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FROM THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE

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ABOUT GRAVY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

IN THIS ISSUE OF GRAVY, we introduce you to five men and women (well, really six: we fudged the numbers with a set of twins) who are thirty-five years old or younger and making their mark on Southern food and beverage. Kahlil Arnold, Anna Bogle, Dwayne Ingraham, Alex and Charlie Mauney, and Hieu Pham are among the up-and-comers in their profession who happened to enter grade school during the Reagan era. We're not trying to give you the definitive list of "5-under-35" in Southern food; we just want to tell you five compelling stories you probably haven't heard before.

If these individuals share a common thread, it's a strong sense of where they come from paired with the creativity—and courage—to do things their own way. Welcome to the black, white, Asian, male, female, sweet, spicy, boiled, boozy, farm-fresh, foraged, locally inspired, globally inflected future of Southern food and drink.

—Sara Camp Arnold

MORE THAN MOONSHINE

In Kentucky, Anna Bogle crafts cocktails with a sense of place

by Lora Smith

THE MUSICIANS FROM THE CAJUN COUNTRY REVIVAL, up for the night from Louisiana, seem to be getting a kick out of drinking bourbon in its native habitat. Their faces are flushed from slow pulls of Bulleit, a favorite at Summit City Lounge in downtown Whitesburg, Kentucky.

Housed in a historic building that once served as the office of the late lawyer, author, and mountain people's advocate Harry Caudill, the bar has become a landmark for another reason. Summit was the first bar to open five years ago when the city voted to legalize the sale of alcohol by restaurants, something referred to in the rapidly disappearing dry counties of eastern Kentucky as "going moist."

Joel Savoy, flicking his fiddle bow, motions to the backlit bar. "Anna, come dance a little with us." A lovesick waltz starts. And Summit's dark-haired bartender, thirty-four-year-old Anna Bogle, momentarily sways in the arms of a handsome young man in a red-checkered shirt. The crowd swells to a sweaty mix of flatfooting and two-stepping bodies.

WHITESBURG, set at the base of Pine Mountain, Kentucky's second highest peak, straddles the crossroads of a complicated social history and an uncertain economic future, based on the region's dependence on a declining coal industry. Since the 1960s, Whitesburg has largely been synonymous with Appalshop, a multimedia arts center. Conceived as a War on Poverty program for local youth, it continues to attract national acclaim for producing award-winning documentary films. Despite the best efforts of that program, Whitesburg, like most of Appalachia, still struggles with persistent poverty and inordinately high unemployment.

But tonight, with the rowdy crowd of miners, politicians, and artists, drinking and dancing under star-shaped paper lanterns, Whitesburg feels like the most carefree place on Earth.

During the band's second set, the drinkers draw a bead on Anna's cocktails, including a wild mountain grape–infused take on a Ramos gin fizz, shaken with egg whites, cream, orange flower water, simple syrup, and lime juice. Those same wild grapes undergird a grape-and-lavender-infused vodka tonic with a splash of Saint Germain that tastes like a country cousin of the cosmopolitan.

Anna talks me through her creative process, equal parts improvisation and something out of a field guide to wild edibles of the Southern Appalachians: "I was up hiking on Little Shepherd's Trail and came across a ton of wild grapes—the seedy kind, not good for jelly, so I made some infusions."

My pick for the night's star is a frothy, nameless wonder with a delicate beige color that Anna hands me in a champagne coupe. "I'm really horrible with naming things," she admits, "but I've been wanting to figure out a sorghum cocktail."

Discovering a pear tree on a friend's property, she found her inspiration. The result is something I took to calling the "Winter Pear," a riff on a White Russian that features heirloom pear-infused vodka and a dab of pear butter, with local sorghum instead of Kahlua.

ANNA IS QUICK TO SAY that it would be hard to live in Whitesburg and not be influenced by place. "The physical landscape here is unmistakable, all around, holding you. You're always encircled by these mountains," she says. But her approach is also a natural expression of her experience as a young Appalachian.

Raised in a small community outside Maryville, Tennessee, Anna's earliest memories are of bringing her family's surroundings to the table. "We always had a big garden, cows, chickens and goats," she recalls. "Our neighbors hunted game and raised hogs. As kids, we'd go down and help with the hog killing."

