

One of Thirstie partner store [Atlantic Cellars](#)' missions is to showcase locally- and domestically-made spirits, and the store held a "book signing and booze drinking" on Saturday in service of that mission. [Heather Dolland](#) signed copies of her book "[Discovering the New York Craft Spirits Boom](#)", all about New York State distillers, and three Brooklyn distillers provided samples of their products. Kevin and Stacey Herson poured their [Doc's Spirits](#) absinthe, Jackie Summers of [Jack from Brooklyn](#) shared his Sorel liqueur, and Bridget Firtle of [The Noble Experiment](#) offered her Owney's NYC Rum, and mixologist Micaela Piccolo of Thirstie shook up original cocktails and handed out Thirstie coupon codes and swag.

Heather Dolland told Thirstie that before she had started this book project, she "had no idea that so many local distillers existed." Her [book](#), on sale at Atlantic Cellars and elsewhere, profiles thirty New York State distillers, many of whose products have just entered the market in the past few years. "We're at the beginning of a wave" with respect to New York distilling, Dolland told Thirstie, and she wanted to provide consumers with a guide to what's out there. The book also includes cocktail recipes for each distiller's products and information on where to find the spirits. One chapter consists of an interview with Ralph Erenzo, founder and distiller of [Tuthilltown Spirits](#)' Hudson Whiskey, one of the more prominent New York craft distillers. "I said to Ralph, you have a rearview mirror that most people don't have," says Dolland. "What would you tell people who are just starting out, and what advice would you have?"

Kevin and Stacey Herson, the husband-and-wife team behind Doc's Spirits, brought their [absinthe](#), and served it both on the rocks and as a highball with seltzer and a lemon twist. Their absinthe is crisp, clean, and very flavorful, without the thick sweetness that characterizes some other liqueur-like absinthes, or a pronounced anise note. (I'm not an anise fan myself, but I enjoyed the complex herbal flavor of their absinthe.) In their distillery -- the first absinthe distiller in New York City, ever -- they use New York-grown malted barley and spelt, yeast, sugar, and New York City tap water to make their spirit, and distill it with grand wormwood, anise, fennel, whole dried lemons, and other herbs in a pot still. After distilling, they cold-macerate other herbs with the spirit for additional flavor and color before bottling the result at a hefty 132 proof. (No artificial colors or flavors here!) Kevin Herson told Thirstie that he experimented for eight months before settling on the absinthe's eventual formula, mostly working by combinations of smells from the various herbal ingredients.

Jackie Summers brought his wonderful [Sorel](#), a spiced hibiscus liqueur that's great with ginger beer (Summers recommends the Brooklyn-made Q Ginger Beer, made with all-natural ginger and cane sugar, for its bite and purity of flavor) or in cocktails. It works well in gin rickeys, in Margaritas replacing triple sec, or even as a substitute for sweet vermouth in a Manhattan. Summers told Thirstie that Sorel is based on the alcoholic hibiscus-tea concoctions served up in Barbados, "where they put alcohol in everything!" He sources his spices from all over the world -- cloves from Brazil, cassia and nutmeg from Indonesia, ginger from Nigeria, hibiscus flowers from Morocco -- but uses a spice importer from Brooklyn.

In the summer of 2011, Bridget Firtle decided it was time for a change. She abandoned her hedge-fund lifestyle and poured her life savings into The Noble Experiment, where she produces the delicious [Owney's NYC Rum](#). Made from just three ingredients: sugar cane molasses from Florida and Louisiana, a proprietary yeast blend, and filtered NYC water, Owney's is grassy, funky, and intensely flavorful. It works well in everything from an El Presidente to a Rum Negroni, but Firtle shook it up with lemonade and fresh mint for a refreshing drink on a hot summer afternoon.

Also served at the Atlantic Cellars event was the original creation, the "What's Up Doc's", incorporating all three featured spirits together with [Q Ginger Beer](#) for an entirely Brooklyn-produced cocktail. Rinse a cocktail glass with Doc's Spirits absinthe, then combine equal parts Owney's NYC Rum, Sorel, and Q Ginger Beer, stir, and garnish with a freshly spanked mint sprig. Aromatic, spicy, herbal, and complex -- as multifaceted as New York itself.











NEW YORK
DISCOVERING THE
New York
CRAFT SPIRITS BOOM
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