

and tank cleaning, is automated with an iPad. This reduces the opportunity for human error. And the precision programming reassures the consistency of the artfully crafted recipes. They want you to experience the taste of ingredients that were grown as part of the landscape of northern Nevada—and it's actually there. You don't have to have be a graduate-level connoisseur of spirits to taste the flavors of home.

There's a quality assurance lab on-site. Typically, these processes are contracted through a third party, but KassaDee Herring runs the lab at Bently Heritage. It is full of scientific vials, machines and data represented in techy visualizations illustrating the compounds that make up the thumbprint of every batch.

The remaining production buildings on site include a malting facility, where grain is processed before delivery to the distillery in the creamery. The combination of mechanics and biology happening in there is entirely over my head, plus that building wasn't open during my tour.

There are also two barrel-aging facilities. Some of the barrels are old sherry casks filled with vodka to generate the signature Sherry Rested Vodka. (I've never heard of anything like this. It tastes like those rich, booze-filled chocolate-covered cherries you get around the holiday season.) Other barrels are filled with spirits that will still be years in the making before they're released. This includes the single malt whiskey, the bourbon and the rye.

On my visit to Bently Heritage Distillery, I was paraded around by the events and

mixology director, Lucas Huff. He provided the spiel and the aforementioned stories. At the end, he whipped up cocktails that were entirely new experiences for my palate, but with essences that were familiar—Nevadan.

Huff is Nevadan; he's from Minden, specifically. He graduated from Douglas High School. Like kids from small towns do, he took off to figure out what else this world had to offer. Truthfully, Chris Bently didn't spend his whole upbringing in Minden, either. He lived in the Bay Area. He's traveled the world. They're both back now.

Huff's journey delivered him a short way up the road to Truckee, where he cut his teeth in the

high-end service industry; then over to the Bay Area, where he became a certified wine sommelier (no small feat). Eventually, he met a patron who asked him, "Have you ever heard of this place called Minden, Nevada?" The guy told Huff there was distillery burgeoning, and Huff put his name in the running to work the tasting room back in his hometown.

Huff's story is like most things in Nevada—a combination of hard work and happenstance. The same is true for the spirits at Bently Heritage Distillery. Chris Bently could have built a luxury distillery anywhere, but he built it here as a way of attempting to preserve the aromas, tastes and character of our piece of this state. From one Nevadan to the next: It's spot on. □

Learn more about Bently Heritage Estate Distillery here: www.bentlyheritage.com.

"EVER HAD AN OLD FASHIONED, AND IT TASTES LIKE A SUGARY SHOT? THAT'S NOT HOW IT SHOULD TASTE."

Lucas Huff, Events and Mixology Director



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