

MOVE OVER KENTUCKY

MUCKLEYEYE SPIRITS ARE HERE



Story

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Photo Credit

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The first full service farm distillery in New Jersey is about to become a reality in our own backyard, thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of Colts Neck's Geoff Karch.



For more information, visit coltsneckstillhouse.com.

Unlike the existing industrial warehouses, The Colts Neck StillHouse (StillHouse) will offer cocktails, tours, tasting and events in the brand-new facility at 300 Route 34 South. Why MuckleyEye? Geoff explained, "This is a term my grandfather used for those moments of discovery, joy and enthusiasm. He'd scream out, 'Holy Muckleyeye!'...a word of exuberance that matched the level of my passion for what I'm doing. Hopefully people will say 'Holy MuckleyEye' at the end of the experience." This proclamation captures the core of the distillery's motto: Each product is made with white-knuckle enthusiasm and exuberant pride.

This is an all new venture for the family. Geoff and Maryann raised their children Lillie and Harrison in Colts Neck while Geoff worked at his career in television advertising sales. He began to seriously consider trying his hand at distilling. "It's a passion I've had. I did a little home brewing and I always wanted to make something with my own two hands. It's a very new industry in New Jersey relative to other states, particularly out west. When I open I think there will be approximately fifteen or so craft distilleries in New Jersey." As a craft distillery, StillHouse is legally bound to distill no more than 20,000 gallons per year.

By 2015, his plan was underway and he broke ground in 2017 after the extensive permit process. The StillHouse is designed similar to a distilling focal point in Kentucky known as Moonshine University. His architect worked with Kentucky engineers, and Amish crews constructed the facility and the indoor bar. But the physical facility is only part of the journey to making his dream a reality. The transformation from an advertising executive to a distiller also took time and energy. "I went through a really intensive training camp in the distilling epicenter located in Louisville, Kentucky which is the home of bourbon whiskey. I learned a lot of the Kentucky secrets. I formed my recipes there and my technique and learned how to run my equipment. I have a set of advisors there who are still on my

board so if I need help or advice, they are there. The rest of the learning was from self-study."

Soon, visitors will be surprised by the variety of spirits being created at The StillHouse. While bourbon and other whiskeys are certainly a focus, guests will also enjoy rum, several styles of gin, vodka and flavored "moonshines", such as apple and pecan pie for the holiday season. Distilling will be on premises and, where possible, using local ingredients. Area farms have already been enlisted to grow the necessary corns, ryes and other grains. Geoff noted that there are approximately 250 styles of bourbon made by about thirteen major manufacturers currently. This mass production is accomplished in a very commercial way using column stills. Geoff acknowledged that while they make a great clean spirit, The StillHouse products will be distinctive. Distilling truly is an art. "Mine are going to taste a little different. They are made with a single pot still, a 250-gallon pot still made in Kentucky. Our gin will have a unique flavor too. Gin has to be juniper forward to be labeled as gin. We will use hints of local botanical flavors, including local cranberry and rosemary."

The StillHouse is permitted to serve cocktails in its tasting room and to sell up to six bottles to an individual. It also is allowed to sell to liquor stores and restaurants. Only its own products may be served and sold and this suits the Karches just fine. Geoff emphasized, "Our philosophy is really hyper local. The main aim is to service the local community and be a quality artisanal experience."

The StillHouse will surely become a destination. "We want to make it a truly memorable experience so people will be transported back to a time, pre-prohibition, when there were about 10,000 small distilleries in the U.S., all making their own local products. We are using pots similar to those used 100 years ago. Visitors will come to see the essence of how that all happened, and will taste the products they learn about. We want them to experience the distillery and just have fun."