets at <http://www.MaltAdvocate.com>.

### BEER IN PHILADELPHIA

Part of the fertile crescent of American brewing, Philadelphia has much to offer. Jim Anderson, founder of *BeerPhiladelphia* magazine, and the man who brings you the Split Thy Skull Barley Wine Festivals, has a list of the doings 'round Philly. See them at <http://www.beerphiladelphia.com/news.htm#calendar>.

### NATIONAL WINE WEEK

March 18-22 is a happy time across the nation: buy a meal at a fine restaurant, add \$10 and you'll get to quaff a nice selection of wines. Learn more at <http://www.nationalwineweek.com>.

### SAVEUR WEEKEND SERIES

This foodie mag is hosting vacations in California and Georgia where guests will enjoy "themed breakfasts, cooking demonstrations, and market-fresh meals inspired by treasured recipes from SAVEUR." For further details on the SAVEUR get-aways, head to AlcoholReviews.com's NEW STUFF section at <http://AlcoholReviews.com>.

### OTHER EVENTS

For the latest news on coming beer, spirit, and wine tastings, vacations, dinners, and parties, stop in daily to the NEW STUFF section at <http://AlcoholReviews.com>.

**TRBWS**

# Beers

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## Coopers Australian Ales

by Ken Wohlrob



Screw Fosters Lager. Australians laugh at Americans who drink Fosters much in the way we tend to laugh at Europeans that drink Budweiser. “Eh, look at em’...wouldn’t know a good beer from a can of dingo urine. Hey! Hey! ‘Ere you go mate, try another can of croc piss.” Ah but Coopers- damn, if the descendants of Thomas Cooper don’t make a quality line of beers.

A crazed rock climber introduced me to Coopers Sparkling Ale many years back in Kent, Ohio. I’ve been hooked on the stuff ever since. You still have to work a little bit to find it in the States, but it’s worth the effort. Family owned since 1862, the Coopers brewery even makes homebrew kits, a nice indication that they are dedicated to the handcrafted brews.

What’s most important to know about Coopers (Preiss Imports, <http://PreissImports.com>) is that they are one of the few companies left that still makes bottle conditioned top-fermented ales. What does that mean to the Budweiser drinker? It means that rather than filtering the brew to the point of everything-- including the flavor-- being removed, they allow some of the

yeast to go into the bottle. The beer continues to ferment in the bottle and acquire new attributes. In addition, this also gives the lighter of their top-fermented beers a cloudy look. Aesthetically, some consumers are turned off by cloudy beer. Clear = good, cloudy = bad. Those of us who have tasted cloudy beers are almost of the reverse opinion: Clear = not so good, cloudy = better.

For fun, you might want to examine how a Coopers beer can change with time. Buy a six of Coopers; drink one (or five) immediately. Let at least one sit for 2 weeks or so (preferably in a cool, ultraviolet light free place. Open and enjoy. You’ll notice the flavor and aroma are a little different.

The king of Coopers top-fermented beers is their **Sparkling Ale**, which clocks in at around 5.8% alcohol. Like I said above, the beer has a very cloudy appearance due to the yeast. In the mouth it has an almost fruity/steam-beer like taste and more carbonation than your typical ale (think Bass). The aroma is minimal, but the robust taste knocks you in the teeth. (Rating \*\*\*\*1/4)

Coopers **Pale Ale** is really more of a modification of the Sparkling Ale. It differs in that it has the hop and malt characteristics of a London Pale Ale. A bit lighter in flavor, but still with packing an extra dose of carbonation, this one chimes in at 4.5% alcohol. (Rating \*\*\*1/2)

Coming in at a solid 6.8% alcohol, the **Coopers Best Extra Stout** is as unique to its style as the Sparkling Ale. While it is a classic imperial stout, the Best Extra Stout is much dryer and less weighty than most Guinness knock-offs. This is probably due in large part to the brewer’s use of a special roasted black malt instead of roasted barley, the latter of which is used more commonly. In addition, the Coopers Best has a far stronger chocolate taste and aroma than most stouts. It’s not surprising that this one took home the 1994 Grand Champion honors at the Australian Beer Awards. (Rating \*\*\*\*)

