01 / THE STORY

Wilderness Trail

Fermentation knowledge. Kentucky patience.



A different starting point

Shane Baker and Dr. Pat Heist brought engineering and fermentation expertise to their own whiskey venture. Their earlier company, Ferm Solutions, advised other producers before Wilderness Trail gave that knowledge a name on a bottle. [S1, S2]

Two beginnings

The company was founded in 2012; bourbon barreling began in 2013. Keeping those dates separate preserves the real story: building a business and starting the aging clock are different achievements. Its first bourbon reached buyers in 2018. [S1, S3, S5]

The place

At 4095 Lebanon Road in Danville, a nineteenth-century farmhouse stands beside the modern distillery. The official visitor route connects fermentation, distillation, barrel aging and tasting. It is a physical introduction to the relationship between traditional whiskey and contemporary process control. [S14]

A wider family

Campari completed its initial 70-percent acquisition in December 2022. The group also owns Wild Turkey and Russell’s Reserve, but shared ownership does not make the whiskeys interchangeable. Campari’s 2025 report still records the 70-percent interest. [S7, S8, S15]

02 / A MEASURED JOURNEY

From knowledge to whiskey

Twelve milestones in the distillery’s development.

2006

Baker and Heist establish fermentation-services company Ferm Solutions. [S1]

2012

Wilderness Trail is founded in Danville, Kentucky. [S1]

2013

Bourbon barreling begins. The early pot-still operation could take a twelve-hour day to produce one barrel. [S3]

October 2015

A grain changeover inspires a four-grain batch, combining rye and wheat alongside corn and malted barley. [S4]

2016

The distillery receives Kentucky Manufacturer of the Year recognition. [S1]

April 28, 2018

The first bourbon release is scheduled at Taste of Danville: wheated, single-barrel and bottled in bond. [S5]

January 23, 2020

The KDA names Wilderness Trail the eighteenth Kentucky Bourbon Trail stop, graduating from the Craft Tour. [S2]

June 8, 2020

The first six-year wheated bonded bourbon is scheduled for the Trail’s reopening and the return of visitors. [S6]

December 10–11, 2021

The six-year four-grain release supports the distillery’s charity fund for families affected by cancer. [S4]

October 31, 2022

Campari announces an initial 70-percent acquisition agreement, with an option structure for the remaining interest in 2031. [S7]

December 7, 2022

Campari announces the completed acquisition, a separate milestone from the agreement signed in October. [S8]

December 8, 2023

The first ten-year release is planned around the distillery’s second barrel, connecting its early stock to a decade of aging. [S3]



03 / READ THE BOTTLE

The method and the glass

Sweet mash

Fresh ingredients start each batch, without acidic backset from an earlier distillation. The producer describes controlled infusion mashing and bonded small batches of twenty barrels or fewer. [S9]

Keep the terms separate

Bonded releases are bottled at 100 proof. Private barrels can be cask strength. High-rye bourbon and rye whiskey are separate categories, while barrel-entry proof describes an earlier point than bottling proof. Read the individual label. [S9, S10, S12, S13]



Three ways into the range

Wheated bourbon is the flagship; high-rye bourbon offers another bourbon expression; rye whiskey is a distinct comparison. The producer’s tasting descriptors introduce a style rather than predict every barrel. [S11-S13]

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

S1 Our Story

S2 KDA: Bourbon Trail admission (2020)

S3 KDA: First ten-year bourbon (2023)

S4 KDA: Four-grain release (2021)

S5 KDA: First bourbon release (2018)

S6 KDA: First six-year bourbon (2020)

S7 Campari: Acquisition presentation (2022)

S8 Campari: Acquisition closing (2022)

S9 Our Process

S10 Frequently Asked Questions

S11 Wheated Bourbon

S12 High Rye Bourbon

S13 Rye Whiskey

S14 Distillery & Tours

S15 Campari: Annual Report 2025

Research checked October 17, 2026. Release dates follow contemporary announcements. Current distillation throughput is not asserted. Original illustrations interpret the story.