Hood River Distillers

Hood River Distillers, Inc., received the first state distiller's license (DSP-OR-1) when it was established in 1934. The distiller is the largest and oldest liquor company in the Pacific Northwest. The original officers were E.L. McClain Jr. (president), A.W. Peters (vice president), E.R. Pooley (secretary-treasurer), E.F. Pooley (general manager), and J.H. Crenshaw (company chemist).

The company began by making fruit wines and brandies from the apples, pears, and berries that were going to waste as excess production of the valley's abundant harvests. In the early days, production capacity was 300,000 gallons a year, and the company used 470,000 boxes of Oregon apples each year to make products such as Old Delicious Brandy.

Hood River Distillers has been at its current bottling facility on Riverside Drive in Hood River since 1968 and has expanded the plant for storage and production-line upgrades several times. The company produces more than 1.25 million cases of distilled spirits per year. It makes, imports, and distributes more than fifteen brands of spirits, ranging from inexpensive to premium products, including whisky, rum, gin, vodka, brandy, tequila, and liqueur.

While Hood River Distillers distributes spirits in more than forty states, its core distribution area is the Pacific Northwest and some of its labels refer to local places and events. ULLR, a "Nordic libation" with a picture of Mt. Hood on the label, was created for snow enthusiasts, and Pendleton Whisky recognizes the hundred-year-old Pendleton Round-Up.

Hood River Distillers is an Oregon corporation, owned by four families who comprise fourteen shareholders. The company has fifty-three employees and realizes net annual sales of almost $29 million. The company sponsors over thirty rodeos and western lifestyle events throughout the country, including the Pendleton Round-Up, and is also a sponsor for WinterFest in Bend.

Written by Linné Dodge

Further Reading:

Hood River Distillers website. http://www.hrdspirits.com/.

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