**TRBWS**

*Ken Wohlrob is the editor of Bully Magazine (<http://www.BullyMag.com>), an accomplished homebrewer, and all around student of spirited beverages.*



# Beers

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## The Joys of Theakston's

by Peter Millar, U.K. Financial Times

Once upon a time, there was Old Peculiar, complete with its peculiar spelling. A remarkable beer with a remarkable history. It was brewed in the little North Yorkshire town of Masham - pronounced "Massam" locally, at least until you've had a few pints of Old Peculiar. The Peculiar was the name given to the erudite gentleman who presided over the town's ancient ecclesiastical court. The beer, made by the Theakston family since 1827, acquired the name sometime in the 1890s, and profited from its peculiarity.

In its classic days Old Peculiar was a real delight, a dark, fruity ale with a flavor that could some times approach blackcurrant, and a relatively hefty 5.7 alcohol content. It was made with several varieties of hops including Northern Brewer but Fuggles dominated. Marvelous, individual, distinctive and idiosyncratic: all the adjectives that used to be used for the best of England's craft breweries.

Theakston's Best Bitter was all right too, a soft, golden, nutty session ale (3.8 ABV). The family name was synonymous with the best traditions of Yorkshire brewing. Masham was a place of pilgrimage for real ale fans. It was so successful in fact, that its success swallowed it. The attempt to expand led the company into debt. This led, some dozen years ago now, to it being bought up by the giant Scottish and Newcastle (S and N), currently the subject of speculation that it might combine with Miller and South African Breweries to form the world's largest brewing company producing some of the world's worst mass-produced beers.

Theakston's was homogenized-- some would say bastardized-- and almost all production moved north to the giant plant at Newcastle on Tyne, which has all the rustic charm of a chemical factory. A token quantity was still brewed at Masham, but primarily as a sop to local opinion and so they could still use the slogan "Brewed in Masham" on bottles. Theakston's and Old Peculiar are now amongst the most commonly available beers in Britain, served up alongside the insipid Courage Best in all of the vast chain of pubs owned by S and N. But they are shadows of their former selves.

All of this wrangled with the last remaining Theakston still in employ: Paul, up until then more involved in administration than brewing. He was mightily annoyed by what had happened to the family name and products. So he did the decent thing. He quit and set up on his own. Almost immediately S and N warned him that under threat of injunction he could on no account use his own family name-- which they now owned-- as a trademark. Miffed, to say the least, Paul Theakston decided to annoy S and N as much as possible. He scoured the country for original top quality brewing equipment, and set up shop in the old maltings right next door to the Theakston brewery. Robbed of his own name, he resorted to the only one he could think of- or rather his wife did when she dubbed him the black sheep of the family: **Black Sheep Brewery** was born (<http://www.BlackSheep.co.uk>).

And thank God it was! Paul's ales are as good as anything the old family tradition ever turned out. Black Sheep Best (3.8) is a richly flavorsome hoppy session bitter, and the only one in the country-- to my knowledge --now fermented in traditional old Yorkshire Stone Squares. Inevitably, therefore, they also make **Square Ale**, as well as the chunkier **Black Sheep Special**, a stronger (4.3), full-bodied amber ale, and the remarkable complex, dark Riggwelter (don't ask, it's something to do with sheep laid on their backs!) also fermented in the stone squares, 5.9 ABV and even better than the Old Peculiar I remember.

The result is that Masham - and the Black Sheep brewery - is once again a place of pilgrimage for the serious beer drinker, and Theakston a name to look for on a bottle of beer - as long as it's not the big word across the label but the little personally scrawled signature in one corner.

