

### Whiskey's Hudson Valley Revival

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IN 1825, New York State had more than a thousand small distilleries, and produced a major share of the nation's whiskey. Today it has just 13, and only recently has one of them revived a local craft, producing the first traditional whiskey made in the state since Prohibition.



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Brian Lee (red shirt) and Ralph Erenzo, right, have big plans for their still in Gardiner, N.Y.

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license. Their still became their new toy.

Into it go batches of local produce: apples, potatoes, corn, grapes and more, and out drips handcrafted liquors. Many are just experiments at this stage, but the distillery has three excellent products on the market: two vodkas distilled from local apples and an un-aged corn whiskey. A bourbon, which they age in oak barrels, will be bottled at the end of the summer.

Created and run by two men in a converted Hudson Valley granary adjoining a 1788 grist mill, Tuthilltown Spirits is an artisanal operation by any measure. Ralph Erenzo bought the Gardiner, N.Y., property in 2001 hoping to turn it into a campground, but when his neighbors objected, he settled on distilling, which he had never done before. He became partners with Brian Lee, also a novice to distilling but with a mechanical aptitude. They gutted and refitted the granary, acquired a German pot still, took some courses, and set to work turning Hudson Valley apples into vodka and local grain into whiskey.

Until 2002, anyone who wanted to be a legal distiller in New York State had to pay \$50,000 for an industrial Class A license, or else distill only fruit brandy. But a change in the law that year created a new type of license. For just \$1,450, aspiring distillers like Mr. Erenzo and Mr. Lee can produce up to 35,000 gallons a year of any inebriant. Last summer, the two men became exuberant holders of the first such