



Willett DISTILLERY

AUTHORS OF MEMORABLE KENTUCKY BOURBON & KENTUCKY RYE WHISKEY

WILLETTDISTILLERY.COM
BARDSTOWN, KY

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The Willett family distilling legacy began in Kentucky shortly after the Civil War. John David Willett was the Master Distiller and part owner of Moore, Willett & Frenke Distillery in Bardstown, KY. John David's son Lambert Willett walked 5 miles each way to his distilling job at the current site of Barton's. It wasn't until Lambert began working at the Bernhiem Distillery in Louisville that he purchased a car for his commute. Lambert worked 6 days a week for nearly a decade at Bernhiem.

During prohibition Lambert raised cattle and hogs to support his family and community. The effects of prohibition were devastating to the Bourbon Capitol of the World. Immediately following the repeal of prohibition in December of 1933, Lambert's son Thompson Willett began learning the distilling trade working alongside his father at the age of 25.

Est. 1936. Three short years after prohibition, the Willett family chose the highest point in Nelson County, Kentucky to begin construction on what is now the Willett Distillery. By St Patrick's Day 1937, the first barrel of whiskey was rolled into Warehouse A.

After 80 years, Willett remains independently family owned and operated. Under the leadership of parents Even and Martha Willett Kulsveen, the fifth generation of family distillers, siblings Britt and Drew Kulsveen, are continuing the family tradition of spirits excellence, generosity and southern hospitality. Janelle Kulsveen, Drew's wife, hosts visitors from all over the world for tours and tastings. The over 43,000 annual visitors have necessitated a number of expansion projects on the Willett property including the addition of a premium cocktail bar.

Family of Brands: Willett Pot Still Reserve, Johnny Drum Private Stock, Johnny Drum Black Label, Old Bardstown Bottled In Bond, Old Bardstown Estate Bottled, Old Bardstown 90 Proof, Noah's Mill, Rowan's Creek, Pure Kentucky, Kentucky Vintage and the Willett Family Estate collection.

Come visit our whiskey shop for a tour or complimentary tasting. Distillery tours are available year-round and last between 45 minutes and an hour. The distillery address is 1869 Loretto Road, Bardstown, KY 40004. For holiday closings or to book your tour call 502-348-0899 or visit us online at www.willettdistillery.com.

*At Willett Distillery, it's our job to make memorable whiskey.
It's your job to savor slowly and make lasting memories.*



Willetts

EVEN KULSVEEN

If Even were a whiskey he would be Johnny Drum Black Label, a classic balance with equal parts caramel, oak and pepper. Born in Norway, Even's meticulous attention to detail served him well in roles ranging from barkeep to military cook and fine decanter craftsman. Together Even and his wife Martha Willett Kulsveen purchased the distillery property in 1984. Immediately Even's expertise in export markets became an imperative value. Popularity for brown spirits in the US was on the decline while numerous foreign markets were growing. Asian markets demonstrated a thirst for whiskey and an appreciation for artistic packaging. Even positioned Willett to provide the best of both. During the distillery dormant years, Even sold premium aged products overseas. Single barrels were

sold via independent contract bottling as well as specially co-mingled small batch selections. Even developed the heightened palate discretion of a Master Blender - a gift that has shaped the current boutique small batch collection. Even is a profound and willing teacher, not only to his son and daughter that work along side him but to everyone that crosses his path. Even works seven days a week and can only be lured away by his delightful grandchildren.



BRITT KULSVEEN

If Britt were a whiskey she would be Pure Kentucky, the Gemini of Bourbons. Like this aptly named whiskey, Britt is vibrant, bold and spicy. Britt is a native of Bardstown, KY and graduate of Louisiana State University where she studied political science and responsible consumption. Britt also studied distillation at L'allemond Ethanol Tech in Montreal, Quebec. In 2005, following the wake of hurricane Katrina, Britt returned home to join the family distilling business. Britt and her brother Drew represent the family's fifth generation to work at the Willett Distillery since its construction in 1936. Britt is responsible for everything from compliance to strategy and development. Britt and her cheerful daughter Scout enjoy entertaining and cooking together (most especially purple, chocolate chip pancakes) in their historic home

located in the most beautiful small town in America. Britt's commitment to positive thinking has an infectious and uplifting impact on friends, family and coworkers.



