

PRICHARD'S

DISTILLERY



Phil Prichard: Distilling Good Stories and Great Rum

by Teddy Durgin

"I enjoy being the dog in this dog and pony show!" exclaimed Phil Prichard, founder, president, and master distiller of Prichard's Distillery in Tennessee.

The dog and pony show he is referring to is his recent visit to Maryland to press the flesh with customers, sales personnel, and anyone else who will be associated with moving his products here in the years to come. He made several key account calls, touring Total Wine & More locations in Laurel and Towson, Bay Ridge Wine & Spirits in Annapolis, Wine World Beer & Spirits in Abingdon, Ronnie's Beverage Warehouse in Forest Hill, Wells Discount Liquors in Baltimore, and more.

"I'm doing what I enjoy the most," he stated, "and that's getting out on the road, meeting people, and introducing them to our products. At one time in my life, I ventured into the restaurant business. And I found that people always wanted to meet the guy who was cooking their food. The same is true of the guy who distills the spirits. People want to meet me. It just gives the folks a good and comforting feeling to meet the actual guy who makes their whiskey or their rum or whatever they're drinking."

Prichard has a folksy way about him. But he's a driven man, for sure. Talking with him for just a few minutes makes you want to roll up your sleeves, help him serve his tasty spirits, and listen to the stories he spins about his experiences in the industry. One of his favorite tales is the decision he made years earlier to move from a career as a dental technician and into the beverage business (after a brief stint raising and breeding Norwegian Fjord horses in upstate New York).

"I started this distillery better than 20 years ago," he recalled. "I walked into my banker, I looked at him, and I said, 'Mike, I want to build the first distillery in Tennessee in almost 50 years ... and I'm going to make rum!' I can still hear the laughter as I walked out the door. I didn't get any financing from my bank! And I found that building a distillery is very, very capital intensive. But we've managed, by hook or by crook, to build a very substantial distribution network

all based on the quality of our products. I'm not going to tell you we're in every state, but we are in every major market throughout the United States."

Among Prichard's Distillery's top products are seven signature rums: Prichard's Fine Rum, Cranberry Rum, Crystal Rum, Key Lime Rum, Peach Mango Rum, Private Stock Rum, and Spiced Rum. "Rum is my passion," stated Prichard. "If I can't sell rum in Maryland, I'll just stay away [laughing]!"

He stated that the Peach Mango Rum is his "go-to." But as summer gives way to fall and apple season comes into play, Prichard expects his company's Spiced Rum will pick up in sales. "With either a hot apple cider or a cold apple cider, it's just a really nice and refreshing treat as a cocktail for the autumn season," he said. "Then, as the holiday season kicks in, we find people's tastes migrate to our Cranberry Rum. Someone told me the other day they love to baste their hams



At the Baltimore offices of Bacchus Importers are Jason Lockerman, Phoenix Rising Group; Lou Zwirlein and Tomas van den Boomgaard, both with Bacchus Importers; Phil Prichard; Todd Schneider, Bacchus Importers; and Scott Folkins, Phoenix Rising Group.

in Prichard's Cranberry Rum. That's some expensive basting, but it's a mighty good use!"

Prichard's Distillery's product portfolio also includes five liqueurs and a half-dozen whiskeys. The former includes two of Prichard's best-known offerings, Sweet Lucy and Sweet Lucy Cream. The latter includes a Doubled Barreled Bourbon and a Double Chocolate Bourbon. But don't mistake that second one for a dessert drink. "Bourbon by its very nature is sweet," Prichard noted. "People who like bourbon like it because of its sweetness. But when we add chocolate, it actually tempers that sweetness down and brings in a little bitterness. The chocolate notes in our Double Chocolate Bourbon are so subtle that a lot of people don't even realize there's chocolate in there. The chocolate note comes in on the back end, very quietly."

Phil Prichard didn't come to Maryland quietly. He definitely made some noise while he was here in late August. And he hopes to visit the state again, concluding, "I think Maryland will be a good place for us to focus our products, especially our rum portfolio. It's a pretty diverse market with diverse tastes. And that plays well into where our focus is." ■



Here's Phil Prichard with the team from Total Wine & More in Laurel; Alec Davis, Chad Murphy, Rayvon Watts, Eric Simon and Eric Sigmund.



At Wells Discount Liquors in Baltimore are Diana Abbott and Joann Hyatt, both with Wells; Phil Prichard; and Susan Olson, Phoenix Rising Group.



Phil Prichard at Ronnie's Beverage Warehouse in Forest Hill is with managers Adam Dorsch, Megan Hunter and Jeremy Abshire, all with Ronnie's.

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