

FEATURES

# Nothing but the Tarnished Truth

Tarnished Truth Distillery Company is sending a message from Virginia Beach to Kentucky: Bourbon whiskey was born in Virginia (and Hampton Roads, at that).



Credit: Joshua Fitzwater  
Tarnished Truth whiskey barrel.

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On a wall inside the [Tarnished Truth Distilling Company](#) in the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach, the following words are painted: "There are so many things that are good and right about bourbon that it pains us to have to correct an historical inaccuracy, but bourbon whiskey was born right here, in Virginia."



Contrary to popular belief, whiskey didn't originate in Kentucky, but rather in Jamestown, where corn was introduced to the settlers (corn mash is the main ingredient in bourbon whiskey). The distillery occupies the space of the hotel's former laundry room, and is carrying on the legacy of the great American distillation with its brand of bourbon and rye whiskey.



Credit: Joshua Fitzwater  
Pre-distilled bourbon samples.

Andrew Yancey and his partner Josh Canada had the idea five years ago to create a distillery in Virginia Beach.

"We wanted to offer an experience other than doing a tasting room, and once Bruce Thompson bought the hotel, it was the perfect fit. We pitched it, and he loved the idea and tying it into the Hunt Room...We challenged our branding company to give a nod to the hotel while maintaining our own identity," Canada said. "We chose The Cavalier specifically because we feel the longstanding history of the property resonates with our brand."

The Cavalier Hotel recently underwent a massive renovation, and the focus was to modernize the hotel while maintaining its charm. Now the Virginia Beach landmark is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, according to Michael Woodhead, vice president of marketing for Gold Key | PHR Hotels & Resorts.



Credit: Joshua Fitzwater  
Nine years aged bourbon whiskey.

Tarnished Truth holds the distinction of being the first and only distillery in a hotel in the United States.

"We took out the entire floor so guests could see it from the Hunt Room, and essentially designed the space around the equipment and built around it," said Yancey. "Guests cannot only look and see everything, but they can smell the mash as well."

Visitors can take either an hourly or a private tour, partake in flight tastings, and the tasting room is available for private events.



The craftsmanship that goes into the bourbon can be noted from the local grains used (from Renwood Farms, located outside Williamsburg), to the stills used for distilling which are made by the highly regarded Vendome Copper and Brass Works, which has been in operation since the early 1900s.



Credit: Joshua Fitzwater  
Vendome Copper and Brass Works still.

In addition, Tarnished Truth has brought in Larry Ebersold, a master distiller who worked for Seagram's for more than 35 years, to spearhead the distilling process.

As Canada puts it: "He comes in for quality control."

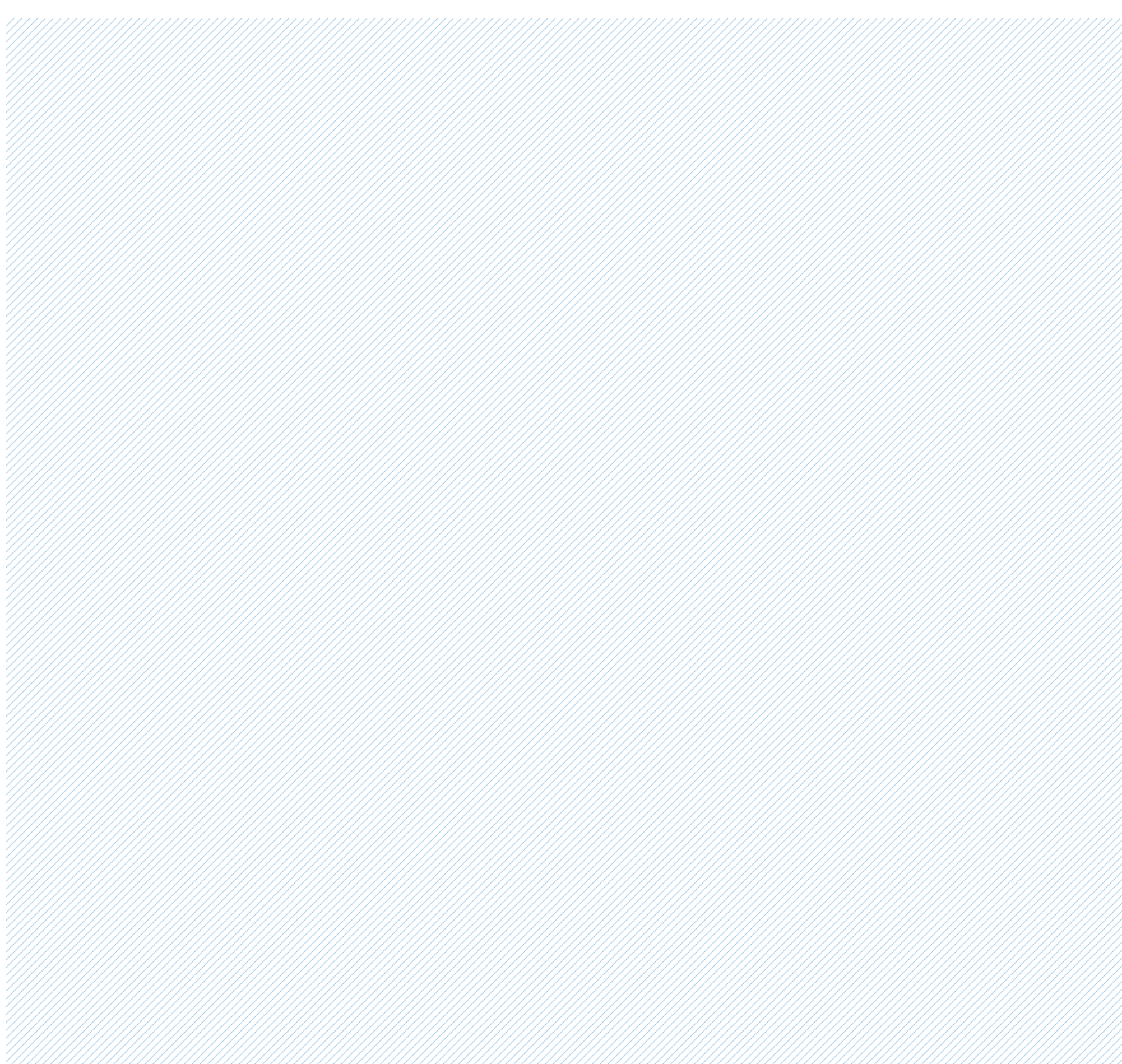
The 500-gallon systems produce four barrels per week, and the response to the bourbon has been remarkable. The nine-year bourbon sold out in three hours, The single barrel Cavalier Bourbon will be released on Saturday, March 31; it is expected to sell out as well.

The combination of the demand for Tarnished Truth whiskey and the recent openings of several promising distilleries throughout the commonwealth may mean that Virginia is well on its way to reminding Kentucky were whiskey was born.

**ABOUT SOUTHERN GRIT MAGAZINE:** *Southern Grit Magazine* is a food publication based in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia and aims to open an honest dialogue about food in the region. Each issue is themed, and highlights different food-related issues within that theme. Southern Grit features recipes and reviews as well as more creative content spinning off each theme.

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