DREW KULSVEEN

If Drew were a whiskey he would be Willett Family Estate Rye. The elegant exterior honors a long storied family history marked by courage and generosity while the liquid inside has a forward fresh flavor that is youthful yet mature. Drew is a native of Bardstown, KY and graduate of Western Kentucky University where he exemplified a commitment to school spirit by wooing the star of the dance team to marry him. After graduating with degrees in marketing and economics, Drew returned home for a complete education in the family business. Initially, Drew spent much of his time studying the careful precision of co-mingling whiskey but soon Drew's knack for all things engineering would land him in the distillery. Over the years, Drew has developed additional mash bills to expand the company's bourbon and rye portfolio earning him three nominations for James Beard Awards in the outstanding spirits professional category. When he is not making whiskey, Drew travels the country sharing his passion with bourbon newcomers and seasoned enthusiasts alike. Drew and Janelle live in Bardstown, KY with their endearing children Baron and Bridjette. They are known to welcome guests with the most generous and authentic variety of southern hospitality.



Willett

JANELLE KULSVEEN

If Janelle were a whiskey she would be Rowan's Creek, a clever amber with floral and candy shop qualities that draw one in. Janelle's charismatic windy-city personality caught the attention of husband Drew Kulsveen from the stands of the WKU stadium where she performed on the dance team in-between marketing classes. Drew tempted Janelle back to his hometown of Bardstown, KY where Janelle supports the family business by entertaining the more than 43,000 guests that tour the Willett property annually. Janelle's background in retail and distribution management with Fruit of the Loom contributes to the popularity of the Willett whiskey shop which hosts the most coveted of enthusiast apparel. In the midst of multiple construction projects to expand the visitor experience, Janelle is committed to welcoming guests with that same Willett brand of exemplary hospitality that has become a family tradition. You will often here the family say, I never go to work, only my second home. While there may be more pets, legos and tutus in the home Janelle shares with Drew, Bridjette and Baron, the warmth and the whiskey is consistent.





WILLETT POT STILL RESERVE

47% ABV / 94 Proof

tasting notes

Nose is “vanilla lemon cake”.
The palate is a balance of caramel, vanilla, spices, and citrus.



WILLETT FAMILY ESTATE BOTTLED BOURBON

Cask Strength

tasting notes

Single barrel selections, varies by bottling.



WILLETT FAMILY ESTATE BOTTLED RYE

Cask Strength

tasting notes

Single barrel selections, varies by bottling.



OLD BARDSTOWN BOTTLED IN BOND

50% ABV / 100 Proof

tasting notes

The nose is “Fun Dip” candy, that sugary stick dipped into cherry flavoring.
The palate is a cherry hard candy, an oily mouth feel, vanilla caramel candies and notes of oak.





KENTUCKY VINTAGE

45% ABV / 90 Proof

tasting notes

Nose is sweet vanilla, ripe fruit, and oak notes. The palate is buttery with a sweetness that I can only describe as “candied corn.” The oak notes cut the sweetness, reminding you that you’re drinking a Bourbon.



ROWEN'S CREEK

50.5% ABV / 100.1 Proof

tasting notes

Bringing your nose to the glass and your olfactory is treated to caramel and vanilla layered on herbal and floral notes. The mouthfeel starts oily but finishes dry. On the palate you are treated to sweet caramel, vanilla, dusted in floral notes... finishing notes of oak and a lingering spiciness.



NOAH'S MILL

57.15% ABV / 114.3 Proof

tasting notes

One of the most lush and rich Whiskeys on the market. The nose is walnuts, prunes, and floral notes. The palate mimics the nose with walnuts, prunes, spices, intertwined with lavender and balanced with the perfect amount of acid, that leads you down a path of lingering burnt caramel.



PURE KENTUCKY

53% ABV / 107 Proof

tasting notes

Aptly named, because when you think of Kentucky, you think Bourbon. The nose is toffee, fruit, eucalyptus and oak. The palate is cinnamon, to ee, caramel, pepper, oak, and spices.





JOHNNY DRUM 86 PROOF

43% ABV / 86 Proof

tasting notes

The nose is reminiscent of walking along the edge of the woods where flowers, mint and honeysuckle are growing at the base of pine trees. The palate is an oily caramel carrying notes of oak and a peppery finish.



JOHNNY DRUM PRIVATE STOCK

50.5% ABV / 101 Proof

tasting notes

The nose is sour apple, vanilla, and oak. the palate is a snowball rolling over fruits, vanilla, and spices, mixing them all together into a well balanced and complex whiskey.



OLD BARDSTOWN 90 PROOF

45% ABV / 90 Proof

tasting notes

A classic Bourbon. On the nose, caramel, oak, vanilla, and just a hint of floral notes. The palate follows with more of the same. A softer style Bourbon, this is a great gateway dram to converting someone to becoming a Bourbon drinker.



