

imbibe

LIQUID CULTURE

PLUS:

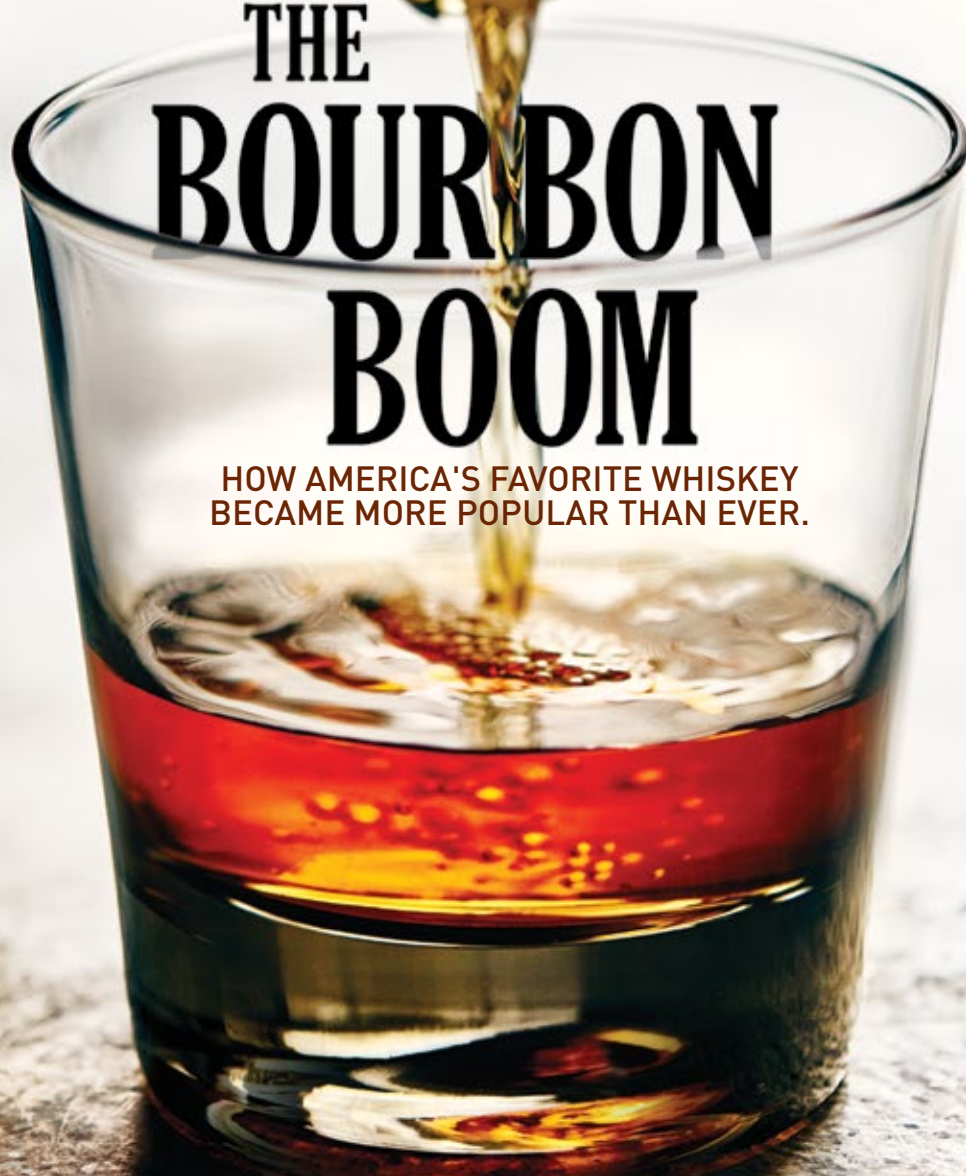
ELEMENTS:
BLANC VERMOUTH

COLD-BREW
COFFEE GEAR

GIN & TONIC CAKE

THE BOURBON BOOM

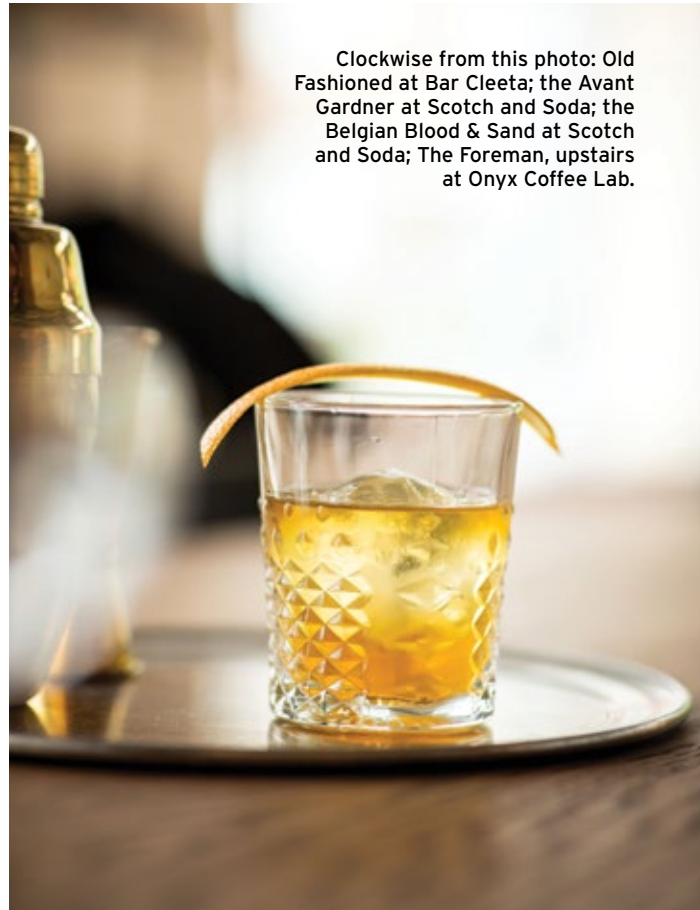
HOW AMERICA'S FAVORITE WHISKEY
BECAME MORE POPULAR THAN EVER.



