

# Sample the Spirits of Michigan

BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

**M**ichigan has a longstanding history of crafting world-class beverages. The state's wineries and craft breweries have been gaining international attention for their diverse products. And now distillers are getting into the game with an array of spirits — from vodka, rum, whiskey, gin, and bourbon to a unique innovation known as Hopquila. Here's a taste of who's who, and who's new.



**> CIVILIZED SPIRITS:** Northern United Brewing Co. (Grizzly Peak Brewing Co., North Peak Brewing Co. and Jolly Pumpkin Artisan Ales) recently launched a line of distilled spirits — vodka, gin, whiskey, and rum — blended and perfected in its Old Mission Peninsula distillery. Products are currently available at select Michigan restaurants and retail outlets, with expanded distribution expected soon. [nubco.net/civilized-spirits](http://nubco.net/civilized-spirits)

**> GHOST VODKA:** This vodka, introduced in 2010, is as mysterious as its name implies. Distilled in Detroit from a triple-blend of Michigan grains, it's available at select Michigan retail outlets, including Meijer. [ghostvodka@detroit@gmail.com](mailto:ghostvodka@detroit@gmail.com)

**> GRAND TRAVERSE DISTILLERY:** Michigan's oldest micro-distillery produces the award-winning True North Vodka made from local rye (as well as cherry and chocolate-infused flavors), in addition to a Wheat Vodka. Ole George Rye Whiskey aged in mini barrels in its Traverse City facility, is the latest addition. [grandtraversedistillery.com](http://grandtraversedistillery.com)

**> HARD LUCK VODKA:** With candy flavors like Red Fish and Root Beer Barrels, this infused vodka is unlike any other made in Michigan. Born at the Hard Luck Lounge in

Grosse Pointe Park and bottled in Temperance, these spirits are distilled from grain through a three-tower process. They're available at retail liquor stores, bars, and pubs around the state. [hardluckvodka.com](http://hardluckvodka.com)

**> INCENTIVE VODKA:** Distilled from Michigan-grown corn, this medal-winning vodka is made in small batches, with a filtration process that yields world-class smoothness. Founded in 2009 by Big Cedar Distilling, it is now available at retailers and bars throughout Michigan and at the Sturgis tasting room. Incentive recently introduced two rums — silver and aged — available at the tasting room. [incentivevodka.com](http://incentivevodka.com)

**> JOURNEYMAN DISTILLERY:** Michigan's newest distillery started serving hand-crafted, organic whiskey and distilled spirits in October. The 4,000-square-foot distillery and tasting room is housed in the historic Featherbone Factory in Three Oaks, and it's a welcome addition to the Southwest Michigan tourist-region known as Harbor Country. [journeymandistillery.com](http://journeymandistillery.com)



## Cocktail Comeback

BY ERICA SCHOPMEYER

There's a rekindled love affair with spirits. And many restaurants and bars are dedicating themselves to handling cocktails with the same care they lavish on food. From martinis and Manhattans to craft beer and fine wine, we tap the choices of *Hour Detroit* readers' annual "Best of..." picks, plus a few new and notable places to sip and savor.

### Best Place for Nightcaps after a Show:

The Whitney — The luxurious home of David Whitney has been a Detroit must-see for years. It doesn't have to be a special occasion — the quiet, classic feel makes it a local favorite.

### Best Wine List (Suburbs) Vinoteca

— The sophisticated wine bar in Royal Oak features more than 30 wines from across the world, including an occasional selection from Michigan's vineyards. Low lighting and a cozy atmosphere create the perfect ambiance for an after-work glass with friends.

### Best Wine List (Detroit) Roast

— What goes well with dishes at Chef Michael Symon's downtown eatery? Just ask your server ... the wine list is both expansive and impressive.

### Best Beer Selection: Berkley Front

— With more than 40 beers on tap — from Michigan-made brews to international names — the Front is a haven for the beer-lover.

**Best Bloody Mary:** Lily's Seafood — While Lily's in Royal Oak is known for its seafood and brewery, their Bloody Mary bar should not go unrecognized. Beginning at 10 a.m. on weekends, Lily's offers DIY Bloody Marys and Mimosas for \$3.

