

“Every Man His Own Distiller”

Technology, the American Revolution, and the Masculinization of Alcohol Production in the Late Eighteenth Century

The majority of Chesapeake men became interested in the traditionally feminine project of making alcoholic beverages during the second half of the eighteenth century. A very small number of men, all of them the largest planters, had already become involved with large-scale alcohol production, but they were the exception in the region. Most men in the Chesapeake lagged behind men in Europe, Latin America, New England, and the Middle Colonies, who had been making alcoholic beverages since at least the seventeenth century. The transition was not speedy, and rural women in western areas of Virginia and Maryland continued to produce alcohol well into the nineteenth century. In more eastern and populated areas, however, the penetration of English science, the advent of technological advances, the necessity of supplying the Continental Army with liquor during the American Revolution, and the compliance of women with men's efforts led to the masculinization of alcohol production in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Beginning in the late seventeenth century, “scientific” Englishmen throughout the English empire exhorted their brothers to take up the production of alcohol. For example, Dr. Fothergill of the Bath Agricultural Society in England urged “every gentleman who wishes to improve his estate” “to be well versed, at least, in the principles of philosophical chemistry,” in part because the “brewing, the making of wine, cider, vinegar, &c. are so many chemical processes; which, for want of the requisite stock of knowledge, in many cases either fail altogether, or are carried on with little advantage.” English scientists and authors rewrote women's recipes into precise directives intended for men, stressed the difficulty of making the beverages, and in general transformed alcohol production from cookery to science.¹

The new instructors began by insisting that men follow their newly calculated

commands. For instance, Eliza Smith's 1727 *The Compleat Housewife*, which was extremely popular in both England and the colonies, never told women how to make malt. Smith assumed that women had this knowledge and that the process was simple enough. In contrast, Alexander Morrice told his male readership in his 1802 *A Treatise on Brewing* that making malt required them to place the barley in water for seventy-two hours; drain it for thirty hours; stir it every three to five hours; heap it for twelve hours, turn it every six hours; and then place the barley in a kiln for four to twelve hours. New experts like Morrice emphasized that brewers should keep "a book of different brewings, and observation thereon." "I must recommend," ran the usual instructions to scientific brewers in the eighteenth century, "that he will never make a brewing without keeping a correct account of his day's work."²

Experts added newly coined scientific terms including "alkali" and "narcotic" to alcohol production, published analyses of specific gravities of the products used in making alcohol, and insisted that each batch of brew be considered a scientific "specimen." In harmony with this advice, Virginia planter Landon Carter wrote in his journal in 1772 that "every husbandman whether planter or farmer would do well to keep a diary or journal of all his observations on his own and the management that he sees of others; for as it can never be perfect, it is certain he himself might correct many of his own errors by such a journal comparing one year with another."³

The new instructors of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries aligned alcohol production with the emerging field of chemistry. "It is only by working as closely as possible to the principles of chemicals science," proclaimed one author, "that the best and most profitable result can be produced" in making alcohol. Many instructors recommended that brewers and distillers read William Irvine's *Chemical Essays*. The author of *Hall's Distiller* quoted long sections from Mr. Henry's "Epitome of Chemistry" and explained that alcoholic beverage production was "dependent" on chemistry, with "great advantage to be derived from a knowledge of this science." Making alcohol, the new experts insisted, was an activity within the field of chemistry, not cookery.⁴

At the same time, authors of scientific tracts assuaged any fears of complexity their readers might have had by labeling their systems of alcohol production "practical." Alexander Morrice declared that he was a "common brewer" with "practical abilities." The notices published to promote Harrison Hall's book insisted that he was a "practical man" with "practical information" of "practical good sense." Likewise, authors stressed the word "plain": John Tuck assured readers that his book was "on a plain and entire new plan," and promised that he

would not “introduce any thing that is not easy to be comprehended by the plainest understanding.”⁵