*As a foreign correspondent for Reuters, The Sunday Times and The Sunday Telegraph, Peter Millar toured the bars of central and eastern Europe (finding time to win Foreign Correspondent of the Year award for his coverage of the fall of the Berlin Wall). He lives in Oxfordshire and London.*

# Spirits

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## Irish Moonshine?

by Kevin R. Kosar



Poteen? You might be asking yourself, "o.k.- what is it?" Well, the word poteen (often pronounced "pot-cheen") is a bit like the word "moonshine" in America. It refers to a small batch, clear spirit that is unaged and it carries connotations of the illicit. Indeed, for some time, the Irish Revenue Commissioners, who oversee these matters, forbade companies to call their product poteen because of, as one commissioner put it in correspondence with Knockeen Hills, "strong association in the public mind of the term 'poteen' with illicitly distilled spirits and the confusion that the use of such terms would give rise to as the duty status of such spirits." Right.

However, the authorities have relented a bit and now we in America are benefiting. At least two brands of poteen (some times spelled "poitin," or "potcheen") have made their way to *The Review's* front door.

We took all samples both up and with a few drops of water. First on the menu was **Bunratty Potcheen**, made by Bunratty Mead & Liqueur Co. Ltd. Of County Clare, Ireland. Bunratty is now being imported by A.V. Imports (<http://www.avimports.com>); previously Camelot Importing handled it. At 90 proof, it is, believe it or not, the mildest of the poteens sampled. The Bunratty, interestingly, had a fruit nose- almost like raspberries. In the mouth, though, it was spirit, melon, and earth. The close was dry, but not parching. Surprisingly smooth and intriguing. (Rating \*\*\*\*)

**Knockeen Hills** of Waterford, Ireland is handsomely packaged and comes in three strengths: the green is 101 proof, the gold is 140 proof, and the black is a hefty 180 proof. All three of them are distilled three times and are imported by Bradley Trading Corp (<http://www.bradleytradingcorp.com>).

The 101 proof version nosed, remarkably, of banana and pear. The 140 proof had a much fainter nose, with, perhaps, a hint of grain and green olives. The nose of the 180 variant, I dare say, would fool



many into thinking it is rum. It's sugary, and the only other note we could locate was a wee bit of apple.

In the mouth the 101 proof was a pleasure- banana mostly, with a bit of pear. Quite smooth and fruity. (Rating \*\*\*\*1/4) The gold was much drier in the mouth, as one would expect, and the taste was a mix of the mineral, metal, and a tiny bit of vanilla. (Rating \*\*\*1/4)

Then came the might black label. Ninety percent alcohol- gracious: drink with caution and keep all flames, including cigarettes, away! The 180 offered up molasses and caramel and though very dry, it wasn't scorching hot. In light of the proof, that's impressive. (Rating \*\*\*3/4)

# Spirits

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## Irish Whiskies

by F. S. Fitzgerald

So it falls to me to assess these Irish whiskies. So be it.

### **Kilbeggan (80 proof)**

The bargain bottle of the bunch. Produced by the Cooley Distillery, which opened in 1989, and bottled at the ancient Lockes Distillery in Kilbeggan. It spent 3 years in barrel and tastes of pear, caramel, stiff barrel, and a touch of spearmint. Add a few drops of water to rub the heat off and make it more buttery. A solid Irish whiskey. (Rating \*\*\*1/4)

### **The Tyrconnell (80 proof)**

The Andrew A. Watt & Co. distillery cropped up in 1762; The Tyrconnell brand in 1876. But the stuff in this bottle is made at the aforementioned, young Cooley distillery. Got all that? No? That's fine. We're here to taste not delve into the arcana about brand vs. distillery vs. bottler vs... This is a fine Irish single malt whiskey: rich with barley, berries, barrel and a dry close. Lovely balance. Like Kilbeggan, it's imported by Premium Imports Ltd., a subsidiary of Heaven Hill Distilleries of Bardstown, Kentucky. (Rating \*\*\*\*1/4)

### **Connemara (116.4 proof)**

This, dear readers, is no whiskey for the novice or light-weight. It's huge, the only peated single malt Irish whiskey. It too is made at Cooley, but is imported by Preiss Imports (<http://PreissImports.com>). It's quite like a single malt scotch: smoky, with a touch of iodine, salt, and very spicy. I had to cut this one with plenty of water. *Sui generis*, wholly unratable, and something the malt lover must try.

