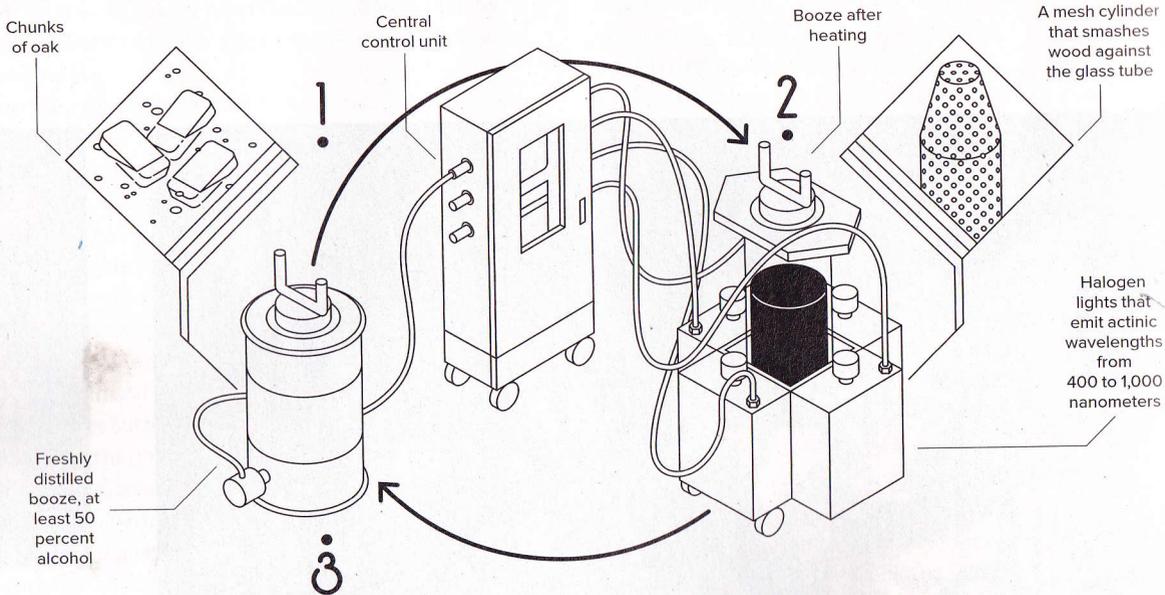


LIQUOR QUICKER

As a cult-favorite craft distiller, Bryan Davis has been experimenting for more than a decade with ways to make young booze taste old—or at least weird. Now Davis says he has a contraption that can make rum or whiskey seem like it has spent 20 years in a barrel after just a few days. It might even work. —W.C.



Phase 1

Unaged booze and wood are combined in the tank and heated at a temperature between 140 and 170 degrees Fahrenheit for several days. Acids in the wood help turn volatile molecules created during fermentation into flavorful esters.

Phase 2

The mixture flows into a glass cylinder, where light breaks down polymers in the wood. That releases more flavorful molecules and a few things you don't want, like medium-chain acids and precursors to ethyl acetate—basically nail polish remover.

Phase 3

Back in the tank for more heating, the complex solution undergoes further reactions. The acids convert to esters that in turn bond to other molecules, resulting in compounds with rich, honeylike notes identical to those formed by long-term aging.