WILLETT 80 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

50% ABV / 100 Proof

tasting notes

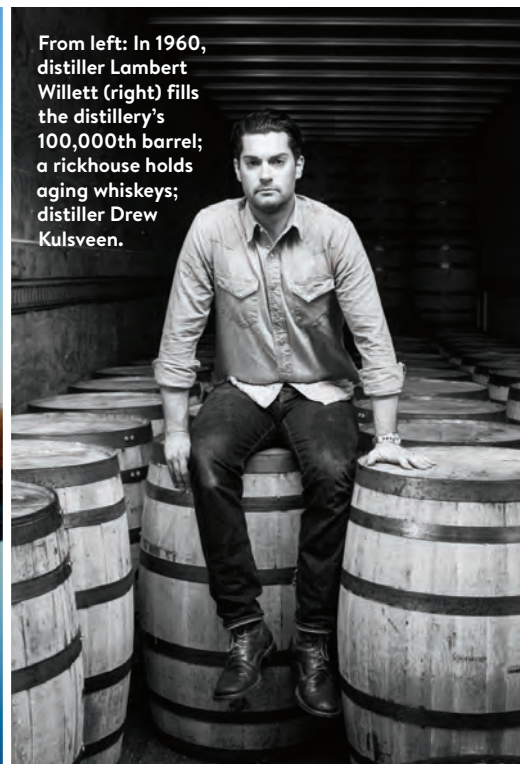
You can barely get the glass to your nose before you think of Christmas. Its rich complexity of ginger, spice, candied citrus, and oak makes you want to snap a piece of a gingerbread house. Fruits, chocolate, and never ending spice rapped in vanilla. The flavors are nicely balanced. Give this one a little time in the glass to open up and show its true depth. You'll be glad you did.



Bourbon's Boy Genius

AT WILLETT DISTILLERY IN BARDSTOWN, KENTUCKY, FIFTH-GENERATION MASTER DISTILLER DREW KULSVEEN IS MAKING SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST SOUGHT-AFTER WHISKEYS.

BY BETSY ANDREWS



From left: In 1960, distiller Lambert Willett (right) fills the distillery's 100,000th barrel; a rickhouse holds aging whiskeys; distiller Drew Kulsveen.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (FROM LEFT) WILLETT FAMILY ARCHIVES, DAVID FLORES PHOTOGRAPHY, STEVEN TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY

ASK DREW KULSVEEN whose bourbon, besides his own, he likes to drink, and he'll demur. "I don't want to go on the record," he says, "or people will start chasing after it." Kulsveen's opinion matters that much, because in the world of American whiskey, he's a bona fide celebrity.

Kulsveen grew up playing amid his grandfather's rickhouses in the "Bourbon Capital of the World," Bardstown, Kentucky. Today, Willett is among Kentucky's last significant family-owned distilleries, and Kulsveen, 36, is its master distiller. It's a huge responsibility because Willett is legendary, yet for 30 years, during a long downturn in the bourbon market, the family distilled nothing. Now, the stills are operative again, expectations among whiskey lovers are fierce, and demand couldn't be higher. "We're running 24 hours a day, making as much bourbon as we physically can," Kulsveen says during a recent visit. For operations like Jim Beam, which distills nearly 40 times as much, Willett's 1,000 barrels a month is "a drop in the bucket," says Kulsveen, "but it's a lot for us."

Kulsveen strikes a different profile than other Kentucky distillers. He is so charismatic, says Fred Minnick, author of

Bourbon: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of an American Whiskey, that "when he started making public appearances, he ruined it for everybody else."

Still, Kulsveen stays humble. "Distilling's not rocket science," he says. "As long as you use the right ingredients and pay attention, you can have a good product."

We are in Willett's limestone-columned distillery watching the contents of a 10,000-gallon fermenter roil. Gorging on the sugars in a soup of grains and water, yeast sends foaming ripples across the oatmeal-colored liquid. It is transforming the mash into beer that later will be rendered into alcohol in two huge stills: a gnome-shaped copper pot still, antique-looking but new; and a stainless-steel column still with a colorful past. Manufactured for the old Kentucky brand Waterfill and Frazier, the still wound up in Mexico during Prohibition, where it was used to make contraband. Drew's father, Even Kulsveen, bought it for a steal.

The column-still purchase is one chapter in a storied history that has led Drew Kulsveen to this moment. It starts in the 17th century with Cognac-producing ancestors. The Willetts were French Protestants who escaped persecution from the Catholic church by moving to America. They settled in

Kentucky, where they got into bourbon making in the late 19th century. Prohibition was a temporary setback. More significant was the blow dealt by vodka when James Bond's "shaken, not stirred" martini helped vodka top spirits sales by the 1970s. Seen as old-fashioned, bourbon lost popularity. By 1981, Kulsveen's grandfather had leased his stills to an ethanol producer that then went bankrupt, leaving only ruined equipment behind.

Drew's father Even took over a few years later. His son joined him in 2004. But it took them until 2012 to start distilling again. In the lull, Willett became a cult NDP, or Non-Distilling Producer.

