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Root Beer Journal IV: Virgil's

Posted by Fredric Koeppel under [Root beer](#)
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I'm really bummed that I missed National Root Beer Float Day last week, but that notion does bring up the question of what kind of root beer would you use to make a float. After all, one needn't cook with the best wine; that would be a waste. (I mean, you can if you want, but still.) To make *kir*, you use a few drops of cassis in *aligoté*, an inexpensive acidic white wine, not lush, more expensive chardonnay. And you wouldn't degrade a fine sparkling wine or champagne to make a mimosa.

Just so, I would not make a root beer float, much as I love them, with Virgil's Root Beer. It's too good for that use.

Virgil's soft drinks are made by Reed's Inc., which also makes a line of very authentic and gingery ginger ales and other ginger products. The formula for Virgil's Root Beer was concocted by

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Ed Crowley, of the Crowley Beverage Corporation in Wayland,

Washington, who sold the company in 1999 to Original Beverage Corporation, which changed its name to Reed's Inc. in 2001. The company was founded by Christopher Reed, a sort of ginger guru, in 1987.

Here are the ingredients of Virgil's Root Beer:

Carbonated water and unbleached cane sugar; anise from Spain, licorice from France, vanilla (bourbon) from Madagascar, cinnamon from Ceylon, clove from Indonesia, wintergreen from China, sweet birch from the southern US, molasses from the US, nutmeg from Indonesia, pimento berry oil from Jamaica, balsam oil from Peru, cassia oil from China.

Virgil's contains no artificial ingredients and no preservatives; it is, instead, pasteurized after bottling.

The first impression is of a root beer that's clean and spicy and sweet, but well-balanced. There's a distinct piney element as well as a powerful and slightly medicinal rooty/herbal character, as if it were a healing concoction brewed by medieval monks. Virgil's Root Beer is full-bodied and creamy, quite effervescent, with high notes of cool mint and vanilla and barky-tarry hints in the depths. The

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finish is a little bitter, like an Italian *digestivo*. Altogether, it's a great and complex root beer.

Virgil's products — I also like the black cherry cream soda — are primarily available at gourmet and specialty stores. In Memphis they can be found in single bottles at Fresh Market and at Whole Foods in four-packs for \$3.49.



ONE RESPONSE TO "ROOT BEER JOURNAL IV: VIRGIL'S"

1. **Glass Bottles Says:**
August 16th, 2010 at 11:12 am
I'll have to check out some Virgil's, it sounds amazing!

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