



20



42



72

4  
**THE MIDLAND STOP •**  
Words by: Meagan Thomas | Photos by: Beth Grimes

8  
**AXE AND THE OAK DISTILLERY •**  
Words by: Andrew Elsass  
Photos by: Allison Daniell Moix

12  
**BARTENDER PROFILE: ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ**  
Words by: Anna Squires & Alejandro Sanchez  
Photos by: Allison Daniell Moix

14  
**COCO'S SIX PICKS FOR BREWERIES IN FORT COLLINS**  
Words by: Sarahbeth Caplin  
Photos by: Emily Coffey

16  
**NEW BELGIUM BREWING**  
Words by: Sarahbeth Caplin | Photos by: Emily Coffey

18  
**ODELL BREWERY**  
Words by: Sarahbeth Caplin | Photos by: Emily Coffey

20  
**COLORADO CIDER COMPANY •**  
Words by: Kaitlin Boyer | Photos by: Katy Doerksen

24  
**COLORADO'S WINE COUNTRY**  
Words By: Julie Martin Sunich  
Photos by: Katy Doerksen & Karen Mitchell

30  
**A JOURNEY INTO PAIRINGS**  
Words by: Dionne Roberts | Photos by: Teryn O'Brien

34  
**BARTENDER PROFILE: MONTANA HORSFALL**  
Words by: Anna Squires & Montana Horsfall  
Photos by: Meegan Dobson

36  
**LAWS WHISKEY HOUSE •**  
Words by: Chris Davis Murphy  
Photos by: Allison Daniell Moix

42  
**COLORADO MALTING COMPANY •**  
Words by: Alex Riegelmann | Photos by: Jeffrey Kintner

46  
**BARTENDER PROFILE: ALEX JUMP**  
Words by: Anna Squires & Alex Jump  
Photos by: Teryn O'Brien

48  
**HOMEMADE FLAVORED SYRUPS**  
Recipes by: Katie Lew | Photos by: Meghan Sheppard

54  
**100 BOTTLES OF COLORADO BEER**  
Paintings by: Ceil Horowitz

60  
**PROHIBITION IN COLORADO**  
Words by: Kendall Ashley | Illustration by: Patrick Parks

64  
**3 HUNDRED DAYS OF SHINE •**  
Words by: Teryn O'Brien  
Photos by: Teryn O'Brien

68  
**OPENING A COFFEE SHOP IN THE MILE HIGH CITY**  
Words by: Elle Taylor | Photos by: Teryn O'Brien

72  
**BARISTA CHAMPS**  
Words by: Emily Glover  
Photos by: Tanya Martineau

76  
**BARTENDER PROFILE: ERIKA MULLETT**  
Words by: Anna Squires & Erika Mullett  
Photos by: Devin Richter

78  
**LUKE FLOWERS**  
Words by: Susan Fletcher | Photos by: Becky Kyle

84  
**BRECKENRIDGE DISTILLERY •**  
Words by: Teryn O'Brien  
Photos by: Becca Howard

90  
**PEAK PLACE •**  
Words by: Katie Lew | Photos by: Rachel Beckwith

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# Loyal & True:

## 3 HUNDRED DAYS OF SHINE SPOTLIGHTS ITS COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Words by: Teryn O'Brien | Photos by: Teryn O'Brien

Undoubtedly, the heartbeat of any successful distillery is the people who walk through the doors to talk, to imbibe, to dream. It's that ongoing, meaningful community support that "regulars" offer to an establishment. 3 Hundred Days of Shine, a moonshine distillery in Monument, Colorado, is doing that community so well that in just two years since opening in 2014, they've formed a tight-knit community of committed and curious new customers who are always greeted with the welcoming smiles of owner Mike Girard and other staff members.

While any company can hype their own products or services, it's hearing the stories of regulars that truly paints a picture of what a business has to offer. Take, for instance, Mark and Terry Anthony, who originally hail from Nebraska but have been in Colorado since 1996. They are high school sweethearts who've been married for 51 years. Before moving to Colorado, Mark traveled all over the world to places like Angola and Australia for his job as an engineer. They moved to Monument in 2010. The couple stumbled upon 3 Hundred Days of Shine at a friend's suggestion that they try out "the new moonshine place," and it quickly became one of their favorite spots. "We really connected with Mike, and we loved his story," described Terry. "We wanted to support him in any way, because he's just a good guy."

Mike's clearly a humble person, and although he prefers not to hype his own veteran story—the regulars think it's important to bring it up. Mike was in the military for almost 23 years. He spent 9 years in the infantry, but the last 14 years were spent in the Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD)—a division that goes into the hardest places, like Iraq and Afghanistan, to dispose of and disarm bombs. 1% of US citizens volunteer to join the military, and less than 1% of that volunteer for the EOD. There were about 800 EOD specialists army-wide when Mike graduated EOD School, but there are more than twice that number now. In other words: "He was on the ground doing the nasty stuff," Mark summed it up, sharing a bit of Mike's story from his own perspective. There is a wall at 3 Hundred Days showcasing Mike's career through medals, tributes to fallen friends, and pins from other military personnel who have wandered in to leave a mark, if only for a moment.

