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Wyoming Whiskey returns to local ownership after founders’ group buys out Edrington

The sale ends Edrington’s eight-year stake in the distillery and signals a renewed focus on Wyoming roots and regional growth.

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Wyoming Whiskey has returned to local ownership after WW Partners, a Wyoming investment group led by co-founder David DeFazio, bought Edrington’s 80% stake in the distillery, according to an announcement made Thursday in Kirby, Wyo.

The deal gives full control of Wyoming Whiskey back to owners based in its home state and ends an eight-year partnership with Edrington, the Scotland-based spirits company behind brands including The Macallan. Edrington first invested in Wyoming Whiskey in 2018.

The ownership change could matter beyond one distillery. In the U.S. spirits market, shifts in control can affect how craft whiskey brands are positioned, how much they invest in production and distribution, and how large international groups reshape their portfolios.

Wyoming Whiskey said it plans to build on the production systems developed during Edrington's ownership while moving back toward a more local and regional strategy. DeFazio said the company would "re-commit to its roots" and return to the identity that helped establish it as a Rocky Mountain whiskey brand.

Edrington said it had worked with the local distilling team to refine and expand production during the partnership. Mike Zitelli, head of legal and corporate affairs for Edrington Americas, said the company wished Wyoming Whiskey success under its new ownership and "more focused localized approach."

Founded in 2006, with distillation beginning on July 4, 2009, Wyoming Whiskey says it was the first legal distillery in Wyoming history. The company produces bourbon, rye and American straight whiskey in Kirby using non-G.M.O. grains grown in the Bighorn Basin.

The distillery has recently drawn attention for Buffalo Bill Cody, which it said was named Best Non-Kentucky Small Batch Bourbon at the World Whiskies Awards. At the same time as the ownership announcement, Wyoming Whiskey also introduced State of the Union, a 6-year-old straight bourbon tied to the nation's 250th anniversary.

As part of its next phase, the company said master blender Nancy Fraley is returning after nearly three years away. Fraley previously worked on releases including Outryder and the 10th Anniversary Edition.

Fraley said her decision to return was influenced by the company’s move back to local ownership under DeFazio. She said she would resume working closely with the production team as Wyoming Whiskey looks to expand relationships in its home market, across the United States and abroad.

For Edrington, the sale marks another portfolio adjustment at a time when major drinks companies are reassessing where they want to deploy capital. For Wyoming Whiskey, it opens a new chapter centered on local control at a moment when regional identity remains an important selling point in American whiskey.