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JOURNEYS

In the Berkshires, Dinner's Not Far Away



Jennifer May for The New York Times

Gin, vodka and rum are made at Berkshire Mountain Distillers in Sheffield, Mass. Food-savvy tourists are helping to spur a vibrant food-producing culture in western Massachusetts. [More Photos »](#)

By MARK VANHOENACKER

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IT'S hard to dismiss the current locavore boom in the Berkshires as mere fashion. In fact, the national enthusiasm for eating farm-to-table has roots in western Massachusetts. The nation's first agricultural fair was held in Berkshire County in the early 19th century, and in 1986, when the country's first two community-supported agriculture farms were established, one was in the southern Berkshires.

White wine is the typical accompaniment to most starlit Tanglewood spreads. But some music may demand something stronger, in which case the buzz is all about Chris Weld at Berkshire Mountain Distillers in Sheffield.

Returning home from California in 2004, Mr. Weld searched for an innovation-friendly agricultural community and soon found an overgrown apple orchard on the site of a 19th-century spa. A biochemist, he thought of distilling, and by 2008 he was marketing a small collection of gin, vodka and rum to quick national acclaim.

More than a century ago, water from the spa on his property was sold as a curative in New York. Now spirits produced on the same soil are being sold at the Oyster Bar in Grand Central Terminal, and at modern speakeasies like PDT in the East Village. Mr. Weld's spirits are sold at restaurants in the Berkshires and also at Nejaime's Wine, which has three locations (800-946-3988; nejaimewine.com).