

The Real Manhattan

By JONATHAN MILES
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THE Manhattan is back.



Evan Sung for The New York Times

Perfect Manhattan Adapted from LeNell Smothers

2 ounces Tuthilltown
Hudson Manhattan rye
whiskey

½ ounce sweet vermouth
(preferably Vya or Carpano
Antica)

½ ounce dry vermouth

2 dashes of orange bitters

Lemon twist, for garnish.

Stir the liquid ingredients
with ice and strain into a
chilled cocktail glass.
Garnish with the twist.

Yield: 1 serving

The recipe that Tuthilltown's owners cleave to comes from LeNell Smothers, who owns LeNell's, a wine and spirits boutique in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Ms. Smothers is fond of what's called a "perfect Manhattan," so called for its balanced proportions of sweet and dry vermouth rather than any claim to immaculateness. Ms. Smothers has been a staunch proponent of Tuthilltown's products, which she admires for their Hudson Valley provenance and the pride and devotion Mr. Erenzo and Mr. Lee are pouring into them. "It's really exciting to see someone local doing this," she said. "They're shaking things up a bit."

In a sense, that is. The original Manhattan was always stirred.

Not back in fashion, I mean. That story is at least a decade old, and even then it wasn't much of a story. Unlike many other cocktails that have recently been roused from long hibernation, the Manhattan never really slumbered, having been kept drowsily awake through the lean years of cocktaildom by French-cuffed businessmen and other habitués of old-guard hotel bars and private clubs. But even those Manhattans — typically mixtures of bourbon or Canadian whiskey, bitters and vermouth finished off with the crimson syrup-grenade we call maraschino — aren't what I'm talking about.

No, I'm talking about the original Manhattan. The daring, woodsier Manhattan of the 1800s — when New York City was only Manhattan and its eponymous cocktail was the boss of all drinks. Back then, bartenders left out the glopmy maraschino cherries — those didn't arrive at our shores until 1900 or so — and made the drink exclusively with rye whiskey, bourbon's sharper-tongued cousin. (For an analogy, think of the difference between rye bread and corn bread). In all likelihood, that rye whiskey came from upstate New York, because, as Ralph Erenzo points out, "There were 1,200 distilleries operating in New York before Prohibition."

Mr. Erenzo should know. Along with his partner, Brian Lee, Mr. Erenzo is the proprietor of the only whiskey distillery operating in New York State. Their two-man operation, Tuthilltown Spirits, is based out of a converted granary and 18th-century gristmill in Gardiner, N.Y., near New Paltz, that has so far yielded small artisanal batches of bourbon, vodka and the sort of unaged corn whiskey sometimes referred to as moonshine.

On a recent Monday, the two microdistillers introduced their latest offering at a party at the Four Seasons: Hudson Manhattan Rye, a 92-proof whiskey made with 100-percent

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