

Jack Daniel's fights to save Tennessee Whiskey designation

By **Wendy Morley** on March, 17 2014 | Spirits & Tobacco



Pending legislation seeks to change the designation of Tennessee Whiskey by allowing reuse of barrels. Jeff Arnett, Master Distiller of Jack Daniel's, stated that a change in the current law would "dramatically diminish the quality and integrity of the whiskey."

Current law passed by the General Assembly last year and signed by the governor created a designation of "Tennessee Whiskey" as being made from fermented mash of at least 51 percent corn, aged in new oak barrels, charcoal mellowed and stored in the state. The effort was a natural progression to help grow the Tennessee Whiskey designation and similar to what the bourbon industry did in the past to codify the definition of "bourbon."

Arnett said that Jack Daniel's has always used new toasted and charred barrels only once for the color, flavor and character they impart upon the whiskey. Reusing a barrel would likely require the

use of artificial colorings and flavorings, he said, which in the end would produce a product inferior to bourbon. “Using quality grains, quality water, quality barrels and other natural ingredients has been the backbone of Tennessee Whiskey and, frankly, the bourbon industry for decades. Why in the world would we want to change that now by inserting artificial ingredients into our processes? And why in Tennessee would we willingly give the bourbon industry the upper hand in quality by cheapening the process we use to make our whiskey?”

“When consumers around the world see ‘Tennessee Whiskey,’” Arnett continued, “they expect it is a premium product representing a world-class standard and utmost quality. What we have here is nothing more than an effort to allow manufacturers to deviate from that standard, produce a product that’s inferior to bourbon and label it ‘Tennessee Whiskey’ while undermining the process we’ve worked for nearly 150 years to protect.”