



# LULING FOUNDATION

AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION FARM, ESTABLISHED BY EDGAR B. DAVIS IN 1927



**Farm to Bottle**  
By Geri L. Kline, M.S.



## **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Assistant Agriculture Agent- Agriculture Literacy and Youth Development for Gonzales County**

For this agriculture literacy interview I went just down the road to Smithville to visit Bone Spirits Distillery. In 2010 Jeff Peace founded Bone Spirits. When I asked him why he chose this industry he replied that he was chosen. Sidney Frank, creator of Grey Goose Vodka and Jagermeister brought him into the liquor industry and taught him. They had similar backgrounds since both came from small towns. Bone Spirits got its name because the liquor is “bare bones”; no smoke and mirrors and no tricking customers. They produce Moody June (gin), Fitch’s Goat (moonshine or corn whiskey), Smiths (vodka) and Bone Bourbon. Bone Spirits typically brings on temporary help with many more people during the busy holiday season. The Bone Spirits slogan is “Farm to Bottle” which is accomplished by: only buying local grains, milling done locally, giving back spent grain to the farmers, which, maintains sustainability.

Yellow corn number 2, which is used to make the mash for vodka, moonshine and whiskey, is grown by local farmers and is milled in Gonzales. After the milling is complete the corn is put into a kettle. The kettle cooks the corn and extracts sugar. Next the sugar-rich corn sweet mash is moved to into a fermenter. Yeast is added to the mash. The yeast eats the sugars and produces a low alcohol “beer”. After the alcohol mash is done fermenting it is moved to a Vendome Copper pot still for the first distillation. Distillation will be repeated two more times for Fitch’s Goat Moonshine and Fitch’s Goat Corn Whiskey. After distillation is complete the distilled grains rich in protein are pumped into portable tanks and the whiskey is moved into charred white American Oak barrels for aging.

Local farmers pick up the spent grains, which are about 20-30% protein. The mash is a good protein supplement to give to livestock. Mr. Peace actually has to pay the state chemist to be able to give the mash to the farmers. The neutral spirits made at the distillery are used to make Moody June gin; it requires 30% juniper berries, 30% citrus, 30% coriander and 10% other botanicals. Juniper berries are hand picked, locally. Lemons, limes and oranges come from the Rio Grande Valley. The coriander is bought from the Amarillo area. Each of the ingredients used to make gin is milled and put into bags, like the ones you would use to make tea. Those bags are distilled to get gin concentrate. That concentrate is blended with vodka to produce gin. The only ingredient that Bone Spirits uses that is not produced in Texas is rye. Mr. Peace buys rye from a family in Hennessey, Oklahoma and has driven there himself to pick up 3 tons at a time. Rye is used to make the Bone Bourbon.

Bone Spirits is a sustainable business by recycling, buying local, giving grains back and not wasting water. They recycle all their glass, metal, and cardboard. To save water they used a closed loop system on their condensers.

When I toured Bone Spirits I was able to see how the liquor was produced and how much thought has gone into making sure that the ingredients are local, how farmers/ranchers are being helped and how they are sustainable. If you want to tour Bone Spirits their tasting room is open Fridays and Saturdays 10am-5pm.

Remember to take pride in agriculture and thank a farmer/rancher.

**For questions/comments please contact:**

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