Manufacturing has been the pride of Brooklyn since the borough’s early days. In the 19th century, Brooklynites made ships, paint and beer, among other essentials, until factories closed up during the post–World War II decline. But in the past decade, alongside Brooklyn’s renaissance writ large, craft has reemerged—perhaps nowhere more visibly and vigorously than in drink and food.

“Brooklyn has come to have a certain resonance. It stands for an artisan, urban sensibility,” says Tom Potter, a founder of Brooklyn Brewery 26 years ago. At that time, “you’d be hard-pressed to think of any consumer product that was from Brooklyn and announced it,” he recalls. Potter opened New York Distilling Co. in 2011 into a craft scene that had been virtually nonexistent 10 years earlier but in which New Yorkers now make everything from grappa...
to mayonnaise in those same historic factories. “There’s a serious sense of purpose of people who have come together and really care deeply about what’s being made. Food and beverage is the heart of it,” says Potter.

The twin forces of pride of place and imagination power Brooklyn’s craft-drink scene. You see the former in everything, from local artists creating labels to an evangelical belief in the quality and potential of New York’s grapes and grains.

The creativity that glimmers throughout the hip, young enclaves of the borough shows up best in the glass. Whether it’s a rye-based gin made from a rediscovered 1809 recipe, or a devil-may-care three-year barrel-aged botrytized Long Island Riesling, you can find it—you can probably only find it—in Brooklyn.

Here are six spots where you can taste the Brooklyn beverage boom. They provide educational tours and tastings for visitors curious about the drinks and how they’re made. At some, you can kick back and get a glass at the bar, order a meal or even catch live music—the full Brooklyn experience.

BROOKLYN BREWERY

79 N. 11th St., Brooklyn Telephone (718) 486-7422 Website www.brooklynbrewery.com Open Monday to Thursday, $10 tours at 5 p.m.; Friday, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.; Saturday, noon to 8 p.m., free tours 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 6 p.m., free tours 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

After the last of the great German immigrant brewing families closed shop in 1976, there were no breweries in Brooklyn for 20 years. When Steve Hindy and Tom Potter launched the brand in 1988, the perception of Brooklyn was more “blight” than “art.” The pair encountered skepticism, resistance and the mob, which was looking for a cut, when they first tried to sell beer out of their truck. (All production before 1996 was done at a facility in Utica, four hours upstate.) “Few people in Brooklyn knew what craft beer was. ‘Why not make a light beer like Heineken?’” Hindy recalls doubters asking.

By 1996, the brewery had grown enough to open a plant in the borough, and today, the tasting room—really a cavernous hall—hosts more than 3,500 visitors per week. In 2013, 216,000 barrels came off the line.

Because of the bustle, weekday tours, which cost $10 and include four 2-ounce pours, must be reserved in advance; weekend tours (free, no reservations needed) run on the half-hour. For those who just want to hang out and order a pizza (no food is served at the brewery), the 11 taps are always rotating, with beer tokens at $5 for a pint or five for $20.

BROOKLYN OENOLOGY

209 Wythe Ave. #106, Brooklyn Telephone (718) 599-1259 Website www.brooklynoenology.com Open Monday, 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Thursday, 2 p.m. to 11 p.m.; Friday, 2 p.m. to midnight; Saturday, noon to midnight; Sunday, noon to 10 p.m.

“This is the original art piece right here,” Ali Shaper says as she gestures to the Julie Combal canvas in her tasting room; covered in rapids of black and blue, it matches the label of the 2010 Long Island Merlot on the table. Combal’s work decorates the walls, but in a few weeks it’ll be replaced by pieces from another Brooklyn artist. The cozy space functions as a gallery for the artists who design the winery’s labels.
Every release sports a new work. The labels can be peeled off and saved as stickers. “You should see our refrigerator,” Shaper says. “It’s ridiculous.”

For about four years, Shaper pulled night and weekend shifts in wine retail and restaurants, then woke up to engineer “weapons display and targeting systems for military aircraft” at her day job. She set her sights on wine-making, and with the 2005 vintage, BOE took off. Shaper works with eight to 12 New York vineyards each year at a custom-crush facility on Long Island’s East End. (They plan to move production into the borough as soon as possible.) Her initial Merlot and Chardonnay lineup has expanded to more adventurous excursions, such as a Finger Lakes Cabernet Franc rosé.

BOE’s tasting room bar, designed to look like a pried-apart stainless-steel vat, carries a banner for state pride. From $7 to $12 a glass (or $3.50 to $4.50 for 1 1/2-ounce tastes), Shaper serves her wines and a rotation of about a dozen others from New York. There are also spirits, beers, ciders, bottles to go, meats, cheeses, mustard and more—all made in New York.

**BROOKLYN WINERY**
213 N. 8th St., Brooklyn
Telephone (347) 763-1506
Website [www.bkwinery.com](http://www.bkwinery.com)
Open Monday to Thursday, 5 p.m. to midnight; Friday, 5 p.m. to 1 a.m.; Saturday, 1 p.m. to 1 a.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m. to midnight; weekends, free tours 2 p.m., 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.

There are logistical hurdles to making wine in a building that at various times housed a creamery, a pickle factory, a funeral home and a dive bar. “Back where the barrel room is, there used to be a stage and a hole in the wall where the foam would come in for the rave parties,” says Connor McCormack, Brooklyn Winery’s winemaker.