Overall, the treatises celebrated the idea that science had transformed women’s art and mystery into men’s certainty. For centuries, English men and women had declared that making alcohol was a woman’s skill. For instance, cookbook author Robert May stressed in 1660 that preserving and distilling were “secrets” that belonged, as the title of his cookbook proclaimed, to the *Art and Mystery of Cookery*. As late as 1727, some English cookbook authors were still stating that women were “artists in the brewing way” and should use their expertise “to judge as they please.” Considered as a science, however, alcohol production was entirely knowable; the mystery was removed. The new science authors emphasized that men should “master” women’s “mystery.” “Though I shall give every information in my power of the criterion by which to judge when a perfect fermentation has taken place,” one scientific author stressed, “nothing but practice and your own observation can make you master of it.” “It is absolutely necessary to endeavor to be a master of this knowledge,” another writer told his readership, almost all male. The best beer would be brewed by “whoever will make himself master of these lessons,” proclaimed a third author. The few authors who persisted in invoking the ancient art and mystery of alcohol production were criticized by their peers. Authors rebuked John Richardson for his “reprehensible [book], on account of the air of mystery in which the subject is invested.”⁶

Sometimes authors evoked the art and mystery of alcohol production in order to claim that they could reveal secrets that others could not. This was itself another way of demonstrating mastery. Alexander Morrice promised that his book “exhibited the whole process of the art and mystery of brewing,” indicating that brewing was no longer a mystery to *him*. Since he would show “the manner of using the thermometer and saccharometer” “rendered easy to any capacity,” he established himself as a master of the mystery. Other authors similarly referred to the artfulness of the brewer to enforce the notion of mastery. Brewing, these authors assured, “requires the strictest attention of the artist.” Authors increasingly emphasized alcoholic beverage production “mastery” and science as the process was more and more de-skilled, to discourage women’s participation and to assuage men’s concerns. A man who had “mastered” alcoholic beverage production did not need to feel ashamed of performing women’s work.⁷

In case any men continued to leave alcohol production to women, the new experts assured them that they were wrong. Morrice warned that “when a butt wants fining down, [many] appoint a servant girl to perform that office by whom the bungs are left out, and many other acts committed, which all tend to discredit the brewer,

although he does not deserve it." In answer to those who pointed out that "every old woman can brew," Morrice argued that women, "not knowing the proper heats that are necessary," "are giving goods instead of grains to the pigs." Women, the new experts asserted, could no longer differentiate between barley and beer.⁸

The transition to all-male, scientific alcohol production in the Chesapeake began with the large planters, who, eager to keep up with the gentry in England, communicated with the Royal Society of London and read its publications. The Royal Society, founded by Francis Bacon in 1660, was the first scientific society in the English empire. Scientific societies such as the Virginia Society for Advancing Useful Knowledge, founded in 1773 "in humble imitation of the Royal Society," used Francis Bacon's writings as a guide. Planters wrote long letters to the Royal Society describing regional flora and fauna, and sent samples of snakes, corn, and seeds. Planter Philip Ludwell, owner of the Green Spring plantation, wrote to the Royal Society in April 1760 to request grape slips for winemaking. Virginia Governor Francis Fauquier corresponded with the Royal Society as well, and in 1762 planter Charles Carter sent the Royal Society samples of his wine. John Clayton of Virginia co-authored with a European a 1739 book on American botany called *Flora Virginica*. John Leeds of Annapolis published his observations of the transit of Venus in the Royal Society publication, *The Philosophical Transactions*.⁹

Large planters saw scientific distilling as a way to keep up with the English gentry. Philip Vickers Fithian recorded a conversation at Mr. Carter's dinner table between men who were speaking about distilling persimmon "beer." "It is soft, mild, of a fair pure color, burns clear, but does not answer the Colonel's expectations," Fithian noted, "so that he does not propose to recommend it to his neighbors in this or the neighboring counties as a useful experiment." Charles Carter's experiments with producing wine suggest the same scientific view. "I am collecting seed from all parts of the country," he wrote to the Royal Society in England, but "our grapes seldom take root, the joints being longer than all foreign grapes that I have seen."¹⁰

