

Sip hard-to-find wine or a spirit made just for the restaurant at Legal Harborside.

Collector's Edition

SAVOR ULTRALUX AND ÜBER-RARE SPIRITS AND WINES AT THESE TOP BOSTON BARS.

BY BRANDY RAND



Belly Wine Bar

Sherry is enjoying a well-deserved moment in the spotlight these days. Two top finds hail from terroir-driven Sanlúcar de Barrameda in Andalucía in southern Spain: La Cigarrera Amontillado Viejo and Cesar Florido Palo Cortado “Peña del Aguila.” Wine director and co-owner Liz Vilardi says these two sherries are considered “sacrista,” or sacred, and so rare they were often kept only for the family or used as a dowry. The distinct climate of the region imparts a salty, oceanlike quality to the sherries, which spend 30 and 38 years, respectively, aging in solera barrels.

1 Kendall Square, Cambridge, 617-494-0968; bellywinebar.com

Catalyst

An appreciation for lesser-known regional tipples is a hallmark of Catalyst, which stocks a selection of standout rarities. Austrian distiller Hans Reisetbauer is said to make the world's best eau de vie, and his Wild Cherry is perhaps the most coveted.

300 Technology Square, Cambridge, 617-576-3000; catalystrrestaurant.com

The Hawthorne

Lured by The Hawthorne's distinction of being the only bar in the world pouring a few brands of nearly extinct Scotches, whisky enthusiasts make the pilgrimage to sample its collection of rare spirits, which includes Glenturret 18 year old and Cragganmore 21 year old.

Other highlights include Littlemill 20 year old Connoisseurs Choice, which comes from a now-shuttered distillery; 1967 Lonach Strathisla 42 year old cask strength; and Balvenie 1976 32 year old single cask, which owner Jackson Cannon calls the stuff of legend. **500A Commonwealth Ave., 617-532-9150; thehawthornebar.com**

Legal Harborside

This is the only establishment in the state where you can enjoy certain handpicked wines from its list of artisanal vintages. A focus on family-owned vineyards highlights gems like 2009 Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils Côte de Beaune Chassagne-Montrachet premier cru “Morgeot.” A collection of privately bottled spirits made just for Legal Seafoods includes a local Berkshire Mountain Distillers Ethereal gin and handpicked barrels of El Dorado 5 year old rum, Corazón de Agave Tequila Anejo, and Eagle Rare 10 year old bourbon.

270 Northern Ave., 617-447-2900; legalseafoods.com

L'Espalier

To enjoy the nearly impossible-to-find Pappy Van Winkle 23 year old bourbon, which has a cult-like following among whiskey lovers, look no further than the back bar at L'Espalier, which harbors a coveted bottle. And soon to celebrate its centennial birthday is one of the oldest cognacs available today—1914 Pierre Ferrand “Grand

Champagne” cognac. This vintage-dated spirit was distilled by women whose husbands were fighting in World War I.

774 Boylston St., 617-262-3023; lespalier.com

Papagayo

An exceptional spirit meets exquisite art in every handcrafted decanter of Clase Azul Extra Anjeo tequila. This luxurious sip hails from the Arandas region of Jalisco, Mexico, and ages for a minimum of three years in oak sherry barrels. Each decanter takes 40 days to paint and has a 24k gold label. Only 50 bottles are available in the US.

283 Summer St., 617-423-1000; papagayoboston.com

Strega Prime

Nick Varano's new upscale Italian steakhouse and its Seaport sister, Strega Waterfront, stock more than 1,000 select spirits and wines, including bottles that go back to the late 1940s and even a Madeira dating from 1900. A list of hard-to-find cult wines features a vertical of 1977 Ridge Wines signed by the winemaker and the exclusive 1969 Domaine de la Romanée Conti La Tâche from Burgundy. Scotch aficionados can try the restaurants' last remaining bottle of 28-year-old single-malt whisky Glenmorangie Pride 1981, which retails for more than \$3,000 a bottle—if you can find it.

100 Sylvan Road at Tradecenter 128, Woburn, 781-933-3333; stregaprime.com BC

BEST BOTTLES

Jason Kilgore, beverage manager at **Catalyst**, spills on his most sacred sips.

What's the most special bottle you've tried? I was fortunate to serve a bottle of Chateau Rayas 1978 a few years ago. The guest was generous enough to pour me a glass. It's still one of the best wines I've ever tasted.

Is it true that “older is better” when it comes to spirits and wines? That is a matter of preference. There's no strict sense or “right age” to drink a wine as long as you enjoy it at that moment. As for spirits, while longer barrel aging is usually seen as superior, it is all a matter of taste.

What luxury dream bottle would you want all to yourself? There's a saying, “There are no great wines, only great bottles.” It's true because the experience of sharing that bottle with someone is what makes it so great.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PERSON + KILLIAN (KILGORE)