After moving north for college, Anna returned to the region to work as a chef, including stints in Asheville and Greensboro, North Carolina, before eventually settling closer to home in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The call to eastern Kentucky came when Amelia Kirby, a childhood friend of Anna's and the owner of Summit City, asked Anna to help redesign a bar menu focused on local ingredients and regional tastes. Anna's approach to bar food and spirits is to call forward the overlooked multicultural and ethnic influences that shape the mountain experience, making it clear that eastern Kentucky offers more than just moonshine, soup beans, and chow chow.

This playful treatment of Appalachian identity translates to a menu of cocktails like The Stone Mason, a liquid homage to the city's Italian immigrant ancestors who cut distinctive stone buildings and bridges.

As the night comes to a close, Anna's mind is on the black walnuts awaiting transformation in her apartment, steps away from the bar. She tells me a black walnut liqueur is in the works and, if successful, will make an appearance in some as-yet-unnamed cocktail. I suggest a walnut bitters, and Anna's eyes light up.

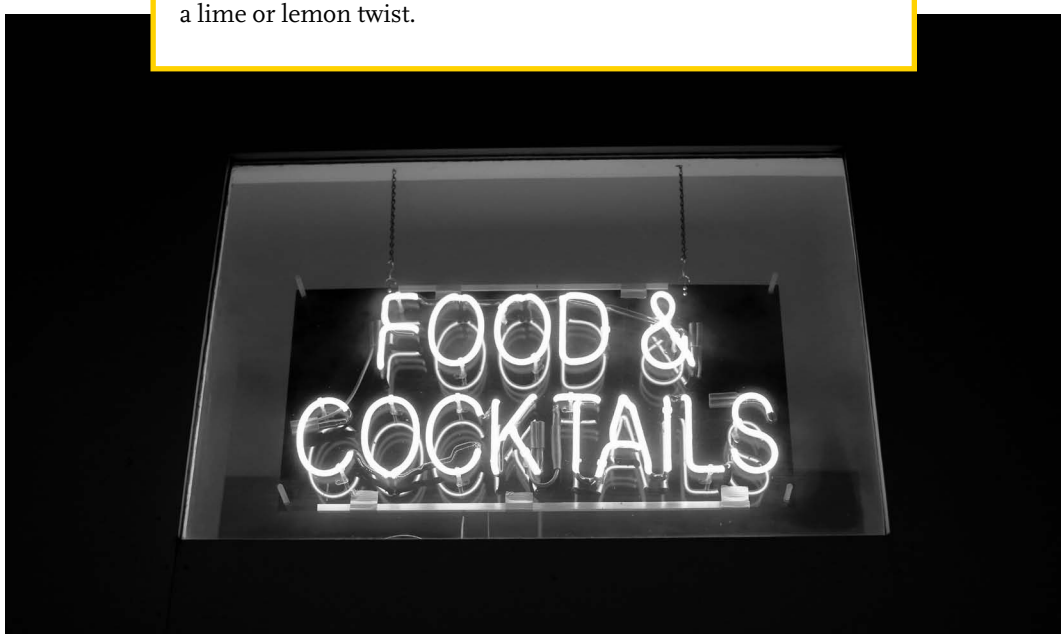
Lora Smith splits her time between a day job in Greensboro, North Carolina, and weekend work in Egypt, Kentucky, where she and her husband are developing 120 acres at the head of a holler into an organic farm and heirloom cider orchard.
PHOTOS by Brett Marshall.