Elite Chesapeake men wrote their own expert literature. For example, by 1775 Virginia planter Landon Carter was experimenting with brewing from green corn, recording his actions with each brew and trying to improve the result each time. Once he thought that he was successful, he published his instructions for green corn beer in the *Virginia Gazette* so that other households could adopt his techniques.¹¹

It is difficult to determine when and how Chesapeake colonists below large-planter status absorbed the recommendation that alcohol production become a

male science. Only a few Chesapeake journals have survived, and even they contain mostly brief entries on weather and crops. Almost nothing written by women still exists. The few journals and careful readings of other remnants such as cookbooks and husbandry books reveal that Chesapeake men began assuming the task of producing alcohol in increasing numbers during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Recipes and instructions slowly migrated from cookbooks to husbandry books that small planters bought. Cookbooks that Chesapeake women purchased and wrote in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries emphasized that alcohol production was women's responsibility. Remember that Sir Kenelme Digbie devoted the initial one-third of his famous 1669 cookbook for women to alcoholic beverage recipes. Richard Bradley marketed his popular *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director* (1727) by advertising in the subtitle that it contained "instruction for managing the brew house, and malt liquors in the cellar; the making of wines of all sorts . . . [and] practical observations concerning distilling" for women. "The reason which induces me to address the following piece to the fair sex," Bradley explained, "is, because the principal matters contained in it are within the liberty of their [women's] province." Bradley included recipes for women to make birch wine (birch syrup, yeast, water, lemon peel, sugar, raisins, and cloves), other raw alcoholic beverages, herbal distillations, and ales. Bradley assured women that he meant no disrespect in giving them alcoholic beverage instructions, stressing that "artists in the brewing way are at liberty to judge as they please." Other cookbook authors popular in the Chesapeake in the early eighteenth century emphasized women's responsibilities. Eliza Smith highlighted recipes for cider, ale, and beer in *The Compleat Housewife* (1727), the first cookbook published in America. Recipe books that Chesapeake women created for themselves also included recipes for making alcoholic beverages. These "books" often were only twelve or so recipes, indicating that each was something that the woman felt she would need. For example, Martha Washington's cookbook included recipes "to make syder," mead, cherry wine, and elderberry wine.¹²

As greater numbers of Chesapeake men took control of alcohol production in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the cookbooks that women in the region purchased contained fewer recipes for alcoholic beverages. The most popular cookbook in the Chesapeake during the second half of the eighteenth century was Hannah Glasse's 1747 *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy*. Glasse shifted her recipes for brewing and winemaking to the back of the book in chapter 22. Distillations were pushed even further back, to chapter 25. William Ellis's popular 1750 *The Country Housewife's Family Companion* also repositioned alco-

holic beverage recipes to the end of the book. Despite the fact that he marketed the book with the promise of “the several ways of making good malt; with directions for brewing good beer, ale, etc.,” Ellis’s book only included instructions for brewing on the last couple of pages.¹³

Chesapeake colonists read in Martha Bradley’s 1770 *The British Housewife* the suggestion that brewing and cidering should be the work of men. “As we have given directions to the person who brews,” she wrote, “to be careful in the choice of *his* malt and hops, we are here to give the same caution to the cider-maker, in the choice of *his* apples” [emphasis added]. Many Chesapeake colonists also owned Susannah Carter’s 1772 *The Frugal Housewife*, a book that contained over five hundred recipes but none at all for cidering or brewing. And while Mary Cole told women at the end of *The Lady’s Complete Guide* in 1791 that “malt liquors should not be passed over unnoticed, as the house-keeper cannot be said to be complete in her business, without a competent knowledge in the art of brewing,” she meant only that women should be familiar with the process; she assumed that brewing would be performed by men.¹⁴

