

MEET THE DISTILLER



David Boyden, owner of Boyden Valley Winery and Spirits in Cambridge, Vt., successfully combined bourbon and aged wood-fired maple syrup produced at his family farm to create a his product line of award winning crème liqueur spirits.



Vermont's Crème de la Crème

Boyden Valley Winery & Spirits creates cream liqueurs, maple bourbon, spiced wine and more at their fourth-generation family farm.

David Boyden grew up on a Vermont dairy farm that has been in his family for four generations. After cultivating a winery and cidery for more than 25 years, he and his wife, Linda, were ready for something new — crème liqueurs that would utilize one of their farm's core products — wood-fired maple syrup.

BY ROBERT COOK | PHOTOS BY DAVID SEAVER

That was 12 years ago. Today, Boyden Valley Winery & Spirits in Cambridge distills Vermont Ice Maple Cream Liqueur, Maple Bourbon Cream, Apple Cinnamon Cream and Maple Bourbon. Their distillery brands their products as "Vermont's Crème de La Crème."

They are sold throughout Vermont's agency stores, every New England state, New York, Texas and soon in Pennsylvania. Since they started their cream liqueur business in 2010, David said they have also gained wide national recognition and won several medals.

In 2022, Boyden Valley won a Bronze medal for its Vermont

Boyden Valley Winery and Spirits tasting room (below) and outdoor patio were created inside the farm's red barn.



Ice Maple Bourbon and a Gold medal for its Vermont Ice Maple Bourbon Crème from the 2022 San Francisco World Spirits Competition — the largest spirits competition in the world.

The spirits competition is one of the oldest competitions in North America and the largest spirits judging in the world. A total of 70 judges from around the world evaluated approximately 5,000 spirits over two weeks in late April.

Vermont Ice Maple Crème Liqueur was also named one of the top 12 products for Christmas by the Wall Street Journal.

Another testament to Boyden Valley Winery and Spirits' popularity happened this year when they reopened their tasting room to the public following a two-year pandemic-induced hiatus.

"It's been very well received. Our customers were patiently waiting to come back," David said. The tasting room was filled to capacity with patrons from Thursday to Saturday, he added.

Located in a former restored carriage barn, the tasting room is a gorgeous space with modern bars and a French bistro lo-



cated in the back with a tile bar and marble tables. David said his wife, Linda, a native of Montreal, designed the space.

David said they offer Vermont cheeseboards with fresh figs and nuts and a featured cocktail each week created with their maple bourbon.

"Another big hit is we do milkshakes using our cream liqueurs," David said.

He explained the Boyden Valley Farm used to hold a maple sugar festival every spring at their sugar house and the maple milkshakes were always a big hit. "We used to sell 500 milkshakes a day. We kept burn-

ing out the blender."

The farm and distillery located at the junction of routes 15 and 104 in Cambridge, just eight miles from Stowe, also has a wedding barn that was created inside an old dairy barn. David's brother, Mark, still runs the family farm by raising beef for his brand "Boyden Beef," and growing and harvesting crops such as corn, rye and soybeans. The farm is also protected as part of the Vermont Land Trust.

Finding a way to make the transformation from a traditional Vermont dairy farm to the eclectic agricultural and distillery

that produces award-winning cream liqueurs was an evolution. Having grown up on a dairy farm, David was inspired to produce cream liqueurs after the Boyden Valley Winery & Spirits changed its focus toward spirits.

“We started the cream liqueur part of our business back in 2010. At that time, we were the first distillery in Vermont to produce crème liqueur. The first one was the Apple crème,” David explained.

David said they made a lot of ciders, apple dessert wines and ice ciders and that part of their wine and cider business led to the first Vermont Ice Apple Crème — which combines a rich Vermont apple brandy with ice cider. By blending the two, they would create a Pommeau, which would then be blended into the fresh cream to produce the cream liqueur. Vermont Apple Brandy is also used to produce the Vermont Ice Maple Crème.

