

Outside

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Q:

Where Are the Best Craft Spirits in America?

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Limited release whiskey from House Spirits Distillery in Portland, Oregon. Photo: Will Vanlue/[Flickr](#)

A: If you've topped out on talking about a wine's terroir and session ales, it's time to tackle the next alcohol trend that's gaining volume: craft distilling. The desire for authentic, handmade goods drove the craft-beer bonanza. Now the same ethic is sparking passions for locally made spirits such as gin, whiskey, rum, and vodka.

Unlike wine making—and similar to craft brewing—distilling isn't tied to the land. Good spirits of any kind can be made anywhere. However, there are a few regional rules of thumb, says Penn Jensen, executive director of the [American Craft Distillers Association](#) (ACDA). The Northeast, where rye whiskey has

traditionally been made, continues to excel in that variety. There are a greater number of good rums in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida, and, in general, the South is known for bourbons. The Midwest focuses on straight whiskeys and gins. The West Coast, historically a fruit-growing area, is known for its brandy. These craft-distilling towns have the spirit—how 'bout you?

Portland, Oregon



Photo: Will Vanlue/[Flickr](#)

Portland's [Distillery Row](#), southeast of downtown, features a half-dozen of the city's finest craft-spirit makers. Founded in 2004, [House Spirits Distillery](#) is on the Row and offers tours. It's known for its cocktail Aviation American Gin, Westward Oregon Straight Malt Whiskey, and Volstead Vodka. Off the Row, [Rogue Ales & Spirits](#) won 2014 Distiller of the Year at the World Beverage Competition. (You may have guessed from its name that Rogue also brews beer.) The company takes a ground-to-glass approach by growing, roasting, and smoking their own barley, rye, hops, and botanicals on two farms.