

Fri. 19 Feb '10  
*Spirits* | NATIONAL

## Not Potato

*Vodka grows some local roots*

Vodka has been working on an image change.

For years, cocktail snobs and mixologists have been bemoaning vodka's increasingly bland and ubiquitous flavor. However, thanks to a few inventive distillers, the spirit is making a comeback. The latest bold invention: Vodka-makers have thrown out the wheat-and-potato rule book, looking to local ingredients for nuanced, *terroir*-driven results.



**Vermont White and Vermont Gold** (St. Johnsbury, VT) Noting the abundance of maple trees and dairy cows in their midst, the distiller at Vermont Spirits smartly took to harnessing these wellsprings for their vodka: The triple-distilled White label relies on pure milk sugar to impart an incredibly smooth, slightly sweet flavor. Its Gold sibling is dairy-free, using sugar created from local maple sap to give it a slight butter scotch-like profile.

**Apia Artisan Vodka** (Portland, OR) Inspired by a long family history of distilling vodka from mead -- or honey wine -- in Russia, distillers at Portland's Artisan Spirits tapped local Buzzing Canyon Apiary for the honey for this handcrafted spirit. Apia has a rich mouthfeel and pleasant sweetness, with lingering notes of -- you guessed it -- honey.

**Pau Maui Vodka** (Maui, HI) The thought of a pineapple-based vodka might make some cringe, but although the mash for this vodka's fermentation is made with the fruit's fresh juices, the spirit doesn't have any cloying sweetness or Technicolor hues. On the contrary, the resulting vodka is crystal clear with an incredibly pure flavor.

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