### **Knappogue Castle 1951 (80 proof)**

A half century old- gadzooks. It seems a shame to drink it: there's so little of it left. Great Spirits (<http://www.GreatSpirits.com>) only releases 300 bottles each year, and that stock won't be round for too much longer. Then again, whiskey is made for sipping not staring at. So in it goes. Wow. One word: peculiar. Whether it was the time in barrel or some mysterious magic at work, this malt tastes like no others. Its primary notes are apple, licorice, honey, and tons of barrel. Baffling. There's no yard stick that can measure this one. Seek it out, drop all expectations, and enjoy.

## **Other Irish Whiskies**

Dear readers, these aren't the only Irish whiskies we've reviewed. We've also examined Jameson (including the standard, the 1780, and the Gold), Brennan's, Bushmills, Knappogue Castle 1992, and...

See them by surfing to AlcoholReviews.com. Just type "Irish Whiskey" into the search engine, click "Go Get It" and links to the reviews will appear. To purchase these and other Irish Whiskies, just surf to <http://AlcoholReviews.com> and click SHOP.

# Spirits

## A Hot Irishman

by AlcoholReviews.com Staff

No, we're not speaking of our top writer Fitzgerald or his buddy Seamus. We're referring to a nifty new product brought to America by Bradley Trading Corp, the same folks who bring us Knockeen Hills Irish Poteen (see page 9).

Hot Irishman is a 44 proof liqueur. It's a blend of a four-year old single malt Irish whisky, coffee from Colombia, and brown sugar. Pour 2 shots in a glass or mug, add 6 ounces of boiling water, top with crème, and *voila*- an instant Irish Coffee that's quite good.

On marveling over this one of our tasters asked a poignant question: "If you want an Irish coffee, why not just make one with Irish whiskey and coffee?" Fair enough. Well, Hot Irishman has a few obvious uses: first, if you're looking to make yourself an after dinner Irish Coffee, why boil a whole pot? It's a waste and time consuming. Moreover, a number of smaller bars don't keep coffee, or if they do, it sits all day and is scorched. That's money wasted for the bar and not something patrons want to drink. Hot Irishman liqueur would also seem to lend itself to coffee shops: they can use it as described above or pour it into their ice coffee / Slushee type machines and make frozen coffee treats that pack a punch. But what do we know- we just like how it tastes.



## Ode to a Wild Turkey

By Danny DeVino

Austin Nichols Wild Turkey Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, established 1855, has a long and illustrious history. In 1893, the Ripy brothers' bourbon was selected from over 400 whiskies to represent Kentucky at the Chicago World's Fair. In 1940, a wild turkey hunt turned a nickname into a legendary brand.

If you think about the history of the United States, the American people, as rugged as the land they wrestled with and their need for a drink as sturdy as themselves, you realize America and American whiskey grew up together. Wild Turkey Bourbon has all the flavor and backbone the American pioneer could have hoped for.

Wild Turkey Bourbon is golden-auburn in color. The **80 proof** opens to a spray of zesty oranges and an aroma of sweet cream butter warming in a sauce pan. Wild turkey is aged in new white oak barrels, giving it a flavor of vanilla and caramel, with a hint of

violet. With the addition of a little water the caramel gives way to a richer chocolate flavor. The **101 proof** has an aroma of honeysuckle and violet, with a sweet taste of peaches, chocolate and caramel. With the addition of water, the honeysuckle gives way to a taste of pure honey. Delicious.

