

Kentucky Brandy. Yes, BRANDY.

By Rich Warren

Question: What alcoholic beverage that starts with a "b" is Kentucky known for?

The folks at Copper & Kings American Brandy Company in Louisville are working toward the day when people will start associating "brandy" as well as "bourbon" with the Bluegrass State. And it's got a neighbor just across the river on the Indiana side joining that effort.

Founded in 2014, Copper & Kings makes brandy using select wines with intense aromatics and high acidity. Those wines are then double-distilled in copper-pot stills. After they're cooked "low and slow" to bring out the fruity intensity and concentrated flavors with no added sugars or coloring, the brandies are then matured in Kentucky bourbon barrels and new American white oak barrels to provide a buttery, honeyed flavor. Copper & Kings also produces apple brandies using apple wines fermented and sourced from Michigan.

But it's not just the chance to taste those flavorful brandies that draws several hundred people per week to take the distillery's popular tours. As owner Joe Heron puts it: "We're more about rock 'n' roll than anything else."

The pot stills have been given the names of female characters from Bob Dylan songs: Sara, Magdalena, and Isis from his 1976 "Desire" album. And a brand new 2,000-gallon still which just came online has been christened "Rosemary" from a song on Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks" album.

But it's down in the cellar where the brandies are aging where the musical associations are strongest. Five major sub-woofers with a strong bass beat belt out powerful tunes around the clock, creating a pulsation inside the barrels that boosts the young brandy's interaction with the inside of the barrel. This process, labeled "sonic aging," is designed to speed up and enhance maturation.

The sonic-aging playlist varies according to musical milestones. If it's Elvis Presley's birthday, expect a "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." The daily playlist is on the Copper & Kings website.

Heron likes to say that Copper & Kings makes "American Brandy with a capital A and a capital B." At tour's end, visitors can taste those distinctive grape and apple brandies or choose from the distillery's



Photo courtesy Copper & Kings

Mixologist creates with Copper & Kings Brandy.

other products, which include six types of gin, two of absinthe, and other liqueurs. Or they can savor the spirits during a more extended stay at the third-floor bar with sweeping views of the Louisville skyline.

Copper & Kings has some company in the brandy-making business. Just across the Ohio River in Louisville's Indiana suburbs, Starlight Distillery is producing brandies that are 100 percent estate-grown. Associated with Huber's Orchard, Winery & Vineyards, a seven-generation family business that's been growing grapes and producing wines since 1843, Starlight uses the more than three dozen wines and other bounty from a 750-acre farm to distill a 10-year and 5-year grape brandy, peach and pear brandies and two kinds of apple brandy, including applejack, so popular in American colonial days that no less of a personage than George Washington promoted its manufacture. Starlight also produces grappa, made by distilling grape skins, pulp, seeds, and stems, as well as bourbon and rye whiskey.

Situated high atop the Knobstone Escarpment overlooking the Ohio River, Huber's Orchard, Winery & Vineyards attracts more than 700,000 visitors a year to its festivals, farm market, bakery, family-fun park, and pick-your-own produce fields. But it's in its "Tasting Loft," resembling an upscale hayloft in a barn, where samples of both wines and distilled products are available. Enjoy their brandies in a flight or have an artisan cocktail made from one.

As with Copper & Kings, Starlight is willing to bet your first sip of brandy will be the first of many. 🍷

YOUR BOURBON JOURNEY

THE KENTUCKY
DISTILLED
EXPERIENCE

IT ALL STARTS IN FRANKFORT



DISTILLERIES

Buffalo Trace Distillery

502-696-5926
buffalotrace.com

Castle and Key Distillery

859-873-2481
castleandkey.com

Glenn's Creek Distilling

859-552-3296
glennscreekdistillery.com

Three Boys Farm Distillery

504-512-2564
threeboysfarmdistillery.com

BREWERIES

Goodwood Brewery

goodwood.beer

Sig Lüscher Brewery

502-209-9138
sigluscherbrewery.com

West Sixth Brewery Farm

859-705-0914
westsixth.com

WINERIES

Prodigy Vineyards & Winery

859-873-8807
prodigyvineyards.com

COCKTAILS

Brick Alley

502-875-2559

Capital Cellars

502-352-2600 • capitalcellars.com

Capital Plaza Hotel Bar

502-227-5100 • capitalplazaky.com

Serafini Restaurant

502-875-5599 • serafinifrankfort.com

www.VisitFrankfort.com

800.960.7200

