

Still & Barrel: Craft Spirits in the Old North State

John Trump



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Although legal spirits in the Tar Heel state only go back about ten years, making liquor in North Carolina is not new. Wilkes County, which was once dubbed the "Moonshine Capital of the World," was the leading producer of illegal liquor for decades. In 1965, Tom Wolfe's article in *Esquire*—"The Last American Hero is Junior Johnson. Yes!"— made the area nationally famous.

Today descendants of famous moonshiners are now respectable craft distillers carrying on the family tradition—people like Brian Call, the master distiller at Call Family Distillers, who is descended from Reverend Daniel Call, who sold his still seven generations ago to burgeoning entrepreneur Jack Daniels. Brian is the son of the legendary Willie Clay "The Uncatchable" Call, who hung around with Junior Johnson and whose favorite car—a 1961 Chrysler New Yorker fitted with toggle switches that kill the brake lights, is on display at the distillery today. Today, the Calls make a 101-proof sour mash moonshine as well as strawberry, cherry, and apple pie varieties.

In Still & Barrel, Trump traces the history of manufacturing moonshine whiskey, gin, vodka, and rum in the state all the way to today's boom from the artisan movement. The book also serves as a guide so you can visit the almost 50 distilleries that are now in business. The state's distillers are not just making moonshine. Their wares include rum—from sorghum and molasses—aged red-wheat organic whiskey and vodka infused with the mysterious Tobago pepper. The information about the distillers and their products is surrounded by history and compelling stories about people and their passion.

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