

NY Distilling Company: Pre-Prohibition-Inspired Spirits in Brooklyn

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Allen Katz is the co-founder of NY Distilling Company. Photo credit Doron Gild.

Before Prohibition, rye and gin ruled the shelves. At this Brooklyn distillery, they still do.

By Kelly Magyarics, DWS, CSX Editor-in-Chief



The Shanty is connected to NY Distilling Company. Photo credit NY Distilling.

Connected to NY Distilling Company, the Shanty is a full-service bar that drives home the Brooklyn producer's philosophy of spirits for the shaker. "Our spirits are designed for cocktails," says co-founder Allen Katz, who also serves as director of spirits education & mixology for Southern Wine and Spirits. "We have well over 200 bottles behind the bar, but only 5 are ours." In other words, guests who grab a stool can see not only how well NY Distilling's spirits work in drinks, but how they play with others.

The distillery, founded by Katz as well as Bill and Tom Potter, is celebrating its fourth anniversary—which happens to fall on a rather auspicious date. "We had hoped to be open long before Repeal Day [December 5], but there were hurdles and hiccups including construction delays and licensing issues," Katz explains. So, they ended up opening on the same date that in 1933 Prohibition was overturned. "We thought that would add a celebratory note to the excitement."

One look at NY Distilling's portfolio and you will see a focus on gin and rye—spirits that thrived in the pre-Prohibition Golden Age of the Cocktail, and ones that have made a comeback during the current classic cocktail revival. Though this renaissance is only fifteen or so years old, Katz points out it was spurred from renewed interest in food, wine and craft beer. From a gastronomical standpoint, cocktails are authentically American, so it follows naturally to make craft spirits that are ready to be used in libations.

Katz and team produce three gins, including **Dorothy Parker Gin**, an American-style gin with a blend of classic and contemporary botanicals like juniper, hibiscus, citrus, cinnamon and elderberry. "It works well in Gin Sours that are bracing and refreshing, all the way across to the Negroni." **Perry's Tot** is produced in a Navy strength style; its higher proof means the "ginniness" isn't lost in drinks like the Gimlet. "A little goes a long way, the boldness comes through."

A third offering, **Chief Gowanus New Netherlands Gin**, was the result of famed author and spirits historian David Wondrich's unearthing a recipe from an early twentieth century manual for a typical Dutch spirit. "The kicker was that they were making it with rye." Katz followed suit, and the gin, aged three to five months in used rye barrels, has spicy pepper notes along with juniper, hops and other botanicals. "The ingredients are straightforward, simple and uncomplicated; you taste all of them in the finished spirit." Sure it can be sipped neat, but Katz also likes to use it in an Improved Holland Old Fashioned, genever-based drinks and seasonal punches.



Speaking of oak-aged spirits, the goal for NY Distilling's **Ragtime Rye** was to maintain a balance of wood with all of the other components. "A lot of American whiskeys that are aged twelve months in small barrels have an overwhelming sense of wood in the front palate through the finish." For a more nuanced approach, their whiskey is aged a minimum of three years in full-size, American white barrels. Giving the barrels time to undergo seasonal weather expands and contracts the staves, meaning the final product has subtle oak that works in tandem with spice, fruit and other aromas and flavors. "The glorious result is rye in the nose and front palate unlike any other rye, and a honeyed quality." Katz says it's fine on its own and is also great in Whiskey Sours and Manhattans. Just released in September, this year's allotment is already gone.

A younger version of their rye goes into **Mister Katz's Rock and Rye**, a style of spirit that dates back to the mid nineteenth century where rye is mixed with rock candy sugar. Theirs also has Bing cherries, dried orange peel and cinnamon bark, and bottled at 65 proof. "It's immensely versatile as a shot with a beer, on the rocks or as an elaborate cocktail ingredient," says Mr. Katz himself. (Some believe it's also a cure-all elixir for sore throats and other ailments.)

The current goal is to keep consistency with their gins, and to put as much whiskey down as possible. The team arrives from various areas of the spirits business, but they all get satisfaction out of producing spirits with a signature stamp. As Katz puts it, "it's the idea of contributing in our own way to contemporary cocktail culture with an eye on the past, while keeping an eye out on what has changed."

NY Distilling's Dorothy Parker Gin is featured in CSX's Ultimate Gin & Tonic Cocktail Kit. Find more information [HERE](#).

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