

# May Spirits

BY TOM FIRTH AND LINDA GARSON

**W**AS IT JUST US, OR DID THIS PAST WINTER SEEM LONGER, COLDER, AND GENERALLY just too much? Things are looking up though as the green stuff is starting to show up just this week, rakes are out, shovels are getting put away (though maybe not too far away – just in case), and Spring is here. This month, we wanted to show off a few locally made spirits that recently caught our eyes with some real breadth of cool, unique, and quality-driven bottles. From a ready to go Old Fashioned, to amaro, and yes some of the top shelf whisky being made here at home, it's a good time to be in Alberta.

## Wild Life Distillery Wheat Whisky, Alberta

Four and half years after starting to produce whisky, Wild Life Distillery have finally released their first – and Canmore's first – whisky, Batch 001. From local wheat (61 percent), barley (26 percent), and rye (13 percent), they've created a stunner; silky smooth with a generous mouth-coating oiliness, all light brown sugar and baking spices on the first sips, leading to graham cracker pie crust and honey. Please don't add a thing, just sip and revel in this unctuous spirit. 375 mL also available.

CSPC 881267 \$76

## Romero Smoked Old Fashioned, Alberta

The quality we are seeing in pre-made cocktails - and with locally made spirits is really quite amazing. A smoked rum old fashioned, and made with the staves of their own rum barrels, this rum-based old fashioned from Romero Distilling is rich and textural with good depth and plenty of that elusive balance – and not too smoky either. Humming along at about 27 percent ABV, it's that rare product that begs the question, "why haven't we seen something like this before now?"

CSPC 883317 \$31-35

## Pivot Spirits Sour Cherry Gin Liqueur Alberta

In the tiny, Southeast Alberta hamlet of Rolling Hills (population 263), between Brooks and Taber, Pivot Spirits is an environmentally conscious, craft distillery producing vodka, gin, and unaged whiskies. They've blended their Pharmacy Gin with the juice of local sour cherries and alfalfa clover honey to produce a delightfully tart liqueur, fruity - yet with the sweet honey earthiness peeking through – it would make a terrific Martinez cocktail!

375 mL bottle also available.

CSPC 883075 \$46-52

## Confluence Distilling Altered State Gin Alberta

Confluence has had a major rebrand, with new 100 percent recycled glass bottles, removeable labels, stoppers made from only cork and charcoal (no glue) – and new products! Altered State Gin is absinthe-inspired, citrus forward and herbal on the nose, with recognisable notes of lemon, thyme, sage, oregano and wormwood. Try it neat, as a white negroni with Lillet Blanc instead of sweet vermouth, or as a vesper martini with ¼-part vodka and 1/8-part Lillet Blanc.

CSPC 888175 \$52

## Rig Hand House of Commons Speaker Rota's Canadian Whisky

A special label of Rig Hand's "Rocking R" rye whisky celebrating its selection by the House of Commons' Speaker of the House (Anthony Rota) as the "house" whisky. The first time a Canadian whisky has been selected, and while notably the UK has a long history of using their own local whiskies, it was long overdue to select a Canadian whisky. The Rocking R is 100 percent rye based, spicy and cereal driven, with lighter fruit tones and a touch chewy on the back end.

Distillery/online \$75-80

## Confluence Distilling Mandarin Amaro Alberta

As well as new branding and changing their vodka and gin to new styles, Confluence has a new product – an amaro featuring mandarin oranges. It's an easy sipping amaro, still with the expected slightly oily, viscous body that makes it slip down way too easily, and still with a goodly amount of bitterness on the finish, and using locally sourced berries too. There's a blend of herbal botanicals, with something quite earthy that grounds it – it would be wonderful in a Paper Plane cocktail!

CSPC 886033 \$45

