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THE MEN'S ISSUE

WILLIAM H. MACY

At home on the range with the award-winning actor and man of many more talents. The Californian-turned-Coloradan opens up about his next act as a folk musician and whiskey "spokesdude."

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“There is no cocktail more iconic than the Old Fashioned, the original cocktail. The spiciness of Woody Creek Rye, is perfectly balanced by the muddled fruit in this post-prohibition Old Fashioned.”
— William H. Macy

Brunello Cuccinelli virgin wool, cashmere and silk shirt-style cardigan, \$2,850, Brunello Cucinelli.

GRIT & GRAINS

In the picturesque Roaring Fork Valley of Colorado, Woody Creek Distillers channels a century-old agricultural legacy and a touch of Hollywood flair into its innovative spirits. Once known for its prolific potato fields, the region now lends its rich history to craft award-winning vodka and gin from local spuds. For Woody Creek's whiskeys, only Colorado grains are used. Woody Creek's dedication to Colorado-grown ingredients has sparked a new era of local distilling, brought into the spotlight by “spokesdude” William H. Macy. With a nod to its storied past and a vision for the future, Woody Creek Distillers captures the essence of Colorado in every bottle, proving that exceptional spirits can be distilled from both heritage and modern innovation.

by Nickolaus Hines photography by Kate Rolston & Adam Bove

More than 100 years ago, the Roaring Fork Valley around Aspen was one of the country's premier potato-growing regions. More potatoes came from the valley than all of Idaho in the 1920s, and Carbondale alone exported about 400 railroad cars filled with potatoes annually. Then, in the 1930s, more mechanized farming equipment and lower potato prices largely put a stop to the area's potato industry. That history of quality potatoes isn't forgotten at Woody Creek Distillers, however, where local potatoes are the backbone of the company's vodka and gins.

There's a reason potato farms moved to other parts of the country. Clearing rocky fields is tough work even in modern times, as is sourcing enough potatoes for a 100 percent local potato vodka that immediately racked up awards—including spirits awards not typically given to vodkas. Today, Woody Creek Distillers still uses Rio Grande potatoes for all of its unaged spirits. Some come from around the ranch in Woody Creek, while the rest come from farms in the San Luis Valley. All distillation, however, still happens just after the fresh, three-month-old potatoes are harvested in September and October.

“The ability to have products grown in Colorado was really important to us,” says Mary Scanlan, CEO of Woody Creek Distillers. The local-first ethos continues with the distillery's bourbons and ryes that use 100 percent Colorado grains. It is not just a feel-good thing to be hyper-focused on raw ingredients from Colorado. “It has a big taste impact,” Scanlan continues.

A lot of outreach, relationship building, and spreadsheets go into local sourcing that can meet the demand for Woody Creek's six spirits. “You start to understand why other distilleries take shortcuts,”

Scanlan says. “But we really believed that wasn't the way to do it,” and “there's a lot of pride in working with Colorado farmers and growers.”

Woody Creek's community-first approach was also the catalyst that led to actor William H. Macy becoming a partner and “spokesdude” for the brand.

Felicity Huffman introduced Macy to her hometown of Woody Creek when they were dating. They married in 1997 and lived in New York City and Los Angeles. When Huffman's mother died, they bought the Woody Creek house Huffman grew up in.

“When I fly to L.A., I start holding my breath,” Macy says. “And when I return to Woody Creek, I exhale. It's just a mindset.”

Huffman's family home is also how Macy's connection to Woody Creek Distillers started. Mark Kleckner, cofounder and operating partner of Woody Creek Distillers, lived next to the home and asked about planting potatoes on their fields to use for potato vodka. A friendship ensued, and Macy joined the distillery as spokesdude in 2018.

Macy was primarily a bourbon and Scotch drinker before moving to Colorado, and notes that he has “always been fascinated by distillation.” Speaking with Macy on the phone, the fascination is clear: his appreciation of Woody Creek's 100 percent rye whiskey led to a research rabbit hole about rye's role in whiskey production dating back to the Founding Fathers. “Rye whiskey was America's whiskey,” Macy says. “And now I'm crazy about it.”

