



LOCAL FLAVORS

Still Life

With a “spirit” of innovation and a nod to history, D.C. distillers are creating a buzz-worthy scene.

By Jennifer Barger

Jos. A. Magnus & Co.



New Columbia

Proof Positive

Prohibition started in Washington, D.C., in 1917, three years earlier than it did in most parts of the country, inciting an active (if less-violent than “Boardwalk Empire”) speakeasy and bootlegging industry. These days, there’s a spirited distilling revolution afoot again, though this time it’s legal, with artisanal hooch makers setting up stills in former warehouses and car dealerships. These alcohol entrepreneurs are concocting everything from moonshine-like white whiskey to herbaceous gin starring seasonal botanicals. Much of the action is happening in the Northeast quadrant of the city, not far from local breweries and the popular Union Market (the foodie epicenter of D.C.). Here are four spots worth the buzz.

NEW COLUMBIA

Story: D.C.’s first post-Prohibition distillery opened in 2011 and named its signature tippie—Green Hat Gin—for the distinctive fedora of a 1920s bootlegger.

Space: In a factory-cool zone, staff give free tours and pour samples and quirky cocktails like the D.C. Negroni with Green Hat and made-on-site vermouth. (Sat. 1-4 p.m.)

Sip: Smacking of celery and herbs, the trademark gin works well on its own or in a G&T. 1832 Fenwick St. NE, greenhatgin.com

JOS. A. MAGNUS & CO.

Story: A team of D.C. cocktail and club vets opened this distillery last year. The spot’s signature bourbon was inspired by a pre-Prohibition one crafted by Joseph A. Magnus.

Space: Two barrooms boast speak-easy décor (leather chairs, a vintage bar) and views into the production room. Tours, classes, samples and cocktails create a festive vibe. (Fri. 5-9 p.m., Sat. 1-9 p.m., Sun. 1-5 p.m.)

Sip: Cocktails include blends like an Old-Fashioned with Magnus bourbon and lime ice. 2052 W. Virginia Ave. NE, josephmagnus.com

CATOCTIN CREEK

Story: Husband-and-wife duo Scott and Becky Harris oversee the region’s oldest distillery, set in a converted 1921 Buick showroom.

Space: The best seats at the bar come with views of the copper stills (“Big Boy” and “Barney”). Bottling workshops, monthly dinners and free tours add to the experience. (Tues.-Sun. hours vary.)

Sip: A caramel-colored elixir, Roundstone Rye has nabbed national honors like a 2016 “Good Food” award. 120 W. Main St., Purcellville, Va., catocctincreekdistilling.com

ONE EIGHT

Story: This distillery gets its name from Article One, Section Eight of the Constitution, which called for the establishment of a district to serve as the nation’s capital.

Space: A redbrick warehouse holds the 2,000-square-foot tasting room. Free tours showcase the Dr. Seussian distilling tanks and cask-filled storage zones (Sat. 1-5 p.m.)

Sip: The diverse lineup ranges from Rock Creek White Whiskey to Ivy City Gin. 1135 Okie St. NE, oneeightdistilling.com

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Scott and Becky Harris at Catocctin Creek