

"It's an exciting time to be a new distillery in Philadelphia. The scene is growing and the city is producing a lot of good products."

A revolution is quietly brewing—or rather, distilling—in Philly.

One thing you'll quickly learn while visiting Philadelphia: buying alcohol here is complicated.

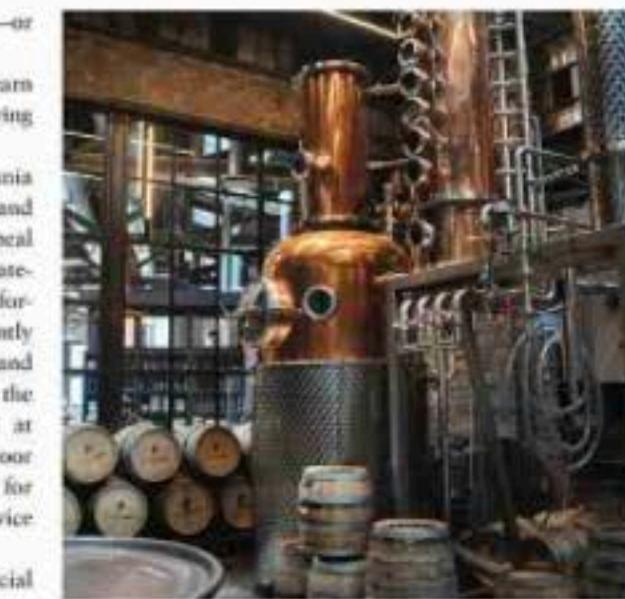
Thanks to the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) and laws enacted right before the repeal of Prohibition, beer is sold separately from wine and liquor. The former can be found at independently owned, by-the-case distributors and specialty bottle shops, while the latter can only be purchased at state-run stores that have a poor reputation (some of it deserved) for less-than-stellar selection, service and prices.

"There were some beneficial changes that took place at the state level that ultimately allowed distilleries some new liberties and reduced the barriers to entry," explains Matt Quigley, who opened Federal Distilling with his brother, Bryan, in Old Kensington earlier this year. "It's an exciting time to be a new distillery in Philadelphia. The scene is growing and the city is producing a lot of good products. It's a small group of talented companies all doing something a little different."

The Quigley brothers' flagship spirit is Stateside Urbancraft Vodka. The bell-clear spirit, made with Midwestern corn and mineral-enriched water, represents years of experimentation in a basement laboratory and professional research on vodka blending and purification. Their gleaming German stillworks looks like a Wonka contraption, all towers and pipes and nozzles and spouts of hammered copper. In this system, Stateside is distilled a dozen times.

Federal Distilling is not the only must-know distillery in town. Rob Cassel is really the man to credit with the renaissance's first flicker of life in the mid-2000s. As the co-founder of Philadelphia Distilling (and its cobalt-hotted flagship Bluecoat Gin) he put the city on the craft-spirits map and has since moved on to a new project in Federal's neck of the woods, New Liberty Distilling. At the combination distillery, school and event space, Cassel is doing four styles of whiskey under his Kinsey label, including a cask-strength aged seven years.

THE LA COLOMBE DISTILLERY WHERE COFFEE-FLAVORED RUM IS MADE. PREVIOUS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NEW LIBERTY DISTILLERY HAS PUBLIC WEEKLY TOURS AND WHISKEY TASTINGS; INGREDIENTS THAT PHILADELPHIA DISTILLING USES TO MAKE ABSINTHE; WORKING THE POT AT ROWHOUSE SPIRITS DISTILLERY; DIFFERENT RUM DRUM FROM PHILADELPHIA'S OLDEST COFFEE ROASTER, LA COLOMBE.



the flavors of the coffee and I suspend them in the rum, which is basically distilled sugar. So it's coffee and sugar, but the best way I can think of having it."

This vibe of upstart entrepreneurs, of experimentation is really powering the movement. "When you spend as much time in coffee-growing regions as I do, one of the things that you realize right away is that these isolated farmers are all moonshining," explains Carmichael, who also hosts Travel Channel's *Dangerous Grounds* and *Uncommon Grounds*. "Through osmosis, I picked up the craft myself, and began doing cognacs, Armagnacs, brandies and just about everything, until I finally landed on rum which I really like."

"I think this strong maker's mentality in Pennsylvania has spilled over from [the craft-beer world] into the distilling sector and is only starting to gain traction," says Quigley. In one case that's happened literally: In West Philly, Dock Street Brewing just got into the distilling game with the recent launch of their Vicio Mezcal. Billed as a 'voluptuous habu' this floral, gently smoky sipping spirit is made from 100 percent espadin agave, a breed prized by Oaxacan mezcaleros.

You could pick up many of these elixirs at the nearest Fine Wine & Good Spirits, but it's way more fun to visit the distilleries, tasting rooms and retail shops. "Philly is a city with a lot of pride that welcomes products made here," says Quigley. Why not bring a bottle home?

## WHERE TO SIP

**DOCK STREET SPIRITS**  
701 S. 50th St.,  
215.726.2337  
What to order:  
Mezcal Mole

**FEDERAL DISTILLING**  
1700 N. Hancock St.,  
295.425.4200  
What to order:  
The Cleaver

**LA COLOMBE**  
1335 Franklin Ave.,  
267.479.3600  
What to order:  
New Fashioned

**THE NEW LIBERTY DISTILLERY AT CRANE ARTS**  
1431 N. Cadwalader St., 800.996.0595  
What to order:  
Philadelphia Sour

**ROWHOUSE SPIRITS DISTILLERY**  
2440 Franklin Ave., 267.825.7332  
What to order:  
Secret Martini

**COOPER RIVER DISTILLERS**  
54 N. 4th St.,  
Camden, N.J.,  
856.295.1273  
What to order:  
Rye Oak Sour

**PHILADELPHIA DISTILLING**  
33 E. Allen St.,  
295.671.0346  
What to order:  
The Clover Club

**MOUNTAIN LAUREL SPIRITS**  
925 Canal St.,  
Bristol, Pa.,  
215.781.8300  
What to order:  
PA Rye Whiskey