

# Quick Looks

## Vermont Vodka

By KIM J. GIFFORD

Photography by JON GILBERT FOX

Quechee, Vt.  
05059

When the average person hears the word vodka, Vermont may not readily come to mind. But Vermont Spirits, a Quechee-based distillery, has been working hard to change this.

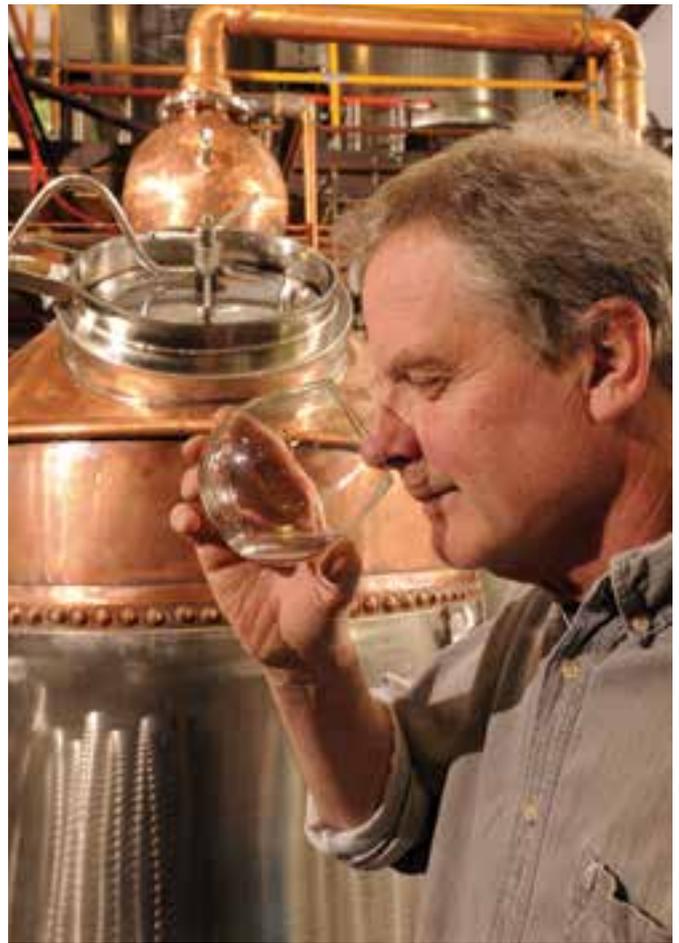
Producer of award-winning vodkas Vermont Gold and Vermont White, Vermont Spirits originated in Barnet, Vt., in 1999. In 2010, the business moved its entire operation — including the building, which it dismantled and rebuilt at the Quechee Gorge Village plaza. Visitors to the popular Quechee Gorge Village complex are familiar with artisan products and the ability to sample fine food and drink such as Putney Mountain wines and Cabot cheese, but vodka is something new and unusual.

Vermont Spirits General Manager Mimi Buttenheim explains that as laws

have loosened over the years, more distilleries have sprung up in Vermont. She estimates there are now 15 distilleries and four non-wine tasting rooms in the state, with Vermont Spirits being one of the largest.

Visitors browse the retail store, which carries everything from Fees' bitters to Bloody Mary mixes and just about "anything bar related," says Buttenheim. When able, the company prefers to carry local products and relies on local businesses such as Allen Olmstead Furniture, which built their bar from reclaimed barn wood and walnut, and Pierre Duchamre of Graniteville, who specializes in metal fabrication and built their copper still.

Tourists from Texas and Washington, D.C., ask questions ranging from price to how best to transport the beverage home (it can be placed in checked luggage on the plane with special packaging available for purchase onsite). They listen to Jeremy Herrell's interesting speech on the product and distillation



Harry Gorman checks product from the still in the distillery, which can be seen from the showroom and tasting room.

process, followed up by a tasting. The retail shop overlooks the distillery, where an easy-to-follow storyboard explains the creation process.

Most vodkas are made from potatoes and grains, but Vermont Spirits uses what is on hand — sugar in the form of maple and dairy. Vermont Gold, made from Vermont maple syrup, was their first product and Vermont White, made from whey, their second. Both have won



# Treating Best Friends

several awards, but one of the most impressive was Vermont Gold's 2004 win in Moscow as the Best American Vodka.

"People ask which is most popular, but it is 50/50. They are so different," Buttenheim says. Vermont White has a more neutral profile, a creamy texture, and "leaves a bit of sweetness on the mid-palette," she says. She recommends using it with any mixed drink, calling it "very versatile."

Vermont Gold is the vodka of preference for those who like their drinks on the rocks or martinis. "Although it has a maple aroma (or nose), it is not maple flavored, leaving instead traces of butter-scotch on the palette," says Buttenheim.

The business originated with a group of friends in Barnet where they had their own sugar bush. It grew steadily, taking in outside investors. Today, the business employs eight, including distillers Harry Gorman and Joe Buswell. This year, the company will release its first gin, the first of three whiskeys, and an apple brandy, aged five years.

Vermont Spirits creates its products through a batch distillation process relying on glass fractioning column stills. The copper still is for products such as whiskey and brandy. Batch distillation, as opposed to the more industrial continuous distillation, allows for more impurities such as methyl alcohol and acetone (normally called "the heads") to be filtered out, leaving the desired "heart of the run."

"Our two products are really good and that's what drives us. It's very different from what's on the market. It's a craft product and there's a big difference between craft distillation and industrial distillation," says Buttenheim.

Learn more at [www.vermontspirits.com](http://www.vermontspirits.com)



**NORWICH REGIONAL  
ANIMAL HOSPITAL**  
*We are here for you*



802-296-CARE (2273) • [norwichvet@gmail.com](mailto:norwichvet@gmail.com) • [www.norwichanimal.com](http://www.norwichanimal.com)

*Just 1 Mile South of King Arthur Flour on Route 5*



**systems plus**  
Discover reliability.

800.388.8486  
603.643.5800

## When your business needs:

Proven technology that meets your business goals and fits your budget

Assured protection for your business data

Safe network connectivity

AND cost-effective IT services backed by a team of experienced, certified system engineers

Find it all at Systems Plus



## Business Services Team

Systems Engineers  
A+, MCI/TP, Network+, ACTC



Hanover - 5 East South Street | Lebanon - 12 Centerra Market | [www.systemsplus.com](http://www.systemsplus.com)