vinetur

Stitzel Reserve debuts rare 24-year-old bourbon as Stitzel-Weller distillery returns to whiskey production

Limited release of 191 bottles marks first new label in decades, blending tradition with masterful selection and exclusive availability

Friday, June 13, 2025



Stitzel Reserve, a new bourbon label from the historic Stitzel-Weller distillery in Louisville, Kentucky, has launched its first release after more than three decades of silence from the site. The inaugural product is a 24-year-old Kentucky straight bourbon, blended from nine barrels and bottled at a barrel strength of 123.4 proof. Only 191 bottles are available, each priced at $1,600 and sold exclusively at the distillery.

The Stitzel-Weller distillery, located on the industrial edge of Louisville, originally opened on Derby Day in 1935. Over the years, it became known for producing whiskey for legendary brands such as Pappy Van Winkle and Willett. The distillery closed in 1992, but its remaining stock continued to age in open-air warehouses, becoming highly sought after by collectors and enthusiasts. In 2014, the facility reopened as a tourist destination, but no new whiskey label had been introduced until now.

The launch of Stitzel Reserve marks a significant moment for American whiskey fans. The new series will feature extra-rare releases available only at the distillery. The first release is notable not just for its age but also for its blend. Master blender Nicole Austin spent over two years selecting barrels that would create a layered and complex bourbon. She chose casks that stood out for their liveliness and aromatic depth rather than just oak-driven flavors.

Austin described her selection process as hands-on and instinctive. She sampled barrels directly in the warehouse, marking those she found exceptional with chalk—sometimes even drawing hearts on her favorites. According to Austin, some barrels lacked enough complexity to be bottled alone but contributed important characteristics when blended together.

While Stitzel-Weller was historically known for wheated bourbons, parent company Diageo has not disclosed the exact mash bill or original source of this release. However, it confirmed that rye replaced wheat as the secondary grain behind corn in this blend. Tasting notes provided by the brand describe the bourbon as having an intensely layered profile with flavors of cracked leather, saddle oil, and burnt sugar.

The release challenges common beliefs about ultra-aged bourbon. Many experts argue that Kentucky bourbon aged beyond two decades can become overly woody due to the region’s hot climate and use of new charred oak barrels. Austin addressed this risk by

carefully selecting barrels that retained vibrancy and aromatic richness despite their age.

The Stitzel Reserve 24-Year-Old Kentucky Straight Bourbon will be available for purchase at the distillery starting in June 2025. The limited number of bottles and high price point reflect both the rarity of the liquid and the legacy of Stitzel-Weller.

Looking ahead, an even smaller allocation is planned for release through an exclusive bourbon collector’s club before the end of this year. Future releases in the Stitzel Reserve series will depend on Austin’s selections from remaining stocks at the distillery. For now, this launch signals a new chapter for one of America’s most storied whiskey addresses and offers collectors a rare opportunity to own a piece of bourbon history.