

DRINKING

## HAIR OF THE (WHITE) DOG

Five surprisingly smooth (and perfectly legal!) ways to ease your way into the mega-proofed world of New Moonshine.

-By Craig Bridger, Friday November 12th, 2010 at 2:20 pm

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There's a George Jones tune playing on our Waylon Jennings Pandora station (it's been that kind of month) that goes like this:

*I took a little sip and right away I knew  
As my eyes bugged out and my face turned blue  
Lightning started flashing and thunder started crashing  
Shoooo: White Lightning*

Annoying song. But, if you've never had a nip of moonshine, pretty educational. Fortunately, the illicit, high-octane juice of the back country—most associated with Prohibition, hot-rod runners, and going blind—is a different kettle of fish from the white dog whiskeys now appearing in fancy watering holes and lauded in publications like *The New York Times*. White dogs (distiller's slang for un-aged American whiskeys) are legal, often cut to quaffable levels, and can be as nuanced as sake. And while they aren't likely to supplant bourbon in our affections any time soon, Max Watman, author of *Chasing the White Dog*, reminds us that we don't have to choose. "I don't eschew blanco tequila because I like reposado," he told us, via email. "They both have something to offer. White dog is simply different: It has no barrel flavors, obviously, but there's cereal grain and maltiness. It's very floral, much more than after it's seen some oak." We agree. And if buying one of these isn't as thrilling as pulling from a mason jar in Appalachia, at least none of them will give you the jake walk.

### DEATH'S DOOR WHITE WHISKY

Death's Door Spirits has nurtured a unique collaboration between their distillery, in Madison, Wisconsin, and the farmers and sustainable agriculture initiatives on Washington Island, six miles off the mainland. Hard red-winter wheat exclusive to the island goes into their vodka, gin, and this soft, well-mannered white dog (along with local malted barley). Aged in new oak for less than 72 hours, it smells like fruit and fresh bread, and drinks exceptionally smooth, with a touch of sweet grain. Might disappear in a cocktail, but real hospitable all by itself. At 80-proof, its sort of the antithesis of white lightning.

\$36.99, [deathsdoorspirits.com](http://deathsdoorspirits.com)

