

Beer to Bourbon: SLO Brew's Newest Venture

By Serena Lopez



Photo by Blake Andrews - SLOToography



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Photo Courtesy of SLO Brew

An Elevated Experience

Just feet away from the breezy, casual SLO Brew Rock, Rod & Hammer's SLO Stills offers a vastly different experience for guests. It's sexier and more sophisticated. It's 21 and over.

"It's all about quality, education, and enjoyment of high spirits and great food," Co-Owner Rodney Cegelski said.

Adorned with rawhide, leather, surfboards, and even a historic sign off the original Pismo Beach Pier, the distillery is a collision of two worlds, two friends.

"This is [Cegelski] and my almost like a passion play," Co-Owner Hamish Marshall said about building the distillery. "We always wanted to do it and it very much resembles us and our partnership."

SLO Brew owners, Rodney "Rod" Cegelski and Hamish "Hammer" Marshall have executed yet another project to

add to their business empire. Rod & Hammer's SLO Stills creates handcrafted whiskey unique to the Central Coast and offers a space where customers can fully enjoy and immerse themselves in the culture of distilling.

"A lot of people don't know that the base of whiskey is beer".

Cegelski said. "Just knowing that we had the capability to do that, we had the brewery, it just seemed like a cool transition to elevate the brand."

The Central Coast Signature

Cegelski and Marshall are long-time friends and business partners. Their love for alcohol is the passion behind their business and it is evident. From brewing renowned SLO Brew beer to now distilling high caliber whiskey, these guys know how it's done.

The duo adds a unique twist to their spirits by incorporating an essential part of the Central Coast into their purifying process. After a spirit is done aging in the barrel, it must be proofed (diluted with water) to reach the desired alcohol content. At Rod & Hammer's, Marshall and Cegelski use water straight from the Pacific Ocean.

"We are literally paddling out to our favorite surf breaks and we are pulling out buckets of water and we are distilling the water and cutting the liquor," Cegelski said. "We are just finding some cool ways to add the essence of the Central Coast and the Pacific Ocean. We plan on making a whole fun series."

Rod & Hammer's currently offers four spirits: two rye whiskeys and two bourbon whiskeys. Each with their own aroma and flavor unique to their own distillation process. From sweet notes like vanilla and caramel to savory ones like pepper and spicy rye, there's a spirit for either mood.

The distillery also offers a Cask Strength Bourbon Whiskey that is uncut with water, showcasing the natural taste straight from the barrel.

Whiskey lovers also have the opportunity to create their very own spirit at Rod & Hammer's. By joining the Barrel Club, members can curate their own batch of whiskey with the guidance of the head distiller. Each five gallon barrel produces 28 750mL bottles and members are able to customize their barrel and bottle labels.

The duo say they are done building for a while and will focus on expanding the Barrel Club.

"It's almost like having three children," Marshall said. "We've had all three children and now we just have to make sure they turn out okay."

Marshall and Cegelski look forward to the future of the distillery and distributing their spirits state-wide and eventually nation-wide.

Rod & Hammer's SLO Stills
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