



Good Spirits: A New Look at Ol' Demon Alcohol

Gene Logsdon

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Here we go. Gene "The Contrary Farmer" Logsdon has taken on some controversial subjects in his time, but this time he has bitten off ("sipped on" doesn't sound right) a topic bound to raise strong feelings on both sides of society's moral boundary lines. His subject is alcohol and its traditional role on the family homestead. Not surprisingly, Gene speaks the bare-naked truth, and finds a lot more good than bad to say about booze.

Alcohol has historically played a significant role in agricultural life. In colonial times it was the most "liquid" alternative to hard currency as a means of exchange. Alcohol was the most reliable, safest, and most convenient way to store the grain harvest, and was an integral commodity on nearly every farmstead. Because it was so valued--does this surprise us?--the government muscled in, looking for its own piece of the action. George Washington was the first of many politicians to regulate alcohol as a means to generate revenues and gain political control.

Good Spirits is a rare and brave revisionist view of history. Logsdon is a master at exposing the absurdity of the commonplace. Does it really make sense that the government can make it illegal for us to combine common substances (grain, water, and yeast) on our own property? Can it be true that every war effort in the nation's history has been fueled literally and figuratively by alcohol and the tax revenues it produces? Why must the farmer fund the government that oppresses him?

In between good-natured tirades, Logsdon makes sure the reader learns some valuable lessons. He tells us how to make beer; he teaches the rudiments of distilling; he interviews Booker Noe (patron of America's First Family of bourbon) to tell us how to sip and tell; and he adds lively tales from alcohol's quasi-legitimate past. This is vintage *Contrary Farmer*: 100-proof, single-barrel select. *Good Spirits* is outrageous, entertaining, enlightening, and an eye-poppingly interesting, natural and holistic look at the role of alcohol. You will savor this book like a snifter of Calvados, the double-distilled apple brandy of Normandy that evaporates on the tongue like a heavenly ambrosia. Heady stuff, but delicious when consumed in moderation.

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