NEELEY FAMILY DISTILLERY

Sparta, KY

'Former Old Forester master taster Jackie Zykan leaves what WSJ called a "whiskey lover's dream job" for a shot at a whiskey brand called "Hidden Barn," her partnership with two 5280 Whiskey Society founders and Royce Neeley of Neeley Family Distillery.'

- Forbes 2022

Year Founded: 2015

Region: Kentucky

Owner/Master Distiller: Royce Neeley

Master Blender: Jackie Zykan

Known for: As important to illegal Kentucky distilling as Jim Beam is to legal. Continuous family distilling since 1740, for 11 generations!

Cool Fact: Grain to glass Whiskey and Moonshine made according to historical tradition

Cool Fact #2: Being the official 'yeast maker', Roy wanted to ensure the whiskey was made in the way his ancestors did; He makes a small bowl of mash and sits it under blackberry bushes until it starts to ferment and then isolates the yeast.



Neeley Family Distillery is a small family-owned and operated venue located in the rolling hills of the Kentucky bluegrass. The Neeley Family has been distilling and bootlegging illegally in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky for Eleven generations until 2015, when 10th generation, Roy Neeley and 11th generation Royce Neeley took the family business legal for the first time ever. They are devoted to honoring the craft of their forefathers through the production of high-quality spirits; the family is literally distilling history every day. The Neeley Moonshine recipe is still revered as the best in the Eastern Kentucky Mountains. The distillery provides an experience unlike any other, combining unparalleled illegal Kentucky distilling history, including centuries old family stills, newspaper articles, and guns, with state-of-the-art custom distilling equipment designed after Royce's great grandfather, Leonard Neeley's Still. The family currently produces two full 53-gallon barrels of Triple Pot distilled Kentucky Bourbon and Rye Whiskey each day. They also produce Brandy and Moonshine which are being aged in used 10-year-old Kentucky bourbon barrels. They are a proud member and stop on the prestigious Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour and B-Line. Zykan's new role will essentially be that of a blender, and she'll work with her partners to source and select whiskey for special limited-edition releases under the Hidden Barn label. "I don't wanna be a master distiller," she told The Bourbon Review. "I don't distill, and I don't want to be a master distiller that doesn't distill. I like to play with it post-maturation. I like to take the pieces and tell a story with them. I like to paint a picture with them.'



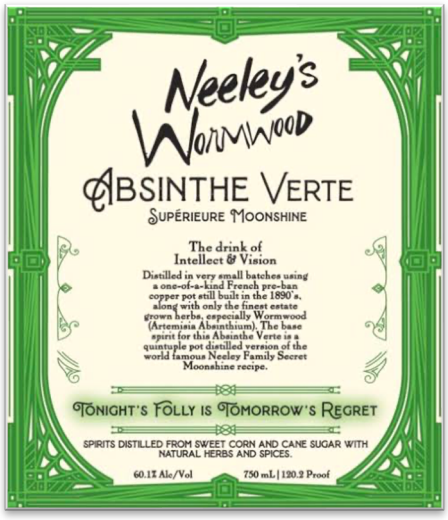
Authentic Kentucky Moonshine

My Family's bread and butter for over 100 years. This is my great grandfather's original shine recipe which he altered from the old family recipe in 1913 with the addition of sugar. Still to this day, you can find some of this clear floating around illegally in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky; left over from a time when my family shot first and paid taxes…never. My great grandfather Leonard had a specific way he made his liquor, running it through his still 3 times with a thump keg attached. We use the same method today on copper pot stills we custom built allowing us to operate like my great grandpas still, a still that we have on display in our gift shop. Our moonshine contains all local grains, fresh Kentucky limestone water, and a unique yeast strand my family has been using for 150 years, which we propagate in our distillery. These factors together result in what is still known as the best liquor in the Kentucky Mountains, an extremely smooth and unique product that only a Neeley can make. Available legal for the first time ever in 2017. Aromas of light buttery corn paired with sweet cane and ripe granny smith apples. 120.2 proof heat bursts forward in the front of the mouth followed by a relaxing and flavorful buttery sweet taste with no heat. There is no burn as it moves down the back of the palate and down the throat. The over balance of cane flavor instead of corn allows this shine to mix well with any cocktail that is sweet or citrusy, unlike most shine that have an overbearing corn taste.



Chocolate Truffle Cream Moonshine

A perfect blend consisting of an Irish cream base with chocolate fudge, vanilla and walnut flavors. This cream spirit is suited for any occasion in any season. Our chocolate truffle should have a shelf life of well over two years and does not need to be refrigerated. Aromas of strong chocolate cream scent with hints of walnut, vanilla and fudge. A delicate creamy chocolate fudge on the front followed by vanilla and walnut flavors. The spirit coats your mouth and tongue leaving a sweet taste with hints of moonshine to savor.



Wormwood Absinthe Verte

Double Gold - SFWSC '21, '22, '23

Best in Class - SFWSC '21 and '23

This spirit was inspired by American journalist, author, and Louisville, Kentucky, native Hunter S. Thompson who was known to enjoy many creativity enhancers, including absinthe. Our Absinthe Verte is created from an 1871 Old World Swiss Style Recipe that includes eight different botanicals. This botanical recipe includes wormwood, fennel, and two types of anise. Using our Eastern Kentucky family moonshine recipe as a base, it creates a one-of-a-kind Kentucky Style Absinthe Verte, and our coloring herbs create a natural vibrant green hue.



R.D.R Sweet Thumped Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey

Most Rye Whiskeys have traditionally been cooked and distilled the same way since prohibition. Our 11th generation distiller Royce Neeley operates outside the confines of the norm. He cooks our rye at lower temperatures and utilizes a proprietarily charged copper thumper on the third pot distillation, bringing out the sweeter notes of the rye grain. On the nose, vegetal herbs combined with spearmint. Robust white pepper on the full bodied palate transitions into a lengthy sweet tobacco finish.

Gold – San Fran. World Spirits Comp. 2022



'Banana Batch' Four Grain Small Batch Bourbon

Very Limited. The fourth blend from single barrel coordinator and blender, Rebekah Neeley, this batch was originally going to be a the second bottled in bond four grain yearly release, but she enjoyed it so much at cask strength that she kept it there. Mashbill is 63% corn, 17% oats, 8% wheat and 12% malt. Banana runt and caramel on the nose with banana bread and vanilla icing on the palate. Rich and creamy from the oatmeal.



Hidden Barn Bourbon Tea Party Batch

A limited-edition bourbon blend created by mixologist Molly Wellmann in collaboration with Rebekah Sue Neeley at the Neeley Family Distillery under the Hidden Barn label. This is an eight barrel batch, using barrels between the age of 6 years to 7-year-old Kentucky Straight Bourbon from Neeley Family Distillery in Sparta, Kentucky. The mash bill is our flagship 70% Corn, 20%Rye and 10% Malted Barley. This Kentucky Bourbon is double pot distilled and bottled straight from the barrel at Cask Strength with only sediment filtration. Freshly brewed tea, honeysuckle, cherries, chocolate, watermelon rind and florals, with the individual barrels showing themselves throughout every sip slightly dry on the tongue that makes you want to come back for the next sip.