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INSPIRING SPIRITS

WELCOME TO THE NEW AGE OF MICRO-DISTILLING

Rate

By SEAN MCCRACKEN

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In the age of commercialization and mass production, advertisements try to entice us to buy a bottle of (insert popular alcoholic beverage here) by promising us we'll feel sexy and cool. We drink it up. Too often, the lifestyle of the drink is developed instead of the drink itself. In the '80s and '90s, craftsmen brewers such as Karl Strauss realized there was a lack of flavor in commercialized products, and micro-breweries began purging America of its mundane habit for pilsners. Micro-brew restaurants like Rock Bottom and Yard House appeared on city blocks to create a personal gourmet adventure. Now it's the distillers' turn. Micro-distilling hopes to wash away our expectations for the standard. The new breeds are only using expensive ingredients, seasonal fruits and are cutting back their product yields per distillation. Meet a few of the spirits that are breaking the hearts of the industry.

- 5- Excell
- 4- Good
- 3- Needs
- 2- Pretty
- 1- All wr



PORFIDIO TEQUILA

\$60 per bottle

Ever since it hit the market, this tequila has lassoed many awards. The Triple-Distilled Plata garnered the 2005 "Top Silver to Try" from Bon Appétit. The Single-Barrel Añejo has filled Wine Enthusiast's "Best Añejo" four years straight and scored "98 Points" in Wine Spectator — the highest rated añejo ever. Inside the bottle, a cactus represents the century-old flavors of Jalisco with pepper and anis undertones, along with a rush of sweet agave nectar. Forget the lime and salt, you will be shocked at the refreshing taste of this tequila.

HANGAR 1 VODKA

\$26 per bottle

In 2002, Jorg Rupf of St. George Spirits and Ansley Coale of Germain-Robin released their first cases of vodka and pulled in phenomenal reviews. Praised as "Vodka of the Year" by various publications, Hangar 1 cannot be matched. Every ingredient is hand picked, hand infused and distilled in tanks no larger than 130 gallons; the industry standard is 800. The Straight Vodka uses Viognier, which masks the alcohol, but introduces the least abrasive flavors. Other flavors include Buddha's Hand, Citron, Kaffir Lime, Mandarin Blossom and Fraser River Raspberry, which is available in the summer when Meeker raspberries are in season. Rupf's sidekick, Lance Winters, puts it best by saying, "We have a

passion for flavors, and the idea is to maintain the core identity.”

SARTICIOUS GIN

\$30 per bottle

Welcome back gin drinkers. Thanks to the innovative minds of the new generation of gin crafters, the question again is “shaken or stirred?” Master Distiller Jeff Alexander and partner Mark Karakas are not just reinventing the flavor, but also the experience. Their tasting room resembles a swanky lounge with low lighting, a pool table and leather couches — just the place to rediscover gin. To make the flavor more subtle, Alexander adds cilantro and organic orange to the standard botanical list, distills in a small handmade Jacob Carl copper pot, and bottles roughly 40 percent of what goes in the pot.

FIND YOUR SPIRIT...

Porfidio Tequila and Sarticious Gin are distributed by Five Star Wine & Spirits. Porfidio is available at Stump’s Market in Rancho Santa Fe, Crest Liquors in Pacific Beach and Wine Bank in downtown, as well as at Side Bar. Sarticious can be found at Crest Liquors in Pacific Beach. Hangar 1 Vodka is distributed by Young’s Market and is available at Wine Bank downtown, Beverages and More, Del Mesa Foods and off-site at Side Bar.

For more information, visit www.tequilaporfidio.com, www.hangarone.com and www.sarticious.com

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