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Baiting Hollow distillery produces LI's first whiskey

by Gianna Volpe No Comments

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GIANNA VOLPE PHOTO | LiV owner Richard Stabile with casks of the company's new single malt whiskey.

The makers of Long Island's first vodka have expanded their offerings, moving beyond potato-based spirits to embrace barley.

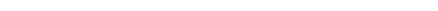
LiV, Long Island's first and only distillery, just released a 150-case micro batch of the region's first and only locally produced single-malt whiskey, a 95 proof spirit.

"It's brand-spanking-new," said LiV owner Richard Stabile. The first batch of the malted barley liquor was released in New York a few weeks ago.

Marketed under the name "Pine Barrens," bottles of LiV's inaugural whiskey batch are still available for purchase in 375 mL "mickeys" at some local liquor stores.

Because only a small amount of Pine Barrens has been distilled, availability is limited. Before LiV's next batch of 100 cases is released in May, tasting samples are available at LiV's Baiting Hollow tasting room, accompanied by pine cone shot glasses crafted specifically for the product, but their stock had already sold out by April 11.

"I've always been a whiskey fan," said Mr. Stabile. "But we wanted to do something different with ours. Most American whiskeys are bourbon-style, made from corn, and there's a lot of ryes out there. We wanted to do a scotch-style whiskey, single malt, but rather than develop our own peated malt, we thought it would be unique if we used a commercially finished beer. Nobody else does this, that we know of."



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The beer they chose was Blue Point's Old Howling Bastard, described as an American barleywine that, according to tasters on beeradvocate.com, has notes of honey and caramel.

"All whiskeys start out as beer, but 99.999 percent of those beers are undrinkable before you distill them," said Mr. Stabile. "We started our whiskey-making process with a great, high quality, drinkable beer and distilled it in micro batches."

The process of developing Pine Barrens began in late 2009 when LiV held discussions with the Blue Point Brewing Company about cooperating to create a whiskey. Experimentation followed, and continued until the beginning of 2011, when the distillation and aging of batch No. 1 began.

850 gallons of Blue Point's Old Howling Bastard was first distilled down to roughly 100 gallons of 160 proof alcohol. It was then blended down to 125 proof with purified water and placed into 10-gallon casks for two months. Then the alcohol was removed only long enough to blend it down to 95 proof before it was placed back into the barrels to age for another 10 months.

"Because of the small size of our new American oak casks, the surface area that touches the whiskey is increased and allows for a 5-1 maturation process," Mr. Stabile said. The significance is the one year LiV aged its whiskey in 10 gallon casks is equivalent to a five-year maturation process in a 50-gallon cask, he added.

"Normal American whiskeys come out a little younger, in the two- to four-year range, but this is a full-bodied, very complex spirit produced in just a year," he said. "It's just got an incredible taste profile. The nose is very welcoming and it has a smooth, polished finish. It's very, very sweet."

Three-year LiV distiller Jonathan Bittner, a 25-year-old Cutchogue resident, said he was "very impressed" with the premiere batch.

"It tops a lot of the whiskeys I've ever tried," he said.

LiV became Long Island's first craft distillery in 2006 with its first vodka, which hit the market in June 2008. Mr. Stabile has been the company's sole owner for the past two and a half years. He the lack of competition in the local market allows LiV to take its time developing products.

"We spent a lot of time experimenting with Blue Point before we got going," Mr. Stabile said, "But we're just blown away with what we came up with."

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[Blue Point Brewing Company, LiV, Long Island Spirits, Old Howling Bastard, Richard Stabile](#)



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