

PastE

Bully Boy Distillers Bottled Old Fashioned Review

By Jim Vorel | October 15, 2015 | 3:27pm

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RATING

8.0



Pre-mixed, bottled cocktails are a pretty tough sell for me. Especially with classic whiskey cocktails like a Manhattan or an old fashioned, it seems fairly pointless—these are three-ingredient drinks that take 60 seconds to prepare anyway. They're not very complicated, and the “pre-mixed” version has more likely than not taken this opportunity to add other unsavory elements to the finished product as well. Primary suspect? Copious amounts of sugar.

My interest was piqued, though, when I read the press material on Bully Boy Distillers' bottled Old Fashioned. Three ingredients, as it should be: Whiskey, bitters, sugar. A respectable ABV, at 35.7%. A promise of a drink that is “not too sweet, not too dry, and with enough bitters to create perfect harmony in a glass.” It seemed worth investigating, and what I found was a capable old fashioned that restores just a little bit of my faith in the possibility of high quality pre-mixed cocktails.

On the nose it's quite aromatic and assertive, and the bitters in particular really pop. I've made many old fashioned and Manhattans at home, but I don't think I've ever had the spicy, medicinal/cola/fruity/herbal essence of Angostura pop quite so strongly, which makes me wonder just how much was used in the creation of this old fashioned—presumably more than the “one or two drops” called for in a classic old fashioned recipe. Regardless, it makes for a complex bouquet that suggests a fairly dry drink.

On the palate, this old fashioned is unsurprisingly sweeter, although by no means cloying. It drinks fairly easily, but it doesn't come off as a product where drinkability was the only goal in mind to the extent that they've completely sacrificed the burn. It's difficult to judge without having previously sampled Bully Boy's American Straight Whiskey used in the drink's construction, which makes the whiskey itself the biggest question mark and arguably the most indistinct of the flavors involved. Once again, the bitters assert themselves with a complex array of herbal and spice elements, amplified by the moderate sweetness. They stop just short of overshadowing the drink, but are definitely the star players.

The bottle suggests serving this cocktail with ice, but after sampling it both ways I believe I might stick to drinking it “neat” in the future. Having already been reduced in strength a bit to 35.7% ABV, the ice feels like it further dilutes the clarity of the whiskey impression in particular. I couldn't help but wonder if it might not have been slightly more assertive were the drink made with a higher-proof base whiskey as a starter.

Still, this is probably the first time that I've *ever* enjoyed drinking a bottled cocktail to the extent that I'll happily drink it again, which is fairly rich praise. The liquid in a bottle of Bully Boy Old Fashioned actually does drink like an old fashioned you'd make yourself—or at least one you'd make yourself if you really liked to highlight the Angostura in your drink. But regardless, kudos to the distiller for avoiding the pitfalls of creating a “cocktail-lite” drink meant to cash in on the popularity of classic whiskey cocktails.

Distillery: Bull Boy Distillers

ABV: 35.7%

Availability: 750 ml bottles, \$34.99 suggested retail price