



Catcher in the rye

This is our kind of terroir: Tuthilltown Spirits is billed as New York's first legal whiskey distillery since Prohibition. Its Hudson Manhattan Rye is 92-proof, hand-filled and numbered, and has some cutely named siblings, including Baby Bourbon, Government Warning Rye and Spirit Vodka, made from apple cider pressed entirely in the Big Apple. It typifies the very particular high-end liquor that's caught the eye of former McWilliam's marketing manager James France since he set up Vanguard Luxury Brands 18 months ago. "I supply the sort of places I can't afford to drink at," says France, who spotted a gap in the market catering to an increasingly discerning and well-travelled Australian drinkership. The Vanguard stable now includes Aviation Gin, St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur, Square One Organic Vodka and what's billed as the world's most awarded rum, Flor de Caña. As he's travelled the country, France has discovered some regional peculiarities of our own. "Rum is big in Queensland, Melbourne is the gin capital, NSW drinks like any world city and Western and South Australia are fairly balanced," he says. As for differences between liquors: "Rum attracts more fanatics than any category other than single malt whisky. There are rum clubs starting up all over Australia." www.vanguardluxurybrands.com.au