

A MIXED BAG OF LIBATIONS WITH WHICH TO CHRISTEN YOUR AUTUMN SEASON

Cognac, Armagnac, vodka, Bourbon, gin, Tequila. This month's Spirits Buying Guide has something for everyone who is learning about, or already loves, fine distilled spirits. Of particular note are:

Old Forester 2005 Birthday Bourbon. This especially toothsome native whiskey owns character attributes that include multiple layers of oaky vanilla spiciness that are clearly instigated by the oak barrel. My choice for the finest Old Forester ever bottled.

Pionneau 1969 Cognac Cask Strength. From a Fins Bois property owned by Camus, this unblended vintage Cognac is bottled at full cask strength. There are only 300 hand-numbered bottles in the U.S. I wish it for the Cognacais would loosen the restraints they place on themselves and start more widely offering idiosyncratic bottlings such as this stunning

beauty, which is an instant classic.

Delord 25-Year-Old Bas Armagnac. As regular readers of this guide know, I love Armagnacs, the highly distinctive grape brandies of the Gascony region of France. I'm a devotee due primarily to their robust, almost reckless personalities. That said, extended aging in oak barrels can, on occasion, turn their natural fury into elegant, even stately calm and elegance. This supple brandy is just such a sinewy thoroughbred.

These three spirits alone are well worth a search. But then, don't forget the Bulleit Bourbon Frontier Whiskey Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whisky, Paulet Very Rare Fine Champagne Cognac, No. 209 Gin, Heavy Water Vodka, and Frida Kahlo Blanco 100% Agave Tequila. These should keep you occupied until October...I think.

— PAUL PACULT

GIN

SUPERB (90–95)/HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

No. 209 Gin (USA; Registered Distillery No. 209, San Francisco, CA); 46% abv, \$40. The nosing passes find generous notes of citrus zest, juniper berry, orris root, licorice, coriander and angelica. The palate entry is bittersweet, intensely grainy and speckled with licorice and orris root; at midpalate the flavor turns delightfully herbal. Finish is decidedly herbal/leafy/seed-like and, finally, bittersweet. An adult gin with an adventurous attitude.