



**JIMMY RUSSELL, MASTER DISTILLER**  
Wild Turkey® Distillery, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky



At A Glance: **Jimmy Russell**

- Wild Turkey Master Distiller
- Father of Master Distiller, Eddie Russell
- Grandfather to Brand Ambassador & Apprentice Bruce Russell and Brand Ambassador Joann Street
- 65 Year Whiskey veteran; Longest-tenured, active Master Distiller in the global spirits industry
- Creator of Rare Breed, Kentucky Spirit and Co-Creator of Russell's Reserve
- Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame™ member
- Lifetime honorary member for the Kentucky Distillers' Association
- Recipient of the Parker Beam Lifetime Achievement Award
- Whiskey Hall of Fame member
- Anointed a Kentucky Colonel by three standing Commonwealth of Kentucky Governors, including former Governors Paul E. Patton and Ernie Fletcher, and current Governor Steve Beshear
- Honored with a Resolution by the Kentucky State Assembly and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky
- Received the Key to Lawrenceburg, Kentucky from Mayor Edwinna Baker

Dubbed the “Buddha of Bourbon” and “The Master Distiller’s Master Distiller” by his industry peers, James C. “Jimmy” Russell knows Bourbon like he knows breathing. For more than 65 astounding years, Russell has been making whiskey at the Wild Turkey Distillery in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, and today, is the longest-tenured, active spirits Master Distiller in the world. Growing up five miles from the distillery, he followed his father, who taught him the traditions and techniques of Bourbon craftsmanship. From his first position at the distillery sweeping floors, he reached the apex of his career as Master Distiller in the 1960’s learning how to make Bourbon the right way – from the inside out and everything in between. No job too small, no task too tedious.

Jimmy's passion for Bourbon led him to study under such Bourbon luminaries as Bill Hughes, Wild Turkey's second Master Distiller, and Ernest W. Ripy, Jr., great-grandson of distillery founder James Ripy, Wild Turkey's third Master Distiller. Even if his unparalleled tutelage wasn't enough, his family history, impeccable knowledge of Bourbon, and possession of time-honored Bourbon-making secrets have led to his reputation as "the Master Distiller's Master Distiller." A part of an exclusive brotherhood, Jimmy is a member of the Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame™ and a whiskey judge for the International Wine and Spirits Competition. He's involved through the entire distillation and aging process of Wild Turkey Bourbon; his experience and wisdom shining through in every single bottle.

Over the past 65 years, Jimmy has been responsible for the launches of a number of new Wild Turkey brands and expressions, such as Tradition, Tribute, 17-year-old Wild Turkey for Japan, Rare Breed, American Spirit, Kentucky Spirit and Russell's Reserve, which he co-created with his son and distilling partner Eddie Russell. Jimmy broke new ground in 1976 with the first honeyed Bourbon, at the time called Wild Turkey Liqueur. Today, fans know the evolution of that product as American Honey. Jimmy is also responsible for making sure the legacy of Wild Turkey stays intact; overseeing the production of Wild Turkey 101, Wild Turkey's flagship brand. While waxing poetic about "aging techniques" and "grain selection," you can often find Jimmy enjoying his beloved Bourbon neat or with a touch of branch water.

In celebration of Jimmy's 60 years of service, the Wild Turkey global family decreed 2014 "The Year of Jimmy Russell," marked by a series of honors and accolades from family, local and national politicians, and distinguished members of the Bourbon industry. Jimmy was granted a Lifetime Honorary Membership to the Kentucky Distillers' Association's Board of Directors, an honor bestowed to only five other individuals within the organization's storied 134-year history.

In 2018, Jimmy and his legendary son, Master Distiller Eddie Russell celebrated 101 years of combined experience at the Wild Turkey distillery – a touching homage to the Wild Turkey 101 Bourbon that launched Jimmy's career more than 65 years ago.

These days, Jimmy can frequently be found signing his John Hancock to bottles and other Wild Turkey memorabilia inside the Wild Turkey Visitor Center. He enjoys time at home with his wife Joretta, whom he met before he started working at Wild Turkey. They have three children – Eddie, Mike and Kathy; six grandchildren; and one great grandchild. A true Kentuckian and avid sports fan, Jimmy is a lifelong supporter of local Anderson County High School athletic programs for girls and boys. He is keenly proud to have two of his grandchildren working within the Wild Turkey family – grandson Bruce and granddaughter Joann – both currently serving as brand ambassadors.

**Media Contacts:**

Sarah Bessette  
Campari America  
[Sarah.Bessette@campari.com](mailto:Sarah.Bessette@campari.com)  
(401) 595-2241

Mackenzie Keller  
If Agency  
[Mackenzie.Keller@if.agency](mailto:Mackenzie.Keller@if.agency)  
(602) 320-0558

###