

In Good Spirits

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Pssst....someone's making gin in Lake Bluff....really. And they're making some really incredible vodka, too.

At first, when Ron Hirasawa (proprietor at Holly's Bistro) first told me about this, it sounded like a secret....I imagined someone with a bathtub full of gin on Scranton. Maybe I was let in on an exciting undercover tip, I thought. "The couple making the best craft clear spirits I've ever tasted are Sonja and Derek Kassebaum," shared Ron. "The gin and vodka are so good (and local) that we've decided to put them into our well drinks so everyone can enjoy – even though it costs more than other brands." Well, I found the "still." Even though they like to keep things on the lowdown regarding their Lake Bluff location, it turns out it's a completely legitimate operation. And boy, what a still it is – gleaming, hand-hammered copper, custom designed to Derek's specifications by a renowned German maker. It looks like serious business.

As the first and only artisanal distillery in the Chicago area, North Shore Distillery produces superior quality spirits for the true connoisseur. Like the micro breweries and small wineries that are so popular these days, a small group of boutique distilleries are redefining the spirit world by introducing world-class batch-made products. At North Shore Distillery, their goal is to bring a discriminating personal touch and hands-on craftsmanship to the spirits they produce.

Though they didn't have any family background in the business, Derek had taken a few classes in distillation as a chemical engineering student in college. Previously an experienced engineer and entrepreneur, he was ready for a change and wanted to work at something that he could feel more passionate about. Sonja, an attorney who was most recently the Director of Human Resources at eLoyalty Corporation, apparently was convinced that this was a good idea. Derek combines old world techniques, modern engineering and artistic vision to create the distillery's products and Sonja takes care of the marketing and business end of things. Originally from Colorado, they have been married for over 14 years and live close by their Lake Bluff Distillery in Gurnee.

"It's very enjoyable for me," explains Derek. "We try to be unique and creative in what we do." Truly, their 'spirit' of enthusiasm is apparent in just one sip of that Tahitian Vanilla Vodka – you better get a bottle before everyone else does.

Martini's are fun to make and enjoy. Here are a few drink recipes from North Shore Distillery which should be 'shaken or stirred' and strained into a martini glass...

NO. 6 CLASSIC

8 PARTS DISTILLER'S GIN NO. 6
 1 PART DRY VERMOUTH
 (SWIRL VERMOUTH IN GLASS AND DISCARD)
 GARNISH WITH BLUE CHEESE STUFFED OLIVE
 OR A TWIST!

NORTH SHORE CLASSIC

SAME AS ABOVE EXCEPT SUBSTITUTE
 8 PARTS NORTH SHORE VODKA FOR THE GIN

LADY NO. 6

1 PART DISTILLER'S GIN NO. 6
 1 PART COINTREAU
 1 PART LEMON JUICE
 GARNISH WITH A LEMON TWIST!

SWEET & TARTINI

4 PARTS NORTH SHORE VODKA
 2 PARTS ORANGE JUICE
 1 PART GRAPEFRUIT JUICE
 1 PART ORANGE LIQUEUR
 GARNISH WITH AN ORANGE SLICE!



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