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REAL SOUTHERN CULTURE

• SPRING ISSUE •

2025

*the hidden*  
**SOUTH**

**BOOGIE ON**

Exploring the Old 280 Boogie  
with friends in Waverly, AL.

**LABOR OF LOVE**

Making award-winning  
whiskey in SC with love.

**ABANDONED**

A photographer captures the  
deserted, historic sites of VA.

**BIKING HISTORY**

Pedal through the historic  
sites of Norfolk, VA.



SIX  
&  
TWENTY  
*5-Grain*  
BOURBON WHISKEY

ALC. 45% BY VOL. (90 PROOF)





# LABOR OF LOVE

DAVID RAAD'S SIX & TWENTY DISTILLERY IS  
METICULOUSLY WATCHED OVER, NURTURED OVER TIME...  
MAKING SPIRITS CRAFTED BY HAND AND HEART.

Written by Marianne Leek / Photography Courtesy of Six & Twenty Distillery

An avid outdoorsman, David Raad's approach to most things in his life has been with the same patience and perseverance it takes to successfully fly fish. Now in his mid-50s, Raad's journey to becoming a master distiller and the owner and operator of Greenville, South Carolina's award winning Six & Twenty Distillery has been anything but linear, a result of his tireless work ethic, and that same patience, perseverance and keen eye for detail.

Raad's family immigrated to the United States from South Africa when he was a child. His upbringing would span three states, New York, Georgia, and Virginia. After graduating high school Raad joined the military where he became part of the elite Army Rangers and served in both Operation Just Cause and Desert Storm. Upon returning home to New York from Kuwait, Raad made the serendipitous choice to move back to the South where he had spent most of his childhood to finish attending college. At the time, he had been taking classes at a community college and excelling. His counselor told him he could likely go wherever he wanted and handed him a brochure for Anderson University in South Carolina that had come across her desk. He applied and was accepted. "They invited me for a visit, so I jumped in my car and drove from New York to Anderson. I was supposed to meet with the admissions director at 9:00 in the morning so I drove all night. At 8:00 am, I was getting gas, and I noticed all these orange paws all over the pavement and I asked the guy pumping gas next to me, 'What's with all the paws?' He's like, 'What planet are you from? It's Clemson.' I said, 'Is that a school? A university?' He said, 'Yeah, duh.' I got in my car but instead of heading to Anderson, I decided to check out Clemson. I walked right into the admissions office with my transcript and basically was accepted on the spot." Making the most of his time at Clemson, Raad took three levels of chemistry "just for fun," and triple majored in political science, history, and Japanese.

After graduating from Clemson, Raad worked for SABMiller, a multinational brewing company in East Africa where he learned the process of brewing beer. In 2011, he parlayed his brewing skills into making distilled spirits and decided to open Six & Twenty Distillery. The inception for creating his own distillery

emerged from not being able to find a whiskey he liked and a conversation with his wife who requested that he "make something we can drink together." When he remarked that they have the same taste, she clarified, "Make me something we can drink together - on a Tuesday night." Per her request, with notes of vanilla, caramel, and maple the "low intensity, long on flavor," Six & Twenty Old Money Wheat Whiskey was born.

To Raad, distilling feels more like capturing, "to create a recipe of different grains, you have to understand what those grains will present under the conditions in which you prepare them, how they'll be improved or diminished during fermentation...then during distillation to bring those flavors forward as a collection and then essentially have your basis before you begin to age it. So, you're shooting for a target of flavor before you even age it." Raad works closely with local farmers, using only grains grown and harvested in South Carolina in his spirits. He compares the distillation process to a dinner recipe, "It would be like going into a restaurant and the chef simply saying, 'Here's dinner,' rather than explaining the ingredients that have been assembled to give you this

savory pasta dish or casserole. The process of creating a good whiskey involves a lot of flavors put together, assembled to make something bigger than the sum of their parts."

Raad explained the evolution from a one hit wonder to a full-fledged distillery with a variety of spirits that appeal to every palate, "After creating Old Money Wheat Whiskey, which was an easy, low intensity, long flavor whiskey, I knew that to have a full spectrum of products you have to have different assemblages. I had to create different combinations of flavor to go on the bolder end, and that became our bourbon. Using a bunch of different grains to achieve a different purpose, to assemble a bigger mouth field, more complex, not simple, but elegant; big and bold and complex - that is our bourbon."

