



# Blazing new territory on KENTUCKY'S BOURBON TRAIL

BY MICHELE PETERSON



If the local Trappist monks can consider bourbon as the secret to the success of their chocolate fudge, then I figure it can't be too scandalous to be having some whisky at 9:00 a.m. After all, I am in Kentucky and the booze is in the pecan waffle syrup, so it's not like I'm drinking it straight.



**B**ourbon has been an integral part of southern life for more than 200 years. Although best known as a sipping beverage, it's not just for whisky connoisseurs anymore. Innovative chefs are reinventing centuries of tradition and pairing bourbon with food in distinctive new ways. For visitors, this new cuisine provides a taste of rugged American history that enhances the dining experience and inspires culinary imaginations.

### Birth of premium bourbon

Kentucky is the birthplace of bourbon. In the 1700s if you had the apparatus for a pot still, you had a distillery. By 1811, nearly 2,000 distillers were producing whisky in Kentucky. Most were small operators but out of this number came whisky families whose descendants continue to work in the industry.

Today, the backwater, rough-and-tumble image is long gone. Premium bourbon has transformed the image of bourbon from "crass to class." Kentucky now distills, ages and bottles 70 per cent of North America's legendary spirit.

*inset images: Tutored tastings offer an introduction to the range of sophisticated flavours that characterize today's bourbon.*

*background: A tour of the historic Buffalo Trace Distillery provides insights into the craft of distilling and aging bourbon.*

*William Manning Photography*