



Michter's flagship Shively Distillery in Louisville, KY.



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My (New) Kentucky Home:

MICTHER'S

Full-bodied, rich, and flavorful: That's how president Joseph J. Magliocco describes the house style of Michter's. "Our whiskeys have great mouthfeel, and they warm the drinker but don't burn," he says.

The company's four core expressions—Kentucky Straight Rye, Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Unblended American Whiskey, and Sour Mash Whiskey—are dubbed US*1 to pay homage to its legacy as America's first whiskey company. Founded in 1753 by Swiss Mennonite farmers John and Michael Shenk, who began distilling rye near Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania, the operation was first known as Shenk's and was later renamed Bomberger's. It changed hands several times before it was purchased, sold, and repurchased by Louis Forman, who, along with his master distiller Charles Everett Beam, crafted a pot-still sour mash whiskey that he named Michter's in honor of his sons Michael and Peter.

The Pennsylvania distillery declared bankruptcy in 1989, and in the 1990s Magliocco, along with his brothers and former Wild Turkey president Dick Newman, started working in three phases to resurrect the brand. First, they went to taste at various Kentucky distilleries and selected a style of straight rye and straight bourbon that they liked.

Next, they began producing whiskey at another Kentucky facility that had extra capacity, using their own mash bill, yeast, and entry proof—a scenario Magliocco compares to "a chef who was cooking with his own recipes in someone else's restaurant kitchen before he could afford his own."

By 2012, the company had acquired the resources to build and open a distillery in the Shively section of Louisville with two small stills (a 46-foot copper column still and 250-gallon pot still doubler would come later). In 2015, once they were confident that the distillate produced there met their standards, Michter's entered the final stage: making all of its own whiskey.

Today it oversees two other Kentucky operations: a 145-acre farm for growing estate grain in Springfield and a second distillery in Fort Nelson, which features the legendary pot still system and cypress wood fermenters from the original Pennsylvania Michter's. Led by master distiller Dan McKee and master of maturation Andrea Wilson, the meticulous production process includes aging in barrels made from wood staves cured outdoors from 18 to over 60 months, which serves to reduce tannins and enhance flavor in the finished product. Toasting the barrels before charring them, meanwhile, caramelizes and concentrates the wood sugars—a step that proves essential for crafting a smooth, full-bodied whiskey.

Michter's also employs two relatively uncommon industry practices. One, the entry proof for its rye and

bourbon is 103 proof rather than the typical 125, resulting in a smaller yield with richer character. Two, it uses heat cycling, which causes the whiskey in the rickhouse barrels to expand and contract, forcing the liquid to interact with the wood more frequently. This makes for a larger annual angel's share, which adds a great deal of expense but ensures complexity.

Magliocco believes the future of the American whiskey market is bright—and hopes that Michter's will play an integral part in it. As he puts it simply, "[Our] goal is to make the greatest American whiskey."

—Kelly Magyarics

Michter's 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Rye Whiskey, USA (\$160)

This 92.8-proofer offers refined yet amplified scents and flavors of peach nectar, walnut, and honeyed pineapple. Subtle rye notes peek out from orange cream and vanilla wafer. Dark tea, charcoal, and nutmeg develop before a prickly sensation on the finish is assuaged by the luxurious mouthfeel. **99** —*M.M.*

Michter's 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$130)

This expression's power and punch are mellowed by the signature Michter's filtration process. The heady strength of cedar closet and rancio is tempered by a soft, rich, and viscous mouthfeel with flavors of chocolate-covered peaches. Mustard seed, burnt orange peel, and flambéed marshmallow edge in on the finish. **95** —*M.M.*