

Raise

Glasses



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A BUZZ OR WARM AND FUZZY FEELING, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE. KANSAS' LIQUID CULTURE IS ALL THE RAGE.

Whether you're a hophead or a wine aficionado, a java junkie or a spirits connoisseur, artisans and producers across the state make it their business and craft to guarantee our sips are extraordinary, authentic experiences. All you have to do is have an open mind and embrace the liquid culture that's sweeping across the plains. So many drinks, so little time—here's a small sample of the Kansas beer, wine, coffee and distilled spirits that have us at hello. Raise a glass to your favorite!

Story by
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AND LOU ANN THOMAS

Photography by
DOUG STREMEL



High Spirits

Forget the fact that Kansas—thanks to ushering in the first law forbidding alcoholic beverages in 1881—once held the reputation as the country’s driest state. Fast forward to the 21st century where there’s a revival of microdistilleries popping up across the Sunflower State, happily joining the nationwide craze for craft spirits.

BOOT HILL DISTILLERY

“Soil to sip” is how Dodge Hill’s Boot Hill Distillery describes its brand of handcrafted, hyper-local spirits. After all, the vodka, gin and white whiskey are made from grain that the three owners—Roger Kelman, Hayes Kelman, and Chris Holovach—grow on their Kansas farms in Sublette and Scott City. The trio spent more than a year renovating Boot Hill’s distillery and tasting room, Dodge City’s former municipal building built in 1929. Each bottle is labeled with where the ingredients were grown. “We grow the grain and then mash, ferment, distill and bottle onsite here,” says director of marketing and distiller Mark Vierthaler. Boot Hill celebrated its grand opening mid-summer 2016 and, according to Vierthaler, the offerings will eventually include bourbon. “It’s resting in oak barrels for a couple of years, though,” he says.

➔➔➔ **501 W. Spruce St., Dodge City / boothilldistillery.com**

HIGH PLAINS DISTILLERY

High Plains Distillery is family owned and operated by Seth Fox and his wife, Dorcie. The microdistillery opened in 2005 and produces vodka, whiskey, gin, tequila and Kansas bourbon under the “Most Wanted” label with the mission of offering quality spirits at an affordable price. The Foxes have expanded the distribution of the Most Wanted Vodka well beyond Kansas, to Georgia, California, Texas and Montana, among other states. Call ahead for tour and tasting information.

➔➔➔ **1700 Rooks Road, Atchison / highplainsinc.com**

UNION HORSE DISTILLING CO.

Founded in 2010 by four siblings—the three Garcia brothers and their sister—Union Horse Distilling Co. is a grain-to-bottle 20,000-square-foot craft distillery located off Interstate 35 in Lenexa that doubles as a production facility and stunning event venue. A massive 500-gallon gleaming copper pot, dubbed “Chester Copperpot,” distills four spirits while Union Horse’s whiskeys are aged in new American oak barrels. Master distiller and co-founder Patrick Garcia signs and hand numbers each bottle of the distillery’s popular Reunion Straight Rye (93 proof) and Reserve Straight Bourbon (92 proof). Union Horse whiskeys are available in Missouri, Nebraska, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

“Consumers have an increasing desire to know what they’re drinking and to understand the journey and story behind the product,” says general manager Eric Garcia. “Just as farm-to-table has been so popular, we’re finding people have the same passion about grain-to-glass. We know people are thirsty for a truly tailored, authentic product.”

From milling locally sourced grains to fermenting, barreling, bottling and labeling, the entire process is done in-house. This gives them “a chance to share our distinct passion for small-batch handcrafted spirits,” Garcia says.

➔➔➔ **11740 W. 86th Terrace, Lenexa / unionhorse.com**

WHEAT STATE DISTILLING

Wheat State Distilling opened in December 2013 and is Wichita’s first legal distillery since Prohibition. It produces craft spirits, including rum, bourbon, vodka, gin and whiskey from Kansas grains. Founded by master distiller, owner and Wichita native David Bahre, Wheat State bills its products as “field to bottle.” Extending his passion for tracing the ingredients that make up his spirits, Bahre encourages customers to refer to the batch and bottle numbers on each spirit to understand the process.

➔➔➔ **1635 E. 37th Street, Wichita / wheatstatedistilling.com**

The Law

ACCORDING TO NATION

Rock-throwing, hatchet-wielding and keg-rolling Carry Nation was a woman on a mission in Kansas during Prohibition as she raided saloons and smashed joints serving patrons illegal liquor that she deemed “hell-broth” and “devil-soup.” Once married to a Civil War doctor who died from the effects of alcohol a year following their separation, Nation felt it was her duty to keep Prohibition’s laws intact. The intimidating, black-clad, six-foot-tall leader of the so-called Home Defenders (Medicine Lodge’s local branch of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union) and its members created a ruckus and left a trail of destruction throughout Kansas as they spread their gospel of abstinence from alcohol consumption. No doubt Nation and her rowdy Prohibition activists would have their hands full and their hatchets working overtime in modern-day Kansas, 83 years following Prohibition’s repeal, when artisans are redefining the quality of handcrafted beer, wine and spirits.





