



State Liquor Authority

Contact: Bill Crowley william.crowley@sla.ny.gov (518) 474-4875
For Immediate Release: May 14, 2018

State Liquor Authority Busts Brooklyn Bootlegging Operation Illegal Stills, Bootlegged Spirits Seized at Red Hook Winery

On Wednesday, May 9th, the New York State Liquor Authority (SLA), the New York City Sheriff's Office (NYSO), and the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) conducted a special joint inspection of Red Hook Winery at 204 Van Dyke Street in Brooklyn, based on information received from law enforcement officials that the winery was engaged in illegal distilling operations, including the illegal production and distribution of distilled spirits. This illegal moonshine operation is one of the first encountered by city law enforcement officials in over two decades. Under the New York State Alcoholic Beverage Control Law, the illegal possession or production of distilled spirits is a serious criminal offense.

The joint inspection team entered the winery at 2 p.m. on May 9th, discovering four unlicensed stills, in addition to over forty cases of illegally manufactured spirits packaged and stored in the back of the winery. The stills were connected to gas powered heat sources during the time of the inspection. A makeshift electrical box with open, exposed wires was installed directly above the gas burners, creating a serious fire and explosive hazard. Members of the joint inspection team directed winery owner Mark Snyder, who was cooperative during the inspection, to dismantle the stills prior to National Grid shutting off the gas lines.



NYSO Deputy Sheriffs arrested Snyder, charging him under the New York State Alcoholic Beverage Control Law for the manufacture for sale of an alcoholic beverage without first obtaining the proper license, and for storing alcoholic beverages on any premise not duly licensed. The Sherriff's Office seized the four stills in addition to palettes of illegal spirits, while SLA investigators confiscated six bottles from the winery's tasting room.



“The discovery of an illegal moonshine operation in the heart of Brooklyn is nothing short of shocking, given how easy and inexpensive it is to obtain a distiller’s license in New York State,” said Counsel to the Authority Christopher R. Riano. “This licensed manufacturer has not only demonstrated his utter insouciance for state and federal laws, but has created a dangerous situation by operating a primitive, make-shift bootleg operation in one of the most densely populated areas of our state. Given the danger to the community posed by these homemade distilling devices, particularly given that exposed electrical wiring was directly next to natural gas lines, it was critical that immediate action be taken. I am grateful to the New York City Sheriff, the New York City Office of Emergency Management, and our other enforcement partners for their assistance in this matter.”

Under both state and federal law, engaging in the distilling of spirits and the possession of distilling apparatus without a license is illegal. Distilleries are required to obtain a Distilled Spirits Plant (DSP) permit from the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Additionally, distilleries operating in New York must obtain a license through the New York State Liquor Authority. In addition to the immediate actions taken, SLA Investigators served a number of formal demands for documents and records, and the investigation into other matters related to Red Hook Winery is ongoing.

The New York State Liquor Authority regulates and controls the manufacture, sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages within the State. The Authority works with local law enforcement agencies and localities across the State to ensure compliance with the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law. In addition, the Authority issues and renews licenses and permits to manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers of alcoholic beverages.

On the Web: www.sla.ny.gov

#