

St. Johnsbury Distillery

New facility offers tasting room with authentic Prohibition-era vibe

St. Johnsbury Distillery opened the doors to its new facility earlier this year, providing guests with an opportunity to experience its range of spirits, and to give them a chance to travel back in time.

Owners Brendan and Dan Hughes have built a destination designed to look like a speakeasy around the time of Prohibition. The walls are adorned in period décor, art deco sconces light the space and the town's history is on display. It's there that guests sample and purchase a variety of handcrafted rums, including Dunc's Maple Rum, Pirate Dan's Vermont Rum, Brendan's Spiced Rum, Dunc's Elderflower Rum and Backwoods Reserve Rum.

"Sourcing ingredients locally whenever we can is very important to us," President and Co-owner Brendan Hughes says. "You can't grow sugar cane in Vermont, but otherwise we stay local — everything from the ingredients we use and the specialty products to the kettles to the maple and the elderflower petals. We source everything we can locally."

An added touch of authenticity arrived just prior to the late September grand opening of the new facility, bringing a truckload of real Prohibition vibes to the Northeast Kingdom: a player piano once owned by Al Capone. Thanks to Scarface's former property and a number of other carefully thought-out details, the St. Johnsbury



Distillery tasting room has an almost tangible atmosphere.

"It's beautiful in the sense that it feels like it really is from that era," Brendan Hughes says. "It's like stepping back in time."

Tell us about the new tasting room.

Dan Hughes: "It's got a 1930s end-of-Prohibition feel. We have 1930s sports pictures from the Academy and Prohibition-era things on the wall. We have a piece behind the bar from an old ice cream parlor that had been sitting in a Vermont barn for 50 years. It was in bad shape, but we restored it. We've got art deco lighting, including some wall sconces from a bank in Boston that was being remodeled. People walk in and just pick up on the vibe right away.

"Also, we have Al Capone's player piano."

Al Capone's player piano?

Dan Hughes: "It's a crazy story. I got a call on my cell phone from a West Palm Beach number. A woman identified herself and said, 'I have some-

BY BILL BURKE



The St. Johnsbury Distillery team on the opening day of the new facility. From the top: Vice President Dan Hughes, Partner and Head of Finance Brian Garvey, Director of Sales Greg Piper, President Brendan Hughes and Head Distiller Mark Kuligowski.



thing I think you'd be interested in. I hear you're building a tasting room with a 1930s feel.' She said she thought it would make a good home for the piano. She and her husband bought it at a charity auction years ago, and apparently this came from his Jupiter (Florida) residence where he had a hideout where it was easier to smuggle things in and out of. It arrived, and we've been having fun with it ever since."

What can people expect at the tasting room?

Brendan Hughes: "They can taste all of our products, purchase bottles, check out live performances and listen to live music. Of course, we've got the piano here — with a ghost player. It's built with a 1930s theme right after Prohibition, so it celebrates the town as it was then, as well. We've got pictures of what the town looked like during that time. Everything is unique, and there was huge consideration given to details. There's also a huge window in the back where people can see the stills and the fermenters and people working down among them. You can buy bottles, but we also



The new St. Johnsbury Distillery, on Eastern Avenue, features historical images from its hometown and 1930s era decor.



HATOZAKI

JAPANESE WHISKY

DELIGHTFULLY
WELCOMING

—— 海峡 蒸溜所 ——

AKASHI CITY
HYOGO
PRODUCT OF JAPAN



YONEZAWA
FAMILY,
DISTILLERS
SINCE 1917

  @hatozakiwhisky

Imported by: Niche W. & S.
A Marussia Beverages Company
ourniche.com

Please Drink Responsibly



The player piano located in the new tasting room was once owned by famed gangster/businessman Al Capone.

serve full-fledged cocktails and beer and wine and food."

What's in the distillery?

Brendan Hughes: "This is our tasting room and our manufacturing facility, as well. The first floor is where we have our stills and all the processes we need to make our product. We have four stills of varying sizes — a 500-gallon still where we do all the first-round cuts; a 350-gallon still where we do all the refining runs to get the high-quality alcohol we want for our spirits; a 100-gallon still for research and development; and another utility still depending on our needs. We do have six different fermenters — two 500-gallon and four 250-gallon fermenters, which is what sets us apart. We do our own fermentation here. We don't purchase alcohol from out of state or other facilities. The second floor is the tasting room and the speakeasy."

