

In July 2006, Peak's organic vodka hit the market, followed 15 months later by their gin — the first USDA-certified organic gin produced in the United States. All Peak Spirits are distilled in small batches, hence the term “micro-distilling,” an industry growing rapidly in this country, but still limited to about 50 licensed businesses nationwide.

Pot-stilling produces a “more expressive, more complex spirit,” according to Anna, due to the time, labor and attention invested in the technique. The Hansons crush their fruit whole, pits included, to create the “mash,” which is then fermented in 2,000-liter stainless steel vats, made in Italy, and moved through the distillery on forklifts. The still produces a high-powered brew, between 65 percent alcohol and 200 proof. Some varieties, including the vodka and the grappas, are re-distilled to create more neutral spirits. All are ultimately “cut-back” to ingestible levels with pure mountain spring water from a private source on CapRock, a scenic lava rock formation 20 miles above the ranch on Grand Mesa.

Today, Peak Spirits is the only organic distillery in Colorado, and the only U.S. distillery devoted exclusively to organic processes, distinctions that would match the objectives of most micro-distillers anywhere in the world.

But the Hansons are knee-deep into their next project, working toward certification as the first biodynamic distillery in the nation. Rudolf Steiner, founder of the holistic system that predated organic farming in 1920s Germany, believed that biodynamics could reinstate agriculture to its vital role in fusing people to the land.

Lance and Anna Hanson share that vision, while a growing number of local farmers agree that working cooperatively enhances culture and grows community. Together they are restoring natural rhythms to Western Colorado by changing the way we eat, drink, and savor the spirit of life. ♻️

Karen Connington is a writer inspired by the arts and sustainable innovations for a small planet. She is a publicist for local nonprofits and former owner of the Heather Gallery in Aspen and Basalt. Peak Spirits are now a vital part of her new year's regimen.

SIX89'S EARL GREY MARTEANI

*Courtesy of Doug Jacobson, Restaurant Six:89
Carbondale, Colorado*

CapRock Organic Dry Gin infused with Two Leaves and a Bud's Organic Earl Grey Tea, with juniper-spiced olives

Infused CapRock Gin

1 bottle CapRock Organic Dry Gin
3 bags Two Leaves and a Bud Earl Grey Tea

Place tea bags in bottle of gin and let soak for 2 days.

Marteani

Ice
Green olives
Juniper powder, freshly ground

Shake infused gin on ice and pour into Martini glass. Garnish with olives rolled in juniper powder.

PEPPER VODKA

*Courtesy of Brian T. Jacobson,
Denver, Colorado*

Infusing vodka is a simple and delicious way to add dimension to a cocktail or to experience complex flavor in a shot. Pepper vodka is one of my favorites as it is very simple to prepare and works well in both Bloody Mary's and as a cold shot to sip.

1 jalapeño
1 Anaheim chili
2 dried red chili pequin
1 clove garlic, peeled
5 black peppercorns
¼ teaspoon salt
1 bottle CapRock Organic Vodka

Thoroughly wash and dry a quart glass Mason jar. Split jalapeño in half lengthwise, remove seeds and ribs (not entirely necessary especially if you like the vodka spicy, but I feel the ribs make the vodka a little bitter), and add to Mason jar. Repeat with the Anaheim chili. Add the chili pequin, garlic clove, peppercorns and salt. Fill jar to top with vodka. Close tightly and store in a cool, dark place for one week.

Clean and dry a clear wine bottle, preferably one with a screw top. Place a funnel in the top of the bottle and line the funnel with a few layers of cheesecloth. Pour the infused vodka through the funnel into the wine bottle slowly.

Makes just shy of one quart.