



Photographs by Michael Pirrocco

EXPERT ADVICE

The Best Clear American Spirits

Spirits are a nationalistic beverage, and the United States has always reigned supreme in two brown liquors: **bourbon** and Tennessee whiskey. But now, a handful of American distillers are going against the grain and delving into clear spirits – and they're producing vodkas that force you to question what the Czars were ever good for: Silver rums that are better than anything you could find on a Caribbean beach, and gins that would put the Queen

on her ass.

"Whether its by using quality local ingredients, or just slowing down and paying extra care during the distilling process, these American guys are making some extremely good distillates," says Jackson Cannon, bar director at Boston's **Eastern Standard**, **Island Creek Oyster Bar**, and **The Hawthorne**. Indeed, leading this opaque and boozy renaissance are a few small producers – most owned by young, half-buzzed men – in niche parts of the country. These distillers realize that an insane attention to detail, and a willingness to retool a recipe until it's near perfection, makes the difference between an excellent spirit and one that's arguably one of the best in the world.

Cannon recently sat down with us at his newest cocktail bar, The Hawthorne (the **strainer**, not the writer), on Boston's Commonwealth Avenue, to tell us about six clear American spirits that are putting the world on notice. Add them to your bar and show a little pride in the good old U.S.A.

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– **MICHAEL EASTER**



**Bully Boy Distillers
White Rum**



**Privateer Silver
Reserve Rum**



Death's Door Gin



**Berkshire Mountain
Ethereal Gin**



Cold River Vodka



**Tito's Handmade
Vodka**

Bully Boy Distillers White Rum

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Growing up on a New England family farm that once housed a secret distillery during prohibition might give you some ideas. It certainly gave Will and Dave Willis ideas – and that's why the two lanky, thirtysomething brothers started **Bully Boy Distillers**, Boston's first craft distillery. "The rum is incredibly well textured and well suited for cocktails. It has a whiff of sugar cane and fresh cut grass – exactly what you look for in a good rum," explains Cannon. "We use it to make a daiquiri with a little **Peychaud's Bitters**, because – let's face it – real men like pink daiquiri time-outs." If you're not the daiquiri type, Cannon also enjoys Bully Boy on the rocks with a citrus peel. [*\$29.99/750ml*;

bullyboydistillers.com]