*Danny DeVino is a big time financier in New York City, a bon vivant, and man of the world. He was nursed on Wild Turkey and is a reader and contributor to AlcoholReviews.com and The Review.*

# Spirits

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## Blanton's Bourbon

by Greg Kitzmiller

Blanton's was the first single barrel bourbon. It was released in 1984. It was named after Colonel Albert Bacon Blanton, who in 1901 at the age of twenty became superintendent of the distillery. It was reportedly a labor of love for Blanton who led this as the only working distillery in Kentucky during Prohibition (1920 to 1933) and had the distillery back and running within 24 hours of the floodwaters subsiding following the great flood of 1937. Col. Blanton was a pioneer in American bourbon

and this whiskey does honor to his name. The Blanton's bottle itself is seductive. Most bourbon bottles are, well, bottles. This one is a jewel. A beautiful round and faceted ornamental glass bottle caresses this fine product and just beckons you to buy her. Atop the cork stopper, sealed in wax, sits a beautiful metal symbol of the great land of bourbon- a Kentucky racehorse and jockey.

Master Distiller Elmer T. Lee, Member of the Master Distiller's Hall of Fame and a friendly guy, oversaw the introduction of single barrel bourbons and may have barreled the bottles you see in classy bars and fine liquor stores. Current Master Distiller, Gary Gayheart, carries on the tradition and likely 'dumped' your barrel- that is, he was present when the barrel was opened and bottled. The bottle I have came from barrel #139, warehouse H on Rick 38 and was dumped 11-5-01 and bottled at 93 proof. There is no age statement but Gary tells me this is 7-8 years old. Travel to Frankfort, Kentucky and you can see the historic warehouse where your bottle was stored in barrel. Bring a flashlight- the primary warehouse is so old it has no electricity.

The bottle and history alone are enough to get us interested in the bourbon but wait until you lift the cork stopper. The color is wonderful deep amber. On the nose this bourbon gives strong hints of toffee/caramel. Sampled neat it is true to traditional bourbon with solid caramel, toffee and, I think, a hint of vanilla. Cut with water it entices me. I taste very strong caramel flavors. The finish continues with wonderful caramel notes and a hotness that you might describe as peppery.

This bourbon has one over ten awards including "Finest Bourbon in the World" from the Washingtonian magazine in 1990. And there is good news from this award-winning distillery. They are experimenting at the Buffalo Trace Distillery (as it is now named). They're using different small grains (in addition to corn, of course), different proofs, and different recipes (e.g., mash bills) to produce new bourbons. Some of these are already available, like Buffalo Trace Bourbon, the Eagle Rare bourbons, and the H.L. Weller line. Others, though, won't be ready for maybe a decade or more. That's all right by me. With a dozen aging warehouses there is plenty of Blanton's.



*Greg Kitzmiller is a freelance writer, university instructor, and conference speaker who follows food and beverage trends. He happens to really like bourbon as well as tequila, Irish whisky, and beer.*



# Wines

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## Reds

### **Familia Zuccardi Q Merlot 1999 (\$22)**

We've long raved over the wines of Jose Zuccardi, most typically those he produces under the Santa Julia label. The Santa Julia's are an incredible bargain- a bottle fetches between \$7 and \$11. The Q's are even better, well worth their \$20-\$22 price. This Merlot is a deep ruby color, is rich, and intense, already showing heavy fruit, good tannins, blackberry and chocolate. Enjoy it now, decant it or give it an hour to breathe. If you can restrain yourself, let it lie for one to three years. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.** (Rating \*\*\*\*1/4) See <http://www.familiazuccardi.com> for details.

## PINOT NOIRS

### **Erath Pinot Noir 2000 (\$14)**

Noses of cherry jam and cherry blossoms- it's one that you can sniff for hours. Sweet in the mouth, jammy, but packs a tartness that made us blink. Good value for a Pinot Noir. (Rating \*\*\*1/2) See <http://www.erath.com> for more on it.

