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READER SUBMITTED: Governor Malloy Visits Westford Hill Distillers On Northeastern Tourism Tour

Margaret Chatey, Owner, Westford Hill Distillers

Ashford

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Westford Hill Distillers, one of America's original craft distillers, hosted Connecticut advertisement Governor Dannel P. Malloy during his summer tourism tour in Northeastern Connecticut on Aug. 21. The Ashford distillery has marketed spirits it distills and produces on-site since 1998 including clear and aged brandies from Connecticut-grown fruit and Rime Organic Vodka.

The Governor and Kip Bergstrom, executive director of the Commission on Culture and Tourism toured the facility, hosted by owners Margaret and Louis Chatey, to gain an understanding of the spirit manufacturing process including sourcing materials, fermentation, distillation and marketing. Westford Hill has purchased about a million pounds of fruit since it opened, much of it Connecticut-grown pears and apples. They outlined the awards and national recognition the distillery has achieved including Best of Category for New World Aged Apple Brandy awarded by the American Distilling Institute, and Best of Show in Package Design and Gold from the Los Angeles International Wine and Spirits Competition for its unique heart-shaped Poire Prisonniere with a full-grown pear inside.

The Governor was also interested in the distillery's diversification into custom-production for other companies including PEEL Liqueurs, another Connecticut company which was awarded a Small Business Express grant from the State of Connecticut. PEEL was recently awarded Double Gold for its PEEL Bananacello Liqueur in the San Francisco Spirits Competition. Westford Hill also performs contract distillation for a number of Connecticut wineries, and Subarashii Kudamono, a large Asian Pear grower in Pennsylvania.

The Chateys talked about the role they've played in the emerging craft spirits movement and Westford Hill's inclusion in national publications including The Saveur 100, Bon Appetit Best of the U.S.A. issue, Business Week, Food & Wine, Bloomberg Markets, ZINK Fashion Magazine, DRAFT, the San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Times and USA Today.

Although Westford Hill Distillers has been a popular destination for visitors during its open houses including Walktober and Connecticut Open House Day, it is not regularly open to the public because state law has not permitted tasting on-site. Changes made by the legislature this year, however, permit tastings following tours, but no retail bottle sales. The Chateys discussed with the Governor the opportunities this new legislation might open up to the distillery for expansion of its business.

Westford Hill Distillers products are distributed throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and in California. <http://www.westfordhill.com>.

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