"We were taking odd lots from Four Roses, Jim Beam"—forgotten casks and ones with flavors that couldn't be blended into standard labels. "Anything under a few hundred barrels, we'd scoop it up," Kulsveen recalls. Willett used the whiskey to make its own brands, including woody, spicy Johnny Drum; Rowan's Creek, named for a rivulet that runs through the property; and Noah's Mill, named after the gristmill that stands over it. To yield their lauded flavors, says Kulsveen, "We got really good at blending."

Minnick confirms it: "They purchased well-aged stocks, let them mature, and would mingle them in small batches, so for the past 10 or 15 years, they put out some of the best product on the market." The whiskeys were coveted by aficionados partly because the operation was so tiny. For a long time, says Minnick, it remained "kind of a secret."

That's changed. With the comeback of classic cocktails, demand for bourbon reignited. Today, American whiskey sales top \$3 billion annually. But distillers can't just bottle on demand; whiskey must age. And the overstocks that Willett relied on had dwindled by the time they were able to reboot the stills. "We would have been in a world of hurt if we had not started back up," says Kulsveen.

He leads me to one of the Willett rickhouses. With six stories of thick, wooden beams illuminated by southern sunlight seeping through small windows, the building holds 6,000 barrels of slowly aging bourbon and rye. Though Kulsveen intends to keep most of it for a decade or more, Willett has already released some of its own distillate in its cask-strength Family Estate bottlings as well as in the affordable Old Bardstown series. They're also slowly introducing it into their seven or so other brands.

Kulsveen takes a drill to a cask, capturing the stream in tulip-shaped glasses before stanching the flow with a wooden plug. "It's all about figuring out the different profiles of the barrels and how they meld together," says Kulsveen. "I want character. I want it to stand out."

We sniff, then sip. This is a five-year-old wheated bourbon and a new mash bill for Willett: 65 percent corn—the main grain in bourbon—plus 15 percent malted barley and 20 percent wheat. It is still young, the grain flavor not yet balanced by the wood, but it already tastes deliciously like orange marmalade on brioche toast.

Though the old family recipes are still in use, wheated bourbon, which is smoother and sweeter, drives Willett's distilling nowadays. There are more updates, too. In terms of

distilling, Kulsveen is experimenting with stave curing and different barrel woods. At the new visitor center, overseen by Kulsveen's wife, Janelle, a bar will open this spring for cocktails, library pours, and small plates. And the gristmill and some cabins have been transformed into guesthouses.

New recipes, new hospitality—Kulsveen is balancing his heritage with innovation to create a Willett for the 21st century. I can already taste it in the glass: bourbon that's more approachable than in the past, yet deeply nuanced—handcrafted by a fifth-generation Kentucky distiller with the stomach to let each barrel sit until it hits its sweet spot. "Time is really the magical ingredient," he says, taking a sip. "You just have to wait, wait, wait."

WILLETT RYE SWIZZLE

 Total **5 min**; Makes **1**

This cocktail works with any lighter-bodied, high-proof aged rye.

2 oz. Willett Family Estate Bottled 3-Year Small Batch Rye, or other high-proof, light-bodied rye

1½ Tbsp. fresh lime juice

1 oz. Tiptleman's Double Spiced Falernum Cocktail Syrup

3 drops aromatic bitters (such as Angostura)

Lime wheel and fresh mint spring, for garnish

Fill a highball glass with ice cubes. Pour rye, lime juice, and Falernum syrup over ice. Stir until glass is frosty, about 20 seconds. Top with bitters. Garnish with lime wheel and mint sprig; serve with a straw.

The Willett Whiskeys

The new distillery at Willett is already yielding some great bottles. Go to kentuckybourbonwhiskey.com for where to find them.



Willett Family Estate Bottled 3-Year Small Batch Rye (\$45)
The scent of this rye mixes maple with aromatic wood. Orangey and spicy with a touch of charcoal, it brings complexity to cocktails.

Willett Family Estate Bottled 5-Year Single Barrel Bourbon (\$60)
A crème brûlée palate mingles with mushroomy notes. It blooms with salted-caramel flavor when you add water.

Old Bardstown 90 Proof Bourbon (\$20)
Honey-roasted nuts on the nose yield to buttery flavor and notes of dried citrus in this smooth, easy (and affordable) sipper, ending in a lip-smacking finish.

Old Bardstown Bottled in Bond 100 Proof Bourbon (\$22)
A complex orange peel and ginger scent resolves into a caramel-corn sweetness here, with a balancing bitterness on the finish.

Old Bardstown Estate Bottled 101 Proof Bourbon (\$28)
A rich vanilla nose and an herbaceous midpalate—think of fresh-cut grass and soil—with bright endnotes of citrus zest in this potent drink.