Art Loureiro, another loyal customer of 3 Hundred Days of Shine, was an infantry officer for 30 years before he retired. He's been living in Monument for 5 years now. Art found out about 3 Hundred Days while golfing with a buddy of his. "The rest is history," he joked. Art is referred to by many as "The Supervisor"







because he comes to the distillery so consistently. “The nickname is really just because I’m old,” joked Art. Art has a particular chair he likes to sit in, and he loves swapping military stories with Mike and other customers that come in. Afterwards, Art usually enjoys taking a spin on the open road atop his Harley. “There’s camaraderie,” explained Art. “The number one thing you always miss when you hang up the uniform is the camaraderie. When you come to a place like this, you find it again.”

But it’s not just the camaraderie that makes 3 Hundred Days stick out, according to Art. It’s the moonshine. “There’s a lot of different moonshines out there, but not a lot can boast that they get ingredients from the actual state that they’re distilling in,” said Art. “Mike also still makes it the traditional way—it’s the historical way that he makes it. There’s history in this moonshine.”

Moonshine is the broad term referring to any illegally distilled spirit in the Prohibition Era. Mike started distilling various spirits as a hobby, but he was quickly offered a business opportunity after people tasted his offering. His passion was to distill in the historic methods Coloradans used during the Prohibition Era. In Colorado, corn was scarce, and so distillers used sugar and sugar beets as their malt base. The taste is truly distinctive to Colorado, and Mike was very insistent that anything he’d offer in a distillery would be true to the historical roots of Colorado.

Around the tasting room, browned and wrinkled newspaper articles and photos of the bootleggers that fought for territory in Southern Colorado adorn 3 Hundred Day’s walls. Mike has even made relationships with some of the descendants of those inglorious men—like Chester Porter, who was one of the biggest bootleggers in Colorado Springs. “To this day, I still haven’t gotten an actual moonshine recipe from the Porter family, but they’ve said if they ever find one, they’ll be giving it to me,” he said.

3 Hundred Days of Shine makes decidedly delicious spirits, from their Centennial Wheat—which is distilled with sugar and wheat, then infused with American White Oak—to their Rocky Mountain Sweet Tea, which is a 40-proof shine that’s easy to drink right out of the mason jar it comes in. “It’s really nice to drink with a splash of lemonade,” said Mike. The Sugar Moon is their 105-proof take on traditional Coloradan style moonshine using sugar and sugar beets. And, of course, their best-selling Apple Pie Moonshine is a popular favorite: a blend of apple juice, apple ciders, sugar, and cinnamon. This concoction doesn’t just taste like whiskey and apples; it truly tastes like a mouthful of flavorful, sugary apple pie.

Customers that taste this uniquely sugar-based moonshine are often surprised. And one, named Allison Hoover, loved it so much she just had to start working at 3 Hundred Days. Allison was one of those customers that walked through the door truly skeptical about whiskey. “I just don’t like corn-based moonshine,” she said. However, tasting 3 Hundred Days moonshine just a month or so after they first opened in 2014 with her husband, Joe, made her a believer. “At the beginning of the evening, I told my husband, ‘You can try it. I’m not drinking it. I hate moonshine.’ I ended up having him drive home that night,” she recalled. “So I guess I liked it!”

The Hoovers quickly became dedicated regulars. Allison loved 3 Hundred Days so much that she began volunteering to do labeling and other tasks, which eventually morphed into a job. She handles production and inventory on a part-time basis. Joe continues to be the moral support and comes in regularly, often helping out at festivals or other events when extra hands are needed.

Matthew Clark, the first regular bartender hired besides Mike, also loves watching people learn to love 3 Hundred Day’s spirits. “You cannot predict what people will like,” he said. “I had this burly guy and this really tiny wife in recently, and his tiny little wife ordered Sugar Moon and chugged it down like water, and he couldn’t handle the strong stuff. So it’s just fun to guess, and then to realize you can’t guess. People surprise me constantly.”

Matthew also shared that people come in all the time asking if the police raid the place, since the concept of “moonshine” seems like it should still be considered an illegal operation to some. “It’s fun going through different flavors and getting them to realize the different proofs and strengths and that it’s not like 180-proof out of the still. People think they’ll go blind,” he laughed. “A lot of people think that,” added Allison. “They go, ‘I can’t drink 4 shots or I’ll die!’”

As the regulars, employees, and regulars-turned-employees of 3 Hundred Days of Shine swap stories about the funny things that have happened inside this building, it’s clear that this distillery brings something special to the table. The laughter and liquor linger long after one hits the road once more to embark on new adventures. Clearly, people are coming back for a reason, and those patrons become loyal and true advocates of an authentic Coloradan drinking experience. This is the dream of any new distillery, and it’s a dream that’s been achieved at 3 Hundred Days of Shine. ●

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