

Fine, Vintage Bourbon from America's Most Prominent Distillery

Kentucky Bourbon is the quintessential American spirit, with a history dating back to distillation for personal use by landowners during the American Revolution, before becoming commercialized during the mid-1800s. Since then, the spirit has waxed and waned in popularity, as imported spirits became more widely available and

popular tastes changed. However, since the turn of the 21st century, bourbon's popularity has again been on the rise, driven by a renewed interest in the founding distilleries that popularized the spirit amongst the American public throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Chief among these hallowed names are Weller and Van Winkle, who came together to create the **1983 Old Weller 107-Proof, 7-Year** bottle available in Friday's Gallery Auction.



Old Weller was founded by William Larue Weller in 1849 in Kentucky. A third-generation German immigrant, the Weller family had been producing spirits for personal use since their arrival in Maryland during the

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mid-1790s and initially produced a selection of un-bonded blended spirits. However, by the time Weller Jr. took over in the late 1890s, the company had reoriented itself towards the production of fine bourbon. It was at this point that the company hired as its first employee the famous Julian ‘Pappy’ Van Winkle, who got his start as a traveling salesman in 1893 at the young age of 18. Buying the company from the founder’s two sons in 1909, Van Winkle merged the Weller company with a close partner to become Stilzer-Weller, and in the process, secured one of the six coveted US government contracts to produce medicinal whiskey during prohibition.

The Weller family was always known for its wheated bourbon recipe, which eschewed the traditional rye-heavy mash for wheat, creating a softer and smoother taste, and this tradition continued under the new joint venture.

Indeed, the Weller family is commonly credited with inventing the wheated bourbon recipe back in the 19th century and continues to honor the legacy of the achievement by committing to the production of the company’s traditional recipe. Even today, the company produces a wheated bourbon bearing the name of the company’s founder, continuing Weller’s long heritage of smooth, drinkable bourbons.

When bourbon and whiskey declined in the American market during the '70s and '80s, Weller was sold several times, eventually joining the Sazerac Company. Although Old Weller is no longer made in the “Cathedral of Bourbon” i.e. the Stilzer-Weller distillery, which closed in 1991, today the Old Weller mark still produces its original recipe in partnership with the esteemed Buffalo Trace Distillery, under the guidance of Julian Van Winkle III.

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That makes this **1983 bottle of Old Weller 107 Proof, 7 Year** one of the last vintages produced in the spiritual home of American whiskey production. As a wheated bourbon, this bottle uses wheat as a second mash ingredient alongside corn and is therefore sweeter and smoother than its competitors, who use primarily rye mixed with the requisite barley. The use of wheat reduces the peppery smokiness of the bourbon in comparison to traditional blends, but in this particular mix, the smoothness of wheat is balanced by the uncut, alcohol-forward nature of a barrel-proof process. Old Weller's bourbons are prized for their sweet fruit notes, strong vanilla undertones, and sharp spicy tones, and typically feature a cinnamon finish, which pairs well with the warm alcohol finish from this 107-proof bottle.

Old Weller has continued to grow in value over time, especially as its reported similarity to Pappy Van Winkle has become common knowledge. This reputation has led to an increase in retail price for recent vintages, a growth reflected in the resale prices of older production stock. This, when combined with the recent explosion in the secondary market across the entire bourbon market, means valuations for Old Weller are likely to increase ahead of the spirit market over the coming years.

One Bottle 1983 Old Weller 107 Proof, 7 Year will be offered as **Lot 185** in Michaan's November Gallery Auction on Friday, November 17th, which features notable names headlining the fashion, fine art, and jewelry departments. Three handbags, by Hermes and Louis Vuitton, lead a sale featuring works by Constantin

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Kluge, Jose Vela Zanegtti, and Keith Haring, while the jewelry department showcases an astonishing golden pocket watch and jewelry by Gioielmoda and Lunch at the Ritz.

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