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[Drink Up](#) by Katy Kelleher

Bully Boy Distillery Makes Craft Moonshine That's More Flavorful Than Its Barrel-Aged Brethren



The word "moonshine" conjures up images of hillbillies and vintage speakeasies, filled with unsavory characters downing lethally-strong drinks. But according to Dave Willis of [Bully Boy Distillery](#), this name has given the actual product—a clear-colored, unaged whiskey—an undeservedly bad reputation. "Unaged whiskey goes by so many different names. Some people call it moonshine, but others call it white lightning, white dog, white whiskey," explained Dave. "During Prohibition, they weren't using the same quality of ingredients or equipment, and the result was a very harsh unaged whiskey. Though it is technically the same thing as what we make, the taste is entirely different. It's sweeter, smoother, and very versatile."

Though Bully Boy, which has the unique honor of being Boston's first craft distillery, released their first products earlier this summer, Dave is no newcomer to the world of spirits. With the help of his brother Will, Dave has been creating alcoholic beverages for years, starting with a five-gallon stovetop contraption, where they made batches of hard cider out of apples from their family farm. The brothers, who grew up on a fourth generation farm in Sherborne, Massachusetts, are adamant when it comes to their dedication to local business. "Our long-term goal is to be able to source all of our materials from our farm," says Dave. "That's really the genesis of a lot of what we're doing—supporting agriculture in Massachusetts."

Bully Boy currently offers several different products, including white rum and vodka, and they will be releasing a barrel-aged whiskey and a barrel-aged rum next year. But while these more traditional beverages may draw in quite a few consumers, we're more interested in the Willis brother's modern take on moonshine.



"They're great for a number of reasons," Dave says of the unaged whiskeys that are just now beginning to come onto the market. "With barrel-aged whiskey, what you are tasting, to a large degree, is the barrel. You're getting the caramelization from the barrel, and all the smokiness that people so often associate with whiskey comes from the wood. However, it's more difficult to taste the grain. With an unaged whiskey, you get to taste the grain. It's a wonderful way to taste the character of different grains. We make an unaged wheat whiskey, and wheat has such wonderful fruitiness—it really has a banana note—that when you barrel age it, that flavor can get lost."

The white whiskeys can also be used in many different types of cocktails, from traditionally whiskey-based drinks to recipes that call for vodka. "You can create a number of classic cocktails with unaged whiskey, but with a new spin." And quite a few restaurants around town—from Menton to Area IV—are doing just that.

But while you can find Bully Boy on the cocktail list at dozens of local eateries, Dave's favorite way to consume their product is probably best made at home. When asked for his "signature drink," Dave gave us his best summer mix—white whiskey, mixed with Pellegrino lemonade, with a bit of bitters floated on top. "Not all craft spirits are created equal," he said. "But when you have great ingredients, all you need is some simple additions to show them off."

<http://www.thefeast.com/boston/play/Bully-Boy-Distillery-Makes-an-Upmarket-Moonshine-128021758.html>