### **Santa Barbara Winery Pinot Noir 1998 (\$18)**

The arrival of Santa Barbara's wines always excites us: we never know what we're going to get in a bottle, yet we can count on it being good. This Pinot is the opposite of the Bouchaine (see below): it's robust; it's feisty enough to stand up to spicy meats. It noses of cherries and raspberries, leather, and earth. Quite sweet in the mouth, and tasting of fruit, cherries, earth and black pepper. (Rating \*\*\*1/2) <http://www.sbwinery.com>

### **Bouchaine Pinot Noir 1999 (\$34)**

Don't let the rather homely label put you off- this is a wonderful pinot noir. The nose is positively perfumey- we could sniff it all day. In the mouth it dishes out gobs of cherry, leather, and orange rind. Too delicate for food in our opinion, but

**MENDED.** (Rating \*\*\*\*1/2). See <http://www.Bouchaine.com> for more information.

### **Lafond Vineyard 1997 Pinot Noir (\$35)**

The color on this one is odd: ruby with tints of caramel. Is it on it's way out or...? Noses and tastes of black cherry, earth, and barrel. A little warm, but exhibits a very attractive velvety mouthfeel. Intriguing. (Rating \*\*\*1/2) <http://www.lafondwinery.com>

## BORDEAUX

### **Chateau Belair (\$14.50)**

What an earthy nose! After sniffing so much fruit and vanilla this is a real treat. Drink it in and you'll get leather, smoke, fruit, and blackberries. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. BEST BUY.** (Rating \*\*\*\*)

### **Chateau La Cardonne (\$15.50)**

This is a wine that shows what makes Bordeaux, Bordeaux. The scent is rich, complex, and seductive. Perfumey, with that signature touch of blueberry. In the mouth it does not disappoint- firm tannins, robust... fruit, and blueberry. Send us a case, please! **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. BEST BUY** (Rating\*\*\*\*1/4)

### **Chateau Larose Trintaudon (\$15.50)**

Has an unusual ocean front or shellfish aroma that we really liked. Super soft in the mouth, with notes of fruit, shellfish, and black pepper. Quite dry- your lips will stick to your gums after a quaff of this. Pair with very mild cheeses, even green salads. (Rating \*\*\*1/2)

## ATTACK OF THE AUSSIES!

### **Jacob's Creek**

This mega brand has partnered up with the PGA to create a big Australian golf tournament, the Jacob's Creek Championship. To celebrate this big thang, Jacob's Creek and the PGA (that's

# Wines

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Professional Golfers' Association, Jethro) threw a major whoop-up in New York City's famed Rainbow Room. What a party- there were golf games to play, loads of wine, and delicious lobster, lamb, and more, all 65 stores above Rockefeller Center. As for the wines, we've spoken previously of the generally solid quality of their \$8 to \$10 wines, so let us here mention the **1999 Reserve Shiraz** (\$15) and the **1995 Limited Release Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$50). The 1999 is rich stuff, big with berries, vanilla, and plum. Yum. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.** (Rating \*\*\*\*\*) The 1995 Shiraz/Cab Sauv is awesome, a wine that caused jaws around our table to drop. So intense, so rich, with mint, menthol, plum, berry...Holy cow. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.** (Rating \*\*\*\*3/4) <http://www.jacobs creek.com.au>

## ATTACK OF THE AUSSIES PART II!

In early February the Australian Wine Board held a mass tasting in New York City. Lacking the time to taste all the varietals from all the wineries, we mostly confined our selves to sampling Shiraz. Things began well: we tasted the oddly **named Ghost Gum Aquila Blackwood Valley 1999** (\$18) and were pleased: rich Shiraz fruit, big plums, blackberries, and vanilla. (Rating \*\*\*3/4) See John F. Marzano of Marzano Imports Co. ([johnnyfmar@aol.com](mailto:johnnyfmar@aol.com)) for more information.

"Hooo-rah, what an afternoon it will be," we thought. Then came a bad streak: glass after glass of thin, un-exciting Shiraz. What was going on? Had the weather been bad? Or was this the market flood (there's been 400% increase in exports to the U.S. over the past 6 years) that inevitably happens before the market shakeout? Seeking safe harbor, we stopped at a sure thing, the Stonehaven table. We eschewed the value line and went for the cream of the crop, **Stonehaven Reserve Padthaway Shiraz 1998** (\$40). Ooooooh, Nelly, what grip! What fruit! And that silky mouthfeel! Do not dither- buy this wine now. (Rating \*\*\*\*1/2) See <http://stonehavenvineyards.com.au> for more information.

