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7 BOURBONS THAT ARE PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

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Posted on Sep 13, 2016



You're doing what with my bourbon now? Each of the following bottles pushes the envelope in one way or another, without straying so far that it's no longer bourbon. From bacon-infused to regional variations that highlight local pride to unusual touches like a Madeira finish, here are some boundary-pushing bourbons to try right now.

1. OL' MAJOR BACON FLAVORED



This Nashville-made whiskey (\$25) lays claim as the first commercial bourbon infused with bacon (the real stuff, not artificial flavoring). It mixes vanilla and mesquite-like smoke on the palate, but the real action is in the aroma, which smells remarkably similar to raw bacon. Mmmm, bacon.

2. RED HANDED



Austin's Treaty Oak Distilling took a creative approach, barreling this blend of whiskeys (\$30) "from across the country" (Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky), in new American oak casks with seasoned staves, then "aged in the hot Texas sun." We're hoping that a bourbon incorporating all 50 states is up next.

3. TRAIL'S END



It wasn't enough for Oregon's Hood River Distillers to bottle a bourbon—it had to add a little Oregon to it, aging it for a while with staves made from Oregon oak. Instead of reading as over-oaked, instead the finished whiskey (\$45) has a pleasing caramel-coconut-baking spice profile.

4. NO. 14



This Vermont Spirits bottling (\$45) is Vermont-made bourbon laced with Vermont maple syrup—sort of a bridge between straight-up whiskey and a liqueur. Look for a maple-y aroma but just a flash of sweetness on the palate.

5. WEST OF KENTUCKY NO. 1



This small-batch bourbon (\$60) hails from California wine country at Sonoma County Distilling as part of a series celebrating “California bourbon.” It’s made from corn, rye and cherry-smoked malted barley for a dry, pleasantly light sip.

6. NEW SOUTHERN REVIVAL-MADEIRA FINISH



Hailing from Charleston, S.C., this limited-edition bottling (\$70) by High Wire Distilling is made with four local heirloom grains and finished with Madeira, a fortified wine with deep Charleston history. It tastes a little bit like fruitcake in a bottle.

7. GARRISON BROTHERS TEXAS STRAIGHT



This bottling (\$80) is made with Texas corn, and you'll know this because the label spells out exactly where the corn comes from—the farm, the corn variety, the harvest year, the farmer's middle name (OK, we made that last one up), plus similarly detailed info about distillation and aging. It's a refreshing change of pace in an industry where there's often little transparency.