

# Relativity: Brains and Booze - or, How far apart are your Lorentz contractions?)

“It’s 2:18 in the afternoon and you’re drinking whiskey without even making a face.”



Relativity whiskey bottle

Jacqueline Connetti of Edrington Americas, the Innovation and Area Manager for Rhode Island, pours a sample of whiskey from a 10-inch bottle shaped like a mad scientist’s lab beaker. A black label wraps around the bottle, designed like a chalkboard and covered with etchings of vectors, exponents and equations. Inside is 750ml of Relativity Whiskey, the branded “Easy Drinking Whiskey” that Connetti astutely noted hasn’t caused any midday eye tearing.

Traditionally, time mellows alcohol and whiskey has less of a burn the longer it’s aged, taking on wood flavors from its barrel. What separates Relativity from tradition, however, is the ability to time travel through what they call “Compression Aging” technology. Relativity “ages” whiskey 18 years in 40 minutes. It’s whiskeysience. And right now it’s only available in Rhode Island.

Relativity first arrived in October 2016 and could only be ordered at Aurora, The Eddy, The Dorrance, and Ogie’s. Today, Relativity can be found at more than 20 bars and most Providence liquor stores. The whiskey may not have been developed in the Ocean State, but right now we’re the petri dish.

Relativity was first engineered in a garage in Cincinnati by Brain Brew Distillers, a group of “chemical engineers, whiskey drinkers, and a team that has worked with Edrington Americas to create spirits for many years,” Connetti said. Upon finalizing the methodology, Relativity moved to Boone County Distilling in Kentucky for production and bottling.

There is a second lab for Relativity, Connetti said, and it’s the State of Rhode Island.

“Rhode Island is a small market with a diverse demographic,” she explained the state’s test market status. “Because of the size and the relationships we have, we’re able to learn, pivot, make changes and optimize our spirits in a cost effective way.”

Considering the first “lab” - that fateful Cincinnati garage - endured explosions as Brain Brew worked to get the technique right, our status as test market is likely the more enviable. With the wrinkles ironed out, the aging process is now not only safe, but their web site makes it sound simple: “Basically instead of putting the whiskey in a barrel and waiting, we put the barrel in the whiskey...”

“When you think of how traditional whiskey is made, you would source the oak, create a barrel out of it, char it, and you’d age your whiskey, bourbon, or scotch through that barrel,” Connetti said. “What we do is, instead of putting the liquid into the barrel and leaving it to chance to age, mature and develop, we use a scientifically controlled process to combine our whiskeys with American Oak wood. Our technology mimics the seasons of nature and matures our whiskey through rapid cycles of heat and pressure.”

So, does all of this work? Has Relativity harnessed not only the forces of nature but also convinced whiskey snobs that science can surpass tradition - the latter, incredibly, seeming the more daunting task? They’re trying their best to let whiskey fans make up their own minds. In February and March, Relativity hosted 50 tastings at area bars and liquor stores to give people the chance to experience the whiskey firsthand.

“There are people who want to drink for taste, complexity and quality,” Connetti said. “There are also traditionalists who are deeply rooted, and want to drink for how a whiskey is made. Both are okay,” Connetti said. “There’s no wrong opinion to have about it.”

While Connetti’s personal favorite cocktail is the New Fashioned at The Eddy - an Old Fashioned spin with orange bitters, and the recipe is on the Relativity web site - she still recommends the best introduction to Relativity is a whiskey neat. By first trying the whiskey as is, without ice or a mix, drinkers can get accustomed to the whiskey’s barley qualities and maltiness on the nose, and mouth feel and viscosity from corn. And, truth be told, there really isn’t a need to mix it. There’s a sweetness from wheat. The spiciness in the finish comes from rye.

Rhode Island has become comfortable with culinary innovation. Established incubators, such as Hope & Main in Warren and newer ventures such as the Armory Kitchen at Rooms & Works, show the state’s pioneering spirit when it comes to our foodie reputation. Considering we’re known nationally not just for eats but stellar higher education, it’s perhaps fitting we get to play guinea pig for the collision of brains and booze.

“Even just looking at the last three years, we’ve seen how culinary has put Rhode Island on the map,” Connetti said. “This is a new, science-forward brand and it’s starting here. It’s an exciting time.”

*For information on where to find Relativity, visit [relativity-whiskey.com](http://relativity-whiskey.com).*