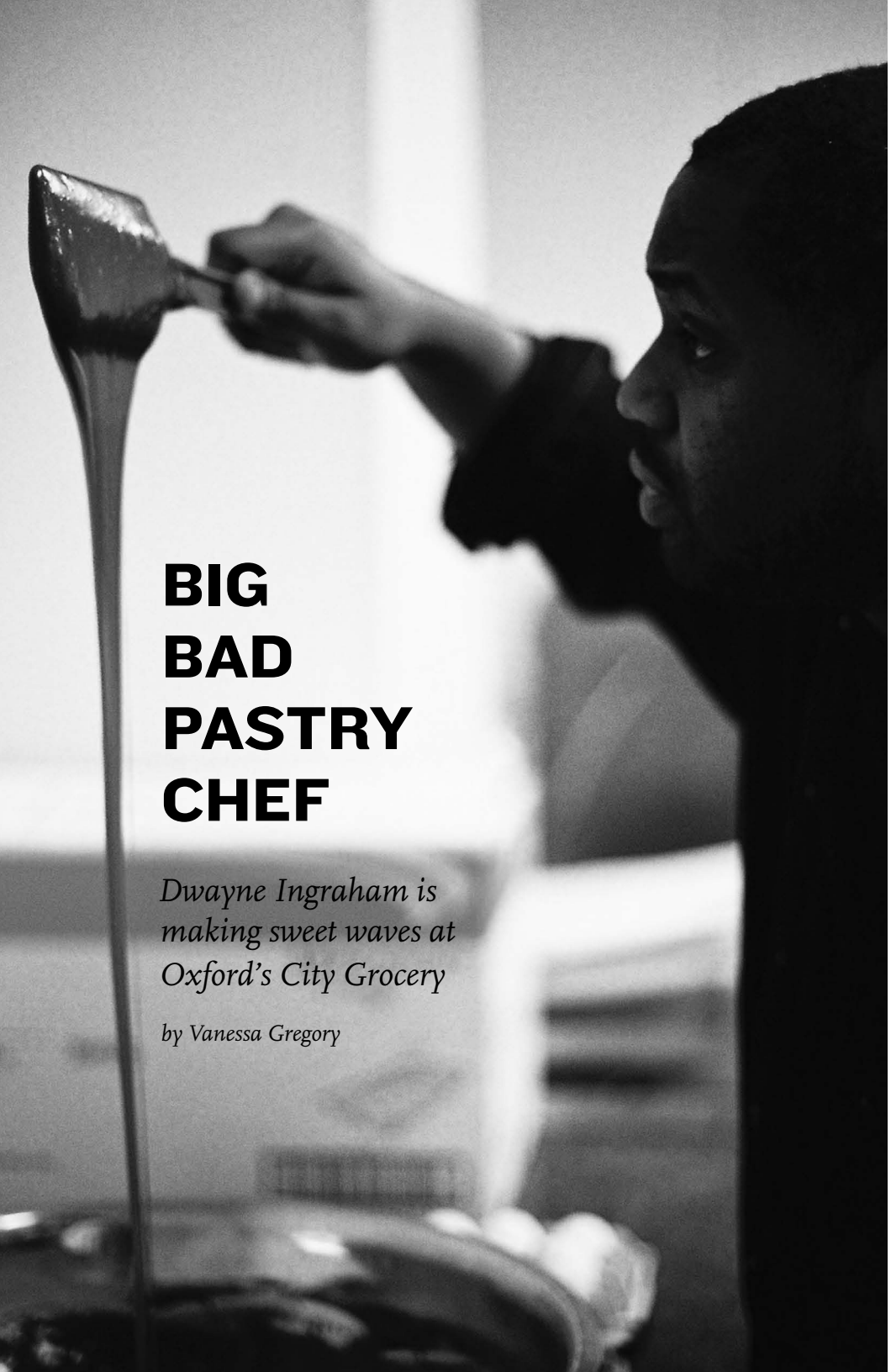
The Stone Mason

Whitesburg's stone buildings and bridges were built by stone masons from the Calabria region of Italy. A drink honoring their contribution to the community—with a Kentucky twist.

1 ½ oz bourbon
½ oz Campari
1 oz freshly made sour mix

Shake vigorously and strain into a martini glasses. Garnish with a lime or lemon twist.





BIG BAD PASTRY CHEF

Dwayne Ingraham is making sweet waves at Oxford's City Grocery

by Vanessa Gregory

I MET DWAYNE INGRAHAM over ice cream sandwiches—basil macarons on the outside, frozen balsamic custard within—served alongside a puddle of vanilla-poached strawberries. Subtly sweet and insistently seasonal, the late-summer confection proved an ideal introduction to the twenty-nine-year-old pastry chef, who pairs French techniques with the tastes and traditions of his Louisiana birth.

