

# Ahead of Its Time

REVIVING A CANADIAN FRONTIER TRADITION,  
REVEL STOKE SPICED WHISKY IS BACK FOR GOOD

During the Gold Rush in Western Canada, gold miners traveled with their families, dogs and, of course, their barrels of whisky. One famous Canadian, “Gassy” Jack Deighton, was especially known for lugging around and sharing his whisky. In Vancouver, at Stamp’s Mill, Gassy Jack offered workers all the whisky they could drink if they helped him build a bar. Within 24 hours, the Globe Saloon was built, and Gassy Jack shared his lovely whisky he had hauled across the country. The area, Gastown, would later be named in his honor.

That’s just one of many Canadian whisky stories about how my favorite spirit helped build the Northern Frontier. But the Canadians were a little more sophisticated with their whisky than American cowboys. Back in the 1800s, Canadians didn’t kick it back straight out of the bottle like Wild Bill Hickok. They actually mixed in spices such as cinnamon to spruce up the whisky; they even carried satchels of various spices and maple syrup for the sole purpose of mixing with their whisky. Today, Canadian whisky may be flavored up to 9.09 percent by adding an imported spirit, domestic spirit, younger spirit or wine aged no less than two years in small wood.

One spirits manufacturer has taken today’s Canadian whisky rules and mixed in yesterday’s spices. Minneapolis-based Phillips Distilling Company first introduced Revel Stoke,

a Canadian whisky spiced with cinnamon, cardamom, coriander, ginger and vanilla, in 2000, naming it after a famous Canadian skiing mountain.

“We were trying to bring some innovation to the whisky category, which had really not benefitted from innovation in the past, in a way similar to that in which the spiced rum category took off,” says Dean Phillips, President and CEO of the Phillips Distilling Company. But a decade ago, the market wasn’t yet ready for a flavored or spiced whisky.

Being ahead of its time is something the Phillips family knows all too well. Phillips Distilling created the first American schnapps in the 1930s and the first flavored vodka in the 1950s. Now that every whisk(e)y maker from Jim Beam to Wild Turkey to Jack Daniels has brought flavored whiskies to market, Phillips can reflect, “Revel Stoke was way ahead of its time. But we were right! Just look at how the flavored whiskey category is taking off.”

Phillips brought Revel Stoke back in late 2010 after receiving emails from fans who could no longer find it. Phillips also found Revel Stoke bottles selling on eBay for hundreds of dollars. The reintroduced Revel Stoke sold 30,000 cases within the first 12 months and is now in 12 states.

It’s frequently used in the Stoke & Coke, which has a nice ring to it, or consumed simply on the rocks. But talented mixologists should add this to their well; its vanilla flavors and cinnamon spices make it a very unique whisky to play with. It’s tasty, for example, in a whisky version of a Mai Tai. And at an SRP of \$16.99 per 750 ml. bottle, it’s a great value.

I won’t give away my own Revel Stoke Punch recipe, but in the spirit of Gassy Jack and all those Canadian frontiersmen who added spices to their whisky, pull out your own satchels and mix with Revel Stoke. Go make Gassy Jack proud. ■■



## Tasting Notes

Nose of cinnamon, cardamom and caramel. A palate of vanilla, very sweet, with hints of cream sherry, chocolate and citrus and a nice maple syrup, cinnamon and butternut squash finish.