When did you realize it was time for a new distillery?

Brendan Hughes: "St. Johnsbury Distillery used to be Dunc's Mill, and we acquired that. (In the old distillery) it was basically in a barn built around the equipment — very much a vertical space. Nothing was streamlined, which, process wise, made distilling difficult. We were running up and down stairs all the time. The bottling area

was not defined from the distilling area, so we needed to make it more streamlined. Also, it was out in the countryside, and people couldn't find us very well. It was on a dirt road, which held its own challenges as well."

Why this location?

Brendan Hughes: "We're dedicated to the town. Our name represents that. It was always important for us to be in the town of St. Johnsbury."

What was the construction process like?

Brendan Hughes: "This used to be a hardware store. When I was growing up, I'd come here for tools for projects at school or whatnot. It was vacant for 2-3 years before we purchased the building, and then we brought everything down to the studs and rebuilt it. We updated the electrical, and all the plumbing work is new. We rebuilt walls and re-did all the foundation work. It was literally stripped down to the studs."

What made this a good spot for St. Johnsbury Distillery?

Brendan Hughes: "It's a lot easier to get to, and a lot more convenient for people coming to visit the area. We've got a loading dock, which makes deliveries significantly easier. We had size limitations in the old facility, so we had to store products and ingredients off-site. Now we can store it all in our own facility. We don't have to

BUNDLE UP YOUR BOTTLES OF



PICK UP A TITO'S HOLIDAY UGLY SWEATER BOTTLE AT A STORE NEAR YOU.



(LIMITED QUANTITIES, PURCHASE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST)

★ TitosVodka.com ★ Crafted to be savored responsibly. DISTILLED & BOTTLED BY FIFTH GENERATION, INC. AUSTIN, TEXAS 40% ALC./VOL. © 2020 TITO'S HANDMADE VODKA.

There's a fascinating story in every bottle.

All of the premium spirits in our growing portfolio have one thing in common: they're built around an authentic story, rich with intrigue, charisma, and layers of unique flavors.



conecuhbrands.com



#017520 | \$30.99



#015745 | \$32.99
SALE: \$29.99

worry about transportation, and now we've got a lot more size."

What's your favorite St. Johnsbury Distillery spirit, and how do you like to drink it?

Brendan Hughes: "The Backwoods Reserve Rum. It's a specialty product aged in oak barrels from Hungary for two years. The flavor profile is like Irish whiskey rather than rum. It has a really nice oaky, smoky flavor to it once it's been harvested after those two years. That, on the rocks, is phenomenal!"

St. Johnsbury Distillery

74 Eastern Ave. • St. Johnsbury
(802) 424-1146 • stjdistillery.com

TRY IT:

Respect Your Elder

- 2 ounces Dunc's Elderflower Rum
- Club soda
- Fresh sage
- Lime

Pour the rum and club soda into a glass with ice. Add the fresh sage, garnish with a lime wedge and serve.



Vermont Breakfast

- 2 ounces Pirate Dan's Vermont Rum
- Bloody Mary mix
- Maple bacon
- Olive

Pour the rum and bloody Mary mix into a glass filled with ice. Garnish with the maple bacon and an olive and serve.

Maple Hot Toddy

- 2 ounces Dunc's Maple Rum
- 2 ounces hot water
- 3 whole cloves
- Cinnamon stick
- Lemon

Pour the rum and hot water into a mug with the cloves and a cinnamon stick. Garnish with a lemon wedge and serve.



Tequila
CÓDIGO 1530

SPICY WATERMELON

Margarita

- 2oz Código 1530 Rosa Tequila
- 3 oz Watermelon Juice
- 3/4 oz Fresh Lime Juice
- 1/4 tsp Agave Nectar
- Fresh Jalapeño Slice
- Kosher Salt (as garnish)

Código 1530 Rosa
87370 • 750mL

VT Reg. Price \$61.99

SALE PRICE

\$54.49

SAVE \$7.50

AWARD-WINNING TEQUILA



AGED IN THE WORLD'S FINEST NAPA CABERNET BARRELS



@codigo1530 | codigo1530.com