John Currence hired Ingraham two years ago to reinvigorate the dessert program at City Grocery Restaurant Group in Oxford, Mississippi. What he got was a great pastry chef. What he also got was a young man with diverse tastes, born in Louisiana, schooled in Vermont; a man who loves maple syrup as much as bread pudding; a country boy whose greatest influence in the kitchen has been a Dominican woman from the Bronx.

"I showed up this kid fresh out of culinary school, and she broke me down," Ingraham says of pastry chef Jackie Caraballo, who mentored him at two Las Vegas restaurants. "She would stand by my shoulder and just bark, 'This is your job, and if this is what you love to do, you really have to do it.'"

Ingraham was born into a family of good cooks in Boothville, a tiny town in the extreme southeastern reaches of Louisiana, one of those spots where the Gulf of Mexico seems poised to swallow the land. Bayous and bays suggest Cajun Country, but Ingraham's family and neighbors felt more culturally connected to New Orleans, where they frequently traveled to shop and eat po-boys.

As a boy, he learned the Louisiana repertoire. His grandmother was locally renowned for stuffed mirlitons and stewed eggplant, cooked down with shrimp and pickle meat and served over white rice. His mother baked a mean sweet potato pie. His father was a crack red beans and rice cook. And his grandfather made a stout bread pudding with bourbon sauce.

The Ingraham family did not kowtow to gender roles in the kitchen. "Mother didn't like to get up early in the morning, so she made us self-sufficient at a very early age," Dwayne says. "The first thing I definitely learned to do was breakfast." By the age of five, Ingraham was working the oven, baking sweet potato pies.

After high school, Ingraham enrolled at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he studied speech communications.

"One day, I literally woke up in the middle of the night and said, 'You know, I might as well do something I enjoy. I'm twiddling my thumbs here in college for years trying to figure out what to do. I love to bake—why don't I go to culinary school?'"

Vermont turned out to be a lot like home. People ate pies. Lots of pies. And they greeted each other by name in the grocery store. The New England Culinary Institute, in Montpelier, was a perfect educational match. Dwayne recalls, "I knew from the very first time that I rolled my croissant dough that this was for me."

At NECI, Dwayne discovered that he is a perfectionist. And he learned that the ranks of pastry chefs are well populated by cooks attracted to routines, methods, and measurements. "I don't like to fail in life," Ingraham says. "And I like to have all the tools I need to succeed."

That approach is yielding impressive results. This winter's jumbled-sounding chocolate roulade—with coffee cream, flambéed bananas, chocolate sauce, Chantilly cream, and salted peanuts—initially threw John Currence for a loop. But it made sense once he tasted it, and the "Funky Monkey"—named after a coffee drink Dwayne fell for in Las Vegas—made the menu.

So have some family favorites. "I put my mother's sweet potato pie on the menu last fall at the Grocery," Ingraham says. "The only difference is I made a marshmallow fluff to put on top."

Ingraham's dream is to someday open his own place in Oxford. He wants to serve the kind of elaborate Sunday brunch he fell in love with at culinary school. "That complete buffet style," he says. "Where somebody's making your omelets fresh, right there. There's a pastry section with miniature petit-fours and petite pastries and a showpiece that pulls you in, somebody doing cherries jubilee and bananas foster, flaring up in front of you."

I, for one, am hoping for macarons.

Vanessa Gregory is a writer and an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Mississippi.
PHOTO, PAGE 6 by Katie Williamson.

SOUTH BY SOUTHEAST

On Atlanta's Buford Highway, Hieu Pham specializes in Cajun crawfish with a Vietnamese accent

As told to Kate Medley by Hieu Pham, May 31, 2010

BORN IN ATLANTA *in 1983 to Vietnamese immigrant parents, Hieu Pham calls himself "a true peach boy; a Southern guy." As a teenager, Hieu spent many summers and holiday vacations at youth camps sponsored by the Vietnamese Baptist Church. There he made close friends from New Orleans, who taught him about Louisiana cuisine. He recalls, "they would bring sacks of crawfish up to Atlanta, or whenever I came to New Orleans, we would have a big seafood feast."*

Hieu opened Crawfish Shack Seafood on Buford Highway in August 2008, when the economic crisis was at its worst. The strip-mall restaurant almost didn't survive its first six months. Four years later, it's going strong, serving a menu anchored by boiled or steamed shellfish, fried fish, and New Orleans–style po-boys. Hieu manages a staff of some twenty employees, but at its core, the Crawfish Shack remains a family affair.

