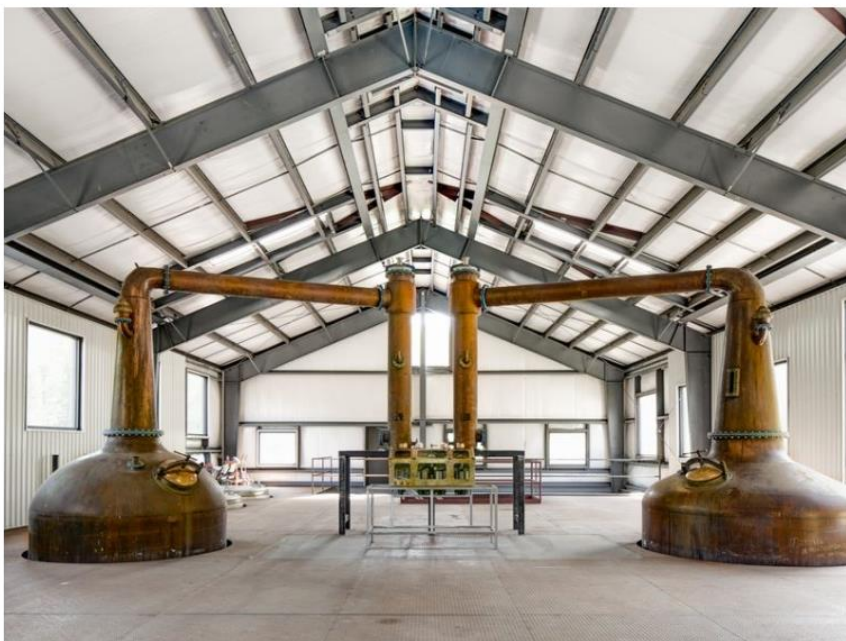


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10 Whiskey Distilleries Poised to Make Waves in the Next Decade

by [Jake Emen](#) Sep 14, 2015, 2:00p[f SHARE \(3,304\)](#) [t TWEET \(125\)](#)

The copper pot stills at Virginia Distillery Company.

Andrea Hubbell

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With hundreds of distilleries launched across the United States in the last few years, now is the perfect time to look ahead and see which whiskey producers are poised to rise above the rest.

Herein, to qualify as an important up-and-comer, distilleries must be generally under the radar—so, that eliminates the most well-known burgeoning producers across the country, such as Balcones and Corsair. Further, these distilleries should be relatively new entrants, open for 10 years or fewer. That knocks out guys like Anchor Distilling Company and St. George Spirits.

Beyond that, distilleries should either have a proven track record of quality products, along with experimentation and innovation, or another component which sets them apart. For instance, in the case of the soon-to-open distilleries included in this list, they've made particularly large investments into their equipment and operations.

"I think in 10 years, the smaller independent brands and companies will have a much bigger voice ..."

In the next 10 years, expect these operations to thrive, and for smaller distilleries to continue playing a more prominent role. "The big brands will always have a large market share but that will be eaten into by the better smaller distilleries," projects Andrew Shand, master distiller of Virginia Distillery Company. "I think in 10 years, the smaller independent brands and companies will have a much bigger voice and certainly more respect from the big guys than they do now," adds Andy Nelson of Nelson's Green Brier Distillery in Nashville.

With apologies to the many dozens of other excellent rising whiskey distilleries across the land, here's a look at 10 whiskey producers who will be big in 10 years.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



KOVAL Distillery

Distilling since 2008, KOVAL's bourbon joins F.E.W.'s and Dry Fly's (mentioned below) as some of the best made outside of Kentucky. KOVAL is also noteworthy for its wide range of experimental whiskeys, including Four Grain, Millet and Oat, and a full supporting cast of additional limited edition offerings. All whiskeys are single barrel expressions, distilled with a 5,000 liter Kothe copper pot still, one of the larger stills found at a startup distillery. KOVAL also produces a lineup of spirits and liqueurs.

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EVANSTON, ILLINOIS



F.E.W. Spirits

Located in the spiritual home of Temperance, F.E.W. Spirits and founder Paul Hletko have made Evanston, Illinois known for excellent whiskey since 2011. F.E.W. Rye Whiskey **has garnered numerous accolades** in recent years, including the 2013 Craft Whiskey of the Year from *Whisky Advocate*, and F.E.W. Bourbon is another excellent bourbon from beyond the Bluegrass State. Further, F.E.W. Spirits also makes gin **and barrel-aged gin**.

The FEW Spirits Lineup. Photo courtesy of FEW Spirits.

BARDSTOWN, KENTUCKY



Bardstown Bourbon Company

With a \$25 million investment, next year Bardstown Bourbon Company will come out swinging. Their team is led by master distiller Steve Nally, who formerly held the same job at Maker's Mark. Nally is a member of the [Bourbon Hall of Fame](#), so his presence, the size of the investment, and its locale in the epicenter of bourbon, Bardstown, all makes this project a serious one to watch. An early tagline from their website touts, "No secrets. No hidden recipes. No mythical stories or fabricated legends. Just great bourbon ... and a burning desire to teach everyone how it is made."

Ongoing construction at the Bardstown Bourbon Company. Photo: [Facebook/Bardstown Bourbon Company](#).

FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY



Old Taylor Distillery

After lying dormant for over four decades, the 125-year-old Old Taylor Distillery will be resurrected next year. Marianne Barnes, **who trained under Woodford Reserve's Chris Morris**, has been named Kentucky's first female master distiller and will lead the facilities's production process. Expect her core bourbon to be bottled-in-bond, in homage to the distillery's past. Also on tap: other whiskeys and a gin. "We want to make sure everyone knows we aren't relying on the magnificent site to sell our products," says Barnes. "We will be producing very high quality spirits, that will just be enhanced by the history and beauty of the site."

By taking over such a large, preexisting facility, Barnes will be able to get the ball rolling quite swiftly. She touts a production capacity of 20 to 30 barrels per day, utilizing primarily a 24-inch copper column still, along with a warehouse over two football fields long. "It's the longest ricked warehouse in the world," she says.

The 125-year-old Old Taylor Distillery. Photo: Julie Cauthen.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY



Angel's Envy Distillery

Angel's Envy already has whiskey on the shelves, but those products aren't distilled in house: they **source their wares** and finish them. But that's set to change with Angel's new downtown Louisville distillery, set to finally open in 2016 after much delay. With a reported \$12 million investment into the distillery and visitor's center, and the name recognition of the Angel's Envy brand, they should be able to make quick strides, as long as their own juice proves to be as good as what they've been acquiring elsewhere.

Photo: Louisville Distilling Company.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



Nelson's Green Brier Distillery

Brothers Charlie and Andy Nelson spearheaded the revival of their family's Nelson's Green Brier Distillery last year. "History and legacy are the biggest reasons for us doing this in the first place," says Andy. "And because of that, we've found a much greater source of inspiration and motivation than a lot of other folks might have."

While whiskey drinkers are wary of historical legacies and stories these days, this one is legit as their great-, great-, great-grandfather Charles Nelson was producing nearly 15 times as much whiskey as Jack Daniel's was in the 1880s. The original distillery was shuttered by state Prohibition in 1909 and is now a registered historical site. Flash forward a century, and Andy and Charles began hatching plans to bring their family's legacy to life in 2006. Currently, their Belle Meade Bourbon is a wonderful, albeit sourced, product, while they've released an unaged white whiskey of their own, and are busy producing and aging whiskeys to come.

Their flagship Nelson's Green Brier **Tennessee Whiskey** is made with their family's historical recipe, using approximately 70 percent corn, and equal parts wheat and malted barley. In a decade's time, Andy forecasts having a second, larger production facility.

Brothers Charlie and Andy Nelson. Photo: Danielle Atkins.

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



Westland Distillery

Around since 2010, Westland Distillery produces several American single malts, including their core American Single Malt, a peated rendition, and one aged in sherry casks. They're exacting in the information they make accessible to consumers. For instance, start learning about their **Sherry Wood American Single Malt**, and quickly find the exact strains of barley, the yeast used and fermentation time, the cask types, aging specifics and production quantities, and more. Westland is in the **Anchor Distilling product family**, and brings huge production capabilities for a young brand with a 7,560 liter wash still and 5,670 liter spirit still.

Photo: [Facebook/Westland Distillery](#).

SPOKANE, WASHINGTON



Dry Fly Distilling

SPOKANE, WASHINGTON



Dry Fly Distilling

Dry Fly Distilling is a startup distillery around since 2007 that has built its brand (and its distillery) from the ground up. Dry Fly's signature product is Washington Wheat Whiskey, but the company also makes one of **the better bourbons found outside of Kentucky**, as well as a tritcale whiskey, and other spirits. Co-owners Kent Fleischmann and Don Poffenroth are touted as leaders amongst startup distilleries, offering consultation and **"distilling school" educational workshops**, of which more than a dozen operating distilleries have attended.

Washington Wheat Whiskey from Dry Fly Distilling. Photo: [Facebook/Dry Fly Distilling](#).

SHOREHAM, VERMONT



WhistlePig

Another brand who has built a reputation based on sourced whiskey, WhistlePig is beginning distillation in earnest this year. Not only that, but their Vermont farm is set to grow their own grain onsite as well. As with Angel's Envy, WhistlePig will have to prove that they can distill—and not just source, age and bottle—but with master distiller Dave Pickerell running the show that shouldn't be an issue. Pickerell was the former longtime master distiller at Maker's Mark, and has since been a respected craft distilling consultant, helping numerous other companies in their startup endeavors.

The WhistlePig Farm. Photo courtesy of WhistlePig.

LOVINGSTON, VIRGINIA



Virginia Distillery Company

With a robust production capacity of 1 million LPA, equivalent to over 8,000 barrels annually, Virginia Distillery Company isn't exactly taking things slow after launching earlier this year. "It's a big bloody bet! But we intend to make a fantastic product, and when it's ready, we want to have enough inventory to share," says CEO Gareth Moore.

VDC currently releases Virginia Highland Malt Whisky, a single malt sourced from Scotland which they age in Virginia, and production is set to begin this fall on their own juice—and they fully intend to stick to single malts. "Nothing but malted barley shall touch our stills," says Moore.

Andrew Shand made the trek from Scotland to run those stills for Virginia Distillery Company. He's a Scotch industry vet for over three decades, having served as distillery manager at Ben Nevis Distillery, and master distiller at The Speyside Distillery, and he's bringing a distinctly Scottish production process with him. "We very much follow the Scottish model, but use the Virginia climate to turn our spirit into a very American malt whisky," Shand explains, touting their traditional Scottish mashing process, and their copper pot stills made in Scotland. "In 10 years, Virginia Distillery Company and its fine malt whiskies will be known throughout the United States," he adds.

Inside Virginia Distillery Company. Photo: Andrea Hubbell.
