



## Profile: Organic Artisan Jam in Nashville

### Bathtub Gin Spreads in Nashville, Tennessee

By: Susannah Felts | Posted on: 09/17/2012 at 09:00 AM



Finally, this week we're going to see some high temps in the low 70s. Everything's getting that dreamy, late-September golden hue. The mums and pumpkins are out at the roadside stands and garden centers. Seems like a perfect time, I think, to highlight the pleasures of fruit spreads – one of the most delicious ways to enjoy the spoils of summer all year round.

But the jams I want to talk about today are not just any sugar-and-fruit spreadables. Oh no. Not only are these lovelies organic and mostly made with local fruit, they're spiked with spirits like Tennessee whiskey, limoncello, peach brandy, coconut rum, and the list goes on, delectably. It's

[Bathtub Gin](#), straight outta 21st century Nashville with a strong scent of Prohibition Era. Right now, I've got a jar of the Limoncello-Strawberry (sweet and tangy), and one of the Tennessee Whiskey-Cherry Tomato (rich and peppery-sweet, a real flavor knockout that would be good with so many things – meats, cheeses, on bread...we dabbled it on rotisserie chicken tonight). In the store, it was a tough call. My local butcher and cheese shop, Porter Road Butcher, sells Bathtub Gin's goods, and they had in stock the Chai Cordial Blueberry Apricot, Porto Cherokee Purple, Peaches 'n' Cream, Manhattan Red Marmalade, and Gobsmacked Union Jack (an over-the-top orangey flavor featuring orange bitters, cognac, candied orange peels, and blood orange tea, and which won a recent "Pimp My Jam" contest!). I'd like to try them all, eventually...

[Bathtub Gin Organic Artisan Jam](#) started appearing at farmers' markets around town just about a year ago, the creation of two Rochester, Minnesota-bred sisters, Amy Lorber and Erin Ackley, both of whom came to Nashville for college and have stayed on (naturally!). The sisters make the jams out of Erin's kitchen. When I spoke with Amy, she told me that, after being out on her own for several years, she found that she missed some of the traditional comforts of family back home – like the jams her mom and grandmother made every year.

“Cooking in general for me is therapeutic,” she says. “The jam is this big warm pot, and it reminds me of making strawberry jam or apple butter with my mom as a kid. We always had rows of jam on the shelf when I was kid. We never had store-bought.” Lorber notes, too, that it’s simply a pleasure to bring back the joy of summer’s ephemeral berries in the dead of winter.

The sisters also share a fascination with the Prohibition Era, which, Amy told me, is when cocktails were invented – more out of practicality than epicurean experimentation. “The shoddy liquor they were using tasted horrible, so they started using fruit juice to cover it up, make it palatable. This is our twist on that.”

Except, of course, these girls have nothing to cover up. They’re committed to using only the best ingredients, all organic and local whenever possible. That means they stay very, very busy in the summer, scrambling to take advantage of berry season. This year’s drought made the berry pickins a bit slim, so they started experimenting with marmalades, the citrus for which, naturally, can’t be sourced here. Amy says she’s fallen hard for the marmalades: “I feel like I’ve rediscovered a whole area of fruit spreads that have been overlooked in the South.” They did get plenty of tomatoes – from [Delvin Farms](#) and [Lester Farms](#), in particular – with which to stir up several inventive tomato jams, such as the one I’ve been enjoying.

Their flagship flavor is still Amy’s favorite: the Rum Raisin Mission Fig. “Rum is one of my very favorite liquors, but [this jam] also uses my favorite spices too – I’m very into the traditional Christmas spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves,” she says. “And figs are just like candy to me, I absolutely love them. So we just played around and got that one just right.” Some of the jams contain candied fruit peels, which Amy and Erin first made themselves – only to find out what a labor-intensive process it really is. One can only spend so much of one’s non-day job time making fabulous jams, after all...

Bathtub Gin is made without any artificial pectins or artificial flavors or preservatives. “Everything is slow cooked, the longer and harder way, but we think that it tastes better. It’s important to us,” Amy says.

One of the coolest things about Bathtub Gin is that each flavor – they’ve concocted 16 to date – comes with a recipe for a cocktail that can be made with that jam. So we’re back full-circle to the cocktails. It’s genius: Jam for your breakfast, jam on your sandwich at lunch, jam in your post-work drink! All the recipes can be [found on the website](#), too. Let me tell you, if I had any Scotch on hand, I would certainly be trying the Gnat’s Whistle right now, which makes use of the Limoncello-Strawberry Jam plus lemon juice, powdered sugar, and ice.

You can find Bathtub Gin at [Green Door Gourmet](#), [Porter Road Butcher/The Bloomy Rind](#), [Lazaroli Pasta](#), the [downtown farmer’s market](#), and a few other places outside Nashville. And [online](#), of course!