Before the distillery business began, the farm started to diversify when David and Linda began the winery venture in 1997, two years before his brother and father stopped the dairy farming business. Mark and their father, Fred Boyden, knew they would either have to become a much larger dairy farm operation or diversify, and chose to diversify, David explained.

Doing more with their newfound interest in crème liqueurs seemed like a logical choice, David said. “We knew there weren’t any other crèmes at the time,” David said.

David and his wife, Linda, began the winery business in 1997 around the same time they got married. David attended the University of Vermont Business School, and Linda had a background in the banking industry. When they were ready to open their cream liqueur distillery business, David said their two daughters, Laurence, now 31, and Juliette, now 18, also pitched in.

He is hoping that they will carry on their family business in the future. “It’s a great opportunity for them. It’s whether or not they see it that way.”

In addition to dairy farming, maple sugaring has always been a major part of the Boyden Valley Farm’s business. The marriage of aged maple syrup and bourbon would lead to the creation of their latest

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Maple Creme Milkshake

- 2 ounces Vermont Ice Maple Crème or Maple Bourbon Crème
- 2 scoops of vanilla ice cream
- Whipped cream
- Chocolate shavings

Pour Vermont Ice Maple Crème or Maple Bourbon Crème in a blender, add vanilla ice cream, blend to milkshake consistency. Top with whipped cream and chocolate shavings.

Maple Bourbon Whiskey Sour

- 2 ounces Vermont Ice Maple Bourbon
- 1 ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ½ ounce maple syrup
- Egg white
- Dash bitters

Shake without ice (dry shake). Add ice and shake again, strain and serve. Garnish with an orange slice and cherry (if you'd like).



Vermont Ice French Toast

- 8 slices of challah or your favorite bread
- 4 eggs
- ⅓ cup of Vermont Ice Maple Crème, Maple Bourbon Crème, or Apple Cinnamon Crème
- ¼ cup of milk
- Butter for pan

Toppings: maple syrup, bourbon whipped cream, sautéed apples, cinnamon sugar

Slice bread into thick slices, approximately 8 slices. Whisk eggs, crème liqueur and milk together in a large dish. Dunk slices of bread into the egg mixture to coat. Butter a skillet and warm it up to medium heat. Cook each side until golden brown, adding more butter to the pan in between batches.

Serve with your favorite toppings: maple syrup, bourbon whipped cream, cinnamon sugar, sautéed apples — or all of the above! Enjoy with hot coffee or hot chocolate.



Vermont Ice spirits, which spawned their crème liqueur business.

Every spring, Boyden Valley Farm produces about 2,500 gallons of maple syrup from 100 acres of trees, David said. To create their Maple Bourbon and Maple Bourbon Creme, they pour the hot robust maple syrup into empty bourbon barrels and age the maple syrup for eight months.

David said this allows the maple syrup to absorb the bourbon flavors from the wood inside the barrels. He said they then take the aged syrup and infuse it into four- to five-year-old bourbon. The same process is used to make the Maple Bourbon Creme, with the addition of fresh cream, David added.

By aging their robust maple syrup for six to eight months, David said they achieve a very smooth crème liqueur and maple bourbon that is very flavorful and unique.

"It is so smooth, not sweet. It tastes like the sweetness from the barrels," David observed.

Every spring after the maple sugar season, they bring in a tractor-trailer load of cream when they are ready to undertake the month-long process to create their crème liqueurs.

A great deal of effort goes into bottling the crème liqueur products to preserve their taste. "We've always been about integrity. We're not a bottling plant. Our long-term goal is to utilize the Boyden Farm to provide all our ingredients for our spirits," David said.

David said their goal is not to become too big, but maintain their approach so they can create and deliver products that meet their standards. To create their crème liqueur spirits, David said they have to follow a very specialized process.

Bottling it can be a chore "because it is very thick," David explained.

As pleased as he is that Boyden Valley's crème liqueurs have made quite a name for themselves and are sold in multiple states, David said distribution is a constant issue. "Getting them to represent your product the way you want them to" is always a battle.

Boyden Valley Winery and Spirits
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