The first published cookbook written by an American, Amelia Simmons’s 1796 *American Cookery*, also conspicuously shifted alcoholic beverage recipes out of the province of women. Simmons composed *American Cookery* in the spirit of post-revolutionary nationalism, making it the first cookbook to include recipes for commel, pumpkin pudding, and another American novelty, spruce beer (molasses, yeast, and water with spruce boughs or needles for flavoring). The inclusion of spruce beer reflected a desire to showcase American foods more than any conviction regarding the propriety of women making alcohol, and the recipe appeared only at the final page of the book. Simmons’s nationalism appears even more strongly in the 1800 edition of the book, when she added recipes for “Election Cake,” “Independence Cake,” and “Federal Pan Cake.” *American Cookery* was widely printed as late as 1831 and was plagiarized repeatedly, appearing in 1805 as *New American Cookery*, in 1808 as *New England Cookery*, and in 1819 as *Domestic Cookery*. Simmons’s influential cookbook, like other late eighteenth-century works popular in the Chesapeake, eliminated recipes for alcoholic drinks.¹⁵

At the same time that alcoholic beverage recipes disappeared from cookbooks popular in the Chesapeake in the latter half of the eighteenth century, they began to appear in husbandry books aimed at Chesapeake men with increasing frequency. Prior to this shift, seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century husbandry books rarely included alcohol production recipes or instructions. For example, William Ellis’s 1732 *The Practical Farmer* and George Cooke’s 1741 *The Complete English Farmer*, both popular in the Chesapeake, never mentioned alcoholic bev-

erages. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, however, English works exhorting men to take up distilling flooded the Chesapeake. George Smith's *A Compleat Body of Distilling* was a frontrunner. Originally published in 1725, the book became extremely popular in the Chesapeake in the 1770s when the *Virginia Gazette* bookstore in Williamsburg expanded and began stocking it. Smith taught men to make elite women's alcoholic concoctions of aniseed water, angelica water, and cinnamon water. In his widely read 1757 book *The Complete Distiller*, Ambrose Cooper wrote that all forms of distilling were men's responsibility. Cooper informed men that "distillation, tho' long practised, has not been carried to the degree of perfection that might reasonably have been expected," and that because female distillers had assumed that "the theory of distillation is very abstruse, and above the reach of common capacities," women had been "hardly suspecting their art capable of improvements." Cooper urged men "to destroy this idle opinion" and promised to teach "the distiller how he may proceed on rational principles."¹⁶

Instructions for cidering and brewing aimed at men also began to appear in other books in the Chesapeake. In *The Cyder-Maker's Instructor*, published in Philadelphia in 1760 and well-read in the Chesapeake, Thomas Chapman told men that cidering and brewing were their responsibility. He told men how to make yeast, beer, raisin wine (raisins, yeast and water), and cider. His book, he promised, "directs the grower to make his cider in the manner foreign wines are made . . . [and] directs the brewer to fine his beer and ale in a short time." George Watkins informed men in *The Compleat English Brewer* of 1768 that a man who brewed carefully could expect to "equal the drink he meets with in the best houses; probably to exceed it." Recipes and instructions even began appearing in books intended for men that were not related to farm or household management at all. For example, New Yorker Elijah Bemiss's 1806 *The Dyer's Companion*, about the manufacture of dye and dyed cloth, included recipes for cider, apple brandy, claret, gooseberry wine, raspberry wine, damson wine, grape wine, currant wine, strawberry wine, beer with and without malt, and molasses beer.¹⁷

By the end of the eighteenth century, books instructing men on cidering, distilling, and winemaking proliferated in the Chesapeake. John Richardson published *Theoretic Hints on Brewing Malt Liquors* and *Statistical Estimates of the Materials of Brewing* in 1784. Alexander Morrice published *A Treatise on Brewing* in 1802 "for the young brewers, and for the benefit of country gentlemen." Hundreds of books appeared in the latter half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries aimed at instructing men in brewing, distilling, winemaking, and cidering. Many of these made an appearance in the Chesapeake, and soon