Particularly, of course, the rye from Woody Creek Distillers. Macy describes the distillery and its CARL stills from the oldest distillery fabricator in Germany as “romantic” for a gearhead like himself. Visit the distillery tasting room at the right time and you might catch Macy strumming his ukulele and singing his



Macy's Old, Old Fashioned

INGREDIENTS

muddled sugar cube, Luxardo cherries, and orange slice

2 oz. Woody Creek Distillers Rye Whiskey

2 dashes angostura bitters

BUILD:

In a mixing glass, stir all ingredients with ice, strain into glass.

GLASS/ICE:

Double Old Fashioned glass over ice.

GARNISH:

Orange peel and brûléed Luxardo cherries.

WCD SPIRITS



Woody Creek Distillers
William H. Macy Reserve

A blind tasting with William H. Macy and Woody Creek experts led to this limited-run, 10-year-old reserve whiskey distilled in 2013. The bottled-in-bond spirit is 80 percent rye and 20 percent malted barley, filled with baking spice notes.



Woody Creek Distillers
Colorado Gin

A citrusy gin using lemon and orange peels, along with fresh whole limes, and Colorado lemongrass. A blend of European juniper varieties and Rocky Mountain juniper joins eight other botanicals layered on the 94-proof, 100 percent potato base spirit.



Woody Creek Distillers
Colorado Straight 100%
Rye Whiskey

Made with 100 percent Colorado Elbon rye and aged for at least four years in new American oak, this 90 proof rye has classic rye spice that stands up in cocktails, yet is smooth enough to sip neat.

WOODY CREEK DISTILLERS

drinking songs—Macy is a longtime player and is rarely without a ukulele. He posted a video playing his song about Woody Creek Tavern, of Hunter S. Thompson fame, during pandemic closures. When things reopened, he took his songs to the tasting room and events where he plays for anyone who cares to listen.

Macy’s love for Woody Creek Rye eventually led to the 2023 limited release of William H. Macy Reserve. He joined a small group of tasters to try eight samples of barrel-proof whiskey for a special bottling. Three whiskeys in particular stood out, and a second round of pours revealed a clear winner: a whiskey Woody Creek made in 2013 using an 80 percent rye and 20 percent malted barley mash bill. “I chose that, and to my great relief and pride, three of the other guys did too,” Macy says. Then, chuckling, adds, “but I’m the movie star, so we put my name on it.”

A few days after our call, Macy would head to the blind tasting for the second William H. Macy Reserve release. Naturally, Colorado rye was top of mind and he requested only straight rye barrels.

“Woody Creek has Colorado all over it,” Macy says. In addition to local base ingredients, the water is “as pure and as magnificent as it could get.”

The mountains provide more than magnificent water. Woody Creek’s gin uses lemongrass from Osage Gardens in Rifle, and part of the juniper that’s used is hand-picked Rocky Mountain juniper.

“The gin has been a bit of a labor of love,” Scanlan says. Former distiller David Matthews would gather wild juniper berries on hikes around the area, and a long process of taste-testing different batches for a gin ensued. It was a hit, and a second gin that’s naturally purple from pea flower blossoms



PICTURED: On stairs, William H. Macy and Mary Scanlan. Foreground Mark Kleckner

called Mary’s Select Gin, with a flavor profile led by Scanlan, followed. Some botanicals have to be sourced from outside the state (Colorado certainly isn’t known for its citrus), but at the core of both gins is a base of Colorado potato vodka.

Woody Creek Distillers has crossed the decade mark, and there’s plenty of quality, well-aged barrels waiting to join the ranks alongside the rye, bourbon, gins, Reserve, and vodka—whether that’s a single barrel program, a new special release, or in the next iteration of the William H. Macy Reserve. “It’s never the same thing every day,” Scanlan says.

Whatever comes next, you can bet it will be a true Colorado spirit through and through.

