



June 1, 2008

Hit the Urban Bourbon Trail

Program promotes local industry

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Louisville tourism officials have unveiled a program to promote the bourbon industry through the creation of an "Urban Bourbon Trail" and a "passport" program to navigate it.

People who visit the eight local establishments on the trail that are stocked with bourbon can get free gifts and a small orange booklet. Resembling a U.S. passport, the booklet contains information on bourbon and on the local and state bourbon trails.

Mayor Jerry Abramson and officials of the Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Kentucky Distillers' Association and local hospitality leaders announced the program Friday at Bourbon Barrel Foods in Butchertown, 1201 Story Ave.

Abramson said "wine is made in lots of places all over the world. But 95 percent of the world's bourbon is made in Kentucky and one-third of that production occurs right here in Louisville ... at Brown-Forman ... and Heaven Hill. And, of course, Maker's Mark has its corporate headquarters here in Louisville."

The Urban Bourbon Trail is part of a new marketing effort to identify Louisville as the gateway to bourbon country, officials said.

The distillers' association has a large exhibit at the convention bureau's visitors center in the Louisville Hyatt Regency Hotel at Fourth and Jefferson streets that encourages travelers to venture out into the state to visit the seven distilleries on the well-established Kentucky Bourbon Trail.

On the new Urban Bourbon Trail in Louisville, visitors can experience the "taste and mystique" of bourbon at eight designated bars or locations participating in the passport program.

Each site is stocked with 50 to 150 different brands or types of bourbon.

The businesses along the urban trail are:

The Bar at BLU in the Marriott Louisville Downtown, 280 W. Jefferson St.

Bourbon's Bistro, 2225 Frankfort Ave.

The Brown hotel Bar, Fourth Street and Broadway.

Jockey Silks Bourbon Bar & Lounge in the Galt House, Fourth and Main streets.

Maker's Mark Bourbon House & Lounge, 432 S. Fourth St. in 4th Street Live.

The Old Seelbach Bar in the Seelbach Hilton, Fourth Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard.

Park Place at Slugger Field on Main Street.

Proof on Main, 700 W. Main.

"Passports" in the new promotion can be obtained for free at the visitors center at the Hyatt. There is no time limit for visiting all eight locations.

The program is explained at the front of the passport. It also includes pointers on how to taste bourbon like an expert and data and maps on the sites on urban trail and the distilleries on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail.

People are urged to visit each urban location, to purchase drink or food and get the passport stamped.

When a user gets a stamp at all eight locations, the passports can be redeemed at the visitors center. People will get a specially designed T-shirt that identifies the wearer as a "trailblazer" and also a gift, probably glassware, said convention bureau spokeswoman Stacey Yates.

The announcement of the Urban Bourbon Trail and the passport program was made in conjunction with the opening of the Bourbon Barrel Foods retail store and manufacturing facility.

Abramson predicted that the new marketing effort will be "an effective tool for strengthening the bourbon industry and for growing ... tourism."

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