



Still Hollow's gin and corn, rye, and cranberry-flavored whiskeys have attracted legions of fans. You'll want to try their Bourbon Barrel Aged Maple Syrup, too.



Whiskey Our Way

Still Hollow Distillery offers whiskey made with local ingredients and traditions.

written by KATE MISHKIN
photographed by NIKKI BOWMAN MILLS

The journey to Still Hollow Spirits is almost as much of an experience as the whiskey itself. The long, windy gravel road that leads to the Harmon distillery feels like someone's driveway—several patrons have confessed to the staff that they were worried they were lost. But they always eventually found it, sitting atop the Allegheny Mountains, surrounded by bucolic pastures.

"You kind of feel like you're going into the backwoods to get the moonshine," says Athey Lutz, distiller and owner of Still Hollow Spirits, and that's exactly the type of distillery he set out to create with his wife, Maggie, and their friend Tyler Waldo two years ago: one that feels comfortable and celebrates West Virginia. "We wanted to do something that would combine agriculture and tourism

and moonshine, and celebrate all those things in West Virginia. Everything we do is really West Virginia-centric. We're proud of being from West Virginia," Lutz says.

Celebrating agriculture, tourism, and moonshine is exactly what they do every day at Still Hollow. Everything is steeped in history and rooted in sustainability. Ingredients that go into the whiskey are pretty much all found right there on Job Farm, in Job. The star of the show is the Bloody Butcher corn, which is sourced from the farm as well as another family farm that has grown the corn from the same seed for more than 200 years, Lutz says.

On a recent afternoon, Lutz was shelling and harvesting corn. He'd stop and chat with visitors who came by. He says the rural location to which he welcomes visitors is

relaxing, and that he loves talking to people and hearing their stories. He spends as much time with them as they want to spend with him, he adds.

Though Still Hollow is just approaching its second anniversary, the idea for the distillery has been with Lutz for a while. He grew up in the Canaan Valley, and his dad worked in the ski industry. Lutz noticed how many tourists who came in and out of the area wanted to learn about moonshine. For 10 or 15 years, he saw friends and acquaintances open successful craft breweries. He and his wife, Maggie, decided to take a class in distilling in Vermont.

"After that we had a little time to think and kind of process information," Lutz says. "We went to another class in Chicago with the same training program, and then drove from Chicago to Colorado for my brother's wedding." All that time in the car became fertile ground for ideas and planning and, by the time they got home from the trip, their decision to open Still Hollow was made.

Lutz likes being in business with his wife and friend. "I guess it makes things easy in a way," he says. "You don't have to work with someone you pretend to like or annoys you—not that you can't annoy your friends or spouse, but it's nice to spend time with someone you already enjoy spending around."

Making whiskey is an intricate process anchored by time. A distiller starts by shelling and grinding corn, then boiling it into a beer. The beer goes into a still, which is "where the magic happens," Lutz says. After that, the whiskey is barrel-aged to become bourbon or infused with a flavor, like cranberry.

The entire process can take about two weeks, and Still Hollow is on pace to make roughly 1,200 gallons of whiskey this year. Lutz's favorite is a clear, corn whiskey that "has a really interesting corn-butterscotch flavor," he says. It's fiery, but it's smooth right out of the still.

Business is good, the couple reports. "If you enjoy a beautiful drive and seeing the West Virginia countryside, it's a good excuse to take a drive and see one of the prettier parts of state," Lutz says. "And if you're interested in hearing about the process of making whiskey and seeing firsthand and asking questions, that would be another reason to come down."

128 Stink Run Road,
Harman, 304.227.4692,
stillhollowspirits.com

