

BEARS VICTORY? LAYING IT ON THE LINE

COOKING UP A STORM WITH THE HEARTY BOYS

January 2007

Chicago

**CHICAGOANS
OF THE YEAR**
9 Heroes for
Our Time


DR. JOSE OBERHOLZER
Cell and Pancreas
Transplantation
University of Illinois
Medical Center at Chicago

BREAKTHROUGH MEDICINE

Meet the Chicago MDs and Scientists
Who Are Pioneering Treatments
for Many of Today's Most
Devastating Ailments

U.S. \$4.99 CANADA \$5.99



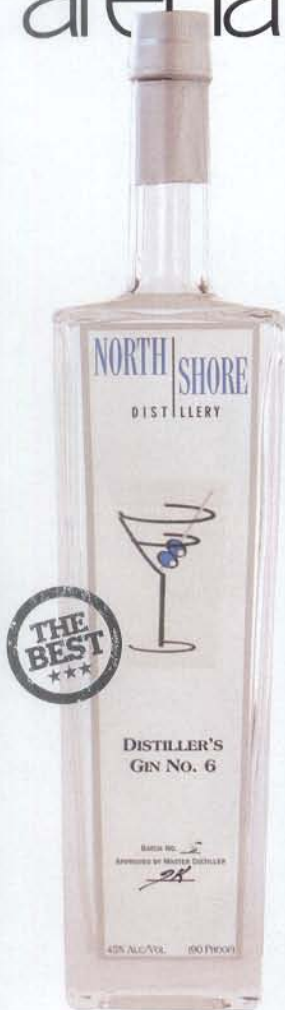
CHICAGOMAG.COM

WEDDINGS
CUSTOM-MADE CELEBRATIONS

In the Spirit

How do two new Midwest spirits compare with fashionable gins and vodkas in the same \$25-to-\$30 range? *Chicago's* chief dining critic pitted Distiller's Gin No. 6 and DiVine vodka against premium brands.

Two clear winners emerged. **BY DENNIS RAY WHEATON**



♣ **DISTILLER'S GIN NO. 6**
(Illinois, 90 proof)

In 2004, Derek and Sonja Kassebaum founded North Shore Distillery, the first licensed and bonded craft distillery in Illinois. Made in a custom-built German copper still in Lake Bluff, their gin is infused with ten botanicals, including cardamom, lavender, and cinnamon. **Verdict:** Wonderful complexity with pronounced floral aromas and flavors; easy to sip neat even at room temperature. I'm not just jingoistic; it really is the best of the bunch.



♣ **BOMBAY SAPPHIRE**
(England, 94 proof)

Ten botanicals, including grains of paradise, almonds, and licorice, infused into the spirit while it's in vapor form in London Carterhead stills. **Verdict:** Complex from all the botanicals yet subdued and smooth. A little wimpish compared with the others, which explains its appeal to non-gin lovers.

Gin: Clear grain spirit flavored with a variety of botanicals, always including juniper



♣ **HENDRICK'S GIN**
(Scotland, 88 proof)

The back of the squat black jug says, "It Is Not for Everyone." Botanicals unique to this brand include Holland cucumbers as well as Bulgarian rose petals. **Verdict:** Reduced taste of juniper compared with others and more assertively floral. The cucumber adds complexity and brightness; often served as a martini garnished with cucumber to add to the effect.



♣ **TANQUERAY NO. TEN**
(England, 94.6 proof)

Made with ten fresh botanicals—not dried, as many competitors use—including grapefruit, orange, lime, and a hint of chamomile. **Verdict:** Lively and fresh, with restrained juniper and sprightly citrus notes and an earthy hint of cardamom that make it stand out from most gins. My favorite since it was introduced in 2000—until North Shore came along.

... then it was on to vodka!

Four vodkas—shaken, not stirred

While the federal definition of vodka is a spirit "without distinctive character," vodka connoisseurs know this is a slight fiction. The best vodkas do have different aromas and tastes, although they are so subtle that it's a waste to use them in drinks like a bloody mary. Dennis Ray Wheaton ordered the superpremiums shaken and served straight up in a martini glass—no vermouth—with an olive or lemon twist garnish. A few of his tasting notes follow.

Vodka:
A spirit without distinctive character, aroma, taste, or color.

BELVEDERE (Poland, 80 proof): Smooth and elegant with a hint of botanical flavors, lemon peel and vanilla notes; light, clean finish.

GREY GOOSE (France, 80 proof): Vague hints of anise but too polished for its own good; finally comes across as bland. If you like your spirits neutral, Grey Goose is the one.

KETEL ONE (Netherlands, 80 proof): Do I detect whispers of floral and vanilla? Aftertaste smooth but not as lingering as others. Pleasant, but not my favorite.

DIVINE (Round Barn Winery & Distillery in Baroda, Michigan, 80 proof): Distilled five times from wine grapes in a European copper-pot still and sold in frosted bottles individually signed by the distiller. **Most distinctive of these vodkas.** Real fruitiness on the nose; pleasant to sip at room temperature, very smooth and delicate.