Wine Country

Meander through Kansas to enjoy the fruits of the winemakers' labor and discover why the state is becoming one of the nation's leading areas for vineyards and wineries. At one point in its history, Kansas produced a sizeable amount of grapes. In fact, Europe's blight-ridden vineyards of the 1800s wouldn't have survived without the help of rootstock from Midwest grapes, used as a graft for European grape varieties because of their resistance against the bacterial infection. By the 1870s, Kansas was part of one of the country's largest grape-growing and winemaking regions. Today's wine production is mostly in the eastern part of the state; because of the Kansas climate, skilled vintners grow hybrid grapes that include part of the heartier native American grapes such as Seyval and Vignoles, among others.

SHILOH VINEYARD

With a degree in agronomy from Kansas State University, Kirk Johnston went to work on the farm that's been handed down from generation to generation in his family since the 1920s. He and his wife, Treva, planted grapes in 2008 and experienced their first harvest four years later. "It was a good one," Johnston says. Located in WaKeeney off the beaten path of Interstate 70, Shiloh Vineyard welcomes wine lovers from across the globe. "Sure, we like serving premium wine from the grapes we grow—dry whites and reds, semi-sweet whites and more—but it's about sharing that with people," Johnston says. The tasting room is in a renovated chicken coop Johnston's grandfather built last century, and a 100-year-old restored barn is available for weddings and other special events. Oh, and Sam, Shiloh's canine mascot, will greet you like a long-lost friend. Which is just how the Johnstons like it.

➔➔➔ **16079 M Road, WaKeeney / shilohvineyard.com**

WHEAT STATE WINE COMPANY

There's always something exciting going on at Wheat State Wine Company in Winfield, whether it's live music, a full-length feature film under the stars during the summer or a tour of the vineyard that includes Norton, St. Vincent, Vidal Blanc and Seyval Blanc grapes, among others. And of course, wine lovers from around the region flock to Wheat State to sip award-winning wine on the patio, enjoy free tastings and explore the winery and grounds.

➔➔➔ **23622 Springhill Farm Drive, Winfield / wheatstatewineco.com**

WYLDWOOD CELLARS

Wyldeewood Cellars has an unusual claim to wine fame—elderberry wine. The family-owned winery opened in 1995 as a way to sustain the family farm, and 21 years later, it boasts 500 international awards and titles and more than 40 wines made from fruits, berries and grape varieties. Billed as Kansas' largest winery, Wyldeewood has three generations of the Brewer family working in the business.

John Brewer, who has a PhD in physics, is the owner of Wyldeewood Cellars. He's also one of three international, professional wine judges in Kansas. "It's pretty simple," Brewer laughs. "If it tastes good to you, then it's good wine. People's tastes vary so much."

One of the joys Brewer has working at his winery is standing behind the tasting bar and watching people react to something they didn't necessarily think they'd like.

"Their eyes light up and I hear lots of 'wows,'" he says. "We have unique flavors in the Midwest because we cannot grow the California grape varieties, and often it's a challenge to get people to accept flavors different from a California wine. But our advantage is just that—we have things different from California."

➔➔➔ **32633 Grapevine Road, Paxico / wyldeewoodcellars.com**

Drink Up!

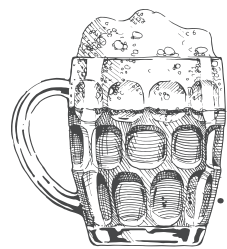
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IN THE SUNFLOWER STATE.

PRAIRIE FIRE

20250 Hudson Ranch Road
Paxico
(785) 636-5533
prairiefirewinery.com

SMOKY HILL VINEYARDS & WINERY

2771 Centennial Road
Salina
(785) 825-8466
kansaswine.com



Get Happy

The foamy, golden beverage once synonymous with football, the ubiquitous six-pack and thirst-quenching vehicle has evolved into a beverage to be savored for its depth of character and myriad flavor qualities. Brewpubs were legalized in Kansas in 1987, and today the state is part of the beer revolution sweeping the nation—there are gems galore where you can sip on great handcrafted brews.

BLIND TIGER BREWERY & RESTAURANT

Named after the Prohibition-era custom of displaying stuffed tigers to alert speakeasy customers of the availability of alcohol, the Blind Tiger Brewery & Restaurant features flagship beers—many of them award-winning—and a revolving menu of seasonal beers and stick-to-your-ribs pub food. Diners have a great view of the brewmasters as they tend fermentation tanks and keep tabs on the brewhouse's activities.

➔➔➔ **417 SW 37th Street, Topeka / blindtiger.com**

FREE STATE BREWING COMPANY

Free State Brewing Company opened in 1989 on Lawrence's bustling Massachusetts Street and is the Great Plains' oldest microbrew pub, boasting a following that some describe as "cult-like." The brewhouse bottles beers distributed throughout the region, and the restaurant serves homemade dishes such as crispy fish and chips, burgers, salads and more. Be sure to try the year-round Ad Astra—this rich amber ale is a crowd favorite.

