

# Finding Bourbon Gold

THERE'S STILL GOOD BOURBON OUT THERE . . .  
IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK



By now, you've heard the news: We're in a bourbon crisis.

Kentucky bourbon stills are at maximum capacity. From Pappy Van Winkle shortages to Maker's Mark's February proof-lowering (and rapid proof-reinstatement) news, bourbon makers just cannot keep up with the demand. And let's face it, this product needs age, so unless distillers used a crystal ball in the early to mid 2000s, they could not have predicted this demand.

The phone calls from customers and discussions with suppliers even led to Buffalo Trace recently sending a press release to all booze media, saying "Kentucky's bourbon distilleries are struggling to keep up with demand." And what did this press release do? It led to more coverage, more shortages and, sadly, all Weller 12 Year Old was gone from my local liquor store.

So, what are we to do? Do we just sit around and hope that the distillers can maintain the quality in this crisis?

I say it's time to discover "new" bourbons—some you know and just forgot.

When the Pappy Van Winkle craze hits later this year—because it will—and you don't have a single bottle, introduce customers to another wheated bourbon, such as \$24 **Larceny** from Heaven Hill. Released in 2012, Larceny is a smooth, sweet bourbon with those patented caramel and vanilla notes and a mid-palate of praline and toasted marshmallow.

**Jim Beam Black** is fantastic eight-year-old

86-proof bourbon that's full-bodied and spicy. In blind tastings of bourbons lower than 90 proof, I've never seen \$15 Jim Beam Black lose.

If you want an ultra-premium hard-to-find that's easier to find, take a look at Four Roses limited editions.

Every year, Four Roses releases a single barrel and small batch limited edition. The **Four Roses 2013 Small Batch** is supposed to be the best in the company's history.

Another great hard-to-find bourbon that's flying under the radar—and your distributor should have access to—is the **Elijah Craig Barrel Proof**,

also from Heaven Hill. At

\$40 a bottle, this 134.2 proof bourbon is hands-down the best deal in bourbon right now.

Although high in alcohol, it's smooth, spicy, rich with caramel and vanilla, and offers nutmeg, cinnamon and maple syrup notes that deliver a nice long finish with no burn. It's even better with a fat ice cube to open it up a tad.

So don't get yourself in a panic. There's plenty of great bourbon out there. Just don't tell anybody. ■■

