

# Whisky

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# Distillations

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## 48 Hours in Boston

BY LIZA WEISSTUCH

There is a small board at the entrance of **Citizen Public House and Oyster Bar** that announces the Dram of the Day. Usually it's a sleeper hit, like Tyrconnell Madeira Cask, which was the case one Wednesday in early summer. But even if the thought of tasting that dram lures you inside, there's a strong chance that you'll pause before you order, distracted by the giant chalkboard on the wall that lists over 200 bottles by region. The whiskeys that will probably captivate your attention most quickly, though, are listed under "Hand Selected." Beverage director Joy Richard says they always have at least six custom bottlings.

Citizen is modeled on an old English pub: all dark woods, fireplace, and rugs. It's located in the shadow of Fenway Park, the historic baseball stadium that sits smack in the middle of the urban bustle. While Red Sox fans rally with pitchers of Bud Light and Sam Adams in neighboring bars, you can relish the bar's subdued setting and indulge in an expertly mixed Manhattan or a flight of rye whiskeys. And don't miss the jar of house beef jerky on the bar.

This pub is just one of several new spots that have staked claims on land that was once the exclusive domain of sports bars and shabby Irish pubs. **Sweet Cheeks Q**, just a few blocks away, is another. Make it your dinner stop. Not only is it a standout in the neighborhood, it's a noteworthy joint by Boston standards. Arguably, it's the only place in town that does barbecue right.

Chalk that up to owner and chef Tiffani Alison, a veteran of Boston kitchens and an alum of Bravo's "Top Chef." She spent part of her childhood in Texas, and she's quick to point out that little goes better with ribs and brisket than American whiskey.

"Any time you have fattier meats that are hick, smoky, unctuous, and rich, you need



Krystyna Moroney pours a flight of Irish whiskeys at The Plough & Stars.





Left: Patrons consider the whisky wall at Citizen Public House; right, top: Bully Boy Distillers' Will and Dave Willis; below, filling up at Bully Boy.

something strong to cut through it,” says Faison. “Also, the vanilla and caramel notes work well with meats.”

Once you settle in with your tray of southern grub, you’re more likely than not to yield to temptation and order a second helping of the famously fluffy biscuits, another House Bill 819— their mint-accented signature cocktail made with tea-infused white whiskey—and so on. Best to trundle back to the hotel for a solid night’s sleep. You’ll need an early start in the morning.

First stop: **Bully Boy Distillers**. Situated in the Newmarket District, a gritty industrial plot on the outskirts of Boston, you’ll wander past warehouses and garages until you catch a few wafts of something sweet and roasty

coming from a nondescript warehouse. Brothers Will and Dave Willis, who grew up on a farm west of Boston, have opened the first distillery to produce whiskey in the city since Prohibition. The space is outfitted with two column stills that are used to produce vodka, rum, and whiskey. Jars and jugs filled with experiments, like a medley of orange peel, Szechuan peppers, and hibiscus marinating in white whiskey line the cluttered counters. While their white whiskey, made with a mash predominantly of wheat, has been available since they launched in 2010, their 2 year old aged product made its debut in November.

You’d do well to pick up a bottle at the source, but if you have a yen for serious shopping, check out **Federal Wine & Spirits**,

especially if you delight in an unusual find or two. Holding court at this unassuming sliver of a shop, which sits a mere two blocks from the historic South Church, is Joe Howell, an aficionado of the highest order. With a treasure trove of single malts open for sampling, he’ll guide you to a whiskey that strikes your fancy.

You’ll work up an appetite hauling your new acquisitions around, so drop them off at your home base before you scoot across the Charles River to Cambridge. If the weather is agreeable, you can stroll across what’s known as the Mass Ave. Bridge. Follow Mass Ave., a main artery, through the impressive M.I.T. campus and directly into the oh-so-hip Central Square.

There you’ll want to slip into **Moksa**, a slick yet decidedly unpretentious Asian-fusion





On left: Chef-owner Tiffani Faison of Sweet Cheeks Q; right: whiskeys at “The Plough.” Below: where Cooley was born at The Plough.

bistro that turns out inventive cocktails. Some drinks might seem experimental, what with unusual ingredients like a kaffir lime leaf/hibiscus syrup, but every formulation is rooted in timeworn classics. The Rose Water Spritz, for instance, is a Manhattan on a garden tour. The fortifying Four Roses-based cocktail substitutes Byrrh and Cocchi Americano, two bright variations on vermouths, for the classic Italian style; it’s served in a glass spritzed with rose water, which enhances the violet notes in the Byrrh.

By now you’re thinking, “Boston and Cambridge are among America’s oldest cities. Where’s the history?” It’s true; whiskey practically begs to be sipped in timeless surroundings. But let’s remember: today’s tendencies, tomorrow’s traditions.

That said, when you’re ready for some classic pub grub, head further down Mass Ave. to a joint the legions of regulars call “The Plough.” Like so many Irish pubs with storied histories, **The Plough & Stars** looks ordinary, and is relatively young, dating only to 1969, but its whiskey history is already remarkable. This is where, in the 1970s, an Irish ex-pat studying down the street at Harvard—John Teeling—met fellow countryman Willie

McCær, an M.I.T. student. At these tables, they latched a plan to buy Locke’s, a shuttered Irish distillery, reawaken it, and call it Coole Today, owner Jennifer Lockwood is a veritable whiskey evangelist, converting legions of drinkers to Connemara, Greenore, and Cooley’s other small batch beauties. McCær still drops in whenever he’s in town.

The Plough seems designed for lounging, with plush burgundy curtains, dark wood furniture, Christmas lights, live music, and menu of Gaelic soul food. If it’s old world grit you’d rather encounter, **J.J. Foley’s** is a must-errry Foley—grandson of the eponymous Jeremiah J.—or one of Jerry’s sons is

regularly behind the bar in a crisp white shirt and tie, doling out drafts and shots to a crowd that trickles in from faraway construction sites and nearby precincts, from municipal offices and music schools. It’s 104 years old, and full of scuffed furniture. Every scuff tells a story. Every story was new when it was told: today’s tendencies, tomorrow’s traditions. Maybe you’ll see a new one start while exploring the tightly curling streets of these towns.

**Citizen Public House and Oyster Bar**

1310 Boylston Street, Boston, 617-450-9000

**Sweet Cheeks Q** 1381 Boylston Street, Boston, 617-266-1300

**Bully Boy Distillers** 35 Cedric Street, Boston, 617-442-6000 (Call to schedule a tour.)

**Federal Wine & Spirits** 29 State Street, Boston, 617-367-8605

**Moksa** 450 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, 617-661-4900

**The Plough & Stars** 912 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, 617-576-0032

**J.J. Foleys Irish Pub** 117 East Berkeley Street, Boston, 617-728-9101