Bentonville, Arkansas

In an ironic twist for the city that's home to the world's second-largest retailer, small business is booming in Bentonville. Snuggled into Arkansas' northwest shoulder, Bentonville has a population of approximately 50,000—including many drawn by positions with the retail giant Walmart, whose founding family successfully campaigned for Benton County's recent transition from dry to wet in 2012. "There's a fluidity of customers seeking different kinds of experiences, and with the influx of corporate recruitment, there're a lot of people seeking to have fun and experience what the region has to offer," says Jon Allen, who co-founded Onyx Coffee Lab with partner Andrea Allen. This has allowed venues to experiment unrestrained, he adds. "Cafés and bars are thriving while maintaining their creative expression." Here, Allen shares some of the area's go-to spots.

By Emma Mannheimer



Clockwise from this photo: Old Fashioned at Bar Cleeta; the Avant Gardner at Scotch and Soda; the Belgian Blood & Sand at Scotch and Soda; The Foreman, upstairs at Onyx Coffee Lab.

Bar Cleeta

Modus Operandi: Bar Cleeta is just a year old and already "has the best wine list in Arkansas," says Allen, who calls the restaurant a "must-visit for the food-curious exploring Northwest Arkansas." The inclusive list from co-owner Weisi Basore—with husband, Trae, holding down the kitchen—looks to shake up the area's current focus on big Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon producers with bottles from Chile and Sicily, alongside those from smaller winemaking regions in Maryland and Texas. The cocktail list is just as appealing, with classic foundations spawning Southern-inspired sips like the Forefathers, an Old Fashioned spin made with sweet tea oleo saccharum and peach bitters. **Coordinates:** 110 NW 2nd St., Ste. 110 // 479-553-7006 // barcleeta.com

Scotch and Soda

Modus Operandi: Two hundred single malt scotches, 125 bourbons, and 35 rye whiskeys make up the lion's share of Scotch and Soda's bottle selection. With an initial location in Springfield, Missouri, Scotch and Soda opened a Bentonville hub in 2015, when the town's cocktail scene was still in its infancy. "Northwest Arkansas is a dense region with a bright future," says bar owner Joshua Widner. In addition to a cocktail list filled with reliable classics and inviting originals, Scotch and Soda works with its Bentonville neighbors on projects including barrel-aged beers and cold-brew cocktails. **Coordinates:** 121 W Central Ave. // 479-319-6874 // thescotchandsoda.com

Markham & Fitz

Modus Operandi: At specialty chocolatier Markham & Fitz, "the smell of chocolate permeates the space," Allen says, with the sound of "cocoa beans grinding, mixers whirring, and cocktails being shaken." Within the dessert bar and café, visitors can sip cocktails reimagined with cocoa, alongside dessert wines and cocoa husk teas—all while chocolate production occurs behind glass in the next room. "Morning or night, Markham & Fitz has something for everyone." **Coordinates:** 801 SE 8th St., Ste. 45 // 479-235-6236 // markhamandfitz.com

Onyx Coffee Lab

Modus Operandi: With outposts in downtown Bentonville and Fayetteville, Onyx opened the doors of its newly minted headquarters in neighboring Rogers last summer. The 30,000-square-foot building houses the company's roastery, bakery, and coffee school. Upstairs, there's cocktail bar The Foreman, where bartenders spin drinks like the Squall, a 50:50 Danish-inspired Martini riff made with aquavit and Byrrh, while the attached restaurant Heirloom at the 1907 accompanies dishes with buzzy wines in an intimate wood-paneled setting. **Coordinates:** 101 E Walnut St., Rogers // 479-899-6750 // onyxcoffeelab.com

Ozark Beer Company

Modus Operandi: "Ozark Beer Company puts out beer that represents the best of Arkansas," says Allen. "'Hard Work, Honest Beer' is their motto, and OBC's beer is found on tap at essentially every establishment you'd want to eat or drink." From Ozark Lager to the Suspended Disbelief hazy pale ale to the silky Cream Stout, Ozark pours local favorites in their current Rogers taproom and brewery, which opened in 2016. **Coordinates:** 109 N Arkansas St., Rogers // 479-636-2337 // ozarkbeercompany.com



Clockwise from left: Phillip Thomas/Novo Studio, Whitney Barclay, courtesy of Porter & Sall, Keetun Pierce

“I’ve become very proud of the adventurous atmosphere our area has adopted so quickly.”

— JON ALLEN

Shaker & Spoon

Bar-quality craft cocktails in the comfort of your home.



shakerandspoon.com/imbibe
for \$10 off your first box