

## Asheville's Troy Ball of Troy & Sons Inspires Women to Pursue Dreams

By Frances Nevill

"When the locals like you, they bring you moonshine," says Troy Ball of Troy & Sons Moonshine, recalling her first encounter with homemade white whiskey in 2003. Ball, who heads up Asheville Distillery, producers of the successful premium moonshine that bears her name, remembers how the 'eureka moment' that launched a brand took time, patience, and learning.

"The moonshine that people would bring us was hot and I'd take one smell and re-seal the jar and put it away. There was no way I could drink it." As time passed, Troy's curiosity led her to ask why it was so undrinkable.

"The good stuff is kept at home," a local told her. "And I just decided I don't want anymore of the bad stuff," she says with a laugh. Troy set out to learn the process of how to distill a great tasting moonshine. "I learned how to collect the best parts – the hearts – of the distillate. The hearts smell so good they make your mouth water."

Inspired that she might be on to something, Troy went to the local liquor store and bought every white whiskey and moonshining product ("there were few") that she could find. None were to her liking. "That's when I realized there wasn't a high quality white whiskey being used in cocktails," she says. "I really felt

that we should be creating an American craft cocktail movement that used an American craft whiskey. And this idea really motivated me."

Troy took her idea a step further by creating a partnership with western North Carolina corn grower, John McIntire. His organic heirloom Crooked Creek corn (grown along the Crooked Creek in McDowell County since the 1800s) became the basis for Troy's moonshine.

"We've had master sommeliers taste our white whiskey and they are floored because it's filled with so many wonderful flavors." Troy & Sons has expanded their product line to include several other premium whiskeys. Their products are available across the country and their distillery in Asheville offers public tours and tastings.



Troy Ball with her signature moonshine

It was a journey for Troy and her husband Charlie (who works as the Troy & Sons master distiller) to find their way from Austin, Texas to Asheville. Troy and Charlie worked in real estate and development in Texas, although caring for their two oldest sons was Troy's primary focus.

"Our two oldest sons were born with undiagnosed genetic disorders. They are both in wheelchairs and a lot of

their youth was spent in and out of hospitals." Noting that Austin's pollen season, in addition to the cold and flu seasons, were especially tough on her boys, Troy and Charlie decided to make a move. Asheville's climate and beauty, particularly the area of Marshall, appealed to them.

"Moving to western North Carolina has made a huge difference for the boys' health," says Troy. "For the first time in a long time, my boys' health is stable. They are happier and we were able to have support here." It was also the first time that Troy felt she could even begin to think of doing something like starting a business.

"I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit," says Troy, who holds a business degree from Vanderbilt. "When I had the boys, I really needed to stay focused on them. I have learned so much from raising them. They bring me great joy and have inspired me to be more than I was. As they got older (Marshall is now 27, Coulton is 25, and their youngest son, Luke, is 21, a college student who also works at the distillery), I started to feel that I could pursue something like this."

Women from across the country who visit the distillery are often inspired to see a woman at the helm. She notes that they often express how they have little time or resources to pursue a life's dream, such as launching a

business or switching careers. Troy is always quick to remind others that it's never too late.

"I think it's real important for women to know there is not an age that is too old to do what you want to do. You might have a lot of responsibilities on your plate, but you tackle it as best you can and you say to yourself that it's o.k. to take on some goals when you are a little older. Even if you are not doing exactly what you want to be doing today, you are learning from it. And there are lots of women who develop careers at all stages of life. It really brought me peace of mind to see other women who had developed a career later in life and realize that was probably going to be my path, too. Then I could just be patient and enjoy the day and be less frustrated."

In addition to raising her boys and running Troy & Sons, living in the Asheville-area has also brought Troy great joy. "Asheville is a very innovative area. There are a lot of people doing new things. I love this area because of the arts, the food, the people, and the majestic beauty – the whole thing really. You can go up on the Parkway and be inspired up there. I hope that the work we're doing here can inspire young women to keep following their paths and follow their dreams."

To learn more about Troy&Sons visit:  
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