MY PARENTS ARE FROM VIETNAM. My dad is half-Chinese, half-Vietnamese; my mom is half-Cambodian and half-Vietnamese. They both were refugees from Vietnam during the Vietnam War. They came to Atlanta in 1980—they were sponsored by a Vietnamese Baptist Church. They actually met on the boat on their way over here.

I have only visited Vietnam once. On my mom's side, everybody is actually over here in the United States. The majority of my dad's family actually still lives in Vietnam, in Soc Trang, south of Saigon.

My mom grew up and was raised in Cambodia, near the border where Vietnam and Cambodia meet. My mom told me that she worked most her whole entire life and did not have a lot of food. She traveled a lot between the countries selling cigarette boxes, rice, just anything just to make a buck or two. Due to her traveling, my mom actually picked up how to cook Malaysian, Thai, and of course Vietnamese and Cambodian. Growing up I ate a lot of home-cooked South Asian food. My mom was not really always about spice so much; but really about flavor. She always added a lot more ingredients than necessary for a typical Vietnamese dish. My mom would be the number one influence in my cooking.

Crawfish Shack Seafood is a Cajun inspired restaurant, but it's not a typical Cajun restaurant. There is a lot of Asian influence behind the ingredients of the food, which gives a different taste, a little bit more enhanced flavoring and aroma. We wanted to make sure that the food was well balanced and properly cooked.

One of the Vietnamese products that we brought to the restaurant was the *nuoc mia*, or simply, in English, sugarcane drink. It's just a freshly squeezed sugarcane stalk. It's a wonderful drink because a lot of customers remember chewing on it as a little kid as a snack. So I have a machine that compresses the whole stick to juice it out. It's mixed with a slice of orange or kumquat to bring out a little bit of the citrus taste behind the sugarcane, so that it's not overly sweet. It was the type of drink that I wanted to draw Vietnamese customers in; another thing that made the Shack a little different that customers could enjoy with their spicy seafood besides sweet tea.

PHOTO, PAGE 9 by Kate Medley.

A FAMILY TRADITION

Following in his father's footsteps, Kahlil Arnold is a meat-and-three master for the twenty-first century

by Chris Chamberlain

JACK ARNOLD, famous for wearing foulard bow ties and overalls, opened his namesake restaurant in a maroon cinderblock building in downtown Nashville in 1983. He slowly earned a reputation as the city's next meat-and-three standard-bearer, a worthy inheritor to the Hap Townes legacy.

Kahlil Arnold, now the lead cook at Arnold's, began working with his father as a boy, washing dishes and sourcing vegetables from local markets. "Growing up, I didn't intend to go into the family business," Kahlil remembers. "But everybody just always seemed so happy there, and it was a fun place to work."

Jack taught Khalil that cooking happens before the stove is even warm. "He used to beat up his vendors pretty good to get the first pick. He taught me that how you prepare your ingredients before you cook them is the key to making great food. So I chopped a whole lot of vegetables."

By the time he was seventeen, Kahlil, a rangy kid with a wide grin and a curly fop of hair, had graduated to baking biscuits, frying sausage, and stirring up sawmill gravy for breakfast. But he wasn't yet a restaurant lifer. "Jack wanted me to go to college, and I wanted to study something to do with wildlife in school," he recalls. "Instead, I majored in criminal justice at Tennessee Tech."

After college, Khalil decided that what he really wanted to do was follow the path his father blazed. But Jack didn't take that well, says Khalil. "He said it was a hard life and actually almost had me hired on with the Secret Service more than once. He thought that job was more up my alley."

For a few years, Kahlil worked in the Arnold's kitchen with his older brother, Mahn, and Will Borden, a thirty-year kitchen veteran who taught Kahlil how to cook down a proper pot of greens. In time, he took jobs at other Nashville restaurants, including a stint as front-of-the-house manager at another Nashville institution, the Loveless Café.

When Jack Arnold eased toward retirement, Kahlil told Loveless owner Tom Morales that he needed to return to help out his family business. "Tom wasn't upset at all. In fact, he asked how many of his kitchen staff I needed to take with me. I'll always appreciate his generosity."