However, one of Six & Twenty's most popular spirits remains their Carolina Cream, a delectable dessert whiskey meant to be slowly sipped and savored. Like Old Money, the idea for Carolina Cream came from an unusual request.



Raad described how one Christmas morning his beloved mother-in-law opened an 1187 shotgun that she had asked for. "She had that shotgun across her lap and she's giving me the hairy eyeball...I'm thinking I'm glad I didn't give her shells. But she said, 'You know what I really want? I want you to make me something like Baileys.' I thought to myself, 'Oh, I can do that.' And so I began that process."

The process turned out to be more complicated than Raad initially imagined because of "the complexity of what it is as a food product." The creation of Carolina Cream would take almost a year following that Christmas appeal by his mother-in-law, mostly because of Raad's insistence on quality. "I wanted real cream. It had to be real cream. It is an expensive product to make because the basis of it is real cream and that's hard to get in the marketplace. The majority of cream-based whiskey products use a synthetic cream - think about when you go to the gas station and put creamer in your coffee. That's the same stuff. I use real cream in our Carolina Cream and that's what makes it unique. It just tastes better, and people recognize that." In response to the overwhelming market success of Carolina Cream, Six & Twenty created the limited seasonal Peach Cream perfect for enjoying during the warmer months, and they are currently working on another cream flavor for release in spring.

Raad's attention to quality and detail has continued to serve him well and in 2023, Six & Twenty was recognized in USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice lists in four categories: Best Craft Distilleries for Whiskey, Vodka, Specialty Spirits, and Gin, as well as making the short list of the finest craft distillery tasting rooms in the country.

Raad considers what he does a "demonstration of love." After all, two of his most popular products were created as gifts for important women in his life. He's also cognizant of the fact that while 51% of whiskey drinkers are women, that whiskey is predominantly marketed to men. He aims to change that. "Six & Twenty is a demonstration of love. I love to make things that people enjoy. I love to share it with my friends. I love to talk about the process. I love to get people smart about how these things are made. That's kind of our *modus operandi* around here."

When Raad was trying to come up with a name for his brand, he honed in on a timeless South Carolina love story between a Cherokee maiden and a white trader. Steeped in both fact and fantasy, legend has it that Issaqueena fell in love with Alan Francis. Learning her tribe planned to attack the settlement of her lover, Issaqueena rode 96 miles to warn him, marking the miles and naming places based on the distance that she rode away from them. Many of the places along her route through Upstate South Carolina are still recognized by the way she named them - Mile Creek, Six Mile, Twelve Mile Creek, Six and Twenty Creek, and others. When she was tracked down, Issaqueena jumped into the falls that now bear her name to escape her pursuers. Believing that evil spirits lived in waterfalls and thinking she was dead, they gave up their search. Issaqueena and Francis would reunite and flee to Alabama where they lived happily ever after. The original Six & Twenty distillery is located along the route

that Issaqueena rode to warn her lover Alan Francis. Rooted in the same spirit, Six & Twenty is Raad's labor of love, each batch "meticulously watched over, nurtured over time...making our spirits crafted by hand and heart."

Raad is on a mission to make his products accessible to a variety of palates and experiences. "That's the thrust of what we are trying to accomplish without being condescending to anyone who wants to explore and experience. That's why we really dig into our educational component as well. We want people to enjoy becoming educated without feeling diminished by listening to a lecture on how spirits are made."