American men were writing and publishing their own alcohol instructional manuals. For example, Samuel M'Harry published *The Practical Distiller* in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1795; Samuel Child published *Every Man His Own Brewer* in Philadelphia in 1796; and Michael Kraffts composed *The American Distiller* in Philadelphia in 1804.¹⁸

More evidence of small planters understanding that distilling, even on a small scale, was now men's work appears in wills of Chesapeake men. While men in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries often bequeathed alcohol producing utensils to their daughters, they increasingly left such items to their sons in the mid-eighteenth century. Before the shift, for example, Bartholomew Andrews of Surry County, Virginia, left a still "to wife Elizabeth for life" in 1720. In the middle of the century, however, many men allowed wives and daughters to use stills during their lifetimes, then required them to be passed to a son once the women had died. In 1746 Thomas Haynes in Prince George County left his son "one hot still for brandy" once his wife's use ended with her death. In 1750, William Walker similarly left his wife Jane "the still" with the provision that their sons would inherit it after she passed away. Later in the century, men skipped over daughters and wives entirely and bequeathed stills directly to sons. In 1750, Joseph Carter of Spotsylvania County, Virginia, was survived by his wife, four sons, and three daughters. His will left his brandy still to his sons and left no equipment for making alcohol to his daughters and wife. Examples of fathers leaving stills directly to sons in the Chesapeake explode after 1760. For example, Tobias Purcell left his still to his step-son in 1761, and Matthew Harrison left a still to his son Benjamin in 1764.¹⁹

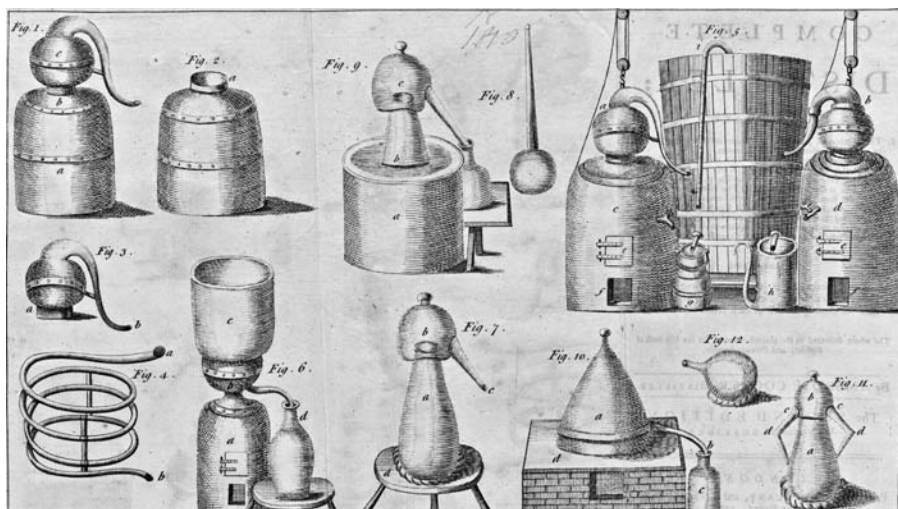
New inventions made alcohol production easier and cheaper, and permitted men of all means to take charge of making alcohol. The new scientific instruments of the alembic still, the thermometer, saccharometer, and hydrometer, as well as the new instruction manuals, meant one did not need to be an intuitive master of alcohol production. With these tools, unskilled laborers could now work in household and commercial breweries and distilleries. Writers were quick to point out the advantage of cheap labor that the new tools offered: "If you want . . . to employ yourself on some other business, having one of these thermometers, you need not stand at the side of the copper to watch it, but . . . leave anyone of your ordinary workmen to take your liquor, and turn over when the quicksilver rises to the index: this will save the brewer a great deal of trouble," one author advised. In fact, the thermometer and saccharometer made it so easy to make alcoholic beverages that another author recommended that brewers purchase "blind thermometers" in which the scale could be hidden in the brewer's

or distiller's pocket so that his workers would not learn his methods and be able to found businesses of their own.²⁰

