

Local fruit shrubs at Spiker's



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Kate Broughton's decision to take alcohol out of her life led her an entirely new business. Two years ago the 62-year-old media consultant chose to "take a vacation" from wine, but was frustrated by the limited range of options. "It was so boring. Not because I missed the buzz," she says. "I just loved the flavor [of wine] and the alcohol makes it taste alive." She read an article about shrubs, a vinegar-based mixer popular in Colonial times to preserve fruit. She immediately began tinkering with recipes.

The result is Spiker's Pure Fruit Shrubs, named for Broughton's grandfather, a West Virginia coal miner whom she never knew, but whose vibrant legacy was passed down through family stories. Spiker's Shrubs are made from a combination of fruit, apple cider vinegar, and cane sugar that is cold brewed for at least two weeks, in flavors like apple crisp, pineapple-basil, and sour cherry-

plum (\$11.95 to \$12.95 for a 12-ounce bottle, \$14.99 for a 4-pack sampler of 1.8 ounce bottles). A range of other flavors, including ruby red grapefruit, peach-rosemary, and raspberry-bergamot, make appearances on a seasonal basis.

When Broughton decided to "get serious" about shrubs, within months she had lined up space in Amesbury's Kitchen Local commercial facility. She relishes her role as a small-batch provider to local retailers. "Everyone fantasizes about selling to Whole Foods," says Broughton. "But the reality for me is that working with small, specialty stores is so satisfying."

Spiker's is a family operation with Broughton's daughter Tess, 27, overseeing product development, graphic design, and special events. And though the entrepreneur initially developed the shrubs to enhance non-alcoholic drinks, they are also being paired with alcohol. Corey Bunnewith, cofounder of the Boston Harbor Distillery, features them with

spirits at his Dorchester tasting room. The sour cherry-plum mixture, he says, is "one of our go-tos, whether we are mixing it with a simple lemonade or into a highball."

Broughton uses local produce when possible, sourcing Italian basil from East Boston's Corner Stalk Farm, where the herb grows year-round in shipping containers. The urban farm's co-owner, Connie Cooney, sells Spiker's alongside her greens at the new Boston Public Market. "Lots of people are making shrubs," says Cooney. "They're easy to make. The hard part is getting it right. And Kate's got it right." Available at Tendercrop Farm, 108 High Road, Newbury, 978-462-6972; Cider Hill Farm, 45 Fern Ave., Amesbury, 978-388-5525; Corner Stalk Farm, Boston Public Market, 100 Hanover St., Boston, 978-239-5789; Boston Harbor Distillery, 12R Ericsson St., Boston, 617-533-7001; or go to www.spikersshrubs.com

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