

Husbands and Wives Do It Together

by Brit Hayford || Koval Photos by Brian Guido

Koval Distillery is relatively new to the Chicago beverage market. Sonat and Robert Birnecker opened Koval in 2009, but word has spread quickly about the distillery's unique line of spirits. This spring Chicagoans can look forward to a new line of Koval whiskeys to be released during Chicago WhiskeyFest on April 23rd.

While this distillery is new to Chicago, the methods they use are long-held traditions that stem from Robert Birnecker's Hungarian roots. This is not the only family-oriented aspect of their business. From the moment I walked into the warehouse space, it was obvious that this was a company that cared about family. A mere

15 feet from the beautiful, copper still that is responsible for Koval's line of all-grain spirits, sits scattered toys and a diaper bag. The whole family lends a hand in creating Koval's product. Sonat's mother peeled 60 pounds of ginger for a delicious Ginger Liqueur made at the distillery recently.

With liqueurs that range from a sweet aperitif called Rose Hip, to a growing selection of delectable grain spirits made from organic rye, wheat, oat, spelt and millet, it is no surprise that Koval's spirits are considered to be in a class of their own.

Sonat explained that Koval is, "the only distillery in the U.S. that is using all five grains and the only that uses grains in our process." The majority of distilleries in the U.S. buy a

high-grain alcohol from large manufacturing producers, and manipulate the pre-processed, Everclear-like product through filtering and adding sugar. The difference in the production practices is one you can taste. After having Koval you'll question drinking anything else.

Koval's line of spirits are designed to be sipped alone at room temperature, but if you're feeling adventurous, check out the recipes link on their webpage, where you will find a selection of different mixed cocktails created by local bars and vendors.

Doug and Tracy Hurst, the husband-and-wife duo behind the mouth-watering Chicago brewery Metropolitan, are best described as lovably dorky and super approachable. Their collective personality is best illustrated by the Star Trek decked-out WC of the brewery, which hosts an impressive collection of Trekkie memorabilia, including a mirror painted with the shape of the Starfleet insignia.

All unabashed nerdiness aside, Metropolitan has continued to create a line of accessible German-style lagers since it opened in summer 2008. Inspired by a home brewing project for a botany class in college, Doug has had the idea of opening his own brewery for over 20 years. When the couple first decided to make a go of it, they spent time researching, through a method Tracy calls, "enthusiastic

