

Ground To Glass

An Interview with Joyce Nethery, Co-Owner and Master Distiller, Jephtha Creed Distillery

EDITORS' NOTE *As far back as she can remember, Joyce Nethery has had a passion for chemistry. She earned a master's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Louisville's Speed Scientific School, and for 15 years worked as a process engineer in industrial scale distillation. She then spent a decade teaching high school chemistry and physics before her husband Bruce's dream of opening a distillery reignited her passion for the distillation process—and the rest, as they say, is history. Her deep love for farm life, as well as her many years working her family's land, have given her invaluable insight into growing the wide variety of crops used in Jephtha Creed's products. It has also inspired the distillery's distinct ground-to-glass maxim. In addition to being a Master Distiller and owner of Jephtha Creed, she is a devoted mother of two who has a passion for all things Kentucky. She couldn't be prouder to carry on the state's long history of distilling the finest spirits in the world.*



Joyce Nethery

DISTILLERY BRIEF *Jephtha Creed Distillery (jephthacreed.com) uses old fashioned methods to meet today's demanding modern tastes. They use only the finest ingredients, locally grown and sourced (when possible) to ensure their products meet the highest expectations for quality and flavor. Owned and operated by dynamic mother-and-daughter duo Joyce and Autumn Nethery, Jephtha Creed sits on 64 acres of farmland where they grow the Bloody Butcher Corn they use for all of their products. Using that corn, they produce bourbon, whiskey, vodka, moonshine, and brandy.*

Will you highlight your career journey?

My career journey began with a master's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Louisville Speed Scientific School. My first position was as a process engineer at Monsanto Electronic Materials in Spartanburg, South Carolina. After that, I moved to Louisville to work as a process engineer for Rome and Haas, which is now part of DuPont. At their industrial distillation facility, I worked on distilling methyl methacrylate (MMA), a foundational monomer in various plastics and plastic additives. Interestingly, the principles, applications, and techniques used in distilling MMA are very similar to those used in distilling ethanol for bourbon – but distilling ethanol for bourbon is a lot more fun. After my

time as a process engineer, I transitioned to teaching high school chemistry and physics. It was during this period that I discovered the importance of classroom management skills. Coincidentally, the techniques I developed for managing a high school chemistry class are remarkably similar to those needed for managing a bachelor or bachelorette group visiting the distillery. Following several years in education, I left teaching to become the Chief Financial Officer for my husband's company. In this role, I handled accounts payable, accounts receivable, depreciation schedules, and taxes. I also gained a deep appreciation for the importance of cash flow in business. Looking back, I see how each step in my career – engineering, teaching, and financial management – prepared me serendipitously for running the distillery.

Will you discuss the history of Jephtha Creed?

Jephtha Creed is a family-run, farm craft distillery deeply rooted in our agricultural background. My husband grew up as a dairy farmer, and we operated a dairy of our own for many years. We still

have the tractors, corn planters, and all the equipment needed to grow crops and raise animals. The idea for the distillery was actually my husband's. At first, I thought it was crazy, but he kept talking about it, so I decided to explore it further. I found a distiller's class at Moonshine University to help him learn the skills of distilling. However, he wasn't able to attend, so I went in his place. That class rekindled my love for engineering, particularly the role of copper in distilling, and inspired me to create what we now call our "Ground to Glass" concept. With our farm and my husband's agricultural expertise, we realized we could grow unique heirloom varieties of corn instead of the Roundup Ready corn we were producing at the time. With my engineering background, we could distill that corn into a beautiful bourbon, creating a product that reflects both our farming heritage and our commitment to craft distilling.

How do you define Jephtha Creed's mission?

Jephtha Creed's mission is to create beautiful bourbon using heirloom grains, particularly heirloom corn. We are deeply committed to honoring the rich history of heirloom corn, Kentucky, and our country. By paying homage



Joyce Nethery at work at Jephtha Creed in Kentucky (above and opposite page - bottom);
Jephtha Creed 6 Year Old Wheated Bourbon (opposite page - top)



to the people who came before us – especially veterans who have fought for our freedoms – we aim to carry forward a tradition of craftsmanship and community.

Giving back is a key part of our mission. Through initiatives like our Red, White, and Blue Bourbon, we maintain ongoing partnerships with nonprofit veteran organizations to support these communities. In 2024, we began donating a portion of the sales from our Red, White, and Blue Bourbon to CreatiVets, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping current and former military members through the arts, as a gesture of appreciation for their service.

Will you provide an overview of Jephtha Creed's spirits and how the brands are positioned in the market?

Jephtha Creed offers a wide portfolio of high-quality spirits, including bourbon, moonshine, vodka, and brandy. Our core bourbon portfolio features:

- Red, White & Blue Kentucky Straight Bourbon
- Six-Year Wheated Bourbon
- Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon
- Straight Four-Grain Bourbon

What sets Jephtha Creed apart is our unique flavor profile, derived from heirloom corns. We've discovered that different corn varieties significantly impact the flavor of bourbon, a little like how grape varieties influence the flavor of wine. With this distinct and beautiful flavor profile, Jephtha Creed is positioned as a high-end bourbon brand. We stand out in the marketplace by offering consumers a deeper appreciation of how essential corn varieties are to creating exceptional bourbon.

What can guests expect to experience when visiting Jephtha Creed Distillery?

Visitors to Jephtha Creed Distillery can expect a memorable and immersive experience. Upon arrival, they can explore our gift shop, enjoy a cocktail at the bar, or relax at the Creed

Café. We offer guided tours and tastings, giving guests a chance to learn about our process and sample our spirits. For those seeking a more hands-on experience, we also offer cocktail classes and barrel tastings. As we grow our own corn on the distillery property, right next to our barrel barns, guests will be able to witness our "Ground to Glass" concept in action,

In addition to these experiences, we host exciting annual events. Our Jammin' at Jephtha summer series features live music, food, and craft cocktails. Last year, we had performances by Mason Ramsey and Phillip Phillips. The Fall Harvest Festival is another highlight, with fun activities including a corn maze, food trucks,



and local vendors. Whether visiting for an event or enjoying our regular offerings, guests can look forward to a beautiful southern, rural experience throughout the year.

How important has it been to build the Jephtha Creed Distillery team?

Building the Jephtha Creed Distillery team has been of gigantic importance. As a family-run business, we take pride in the close involvement of our family members. My daughter, Autumn, and I manage the distillery as a mother-daughter duo, with Autumn being groomed to take over and lead the business. My son, Hunter, is also an owner and has contributed to many aspects of the distillery's operations. In addition to our family, we've built an exceptional team to support our vision and carry the business into the future. We have trusted leaders throughout the many aspects of our business – in our front of house space, distillery operations, and sales and marketing departments. Together, this strong and dedicated team ensures the success and sustainability of Jephtha Creed for years to come.

What are your priorities for Jephtha Creed Distillery as you look to the future?

Our priority is to continue producing high-quality products with our "Ground to Glass" commitment. This means utilizing our growing profile of estate-grown corn in all of our distilled spirits, ensuring every product reflects our dedication to unyielding quality. Last but not least, innovation remains a cornerstone of our approach. Our innovation comes from the soil – beyond the multiple varieties of corn we've been growing, we are now branching out into smaller grains, including rye, wheat, and barley, to explore new products. Staying true to our "Ground to Glass" philosophy, our future spirits will continue to be made from locally sourced grains, with many coming directly from our own farm. ●