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Bourbon Empire: The Past And Future Of America's Whiskey

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BOURBON EMPIRE

The Past and Future of
AMERICA'S WHISKEY



REID MITENBULER
NARRATED BY BRIAN O'NEILL



Synopsis

How bourbon came to be, and why it's experiencing such a revival today. Unraveling the many myths and misconceptions surrounding America's most iconic spirit, *Bourbon Empire* traces a history that spans frontier rebellion, Gilded Age corruption, and the magic of Madison Avenue. Whiskey has profoundly influenced America's political, economic, and cultural destiny, just as those same factors have inspired the evolution and unique flavor of the whiskey itself. Taking listeners behind the curtain of an enchanting - and sometimes exasperating - industry, the work of writer Reid Mitenbuler crackles with attitude and commentary about taste, choice, and history. Few products better embody the United States, or American business, than bourbon. A tale of innovation, success, downfall, and resurrection, *Bourbon Empire* is an exploration of the spirit in all its unique forms, creating an indelible portrait of both bourbon and the people who make it.

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Customer Reviews

There's an amazing amount of interesting and contextualized history in this book as one is likely to find anywhere. This isn't just about whiskey; it's about the place whiskey, and bourbon in particular, holds in American history and the surprising leverage the industry had (and has) on the development and direction of the nation. Mitenbuler has an approachable style and is extremely knowledgeable on the subject without being high handed. If you like your history intertwined with interesting local facts and figures, strategic events, and general trivia woven together with a sly humor and insight, you'll enjoy this book.

This is written by my husband, Jack Sullivan. My Father always said "There is no bad whiskey, just some's better than others." Reid Mitenbuler in "Bourbon Empire" might or might not agree with Dad, but he knows the past, present and even something of the future about the American born and bred alcoholic beverage known as bourbon. A able writer who knows how to tell a good story, in the course of one book he manages to provide a comprehensive picture of the American whiskey industry as it as evolved through the decades. Although I maintain a blog devoted to pre-Prohibition "whiskey men," I learned interesting new information about the trade. Some bourbon drinkers may not be aware of the "mirrors and smoke" that have attended whiskey distilling and merchandising even from the earliest days, but Mitenbuler makes it a major theme of his book -- and legitimately so. As bourbon rises steadily in popularity and public consciousness, "Bourbon Empire" provides an excellent source book. P.S. Dad's bourbon of choice was Wild Turkey.

I'm not a bourbon drinker, myself. Bourbon was my late grandfather's drink, the one who fought WWII in the U.S. Army Air Corps and then raised three children in a wholesome Midwestern town. I'm about as likely to order a Jim Beam on the rocks as I am to fly missions over the Ruhr Valley, or eat TV dinners while watching reruns of M*A*S*H. Which is to say, not very likely. So it was a pleasant surprise to enjoy this book so much. That's because Bourbon Empire is not just a history of bourbon, it's a history of America. With a keen eye for a good story, and prose so good you'll find yourself reading it twice, Reid Mitenbuler goes beyond the rough and ready frontier folk whose names have been pasted on the bottles apocryphally to tell his readers the truth about America's founding drunkards, plucky immigrants, ruthless capitalists, earnest reformers, Prohibition-era bootleggers, Madison Avenue bamboozlers, and modern-day chemists in lab coats. Unabashed five stars. All my friends are getting Bourbon Empire for Father's Day. I only wish Grandpa could have read this book.

This interesting recount, analysis, and projection on America's "native spirit" (as it is often misquoted) is wonderfully written and informative. I learned much about my personal favorite spirit from this book without it ever feeling dry. I would highly recommend you order this, pour a glass, sit in a comfortable chair, and let the 'Murcia flow through you.

First, you definitely need a glass of bourbon in hand while you read this review, let alone the book. Spectacular history of bourbon in the US. Mr Mitenbuler not only analyzes most brands and their lineage, but also focuses on the movers and shakers that made American bourbon what it is

today, for better or worse. For example, I didn't even know that Old Crow used to be a high end bourbon in the mid-1900s. It's simply amazing to read how many bourbons rose to prominence then just as suddenly fell out of favor, and which ones rose from the ashes in present day. As bourbon has now seen a resurgence in popularity, I'd highly recommend picking up, if not at least to have some cool facts to bring with you next time you go to the bar. Just don't be that guy who goes overboard and will only drink Pappy Van Winkle.

If I could have read this book in one sitting I think I would have done. It's a fascinating and entertaining account of the history of bourbon, right through to the present day's distillers. It wears its research lightly, as while the author seems to have unearthed and checked every fact about bourbon over the last few hundred years, it reads as easily as an extended magazine piece - full of humor, great characters, and an uncovering of many things that bourbon makers would probably prefer you didn't know. The author's done an excellent job and comes across as very fair-minded. He's not afraid to criticize some of the dodgy practices, while at the same time understanding why they happen. It's excellent, even-handed journalism which is elegantly written and never veers from its topic, and which proves the case that the history of bourbon is also the history of the USA. It's a great addition to the recent batch of excellent books about spirits.

While this book does get a little tedious at times, it's a fairly fast read and gives you a ton of information about how bourbon grew up in the United States. It also gives you a lot to think about as a bourbon drinker. I first picked it up when I read an excerpt where the author was talking about the dubious value of small, craft bourbons versus some of the products distilled at the larger companies. Just goes to show that small is not always better. It also gave me a few names to search for in the liquor store!

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