

# Baby, It's Cold Outside,

but we have a balmy Tiki Bar inside!

By Bill Wheeler



Today, it is a bone rattling seven degrees outside with a thick blanket of snow in one of the last places you would consider a tropical escape. But that's exactly the exotic world created in Bismarck, North Dakota. Let's explore this microcosm of paradise where you can sip and savor rum about 30 steps where it is made.

Big Dog Distilling and Big Dog Tiki Bar are the brainchild of Scott and Connie Beierle, pioneers in a few interesting ways. As Scott put it, "Since we were the first distillery in Bismarck, there were no local ordinances to allow it. So we ended up writing the city ordinance with the provision to allow a distillery!" The Beierles have always had a very hands-on approach to things, even before that. Not knowing the federal application is usually the realm of attorneys, Scott sat down and "banged it out in about three hours." A little while later he got a call from a nice lady from the TTB (the government agency in charge of distillery applications) to point out a missing signature on one page. At first Scott was skeptical, "Since when does the government call you about anything helpful?" He thought it was a scam and yet the lady was persistent and it got worked out in short order. She was shocked when she heard Scott had filed the application without legal help.

Being in the beer and whiskey belt, the decision to create handcrafted rum and moonshine was a decision not taken too likely. Big Dog Distilling, named by Connie due to her affinity for large mutts, is now entering their fifth year of

production. Serving North Dakota state wide along with Western Minnesota, the brand is launching online sales across the country early this year. They feature four delicious Heart River rums, featuring an Original Rum, Spiced Rum, Coconut Rum and a Coffee Rum which are cane sugar and molasses-based. There are no added sugars and they are even gluten-free!



Big Dog Distillery's Award-Winning Rums

When asked how they got into the distilling business, they quipped, "We are mentally ill! No, seriously, we had businesses in Florida and needed to return to Bismarck, [North Dakota] to serve some family issues." Having experience in a variety of professions, ranging from flight instructor, owning several Subway franchises to general contractor, they were looking for a new challenge. Connie told Scott, "You need something to do." So Scott being Scott, if there wasn't something he knew, he took it upon himself to learn everything there was to know about a topic. Jokingly, Scott chuckled, "Would it help if I told you I stayed in a Holiday Inn

Express last night? Putting pen to paper, he designed what he thought would be a good business plan and requirements for a distillery. Originally starting out with a 20-gallon still it only took 4-6 months to dial in that first original recipe. They have since gone on to add a 115-gallon and a whopping 220-gallon still to aid production. However, their products are still based on original prohibition era, small batch methods. Interesting to note, Scott has an allergy to alcohol, so he creates something he can't have. He makes distilling decisions based on smell, not taste, and yet it works out beautifully.

Photo Credits: Big Dog Distillery



Continued from previous page

They are fortunate to have passionate staff members like Shiloh Perry, their marketing director. She was excited to share information and education about the alcohol industry. Their award-winning bartender comes from Las Vegas and there is a unique synergy that just “clicks.”



Big Dog Tiki Bar inside of the distillery

Their Big Dog Tiki Bar is a warm and welcome respite from the bitter cold of North Dakota winters taking only about 3 months to build out. Now entering the fourth year, local fan

Continued on Page 19

## THE AUTUMN EXOTICA

2 oz. Heart River Spiced Rum  
1/4 oz. St. Elizabeth Allspice Dram  
1/2 oz. John D Taylor Velvet Falernum  
3/4 oz. Lime juice  
1/2 oz. Grapefruit juice  
1/2 oz. Cinnamon Simple Syrup  
2 dashes Angostura Bitters

Whip shake with crushed ice.  
Open pour and top with crushed iced.  
Garnish with spent lime half and freshly grated nutmeg.



# RUM WITH THE BIG DOGS!

6-Time Award Winning  
Heart River Rums to  
choose from!

The Only All-Natural  
Distillery in North  
Dakota



ALL NATURAL | NO ADDED SUGARS | GLUTEN FREE!

VISIT US ONLINE AT [HTTPS://WWW.HEARTIVERSPIRITS.COM](https://www.heartiverspirits.com)  
ASK OUT OUR TOP-SHELF MOONSHINE PRODUCTS!



### The Kondo-Tiki Continued from Page 7

Some of the decorator touches include homage to 60's television and movies, as Chris puts it, "I Dream of Jeannie meets Don Ho." The two "sub-themes" in the bedroom lean more toward television with photos of Gilligan's Island, including a model of the S.S. Minnow, while the living room is more influenced by Joe Vs. The Volcano.

Is The Kondo Tiki successful? Chris quickly responds, "There are two types of guests, ones that seek out a complete, immersive Tiki experience, and a small group, that well, just need a place to stay for the night." Despite two recent hurricanes that shut down his restaurant recently, people manage to still book the condo regularly. After Hurricane Milton decimated his restaurant, he arrived in the aftermath to start repairs to find someone was waiting at the locked gate to rent his unit, despite the fact he thought he had turned off the online rental platforms and everyone was evacuated. Like I said before people LOVE Tiki and neither storms or distance will change that. You can check availability and rates for The Kondo Tiki at [bluemoonrentalagency.com](http://bluemoonrentalagency.com) or reach out to Chris directly at [chris@bluemoonrentalagency.com](mailto:chris@bluemoonrentalagency.com). Find out more about Kondo Tiki at [@KondoTiki](https://www.facebook.com/KondoTiki) on Facebook.

