

Pot Still Operation

When you assemble your new pot still be sure the water flow on the condenser travels up the condenser. You want the feed at the bottom and drain from the top.

Never put more than 10 gallons in a 13 gallon boiler or 6 gallons in a 8 gallon boiler. The reason for this is your wash will always foam some. If you don't leave some room in your boiler, your wash can puke up your column. This will make your product yellow.

When you have your boiler charged with your wash, and your water hoses hooked up then your ready to light the burner or turn on your heating element. **Never run your electric element dry!** Your element will burn up very quickly if you don't have it submerged.

You may want to add some boiling chips to your boiler. This is just so you can hear how much boil you have going on inside your boiler. You can use marbles, stainless steel nuts or small copper fittings will work also.

When you can feel your column starting to heat up some then turn your water on to your condenser. When your wash starts to boil you will start to see your product come out of the condenser. Always discard the first half cup of product. This is what is known as foreshots. It makes great charcoal lighter or ant killer.

You will get the best results by running a very tiny stream from the 3" column and very fast drips with the 2" column.

Happy Stillin

Hillbilly Stills

If you would like to add a thermometer you can drill a small hole in the top of the column and buy a cooking thermometer. Seal it with Teflon tape. I don't add this because many people don't use a thermometer with a pot still.

Making the Cuts

The process known as making cuts is the most important thing in making a nice drinkable product. Your distillate will come out in 4 stages. Forshots, Heads, Hearts, and Tails.

If you run your still to fast on your spirit run you will smear the cuts making it impossible to tell the difference in the stages.

When you're making your spirit run you will want to run a very small stream maybe even just really fast drips almost making a stream. After you have run you're still enough to get to know how it operates you will know how fast you want to run your still. You control your speed by adjusting your heat to your boiler.

You will always throw away the first half cup that comes out of your still. This will contain methanol and must be discarded. After that will come the heads of the run. It will be a very sweet strong taste. Then will come the heart of your run. This is what you will want to keep. After that is what we call the tails. It will have a very distinct smell and taste. It will smell like a wet dog or wet cardboard. Now I will explain the best way to learn how to make cuts. This is a learning process and will get easier for you the more

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Collect in small jars say ½ pint jars. Number each jar as it comes out of your still. Let your collected moonshine “air out” for 24 hours. This is a very important part in learning to make your cuts. I like to use small canning jars leaving off the lid and cover with a coffee filter then screw the ring back on the jar. This will keep small bugs and dust from getting into your product.

After this has aired then start by smelling your product from the middle out. The middle of your run will always be the hearts. You will find a distinct difference from the middle to the front and the end of your collection. The hearts will smell very clean. As you smell from the middle to the front of your run you will notice the smell will become very sweet and strong. If you rub some of this on your gum you will also find it will have a real bite “burn”. It will be up to you what you want to keep for your personal stock. As you smell toward the end of the run you will notice the smell gets stronger with the smell kind of like a wet dog. The Tails will be mostly just water and contain very little alcohol. Again it will be up to you when you want to stop keeping hearts.

You will keep your heads and tails. Put them in a jar together. These are known as Feints. You can add this to the boiler of your next run or save them from many runs until you have enough to do a all feints run. If you do a all feints run you never want to have anything more than 50% ABV in your boiler. I suggest if you have 3 gallons of feints that you add 3 gallons of water.

Example of number your jars.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

The red would indicate heads, the blue would be Hearts, and the yellow is tails.

You can't go by these numbers you may have more hearts or less. This will depend many times on how good your recipe is or how well your ferment finished. For this reason this is why I say this is a learning process. There is an art to being really good at this. When you learn this you can feel like you're a master distiller.

Practice -practice -practice.... Just don't give up. When you get it right you will be amazed .