



Master distiller James McEwan carefully gathers herbs for The Botanist gin on the cliffs of Islay.

What if your favorite cocktails were part of a larger movement to save the planet?

# In the Details

By Kristen Ordóñez



From solar panels to butterfly migratory gardens, Copper Kings works constantly to instill sustainable change in their brandies.



Destillare IPA Float



Destillare Negroni



Montanya Rum Sangria

MONTANYA RUMS - RUM SANGRIA PHOTO © NATHAN BILLOW, ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF COPPER AND KINGS AMERICAN BRANDY

Living a more eco-conscious lifestyle can easily be done with just a few changes, from eliminating the use of plastic bags to growing your own vegetables. For businesses, changes can be made on both a small or large scale, including those that produce wine and spirits. Whether it's promoting the importance of bees to foraging botanicals on the cliffs of Scotland, spirit craftsmen are taking it upon themselves to get closer to their ingredients and methods of production to advocate sustainability.

Alcohol, in the simplest terms, is an agricultural product and depends on environments that are sustainably kept, from having a consistent clean water supply to keeping its pollinator population healthy. Sourcing from these environments and acting responsibly commercially comes down to the manufacturers and craftsmen themselves, and everyone does it differently. With regard to sustainable sourcing and production, however, the best brands understand that it's all in the details. For many of these companies, paying attention to the "small things" is simply part of the

job, as founder/owner of **Copper and Kings American Brandy** Joe Heron says, adding that "doing is the highest state of consciousness."

Copper and Kings uses traditional copper-pot distillation to forge natural, pure pot-still American brandies. These brandies are non-chill filtered with no additives, for an authentic, uncorrupted flavor, nose and color. According to Copper and Kings' website, the art of brandy revolves around the concept of retention and concentration, much like how its methods of craftsmanship concentrate on sustainability. Forty-two solar panels were installed on the roof of the Copper and Kings headquarters, which supplements the building's energy supply. The company also uses two closed-loop water recycling systems for production, one for chilling and one for boiling/heating the stills.

**The Botanist Islay Dry Gin** is also a brand that thrives on meticulous details. During the inception of the brand's signature gin, master distiller James McEwan worked with Dr. Richard and Mavis Gulliver, who introduced him to 33

herbs, leaves and flowers that could be sustainably foraged on the Scottish island of Islay. From the initial 33, McEwan selected 22 for the flavor and fragrance to be the main ingredients of The Botanist gin. These natural materials are abundant on the island, and are all common enough to be harvested without any impact on the wild populations. The result is a versatile spirit that, as a brand representative notes, is "an homage to Islay, a botanical exploration of its heritage."

The Botanist states that all aspects of sustainability are important, and works to incorporate these techniques throughout production, from foraging botanicals with care, selecting responsible suppliers, to the distillery itself. James Donaldson, The Botanist's full-time professional forager since 2017, works to preserve the legacy of his predecessors — taking only what is needed and hand-picking in a way that doesn't cause damage to the plants. "The 22 botanicals that give our gin the unique flavor are harvested sustainably around Islay between March and October," the brand reports; they are then sent



Copper & Kings Distillery, situated in Butchertown, Louisville, Kentucky, produces a plethora of high-end liquors.



PHOTO AT LEFT COURTESY COPPER KINGS AMERICAN BRAND



“Our planet is a precious resource,” says Montanya Founder Karen Hoskin, “and we want to do all we can to leave as little of an imprint as possible.”



McEwan, alongside botanists Dr. Richard and Mavis Golliver, have cultivated the perfect recipe for The Botanist gin, pictured at right, consisting of 22 naturally wild herbs, leaves and flowers.

PHOTO COURTESY THE BOTANIST ISLAY DRY GIN



to the Bruichladdich Distillery, which uses pure spring water from Octomore Farm. The distillery also makes a commitment to sustainability, banning single-use plastics, recycling production wastewater for heating, and using a fleet of electric cars.

As noted on the brand’s website, **Montanya Rums** are the “culmination of a 30-year love affair with rum and a passion for introducing it to others — all while building a business that is a force for good in the world.” Founder/owner Karen Hoskin discovered her love for rum on a trip to India. Thirty years later and 9,000 feet above sea level in Crested Butte, Colorado, Hoskin’s dream of creating her own brand is fully realized in the Montanya Distillery, which uses its location to further integrate green methods of production.

“We bottle our rums using pure mountain water from a snowmelt and spring-charged aquifer below our bottling facility,” Hoskin says, adding that the elevation allows the distillers to boil at a lower temperature, which is part of the formula that makes their rums so unique. “We use some

creative processes with reusing warm water from condensation to start fermentation,” she adds.

Hoskin says that there are many layers in claiming eco-integrity, and that challenges do come with upholding these commitments. There are five main categories to keep in mind, she notes: Raw Ingredients, Distilling, Bottling and Branding, Fleets and Company Transportation, and Tasting Room/Mercantile Operations. Montanya has developed eco-conscious production practices for each category that not only work to promote their sustainability promise, but also differentiates them from competitors. For example, the distillery is 100-percent wind-powered and produces 75 percent less landfill-bound waste, while its bottling center sources from cradle-to-cradle glass manufacturers and uses recycled paper, boxes and bio-corks.

Though these changes sometimes take longer and aren’t always the easiest way, Hoskin affirms she wouldn’t want it done any other way. “This has been part of our ethos from day one. Every decision we make considers how we’ll impact the environment ... I’ve never once

regretted this decision. I want to leave a habitable world for generations to come.”

While steadying a course for this sustainable world, each brand has unique ways of showing its commitment to “going green” and paying it forward to their customers. Copper and Kings, for example, planted a Monarch butterfly garden to serve as a Monarch migratory way station, to help keep a “healthy pollinator world,” according to Heron. The Botanist founded The Botanist Foundation, a community interest company that supports local partners with sustainability and environmental projects. The brand even goes as far as encouraging people to use local, seasonal garnishes and foraged fruits and herbs in their cocktails.

Though there’s much to be done in saving the planet overall, Hoskin notes that this should not dissuade individuals or companies from trying to gain eco-integrity. “One small steps leads to another, which leads to another. It’s always a work in progress, so you can’t let lofty goals keep you from starting in the first place,” she says. **KW**

THE BOTANIST ISLAY DRY GIN PHOTO ©ALFREDO CALIZ; KAREN HOSKINS PHOTO ©NATHAN BLOW