With a production team of just four people, Six & Twenty has been creating award winning spirits since shortly after opening and they show no signs of slowing down. In November they released their limited Avena Oat Whiskey, with oat, brown sugar, and buttery flavors, as smooth and delicious as the Werther's candy from your grandmother's purse. Raad appreciates the creativity inherent in operating a craft distillery and is committed to excellence, "There are so many variations of what we can do because the variations are limitless. Different types of oak to aging, different types of grain to use, different distillation methods. And so there will always be a market for people who make things differently. That's the essence of what we want to do. I'm not going to remake Maker's; I'm not going to make Tito's. There's no point in that and it's been done to death. We don't reproduce everything that's been done already. It's got to be unique." Located in the eclectic and artistic community of the Village of West Greenville, the Six & Twenty tasting room is sleek and modern without feeling pretentious and it's the perfect place to relax with friends after visiting the neighboring galleries. With weekly distillery tours, live music, trivia nights, and seasonal parties, it's no wonder it's considered one of the finest tasting rooms in the country. Six & Twenty also offers monthly mixology classes for those interested in learning how to create signature craft cocktails at home. "Our mixology classes are a hoot! They are limited to no more than 20 people. We close the place off and Jordan, our bar manager, teaches guests how to make different drinks. We will make three cocktails over the course of an hour and a half. She talks about where each drink originated and variations on it. Each person gets their own bar materials - the whole setup - and you learn to make your own drink and have fun with it."

Raad wants visitors to Six & Twenty to know that you don't have to "know" anything about whiskey to know what you like, "We don't necessarily compete against other small craft distilleries. In fact, I hope my customers will explore other craft distilleries. It doesn't matter what opinions are out there about the spirit industry, and there are some very strong opinions. 'This is good and that's bad and this is expensive.' None of that matters. Nobody should listen to that. People need to remember that it's entirely subjective. What you like is what you like and that's it. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise and don't be afraid to explore. That's what we hope people will do."

[sixandtwentydistillery.com](http://sixandtwentydistillery.com)





SIX & TWENTY DISTILLERY  
HAS BEEN CREATING AWARD  
WINNING SPIRITS SINCE  
SHORTLY AFTER OPENING

### THE REMEDY

1.5 ounces Heirloom Rye Vodka  
0.75 ounce Pomegranate Liqueur  
0.5 ounce lime juice  
Build in copper mug or Collins glass over ice  
Top with Ginger Beer, garnish with lime

### PURPLE HAZE

1.5 ounces Double Made Gin  
0.5 ounce Creme De Violette  
0.5 ounce Honey or simple syrup  
1.0 ounce lemon juice  
Shake and dirty pour into hurricane or collins glass  
Top with soda, garnish with lemon

### TIP YOUR HAT

1.5 ounces Old Money Whiskey  
0.5 ounce Ancho Reyes Liqueur  
0.5 ounce honey  
0.25 ounce lime juice  
1.0 ounce grapefruit juice  
Shake, double strain, and pour into coupe glass  
Garnish with lime

### SMASHED IT

5-7 muddled blueberries  
4-5 mint leaves (slap it!)  
2.0 ounces 5 Grain Bourbon  
0.75 ounce lemon  
0.75 ounce simple syrup  
Shake well, strain and pour over fresh ice,  
Garnish with berries & mint sprig

### SWEET TREAT

1.0 ounce Carolina Cream  
1.0 ounce Dark Rum  
0.5 ounce Amaretto  
0.75 ounce demerara or brown sugar simple syrup  
Shake well, double strain, and pour into coupe glass

### OLD FASHIONED

2.0 ounces 5 Grain Bourbon  
0.5 ounce demerara simple syrup  
2-3 dashes Ango & Orange Bitters  
Garnish with orange peel & cherry skewer  
Stirred, large cube in rocks glass

### NEW YORK SOUR

2.0 ounces 5 Grain Bourbon  
0.75 ounce lemon juice  
0.5 ounce demerara simple syrup  
red wine float  
Garnish with cherry skewer  
Shaken, double strained, large cube in rocks glass

### SIDE CAR

1.5 ounces 5 Grain Bourbon  
0.75 ounce Orange Liqueur  
0.75 ounce lemon juice  
Garnish with sugar rim & orange twist  
Shaken, double strained, straight up in coupe glass

### MANHATTAN

2.0 ounces Old Money Whiskey  
1.0 ounce Sweet Rosso Vermouth  
3-4 Dashes Angostura Bitters  
Garnish with cherry skewer  
Stirred, straight up or on the rock,  
Large cube for rocks glass or  
straight up in Nick & Nora coupe glass

### FRENCH 75

1.5 ounces Double Made Gin  
0.75 ounce lemon juice  
0.75 ounce simple syrup  
Top with Champagne  
Garnish with lemon twist  
Shaken, straight up in a flute





# MIXING IT UP

WITH SIX & TWENTY