

# Where to Find the Best Bourbon Outside of Kentucky

by Jenny Adams July 31, 2017



Courtesy Balcones Distillery

Balcones Distillery in Waco, Texas only releases its batch of Balcones Blue Corn Bourbon once a year.

## Traveling for America's favorite spirit.

During the many essential steps to crafting a truly exquisite [bourbon](#), some things are always left up to the distiller—many feel the extreme temperatures of an August afternoon will force flavor from a barrel, for example, and others look to heirloom corn for sweetness. However, bourbon, like [Champagne](#) or Scotch, also has hard-and-fast rules attached to earn the designation. It must always be a minimum of 51-percent corn in the mash bill (the mix of grains used to make the smooth, golden spirit) and it must be aged in new charred oak. Another thing people often *think* is a rule?

“We still hear people saying it needs to also be made in Kentucky,” says Jeff Quint, owner and distiller of Cedar Ridge in Iowa. “That’s absolutely not true.”

This summer, look beyond [Kentucky](#) for our nation’s iconic spirit—from a distillery harvesting Carolina-grown ginger to another using Vermont snowstorms to impart serious flavor.

### **Balcones Blue Corn Bourbon**

*Made in...Waco, Texas*

Beyond ogling the houses from Fixer Upper, there’s another reason Waco is an excellent place to travel this fall: [Blue Corn Bourbon](#) is released once a year (in October or November), with 200-300 cases sold entirely in Texas. “We are a small-batch, ingredient-driven distillery,” says ambassador Winston Edwards. “We feel blue corn has superior flavor to white or yellow. You’ll notice a totally unique dimension...with roasted, buttery character that blue corn provides, and buttered waffle, burnt marshmallow, sweet tea and a cinnamon hit on the finish.”

### **Virgil Kaine Ginger Infused Bourbon**

*Made in...Charleston, South Carolina*

Former chefs Ryan Meany and David Szlam hung up their aprons in 2011 to produce whiskey, seeking to bring forth a premium, infused option. They source heirloom ginger from a farm less than 30 miles away for this [small-batch bourbon](#), comprising 60 percent corn and 36 percent rye. It’s infused with the raw, hot spice of hand-harvested ginger, and is never artificially or extraneously sweetened in any way—taking summer Whiskey Sours and soda-splashed Highballs to whole new levels.



Courtesy Mad River

According to Mad River in Vermont, its bourbon makes for a great Old Fashioned or Julep.

### **FEW Bourbon Whiskey**

*Made in...Evanston, Illinois*

**FEW** has been in operation since 2011, and drinkers will love this two-birds-with-one-stone option for a home bar. Fantastic spice and heat comes courtesy of a higher-than-usual rye content in the mash bill, as well as distiller Paul Hletko's use of a peppery yeast normally found in Saison beers. The result is hot and feisty, with undercurrents of sweet toffee and baking spice from the corn and oak.

### **Nelson's Green Brier Belle Meade Bourbon**

*Made in...Nashville, Tennessee*

"At the heart of our business is the philosophy of blending the old and the new," says co-owner Charlie Nelson. "We want to honor the history...but we also want to put our own twist on things." Spanish barrels create the special cask finishes of **Belle Meade**—Oloroso Sherry, XO Cognac, and Malmsey Madeira. "(The Oloroso Sherry) appeals to some Scotch drinkers and imparts a little bit of nutty, vanilla creaminess, and nice stone fruit notes," he says. "I love pairing the Sherry cask with oysters and with dessert, especially dark chocolate."



## High West American Prairie Bourbon

*Made in...Park City, Utah*

Nothing tastes better than a well-deserved bourbon after a summer hike, and the [High West](#) tasting room is literally on the ski mountain. Its ultra-aromatic American Prairie has nuances of candy corn, honey nougat, and sweet biscuits. Named for the American Prairie Reserve in [Montana](#)—a partnership to establish the largest, privately owned land preserve in America—ten-percent of profits from bottle sales are donated to the cause.



Courtesy Virgil Kane  
Virgil Kane's ginger-infused bourbon.

## Cedar Ridge Iowa Bourbon Whiskey

*Made in...Swisher, Iowa*

Where better to distill bourbon than corn country? This flyover state's [distillery](#) has 47 acres and a winery, attracting 65,000 visitors a year. "We let Mother Nature do the aging," says owner and distiller Jeff Quint, whose bourbon is the No. 3 seller in Iowa, with 74-percent corn and a gorgeous, sip-able sweetness.