

Ten years ago this month, in the tiny Colorado mountain town of Silverton, in an 800 square-foot stone building that was a brothel a hundred years ago, Karen and Brice Hoskin hatched a crazy idea to start a craft rum distillery called Montanya Distillers.

Their concept fit no existing paradigm. There were very few craft distilleries in existence in the US, and only one or two of them were specializing in rum. The staff had to climb over aging barrels to reach their bottling line because space was so tight. Their warehouse was a box truck that never liked to start, parked on the street with a big padlock protecting their stock. The Hoskins called the truck The Bank Account because between the aging barrels, the bottled rum and the truck, you could see all of their life savings right in front of you.

In the first year of operation, Karen would load up her Toyota Tacoma with as many cases of rum as she could fit in and still safely drive. She would leave the distillery and not let herself to go home until she had sold every case.

The fermentation room had dirt floors and you had to duck to walk through under the low ceiling. Their copper Alembic still was named Bella and the bottle filler was named Helga, referred to in conversation as though they were members of the staff. Three people did everything. Two of them were women, which was exceedingly rare in the distilling industry a decade ago.

The crew would hand apply every label to every bottle, often in the middle of the night because the Hoskins still had their day jobs and a couple of small kids at home. On one inauspicious occasion (or maybe auspicious, depending on who you ask), a leaking barrel sent rum onto the heads of patrons sitting at the tasting room bar below. They tipped their mouths skyward and the crisis was averted.

The cocktail bar inside the distillery served only rum cocktails, also unheard of a decade ago outside the tiki world. Nonetheless, it was shoulder to shoulder crammed with skiers in the winter and hikers in the summer during every open hour, which was only three days a week from 4-7pm. Customers would help the Hoskins carry in deliveries of sugar cane and throw them through a hole in the floor.

Things evolved a bit over time. Today, Montanya Distillers is in Crested Butte and has 23 employees (half women) and 5,200 square feet of facilities. They send rum all over the world and all over the US. They have trained four female distillers from the ground up. They have imported three stills from the family makers in Portugal. They have rebranded, redesigned and reinvented themselves a number of times, becoming one of the nation's most well-loved, award-winning and sustainable craft distillers.

And they think it is time for a party.

On March 31st, 2018, Montanya Distillers launches a celebration of their 10th Anniversary rum with a series of events that will last throughout 2018. On March 31st from 5-6:30 pm, Karen Hoskin will host cocktails and a tasting at [Smuggler's Cove](#) in San Francisco with [Martin Cate](#), one of Karen's earliest inspirations.

At 11 am on April 7th, Montanya Distillers will release the first bottles of their 10th Anniversary celebration rum, Montanya Aniversaria, at the Distillery's Tasting Room. This single-barrel rum is aged for four years in

three different Colorado barrels (in order: AD Laws Whiskey House, Sutcliffe Vineyards, and Peach Street Distillers). The selected barrels are also a tribute to our earliest Colorado inspirations.) There will only be 300+ bottles available in this limited initial release for \$100 each. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to [The Women's Distillery Guild](#) (a non-profit organization supporting gender diversity in craft distilling) and [The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory](#) (a research facility accelerating discoveries about the ecosystems that replenish the world's air, water, and food supplies).

April 7th will also be the day of a big celebration at the Distillery from 6 pm to 11 pm. Live music, cocktails, appetizers and exciting appearances by some of our earliest distillers, managers, bartenders, and staff from our earliest days. (Think Delena Aseere, Matt Schmalz, Alyssa Lile, and maybe even Kyle Tisdell for those in the know.)

The party goes on in New York (April 10th at the [Rubin Museum of Art](#)), Chicago (April 14th at the [Chicago Rum Festival](#)) and Denver (May 20th at [The Hornet](#)).

So join us! The celebration is about to begin.

Karen Hoskin
Founder/Co-Owner of Montanya Distillers