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Meet the Women Behind the World's First Non-Alcoholic Bourbon

When three Kentucky-born friends saw a gap in the bourbon industry, they filled it—with the first-ever non-alcoholic bourbon, Kentucky 74.

By [Katie Lockhart](#)

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In Kentucky, bourbon is the drink of choice. It's as ingrained in the local culture as the grain used to make it. The spirit's nearly synonymous with the state, seeing as Kentucky supplies 95 percent of world's bourbon.

So when three entrepreneurs from Kentucky decided to create Kentucky 74, a non-alcoholic bourbon, there was a bit of pushback. "There are definitely people who are very rooted in the heritage of bourbon here," says Lauren Chitwood, CEO of Spiritless, the distillery where Kentucky 74 is made. "But once they are able to understand that we are not trying to take away from the bourbon market, they get it."

The three friends started Spiritless after years of struggling to find mocktail options while working with big spirit brands. "There was a moment when the three of us looked at each other and said there is no one addressing this need in a good and delicious way," says Lexie Larsen, Spiritless COO.

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They also saw the sober-curious movement growing more and more. Research shows that millennials are consuming alcohol less than older generations, paying more mind to the health and wellness consequences of alcohol consumption.

"For people who need to get up early or have a commitment, the sober-curious movement allows them to make a decision but not have to stay home and be left out," says Abbey Ferguson, president of Spiritless. "We wanted to create a choice for those who choose not to drink, for any reason. We've had so many people say, 'Wow, I needed this. Thank you. I have been sober for 11 years and I am so glad to have a new product to enjoy.'"

The trio's full of Kentucky pride—they're the 74th distillery registered in the state, hence the name Kentucky 74. "We felt that it was important for the brand to have a place, and we are very much born and raised in Kentucky," Ferguson says.





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In order to make the distilled beverage, a groundbreaking two-step process was born through trial and error in the basement of Larsen's home and later perfected by a team of beverage engineers. First, they make a very high-intensity spirit and distill it into top-notch bourbon. Then, they distill it a second time to remove the alcohol. "Through our unique process, a small amount of the essence is added back in to give Spiritless its authentic bourbon-like feel, maintaining all of the tannins and delicious flavors," Chitwood says. "That process itself has never been done before."

The result is a drink that tastes just as good as the original with none of the drawbacks.

How you choose to drink it is up to you. Some drink it straight, others mix it into cocktails. Some like to go "halfsies" with it, opting for a half shot of bourbon and a shot of Kentucky 74 or vice versa makes it easy to maintain healthy habits and meet weight-loss goals. Larsen loves it in a classic whiskey sour while Chitwood prefers it neat with a full-proof bourbon in the "halfsies" style. Ferguson drinks it with ice, bitters, and a splash of club soda.

The diversity of drink options is part of the team's hope for the future of Spiritless. "Our goal is to be able to have anyone anywhere open up a cocktail menu, peruse, and select what they want to drink, whether it be a paloma, a G&T, etc., and have it spiritless or have it halfsies," Larsen says.

Bourbon isn't the only spiritless spirit the team is working on. They're currently in the research and development stages for gin and tequila coming out in 2021. Meanwhile, you can try Kentucky 74 now, without leaving home. Just order it

online to your doorstep and get mixing.

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