The invention of the alembic still, or side distilling, in particular, made the process easier. Side distilling became known in England around 1720, but it was not practiced in the Chesapeake until the 1760s. Before the invention of side distilling, stills were very large and expensive pieces of equipment, and distilling was a complex process. In the side distillation apparatus a coil connecting two containers was immersed in a basin of cold water so that the alcoholic vapors condensed more rapidly. Since the steam did not need to travel up a lengthy rise or drop, the parts of the still were smaller, easier to transport, and less prone to breakage. The process and construction was simple and effective enough that home distillers continue to use side distillation today. The apparatus spread throughout Europe; the French, in particular, became enraptured with distilling. There, Antoine Parmentier constructed the first modern still, where the raw materials to be distilled were heated in a boiler over an oven fire, producing a cheaper liquor that was less tainted by impurities. The subsequent popularity of French distilled liquors in England led English leaders to encourage the local production of distilled liquors — an encouragement they would later regret, as thousands of people became addicted to gin in the early nineteenth century.²¹

Popular books taught Englishmen how to build the new stills starting in the 1720s. One was George Smith's *The Complete Body of Distilling* (1725), which demonstrated how to build a simple three-gallon alembic still. Smith's extremely popular work went through at least eleven editions by 1813. Smith explained that in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, distilling had remained the province of the very wealthy. Distilling had required a space large enough to contain the still, worm-tub, and pump in a row, with an inclined and paved floor and a chimney. Smith's three-gallon still, in contrast, was small enough to fit almost anywhere and required little infrastructure. Smith's still was further improved upon in Ambrose Cooper's *The Complete Distiller* in 1757, which not only detailed how to build and use an alembic but was also the first English work to give explicit instructions on distilling rum. Cooper's work was popular, with at least five editions by 1810. The alembic still, as Cooper explained, required two containers and a worm and, according to Cooper, was "one of the most speedy and profitable [stills], as it required fewer preparative[s], and less time." Smith's, Cooper's, and similar publications taught households in England how to build their own rudimentary stills and would spread to the Chesapeake in the 1760s.²²

Improvements in distilling technology continued to make distilling easier for Chesapeake residents throughout the nineteenth century. In 1801, Alexander



Men in the Chesapeake began reading about, building, and purchasing the new alembic stills during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Ambrose Cooper, *The Complete Distiller*, 2nd ed. (London: 1760). Image used with permission of Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Anderson patented a condenser that heated wash more quickly. Henry Witmer soon patented an improvement on Anderson's condenser. Anderson's condenser with Witmer's improvement commonly allowed a 110-gallon still to be run off eight or nine times in twenty-four hours, a significant improvement over the three runs that had been typical before. Not only could the new stills produce larger amounts of alcohol more quickly, they also produced more alcohol from the same amount of wash. Authors raved about the new technology, assuring the distilling public that with the new stills, one bushel of grain could produce three gallons of spirits. "Accordingly," noted authors, "we find men of science, men of capital, lawyers, doctors, and merchants abandoning other pursuits to learn the art of extracting spirit from grain."²³

Other inventions soon followed, like "Montgolfier's water raiser" for hydraulic-powered stills, which allowed a distiller to eliminate the cost of hiring a person or a horse to pump the water, and mechanical stirrers, to reduce the human labor necessary to stir the materials. By 1804, these inventions led Michael Krafft to write in *The American Distiller* that stills had been improved so much that "no future period can boast that we have left them the smallest shadow of improvement" in distilling technology. From January 29, 1791, to April 25, 1812, the U.S. Patent

Office registered sixty-eight new distilling patents. These patents were only part of the tremendous interest in distilling. Tools like the new small stills meant that the level of skill formerly necessary was no longer required for distilling.²⁴