Mahalo Chris for sharing this! If you have a Tiki-inspired business, venue or something you feel may be of value to our readers, go ahead and throw a note in a bottle to us at [editor@wikitikimag.com](mailto:editor@wikitikimag.com). <sup>wr</sup>

### Big Dog Continued from Page 9

favorites like the Big Dog Wantons and other savory bites are perfect companions to their rum-centric drink menu. It's a natural tie-in to their rum products. They wanted to keep it authentic, from the dollar bills stapled to the ceiling to the tropical décor, giving you that much-needed diversion from the elements awaiting outside.

What else is in store for Big Dog? We would be remiss if we didn't mention they make marvelous moonshine with Pink Lemonade and Blueberry flavors. The Dog Water moonshine products launched in August with an apple flavor coming soon. The big inside announcement is their 2-4 year aged Bourbon Barrel Rum is on the near horizon, so sign up for their newsletter to stay abreast of late breaking news. You can learn more about Scott and Connie's journey at <https://www.heartriverspirits.com> or on social media [@heart.river.spirits](https://www.instagram.com/heart.river.spirits). If you happen to be in Bismarck, stop in, the friendly staff, tasty tidbits and the Heart River rums will be a salve for the soul and a little something to warm you on a cold North Dakota night. <sup>wr</sup>



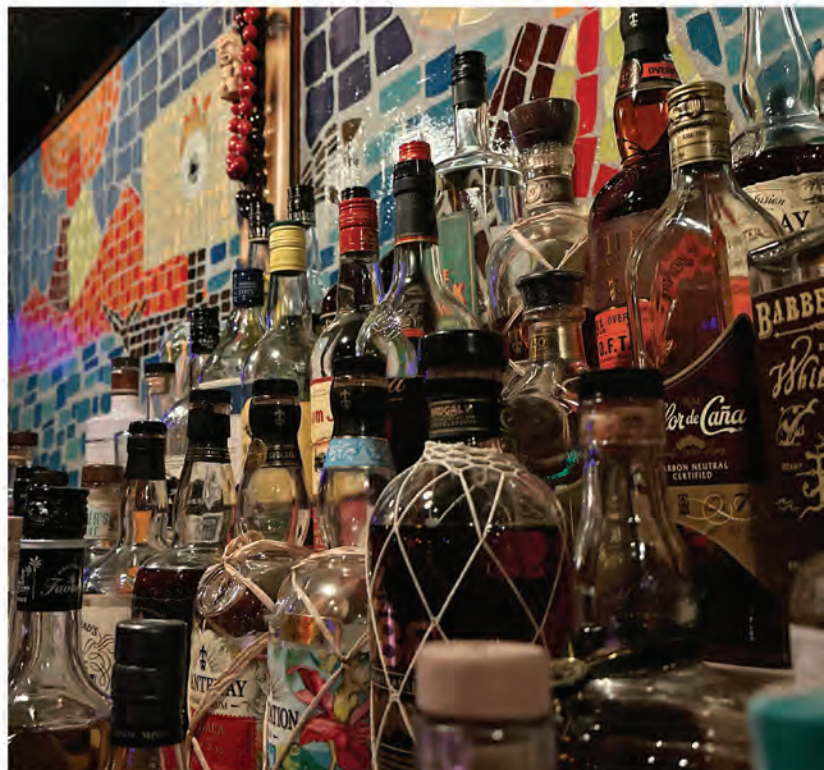
Editor's Note: We have personally sampled several of their products and they are quickly becoming a permanent fixture at Bourbon Bill's Pirate Bar. See our Rudolph's Red Nose Punch featuring Heart River Spirits Spiced Rum at <https://bit.ly/rnnp>.

### Continued from Pele Utu on Page 15

Tiki Oasis. They found just the right venue, the arched ceiling really spoke to them. After only 6 months, the build out was complete and they were open for business. This is a rum bar, not necessarily tropical, but definitely Tiki and the place to escape and unwind.

When queried on what sets Pele Utu apart from any other Tiki establishment, the answers came easily and with great enthusiasm. Dr. Shocker shared, "First and foremost, we are old school bartenders, and we don't pre-mix anything. If it requires 16 or 17 bottles, we are actually touching 16 or 17 bottles. It's a joy watching Rosie make drinks by hand. It's an ADULT bar, not some college bar when students come to get "F'd up." While there is no kitchen at Pele Utu, there is an arrangement to allow Indian food from the adjoining Taste of India restaurant for quick bits and entrees. There is a limited beer selection, but the main focus is on classic Tiki cocktails, and some Pele Utu-specific spins on the menu like the Skipper Mai Tai originally from VenTiki's Original Owner. Want something different? Try their Kona Cooler, a coffee concoction served at Tiki Oasis, or the Hukilau Jim with its exotic and secret ingredients.

What is in store for the future of Pele Utu, only the Moais behind the bar knows? If you are looking for a true Tiki experience on your next visit to Reno, stop in for a Mai Tai, or a Zombie or some new elixir of choice on the menu. Maybe you may even charm them enough



Pele Utu's extensive rum selection

to find out their *real* names! In any case, with the years of experience that converge here, you will be whisked away to that one place you can call true paradise, if only for a while. <sup>wr</sup>