Nashville chefs like Tandy Wilson of City House, Margot McCormack of Margot Café, and Tyler Brown of the Capitol Grille have come to recognize Kahlil as a peer, focused on interpreting local ingredients and traditions. Says Wilson, "He's doing the same stuff that we're doing in fine dining in Nashville, just on a steam table."

Today, Kahlil, the father of three children, is conscious of his role in Nashville. But he is also committed to preserving his father's legacy. The future of Arnold's was recently imperiled when the landlord made plans to sell out. Fortunately, the Arnold family was able to purchase the building, ensuring that visitors will savor Kahlil's takes on fried chicken, stewed tomatoes, flat cornbread, and meringue-crowned banana pudding for years to come.

Jack Arnold, in his prime, could put out a spectacular lunch. And now his son Kahlil, who modestly asserts that his father taught him everything he knows about cooking, is making a sterling name for himself at the family's celebrated eatery. Kahlil's modesty cloaks his many culinary skills. The young man knows his way around the kitchen. That's why you see a line stretching out the door most middays, and a satisfied throng inside.

Chris Chamberlain is the author of The Southern Foodie: 100 Places to Eat in the South Before You Die.
PHOTO BY Jennifer Justus.

A CARDINAL FROM THE ASHES

The Mauney brothers make award-winning gin in a shuttered textile mill

by Jed Portman

THE MAUNEY BROTHERS DON'T TALK MUCH. Going through the notes from our interview, I see the underlined interjection "DAD" often, in all the places where their father helped to push our conversation along. The Mauney brothers have no lack of projects to talk about. I think of what a high school teacher said to me after a mild-mannered relative of hers got caught dropping rocks on cars from a highway overpass: "You've got to watch out for the quiet ones. They're always up to something."

Alex and Charlie Mauney—thirty-one-year-old twins and direct descendants of W. A. Mauney, who founded their hometown of Kings Mountain, North Carolina—began fiddling with alcohol four years ago, making wine in their parents' garage. Before long, they became interested in hard liquor. They formed a business, Southern Artisan Spirits, and set out to make gin, their unaged spirit of choice.

The brothers tested a wide range of botanicals in ten-gallon batches of white liquor. "We worked on the flavor for a year," Alex says. "Buying ingredients. Increasing them. Decreasing them. We probably went through close to a hundred test batches." They call the product of their experimentation Cardinal Gin, for North Carolina's state bird. It's layered with the flavors of eleven botanicals—roughly twice the number in your typical gin—including cloves, frankincense, grains of paradise, orange peel, and spearmint.

Alex and Charlie rented space in a family-owned hosiery mill, a shabby place on the outskirts of town. Charlie left law school. Alex kept his day job with an engineering company and helped distill on nights and weekends. Southern Artisan Spirits was three people then: Alex, Charlie, and father Jim, who'd been downsized out of his job in 2008. Alex moved over to SAS full-time about a year ago. Besides that, not much has changed. Cardinal Gin won the Double Gold at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition this year (the only American gin to do so), and now sells in five states. It is still produced and marketed by two brothers and their dad.

"Right now, we can handle it," says Jim, "but if it gets any bigger—and it's going to get bigger—we're going to have to start hiring people."

Late in my visit, as we sipped G&Ts, chilly air blew through the old loading-dock door. The brothers joked that gin-making might now be Kings Mountain's newest industry, a replacement for textiles. While

small-batch gin may not yet be the go-to tipple in working-class Kings Mountain bars, the brothers say that their hometown—the first in the state to vote itself dry, in 1874—has shown nothing but support for the young business. And bartenders up the road in Asheville pour Cardinal with pride.

Now Alex and Charlie are working on a new project. It has something to do with the tall, boxy still in the corner—the only one of its kind, designed by the brothers with help from distillation experts—and the heirloom Bloody Butcher corn that a farmer is growing for them in nearby Shelby, North Carolina. The details are still coming together, but it's true: The brothers, quiet as they might be, are always up to something.

Jed Portman is a Charleston, South Carolina–based writer and editor who blogs for Serious Eats and Garden & Gun.
PHOTO by Jed Portman.

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