

STATES OF INDEPENDENTS

Ten years ago there were approximately 50 craft distilleries in the US. Now there are over 400. Yolanda Evans gives the lowdown on her favourites

Over the last few years, the US craft spirit movement has experienced a record-breaking boom with further new companies guaranteed to emerge in the near future. These hand-crafted spirits have been revolutionising the industry with their unique whiskeys, gins, rums and vodkas, and bartenders and drinks enthusiast have been taking notice. All over the US, they are lining the shelves of liquor stores and vying for a spot behind the bar. Since there are so many on the market to sort through, here are seven American craft spirits we thought you might want to learn more about.

ATELIER VTE (NEW ORLEANS)



Only the second distillery to be opened in New Orleans since Prohibition, Atelier Vie was founded by Jedd Haas in 2011 as a way to address the need for a greater variety of locally produced distilled spirits. There are five spirits in its portfolio, but it was its absinthe, Toulouse Red that got people talking about

this relatively new distillery. Pot distilled with herbs and infused with a few more to create its lush red colour, it's the first absinthe distilled in New Orleans since the 1912 ban. And just recently, the distillery was rewarded for all its hard work with Euphrosine Gin #9 being awarded a Gold Medal at the ACDA spirits competition.

ateliervie.com

HOUSE SPIRITS (PORTLAND)

Founded in 2004 by former brewer Christian Krogstad, House Spirits Distillery is a leader of America's craft distilling resurgence and the anchor of Portland's famous 'distillery' row. Its award-winning products are batch-distilled with ethically sourced ingredients. They have produced a number of outstanding spirits, including the Irish-inspired Westward Oregon Straight Malt Whiskey™ and Krogstad Festlig Aquavit™ but Aviation American Gin™ is the true stand-out spirit within the brand. Created to change the way people think about gin, it's an American Dry that favours more of a botanicals balance than the usual over abundance of juniper. It taste great neat and has quite a following among the cocktail connoisseurs.

housespirits.com

LEOPOLD BROS (DENVER)

Operated by Scott and Todd Leopold, Leopold Bros. is a family owned, environmentally sound distillery in Denver, producing spirits that are hand-crafted, gluten-free and bottled by hand. The products are wildly popular amongst the cocktail geeks, thanks in part to its award-winning spirits like Absinthe Verte, a pre-Prohibition-style whiskey, and Silver Tree American Small Batch Vodka, the highest rated vodka distilled and bottled in America according to the Beverage Tasting Institute. The American Small Batch Gin shouldn't be overlooked either being that it's easily one of the finest craft gins on the market these days.

leopoldbros.com



ST. GEORGE SPIRITS (CALIFORNIA)



A true pioneer of the craft movement, St. George Distillery burst onto the scene in 2000 with its ground-breaking Hanger One Vodka. It has grown from a dedicated eau de vie distillery set up in 1982 into a diverse operation that has produced a range of notable craft spirits such as St. George Single Malt Whiskey, St. George Absinthe Verte and St. George California Agricole Rum. The California-based company also produces three styles of gins (Botanivore, Terroir and Dry Rye Gin) that are pretty prominent amongst gin lovers due to their unique and bold tastes. Their latest release, NOLA Coffee Liqueur, is inspired by their love of New Orleans-style coffee.

stgeorgespirits.com

ART IN THE AGE CRAFT SPIRITS (PHILADELPHIA)



As the man who created and then turned Sailor Jerry Rum and Hendricks's Gin into highly successful brands, Steven Grasse knows a thing or two about crafting remarkable spirits. And his latest venture, Art in the Age, has been redefining the organic craft spirits category for the past four years. The company's four unique spirits (Root, Snap, Rhubarb and Sage) are distilled with their signature ingredients, making them immediately palatable. The spirits are based on old recipes, with intriguing backstories, that date back to the colonial times in Philadelphia, where the company is currently based.


artintheage.com

86 COMPANY (NEW YORK)

The 86 Company is the bartender-friendly spirit company founded by Simon Ford, Jason Kosmas and Dushan Zaric. Realising that there was a void missing from within the spirit world, Ford, Kosmas and Zaric put their heads together to create a business that caters to the needs of the bartenders, whilst getting rid of all the BS that looms around the industry. And boy is this company doing great things for the bar fraternity. There are the ergonomic bottles with useful labels that actually have honest information about the product instead of the usual marketing spiel. Also, instead of releasing one bottle at a time, Caña Brava Rum, Fords Gin, Aylesbury Duck Vodka and Tequila Cabeza were all released at the same time. And given that these spirits were created with bartenders in mind, they were made for mixing excellent cocktails rather than sipping.



the86co.com



HIGH WEST DISTILLERY (UTAH)

The first legal distillery in Utah since 1870, High West Distillery and Saloon is the world's only ski-in gastro-distillery. Located 7,000 feet above sea level in historic Old Town Park City, this Mormon country distillery has been producing excellent whiskeys and vodkas since 2007. All in all, whiskey is their forte as they have a passion for crafting unique and exceptional ones. The most off-the-wall spirit in their portfolio is Campfire Whiskey, a blend of bourbon, rye, and malt Scotch whiskey, all aged five years or more. It breaks all the rules and is truly a revolutionary product.

highwest.com