➔➔➔ **636 Massachusetts Street, Lawrence / freestatebrewing.com**

TALLGRASS BREWING CO.

Tallgrass Brewing Co. is located near the storied Flint Hills—hence the name's nod to the famous prairie grass that once blanketed the area. Tallgrass is known for its award-winning, world-class craft beers and for taking the plunge and opting out of glass bottles in favor of 16-ounce cans in 2010. Now a major regional brewery with its products sold throughout the region (thanks to a new 60,000-square-foot production facility that opened in 2015), Tallgrass has a beer-finder app to help fans locate popular brews such as Buffalo Sweat and Top Rope IPA. Although tours aren't yet available, beer aficionados can enjoy Tallgrass brews at the 10-barrel, 300-seat Tallgrass Tap House.

Thanks to a dedication to producing good beer, says founder Jeff Gill, Tallgrass has made a name for itself outside Kansas, from Tennessee to Colorado and North Dakota to Texas.

"Kansas is still where the most Tallgrass is sold, and the first release of any new beer happens here. Buffalo Sweat, our stout-style beer—really, does the name get any more Kansas?"

➔➔➔ **320 Poyntz Avenue, Manhattan (Tap House) tallgrassbeer.com**

Brew it Yourself

Brew Lab in Downtown Overland Park celebrates the contemporary home brewer with a unique brew-on-the-premises store. Serving both experienced hobbyists and novices, Brew Lab offers a full menu of brewing education experiences: opt for a private session, enroll in a public class or shop the shelves stocked with supplies, equipment and quality ingredients to complement your own brewing adventures. Spend an afternoon at one of Brew Lab's brewing stations—call ahead to reserve a block of time and bring in your own recipe or have an on-site expert create one according to your palate. Cheers!

8004 Foster Street, Overland Park
brewlabkc.com

Drink Up!

OTHER SIP-WORTHY SPOTS
IN THE SUNFLOWER STATE.

DEFIANCE BREWING

2050 Old Hwy 40, Hays
(785) 301-2337
defiancebeer.com

KANSAS TERRITORY BREWING

310 C St., Washington
(785) 325-3300
kansasteritorybrewingco.com



Drink Up!

OTHER SIP-WORTHY SPOTS
IN THE SUNFLOWER STATE.

**BLACKSMITH
COFFEE ROASTERY**
122 N Main St., Lindsborg
(800) 576-5280
blacksmithcoffee.com

PARAMOUR COFFEE
810 4th St., Wamego
(785) 458-5282
paramourcoffee.com



Supreme Beans

Kansas wouldn't be a well-rounded drinking destination without the help of morning's companion, coffee. It doesn't matter how you take it—packed with sugar or black as night—it all begins with a perfectly roasted bean.

FRESH SEVEN COFFEE

Fresh Seven Coffee is a coffee paradise tucked away unexpectedly in St. Francis and serving the surrounding tri-state area. Kale Dankenbring and Heidi Plumb opened Fresh Seven Coffee in their 8-by-16-foot remodeled car trailer in 2013 and have been drawing coffee drinkers ever since. The couple does small-batch roasting with an emphasis on buying the freshest beans available; they then give the beans their signature light-to-medium roast as soon as possible after harvest in four-pound batches. "We focus on roasting so that the flavor profile of our single-origin coffee beans are retained, then let them sit for two days to balance the flavors, and we only serve that batch for seven days, hence our name, Fresh Seven Coffee," Plumb says.

➔➔➔ **312 West Washington St., St. Francis**
freshsevencoffee.com

REVERIE COFFEE ROASTERS

Andrew Gough, owner of Reverie Coffee Roasters, sources Fair Trade, organic and sustainable beans whenever possible. Ian Miller, head roaster, then gives the beans a light-to-medium roast. "We try to roast so it emphasizes the flavors of the particular origin. Each is tailored to bring out the best balance of sweetness and acidity," Miller says. Reverie also uses locally sourced milk and cream, blended teas, chocolate and ice cream in its café. "We focus on quality in everything and are trying to educate our customers about coffee and advance the coffee culture in our community," he says.

➔➔➔ **2611 E. Douglas Ave. Wichita**
reverieroasters.com

PT'S COFFEE ROASTING CO.

PT's Coffee Roasting Co. in Topeka is an award-winning roaster that has been around and growing for 23 years. When co-founder Jeff Taylor identifies a good source for his beans, he, or a colleague, actually visits the farms where the beans are grown and meets the farmers. "We have visited hundreds of coffee farms and work with those farmers we have identified as the ones who are the best," Taylor says. About 80 percent of the coffee PT's roasts is acquired through their Direct Trade program. In addition to their café locations in Topeka and Kansas City, PT's coffee can be found in at least 35 states, restaurants, select grocery stores and online.

➔➔➔ **929 SW University Blvd Suite 2704, Topeka**
ptscoffee.com **KM**

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