WOODY CREEK DISTILLERS

60 Sunset Drive, Basalt | 970.279.5110
woodycreekdistillery.com

On Mr. Macy: **RRL plaid wool sweater jacket**, \$1,200, and **Fullcount corduroy jeans**, \$335, all Berkeley Supply Company. **Brunello Cucinelli suede lace-up ankle boots**, \$1,295, Brunello Cucinelli.

SEAN KENYON AND BOTTLE PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF WOODY CREEK DISTILLERS

The Monarch

**2 oz. Woody Creek
Bourbon Whiskey**

**½ oz. Mountain Chai
tea syrup**

**2 dashes Strong-
water Aromatic
Bitters**

BUILD:

In a mixing glass, stir all ingredients with ice. Strain and pour over ice.

GLASS/ICE:

Double old fashioned and over ice.

GARNISH:

Orange peel, expressed, and Luxardo cherries.

“The Monarch is a bold spiced cocktail that is perfect for a brisk autumn evening. Woody Creek Bourbon shines while complemented by complex chai botanical notes.”
— Sean Kenyon



Raising the Bar

Sean Kenyon, a third-generation barman and restaurateur, traces his roots in hospitality back to his family’s pubs in New Jersey. With over 40 years in the industry, he has become a pillar of Denver’s bar scene, owning two of the city’s hottest cocktail spots, Williams & Graham and Occidental. Beyond his bars, Kenyon serves as the official mixologist for Woody Creek Distillers, curating exceptional cocktails with its award-winning spirits. His friendship with William H. Macy adds a unique layer to the brand—Kenyon and Macy have even motorcycled across Europe together, blending their shared love for adventure with their professional collaboration. Nationally recognized by outlets like *Food & Wine* and *Esquire*, Kenyon was named American Bartender of the Year in 2014 and American Bar Mentor of the Year in 2022. His legacy in Denver’s cocktail culture and his ongoing partnership with Macy continue to shape Woody Creek’s mission and success.

BY THE NUMBERS

VODKA

11 pounds potatoes in every bottle of Woody Creek Distillers vodka

5.3 million pounds potatoes processed by Woody Creek Distillers

WHISKEY

5 years minimum age for every whiskey bottled

100% Colorado grains used in all whiskey

GIN

17 botanicals steeped in Mary's Select

100% potato spirit base for Woody Creek Distillers gins



Iron and Resin cotton T-shirt, \$36, Iron and Resin, Stanley Marketplace, 2501 Dallas St., Ste. 268, 303.997.7917, ironandresin.com. **Rogue Territory denim jacket**, \$425, and **Red Wing Classic leather boots**, \$299.99, Berkeley Supply Company. **PT Torino denim**, \$425, Andrisen Morton. **Garrett Light “Van Buren” sunglasses**, \$445, Queen City Optical Provisions. **Frederique Constantine “Healey” automatic watch 40mm**, \$1,995, Right Time, 1485 S. Colorado Blvd., 303.691.2521, righttime.com.



Something About Mary

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz. Mary's Select Gin**
- ½ oz. Lavender Water**
- ¼ oz. Lavender Simple Syrup**
- ¼ oz. orange liquor**
- ¾ oz. lemon juice**

BUILD:
Put all ingredients into a cocktail shaker, shake, and strain.

GLASS/ICE:
Coup glass.

GARNISH:
Lavender sugar rim.

WCD SPIRITS



Woody Creek Distillers Colorado 100% Potato Vodka
Made using only Rio Grande Colorado potatoes, some estate grown in Woody Creek and others from the San Luis Valley, this is a bold, unfiltered vodka with a creamy finish that is as good neat as in a martini.



Woody Creek Distillers Mary's Select
Inspired by and with a flavor profile led by CEO Mary Scanlan, this gin tastes as good as it is fun to drink. Butterfly pea blossom creates a purple hue, and flavors of rhubarb, elderflower, and yuzu make it perfect for cocktails.



Woody Creek Distillers Colorado Straight Bourbon Whiskey
Using all-Colorado grains aged for at least four years, this 90-proof bourbon is aged in deeply charred new American oak and loaded with notes of cinnamon, caramel, oak, and honey.

BOTTLE PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF WOODY CREEK DISTILLERS