Thereafter things were just fine. We **encountered Hamilton's Stonegarden Barossa Grenache-Shiraz 2000** (\$17), a very interesting wine. It was mind boggling in its complexity. (Rating \*\*\*\*\*) Surf to <http://www.hamiltonewell.com.au> to learn about it. Then we almost suffered a heart attack. Not only we're we thrilled by **Sandalford's** wonderful, intense, **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED Western Australia Shiraz 1999** (Rating \*\*\*\*\*), **Nicole Renton** from Sandalford (<http://Sandalford.com.au>), who filled our glasses, was a stunner. Drop dead gorgeous. *Mad scribbling in notebook: must put Sandalford on itinerary. No- sell business, tear up apartment lease, pack bags, show up at door of Sandalford. Plead for sanctuary. She might just take you in.*

Pulling ourselves from Nicole we were about to shuffle out the door and back to the office when we saw **Anne Riives**, the PR pro extraordinaire, behind a table with **John Larchet**, he of **The Australian Premium Wine Collection** (<http://www.tapwc.com.au>). Gadzooks, what an end to the day. Fireworks a-plenty. The diversity of Shiraz John showed to us was unbelievable. The **Craiglee 1999** (\$34) had an amazing nose: perfume, so delicate and light. Astonishing. (Rating \*\*\*\*1/4). At the other end of the spectrum was the **Elderton Command Shiraz 1997**, a whale of a wine that stops you in your feet, buckles the knees, and makes you wish you had an enormous plate of beef or lamb before you. (Rating \*\*\*\*3/4) Both are **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

## Dessert Wines

### **Concha y Toro Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc 1999 (\$15, 375 ml)**

One complaint we hear often from wine novices is that they can't "do" dessert wines. "Too sweet" is the gripe. It's understandable. They won't, though, have that problem with this wine. The nose is lovely: apricot, lilac, generally flowery. It's viscous in the mouth without being syrupy, and shows apricot, honey, and anise. We put it up against spicy Indian food: Vegetable Biryani and Chag Panir. It was wonderful, cooling the heat of the food and bringing smiles to our faces. (Rating \*\*\*3/4) <http://conchaytoro.com> **TRBSW**

# Cocktails

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## Recipe of the Month: The Bum

by AlcoholReviews.com Staff

Last year, Alfama won an award from Wine Spectator for its marvelous wine list: all Portuguese, all good. This, though, is the cocktail page, so let us forget wine for the moment and speak of mixed drinks.

In the past we've written about the innovative and tasty cocktails (like the Bitchy Peach) being crafted at Alfama. Alfama, you'll recall, is a Portuguese restaurant in West Greenwich Village, New York City (<http://www.AlfamaRestaurant.com>). They are known for their authenticity, so you won't find con-fusion cuisine here and you won't see variations on the Purple Hooter or Kamikaze being served.

The cocktail list is new world but deeply inspired by the old. The drink to the left, O Vadio, translated as "the bum," is a perfect example. It looks very snappy, very new, and almost Cosmopolitan like. Yet, its primary ingredient is Bagaceira, that is, Portuguese grappa. The robust, earthy, herbal grappa is balanced against the Chambord, while the lime juice adds zest.

### O Vadio

Created by Tarcisio Costa, Alfama Restaurant

2 oz. Bagaceira (Portuguese grappa)

1 1/2 oz. Chambord

1 oz. freshly squeezed lime juice

Squeeze a lemon peel, rub it around the outer edge of a cocktail glass and drop it in the glass. In a shaker filled with ice, pour all the ingredients and shake vigorously for about 25 seconds. Strain into cocktail glass and serve.

*For more cocktail recipes and reviews, please visit our online super site at <http://www.AlcoholReviews.com>, where you also can read about and **SHOP** for beers, spirits, wines, wine racks, books and more!*

# NEXT ISSUE:

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of the Doings at The  
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Vodka Festival...

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and Products New  
to the Market.

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Feigling's  
Finlandia  
Finlandia Cranberry  
Finlandia Lime  
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