

A Place in the

Sun

AUSTIN-AREA BAR PROFESSIONALS USHER IN THE SUMMER SEASON WITH TEN STELLAR SPIRITS BRANDS

by Lori Moffatt
photos by Dennis Burnett

June ushers in prime porch-sipping season. just as the sun's golden rays and the musical clatter of ice in a frosty Boston shaker put an added spring in our step. In a nod to our favorite time of year, *The SOMM Journal* recently invited representatives from ten spirits brands to the basement lounge of Austin's Boiler Nine restaurant, where they showcased their products in summertime cocktails before a panel of area bar professionals and restaurant owners.

It was a tough job, but somebody had to do it: Panelists including Dustin Bolf of Boiler Nine, Jessica Sanders and Stephanie Teslar of Backbeat, Arik Skot Williams of The Rotten Bunch, Brett Esler of Whisler's, and Kristine Kittrell of Weather Up gathered at marble bistro tables to sample a lineup of seasonal libations while learning about the various brands in attendance.

In a tasting that lacked a formal theme, deliciousness served as the common thread. Citrus, mint, ginger, banana, and edible flowers added tropical notes to some recipes, while other cocktails made use of Sherry and soda to create poolside libations brimming with character. Fresh, light, and imaginative, here are ten brands—and ten refreshing cocktails—to consider as the days grow long and the nights get hot.



The panelists gather at Boiler Nine restaurant in Austin, TX, for the spirits tasting. Pictured from left to right are Thomas Ward, Assistant General Manager, Las Perlas; Dustin Bolf, Bar Lead, Boiler Nine; Stephanie Teslar, General Manager at Backbeat and Vice President of United States Bartenders' Guild Austin; Brett Esler, Bartender, Whisler's; Jessica Sanders, Owner, Backbeat; Steve White, General Manager, Seven Grand; and Arik Skot Williams, Beverage Director, The Rotten Bunch.

JCB Vodka

A passion project of French winemaker Jean-Charles Boisset, JCB Vodka's vintage-dated creation is one of the few spirits distilled from oak-aged Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Enjoyed neat, it's crisp with a hint of stony salinity that's suggestive of the Côte d'Or soils in France, where the grapes are sustainably grown and hand-picked.

In Backbeat Assistant General Manager Natalie Mauser-Carter's elegant Golden Slope cocktail, the vodka's elegance shines with a supporting cast of dill-infused Dolin Blanc, St-Germain liqueur, and Jamaican bitters. "I wanted to use the essence of elderflower and dill to bring out flavors of summer and the fresh notes you'll find in wine-based distillate," Mauser-Carter said.

Along with JCB Spirits' flagship pure vodka, Boisset also produces a vodka infused with French caviar, a third vodka infused with famous black truffles of Périgord, and a gin derived from 44 botanicals and inspired by the dry London style. All three vodkas and the gin are a rare treat served icy-cold with caviar in an elegant toast to summer.

The Panelists Said:

- Neat:** Nice peppery bite; lovely salinity and mouthfeel.
- Cocktail:** Gorgeous texture! I love the dill in this drink—it really balances out the pepperiness of the vodka. Also an excellent balance for the salinity. —*Jessica Sanders*
- Neat:** Grape-forward with subtle notes of cocoa, powdered sugar, and vanilla. Very confectionary. Nice mouthfeel and surprisingly weighty considering multiple distillations.
- Cocktail:** Dill and St-Germain work really well with the salinity of the vodka. A really unique and refreshing variation on a Martini. —*Steph Teslar*



Natalie Mauser-Carter, the Assistant General Manager at Backbeat in Austin, represented JCB Vodka.

The Golden Slope

- 2 oz. JCB Pure Vodka
- ¼ oz. St-Germain
- ¾ oz. dill-infused Dolin Blanc Vermouth
- 2 drops Bittercube Jamaican #1 Cocktail Bitters
- Fresh dill sprig garnish

Kirk and Sweeney 18-Year Rum

Aged non-solera for 18 years in oak barrels, this Dominican Republic rum—another member of the 3 Badge Beverage Corp. portfolio—exudes vanilla, almond, pronounced coconut, and pleasantly astringent wood tannins. Named for a Caribbean rum-running schooner during the early years of Prohibition, Kirk and Sweeney honors the long history of rum production with a squat bottle inspired by 18th-century, hemp-netted "onion" bottles, which were hung from a beam on the ship.

In another nod to the spirit's history, Kolitz created a drink called The Caribbean Fortress, evoking adventure on the high seas with local orgeat from Austin's Liber & Company, fresh lemon and grapefruit juices, a chai-infused simple syrup, and a little salt. "I spent ten years in the kitchen before getting behind the bar, so I know that salt brings out everything," Kolitz said.



Bartender Aaron Kolitz created the Caribbean Fortress with Kirk and Sweeney Rum.

The Panelists Said:

- Neat:** Crème brûlée, breadfruit nose; medium viscosity with a very short finish. Vanilla bean, cheesecake, lactose finish.
- Cocktail:** Cinnamon nose. Dry mouthfeel with cinnamon raisin oatmeal cookies on the palate. F'ing delicious. —*Steve White*
- Neat:** Oaky banana with island spice and baking spices. Nutty finish.
- Cocktail:** Spiced cinnamon nose, orange blossom, floral, fruit-forward. Slight green vegetal finish with the addition of Pasote Reposado. —*Dustin Bolf*

Caribbean Fortress

- 2 oz. Kirk and Sweeney 18-Year Rum
- ½ oz. Pasote Reposado Tequila
- ¾ oz. chai-infused hibiscus tea syrup
- ¾ oz. Liber & Co. Almond Orgeat Syrup
- ½ oz. fresh grapefruit juice
- ½ oz. lemon juice
- 3 drops 20% salt solution