

Portland Distilled

Next weekend, October 24th and 25th, Portland will host The Fifth Annual Great American Distillers Festival, with tastings and events featuring craft distillers and bartenders from across the country. This year, the festival will be held in the midst of “Distillery Row,” at the Bossanova Ballroom on East Burnside.

Small-batch distillers like Tuthilltown Spirits, the first whiskey distillery to open in New York since prohibition, will sample their line up of liquors—theirs are made from raw grain and fruit from their distillery farm. But the true stars of the show will be the lot of local talent. Portland is now considered the “mecca” of craft distilling, leading the nation with nine independent distilleries. Many of the city’s spirit makers use local ingredients as the base for their distillations, too. Artisan Spirits, for instance, creates two highly quaffable varieties of vodka: one is a distillation of raspberry blossom honey from an apiary outside of Eugene, Oregon; the other is from Washington Syrah.

For attendees, the festival will be a two-day maceration in liquor. Not to worry, though—the distillers will offer petite samples, served neat, of vodka, gin, whiskey, bourbon, rye, rum, absinthe, aquavit, and flavored liqueurs. And aside from the tastings, seminars on spirits will dominate Sunday’s festivities. Seminar topics include: A History of the Cocktail, Portland’s Tiki Bar Tradition, and The Relationship Between Distillers and Mixologists.

One of the event’s biggest draws is the Mixmaster Mixology Competition. Twenty-four talented bartenders will attempt to create a superlative cocktail for the judges, and attendees have an opportunity to sample. Most of the competitors are members of the Oregon or Washington Bartenders Guild. However, mixologists from New York City, New Orleans, and San Francisco are traveling here to shake it up for a chance at the \$1,000 first-place prize.

A one-day festival pass offers three tasting tickets and access to the seminars and competition for \$10. The two-day pass includes six tasting tickets at \$16. For more information, check out distillersfestival.com.