



Skip the boss's parties?

Dear J.T. & Dale: I have been taking some heat around the office because I skipped the annual holiday party. Was this a huge faux pas? My employer likes to throw parties at his house every few months, and I rarely go. Is this hurting my career?
— Jamie

Dale: Here's another chance to advance my belief that you should make a distinction between your work and your job. Your job is much more than getting your work done — it includes supporting your coworkers, understanding the social dynamics of the organization, making a contribution to team spirit and, yes, being a welcome addition at company social events. Said another way: You can't just shoot the basketball, you've got to play defense, and you've got to show up for the team photo and the charity event, and you've got to smile the whole time. And — trust me on this, Jamie — you want it that way. You want to be part of a team, not just somebody putting in his hours at the Trudge & Drudge factory.

J.T.: I agree with Dale, Jamie, but I get there via a different logic. Keep in mind, you aren't just an employee, you are a business-of-one. Your No. 1 client is your boss. You need to keep the client happy. If attending his party ensures that he knows you appreciate the job, then doesn't it make sense to go? It's also a great time to get to know other staff members whom you might not interact with on a daily basis. It pays to have as many allies as possible in the office. These events can be your chance to develop new relationships that can help you in the future. So, go to the next party and enjoy it!

Dear J.T. & Dale: I am a struggling single mom. Five years ago I started at my current company as a receptionist. I eventually became office manager. Previous office managers made almost double my salary. When I got behind on rent, I went to my boss and asked for a small raise. He declined and stated that my landlord should lower my rent. I ended up being evicted. I can't afford the Internet or a cellphone. In your opinion, is \$9.50 an

Craft distillers offer local touch to high-end sipping

Number of U.S. producers top 400 and rising

BY KATHY FINN
Special to The Advocate

Restaurant and bar patrons are finding cocktail choices that not only expand their imbibing repertoire but allow them to "buy local."

Their options come via several small producers of spirits that have sprung up in the New Orleans area, in line with a trend sweeping the country.

"The growth in distillers has been explosive," said Penn Jensen, executive director of the American Craft Distillers Association in Denver.

Noting that U.S. producers now number more than 400, he guesses 1,000 licensed distilleries could be operating in North America by 2015. "Craft distilling is in," he said.

Jensen said innovation is the name of the game in cocktails these days, thanks in large part to creative bartenders, or mixologists, who come up with new drink recipes that incorporate fresh and interesting ingredients.

"They're making restaurants and bars more romantic and interesting places to go," he said.

Jedd Haas is helping to fuel the trend. He's the founder of tiny New Orleans distillery Atelier Vie LLC, which wrapped up its first full year of operation. Haas is already bottling five products and working to build his portfolio of "craft spirits."

After launching his business with a high-proof vodka for sweet or savory infusions, and an unusual red absinthe, Haas has expanded his offerings to include a traditional green absinthe, a rice-based whiskey and Euphrosine Gin, named for the street that runs alongside the Atelier Vie distillery.

"Our long-range plan is to get distributed across the country," Haas said, adding the products are available in dozens of Louisiana bars and groceries. The company recently cracked into markets in Arkansas, Illinois and Washington, D.C.

Many small-batch spirit producers that started in recent years did so in response to an easing of alcoholic beverage laws by some states. Reacting to the popularity of craft beer breweries and their ability to draw tourists, for instance, states such as Oregon modified their laws to allow craft distillers to offer tastings on-site and sell small quantities of product directly to the public.

The Louisiana Legislature followed suit, passing a bill that allows distilleries to give tours and offer tastings. The law enabled the startup of rum maker Louisiana Spirits Distillery

LLC, which recently began making Bayou Rum from sugar cane at a plant in Lacassine.

A distiller that already enjoyed direct-sale benefits was Celebration Distillation in New Orleans. Founded in the 1990s by local visual artist James Michalopoulos, the company has sold Old New Orleans Rum and offered tours at its Frenchmen Street distillery under a previous law that bestowed the privileges exclusively on distilleries already open at that time.

While new laws have improved the business climate for distilling startups, entrepreneurs like Haas say the local ordinances continue to hamper their ability to grow. Haas, who terms zoning laws "hugely important" in the local distilling permitting process, said navigating the required local approvals has been a challenge.

Kenneth Haik, who has been working to open a distillery since 2010, agrees. The founder of Cajun Spirits Distillery LLC had hoped to start selling vodka and rum last fall from a Mid-City building that he is retrofitting for production. Permitting de-

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Photos provided by Atelier Vie LLC

Rice whiskey pours from a distiller at Atelier Vie in New Orleans. The company also produces a high-proof vodka, a traditional green absinthe, a red absinthe and Euphrosine Gin, named for the street that runs alongside the Atelier Vie distillery



Riz, a Louisiana rice whiskey, is among the five products being made by New Orleans distillery Atelier Vie LLC. Several small producers of spirits have sprung up in the New Orleans area, in line with a trend that is sweeping the country.