When McCormack arrived in 2010, he had four months to build a winery in the busy, chic Williamsburg neighborhood, as the owners wanted to work with fruit from the 2010 harvest. The tanks came in two days before the first grapes. McCormack says he’s been “way more challenged here than I ever was in California,” where he worked at the now-defunct San Francisco winery Crushpad, because of the vintage vicissitudes of New York terroirs, with frosts and hurricanes in the state’s recent past.

Today, you can visit the tasting room any night and try a dozen or so selections made on-site. The split-level space is kitted out like a pub, with sepia-hued photos, a wooden bar refashioned from church pews and boardwalk planks, and a window looking over the barrel room. McCormack has shifted production toward his goal of making two-thirds of the wine from New York and one-third from California; by-the-glass prices range from $10 to $16, and there’s a full dinner menu (at the top end, a rack of New Zealand lamb is $18).

“A huge component of what we do is educational,” says McCormack, an ideal reflected in the flight offerings (from $14, for three 3-ounce pours of Finger Lakes wines, to $30 for any six). A Riesling comes three ways: made in stainless steel, in barrel, and with skin contact. “So they’re all the same vineyard, but they’re just night and day.” Because people come to Brooklyn looking for a taste of the outré, McCormack tried to find an orange wine for a recent visitor. Alas, he’d sold out.

**NEW YORK DISTILLING CO./THE SHANTY**
79 Richardson St., Brooklyn
Telephone (718) 412-0874
Website [www.nydistilling.com](http://www.nydistilling.com)
Open Monday, 6 p.m. to midnight; Tuesday to Friday, 6 p.m. to 2 a.m.; Saturday, 3 p.m. to 2 a.m.; Sunday, 3 p.m. to midnight; weekends, free tours 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

A co-founder of Brooklyn Brewery, Tom Potter was at the vanguard of the Brooklyn craft brewing scene. After bowing out, he went west in 2008 for what he calls “an extended kayaking and distillery tour” and returned to the city determined to bring craft distilling to New York. Partnering with Allen Katz, spirits educator for a major distributor, Potter decided to focus on rye and gin, with a “full-on cocktail bar,” rather than a simple tasting table, to best showcase the fruits of their labor. The distillery and The Shanty opened on December 5—Repeal Day—of 2011.
up the night sky. It’s not hard to see how Snyder lured eminent California winemakers Robert Foley and Abe Schoener, the latter of the Scholium Project, out to Red Hook to make wines from a state dramatically different from their home terroirs.

Snyder is a musical technician by training, building guitar rigs for Billy Joel, Peter Frampton and Ringo Starr. But, he says, “I was sick of being on tour buses for 11-plus months out of the year.” Along the way, he had developed a twin passion for wine, and a friendship with Foley, a guitarist himself.

Having started an import/distribution company in 2004, Snyder found that many wine directors at top New York restaurants had visited Burgundy or Napa a dozen times yet had never driven the 90 miles to the East End of Long Island. Snyder, Foley and Schoener wanted to help serious growers. “If we put [a winery] in Brooklyn, the wines would be judged with the wines of the world here in New York,” says Snyder. In 2008, Red Hook Winery was born.

You can explore their approach in tastings ($5 for three 1 1/2-ounce pours to $25 for six; cheeses and other snacks are also available). Red Hook Winery produces fewer than 1,000 cases, but at press time had 70 separate bottlings on offer (this will probably decrease; Hurricane Sandy washed out 90 percent of the 2012 vintage), including microcuvées such as the botrytized Riesling.

**Van Brunt Stillhouse**

6 Bay St., 1st Floor, Brooklyn  
Telephone (718) 852-6405  
Website [www.vanbruntstillhouse.com](http://www.vanbruntstillhouse.com)  
Open Weekends, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; tours, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Since Gov. Andrew Cuomo took office in 2011 and began loosening regulations, there has been a 320 percent increase in farm distilleries in New York state. Daric Schlesselman and his wife, Sarah, who opened their doors in early 2012, have taken advantage as they begin to build out their tasting room.

The many Brooklyn-based distilleries are all new—as in, founded in 2010 or later—and small, so few are equipped to provide one educational experience most drinkers lack: a tour of how a distillery works. At $8, including three 1/4-ounce pours, Van Brunt’s tour is ideal. Schlesselman describes how the mash becomes a spirit while liquid bubbles in the still, and how different grains and barrel regimens create his malt, bourbon, rye, moonshine, “American” whiskies, rum and grappa. Schlesselman still works as a video editor for *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart*, his employer of 14 years. But as a self-described “self-taught distiller,” who learned the ropes in Scotland, Schlesselman insists he’s not in the distilling game because of the trends. “I want to be doing this for the long haul,” he says.

**Red Hook Winery**

Pier 41, 325A, 175–204 Van Dyke St., Brooklyn  
Telephone (347) 689-2432  
Website [www.redhookwinery.com](http://www.redhookwinery.com)  
Open Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; free tours, weekends 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

“T”his is where we do our crush, so it’s pretty awesome. If you want to define New York, this is the spot.” Mark Snyder, owner of Red Hook Winery, is out behind the vat room, and the Statue of Liberty is right there across the water. To the north, lower Manhattan lights