

VIRGINIA WINE ★ THE KENTUCKY BOURBON TRAIL ★ SOUTHERN SODA ★ RYE WHISKEY

imbibe

LIQUID CULTURE



THE 100 BEST PLACES TO DRINK IN THE SOUTH



PLUS Homemade Pickled Okra ★ Iced Tea Cocktails ★
The 5 Best Mint Juleps ★ Southern Brews We Love ★
John T. Edge on Eating and Drinking in the South ★

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What We're Drinking Now

Imbibe Sips: Catoctin Creek Watershed Gin

The heart of the South may belong to whiskey, but these days, the region is enjoying quite the flirtation with gin. The latest distillery to try its hand at making the clear spirit is Virginia's Catoctin Creek Distillery, which named its Watershed Gin after the Chesapeake Bay watershed that its eponymous Catoctin Creek flows into. Distilled from organic rye grain and a blend of organic herbs and spices, this American-style gin is smooth and nuanced with a subtle juniper backbone and underlying notes of citrus, sweet carrot and vanilla followed by a long, spicy finish. Sip it straight or mix it in a classic, like a Gin Rickey, or something more adventurous, like the Hibiscus 75 from Neill Blackwood at Mokomandy in Sterling, Virginia. *Suggested retail, \$39, catoctincreekdistilling.com*



HIBISCUS 75

Created as an homage to the French 75, Virginia bartender Neill Blackwood says Catoctin gin blends beautifully with the floral, citrusy flavors of this cocktail.

- 1 ½ oz. Catoctin Creek Watershed gin
- 1 oz. hibiscus syrup (see recipe below)
- ½ oz. elderflower syrup (Blackwood uses D'arbo)
- ½ oz. Harlequin orange liqueur
- ½ oz. fresh lime juice
- 1 dash Fee Bros. orange bitters
- 4 oz. sparkling wine
- Ice cubes

Tools: shaker, strainer
Glass: flute

Fill a shaker with ice. Add all ingredients except the sparkling wine. Shake well and strain into a flute. Top with sparkling wine, being careful not to let it overflow the glass.

HIBISCUS SYRUP

- 1 ½ cups hot water
- 1 ½ oz. dried hibiscus flowers
- 1 cups granulated sugar
- Tiny pinch of salt

In a pot, add dried hibiscus flowers, hot water, sugar and salt. Bring to a simmer, stir occasionally, and let simmer for about 5 minutes. Make sure the sugar is fully dissolved. Remove from heat and let sit for 1 hour. Strain through a chinois or cheesecloth. Cool and refrigerate. Will keep for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Neill Blackwood, Mokomandy, Sterling, Virginia



Trivial Pursuit

Looking to impress your friends with your uncanny knowledge of southern drinking history? Here are a few pieces of trivia to add to your bag of tricks.

» **NASCAR got its start during Prohibition** when bootleggers in the Appalachian Mountains would transport their whiskey in customized fast cars to outrun the police. This eventually led to full-fledged, for-profit (not to mention legal) racing in the late 1940s. Now you know what they mean by "stock" cars.

» **A few of America's forefathers dabbled in the world of liquid libations.** George Washington was the only founding father to own and operate a commercial distillery, which modern historians and archeologists in Mount Vernon, Virginia, are currently working to restore. But Washington wasn't the only one—even though the Kentucky-born Abraham Lincoln was known as a teetotaler, he grew up around alcohol, with his father working at a whiskey

distillery in Kentucky and the president himself owning and operating several taverns prior to his political career. And though many think of Thomas Jefferson as the original beer geek, he initially drew inspiration from his wife, Martha, who was responsible for managing the family's homebrews. Later in retirement at their Monticello estate in Charlottesville, Virginia, Jefferson not only commissioned a brewery to be built on the property, but he took to growing hops in his garden and malting the grains himself.

» **Its piquant spice peppers everything from barbecue sauces to Bloody Marys,** but did you know that Tabasco sauce is aged for three years in used bourbon barrels before being mixed with vinegar and sent off for bottling?

» **North Carolina was the first southern state to ban alcoholic beverages,** 11 years before the start of National Prohibition, but its neighbor to the South has historically been more accepting of alcohol—South Carolina is the only southern state that doesn't allow for dry counties.

» **In 1935, Louisiana governor Huey P. Long laid the groundwork for today's cocktail consultants** when he brought bartender Sam Guarino from New Orleans' Roosevelt Hotel to the New Yorker Hotel in Manhattan to show the bar staff how to properly make a Ramos Gin Fizz. He wanted to ensure he could enjoy his favorite southern cocktail whenever he traveled to New York City.