### Best Classic Cocktails: Cliff Bell's

— The Art-Deco style jazz club embodies a classic Detroit feeling, serving



**> NEW HOLLAND ARTISAN SPIRITS:** The award-winning microbrewery also boasts one of the largest spirit portfolios in Michigan, with Zeppelin Bend Whiskey; Freshwater Rums: Huron, Michigan, and Superior Single Barrel; Knickerbocker Gin; and Dutchess Vodka. There's also the unique Hatter Royale "HopQuila" — a fermented wash of 100 percent barley, twice distilled, and then steeped with Centennial hops. They're all available at restaurants, bars, and retail outlets around the state. Tours are also offered at the Holland distillery at 1:30 p.m. Saturdays for \$5 per person, and includes a spirits sampling. [newhollandbrew.com](http://newhollandbrew.com)

**> ROUND BARN WINERY:** The ultra-premium DiVine Vodka was the first "estate vodka" in the United States to be distilled from grapes. Crafted in Baroda, in the heart of the southwest Michigan fruit belt, the distiller uses grapes harvested from the Lake Michigan Shore AVA (American Viticultural Area). DiVine can be found throughout Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. [divinevodka.com](http://divinevodka.com)

**> ST. JULIAN WINERY:** Michigan's oldest operating winery produces its Grey Heron Vodka from 100 percent grapes. Small batches are distilled five times and purified by multiple filtrations, which creates a smooth and satisfying spirit. Available only for sampling in St. Julian's tasting rooms (Paw Paw, Union Pier, South Haven, Frankenmuth, and Dundee), along with a 10-year-old aged brandy, several eau de vies and fruit infusions. [stjulian.com](http://stjulian.com)

**> UGLY DOG DISTILLERY:** Distilled from 100 percent Michigan winter wheat in the small town of Chelsea, the Ugly Dog Vodka is perfected in small, hand-crafted batches. A classic rum has also recently been introduced. Word has it that the distiller has been experimenting with several unique flavors including bacon-infused vodka, black cherry vodka, coconut rum, and black cherry rum. Currently, the traditional vodka is available

in more than 300 outlets around the state, with plans to extend beyond the state lines. [uglydogvodka.com](http://uglydogvodka.com)

**> UNCLE JOHN'S FRUITHOUSE WINERY:** In addition to its vast product line of hard cider, perry, wine, and brandy, you'll find Michigan's only apple vodka. This is not an apple "flavored" vodka, it's distilled from apples to deliver an ultra-smooth and clean taste, with mild fruit and spice notes. Find it at the Uncle John's tasting rooms in St. Johns and at the Lansing City Market. [ujcidermill.com](http://ujcidermill.com).

**> VALENTINE VODKA:** This hand-distilled vodka has been collecting medals since hitting the market in 2007. As one of the first distilleries in the world to use a multi-grain recipe — a proprietary blend of locally-grown Michigan red wheat, barley, and corn — this vodka is available throughout Michigan and Illinois, with Tennessee and Ontario on the horizon. You can also sample a variety of Michigan-themed infusions and signature cocktails at the Ferndale cocktail bar, which opened in early 2011. [valentinevodka.com](http://valentinevodka.com)



For more information about the state's spirits industry, check out the Artisan Distilling Program ([artisandistilling.org](http://artisandistilling.org)) offered at Michigan State University. Established more than a decade ago, it has seen resurgence in recent years with the growing international interest in small-craft distilling.

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traditional 1930s cocktail recipes to jazz connoisseurs.

**Best Microbrewery:** Woodward Avenue Brewery — Situated on Woodward in Ferndale, the WAB offers seven microbrews, as well as Michigan-made spirits. Reader's pick for "best microbrewery" three years in a row, it also got the nod as the top spot for "Bar/Restaurant/Deck/Outdoor Seating."

**Best Bartender:** Carl Gerych at The Lark in West Bloomfield — The 50 year veteran also happens to work at a restaurant that nabbed the top French Restaurant and Restaurant for General Excellence spots.

### New and Notable:

**Sugar House Bar** — One of Detroit's newest cocktail bars, located next to Slow's Bar BQ in Corktown, features herb-accented cocktails with Prohibition-era flair.

**Oakland Art Novelty Co.** — Inspired by the Purple Gang, a mob that supplied booze to thirsty Detroiters during Prohibition, the speakeasy-style bar (notice a trend?) in Ferndale serves distinguished gin, tequila, and whiskey-based drinks.

### Detroit Original Cocktails: Then and Now

**Cold Duck:** Legend has it the blend of sparkling Burgundy and Champagne was first made popular by Harold Borgman, owner of the fondly remembered Pontchartrain Wine Cellar in Detroit, in 1937. Originally called *kaltente*, meaning "cold end" in German, the sparkling wine later became known as *kalte ende*, or "cold duck."

**Pickle Back, Detroit style:** It may have originated in hipster bars in Brooklyn, but the Pickle Back has become one of the hottest drinks in the country. The idea is to pair a shot of Jameson Irish Whiskey with a shot of pickle juice (yes, pickle juice). Using local fave McClure's pickles puts a Detroit stamp on the trend.

**Detroit Old Fashioned:** The standard Old Fashioned cocktail (bitters, sugar, whiskey, a cherry, and orange slice) gets a distinctly Detroit twist by adding two ounces of Vernor's Ginger Ale.