Small-planter households not only read about the new distilling techniques, but they also created or purchased new-style stills and used them to distill cheap molasses into rum. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, stills became simpler, easier to transport, less expensive, and more common. When Benjamin Bramham wanted to sell a still in 1769, he noted that it weighed only 37 lbs. By the 1760s, colonists could buy ready-made stills or the components for stills in Virginia. Advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* indicate that by the 1770s, still capacities in the Chesapeake ranged from the small 30-gallon still to the much larger 400-gallon still. Robert Lyon sold “a large assortment of copper, pewter and tin ware” at his store in Williamsburg, while John Greenhow, another Williamsburg merchant, sold “most sorts of pewter, tin, copper,” as well as wire and all sorts of cast iron. Kidd & Kendale advertised “still-worms made and mended” in Williamsburg beginning in 1769. In 1772, James Haldane of Norfolk advertised that he made all sorts of copper and brass work, including stills and brewing coppers “at the most reasonable rates” “for cash or country produce.” Increases in coastwise shipping allowed Chesapeake colonists to get stills or their components from Philadelphia and New York, where merchants competed for this business. Stills, worms, and still heads ranging in value from £1 to as high as £20 became common in estate inventories in the last third of the eighteenth century. One study found that between 1780 and 1800 25 percent of households in Augusta County, Virginia, owned stills.²⁵

Colonists used their stills to make rum from molasses, which became cheaper over the course of the 1760s. In 1764, the British government lowered the duty on molasses imported from the French and Spanish Caribbean islands from a prohibitive six pence per gallon to three pence per gallon. In 1766 the molasses duty dropped again, this time to only one penny per gallon on all molasses entering the colonies. In addition, during the second half of the eighteenth century, West Indies planters expanded their sugar production. The resulting oversupply further decreased the price of molasses and rum. From 1737 to 1742, Virginians imported an average of 16,659 gallons of molasses annually; from 1742 to 1769, they increased their average molasses imports to 40,054 gallons of molasses annually. Only small amounts of the thousands of gallons of molasses imported went into household cooking, while the vast majority went to making rum. Colonists also used the cheap molasses to make their own unhopped molasses “beer,” which required fermented molasses and water.²⁶



This picture of a late-eighteenth-century still indicates that stills became even smaller, simpler, and less expensive at the end of the century. Image reproduced by permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Books on the new distilling methods sold briskly in the Chesapeake after 1760, when the region saw its first bookstore. The *Virginia Gazette* bookstore and printing office advertised Smith's *Complete Body of Distilling* at least twenty-one times between 1770 and 1776. In total, the *Virginia Gazette* bookstore offered 273 works on science and 26 titles related to agriculture, many with distilling instructions, including Robert Maxwell's *Practical Husbandman*, Arthur Young's *Farmer's Guide*, and Duhamel du Monceau's *Elements of Agriculture*. The store also sold at least eleven encyclopedias with instructions on side distilling and a variety of periodicals containing alcohol production advice, including *Gentleman's Magazine*, *London Magazine*, *Monthly Review*, *The Guardian*, *The Connoisseur*, and *American Magazine*. The instructions in these works offered to democratize distilling, just as the title of one proclaimed: *Every Man His Own Distiller*.²⁷

Although many small planters could not afford books about the new distilling techniques, instructions on side distilling began to fill the pages of the cheaper almanacs and newspapers. The *Virginia Almanac*, which began in the 1750s, ex-

panded in the 1760s to include articles on distilling. For instance, William Rind included instructions for distilling in his *Virginia Almanac* for 1761. Benjamin Franklin published an article in his 1765 Philadelphia *Poor Richard's Almanac*, popular in the Chesapeake, on "how to manage the distilling a spirit from rye." Franklin also included instructions on brewing from corn. The *Virginia Gazette* advertised almanacs that included alcohol production techniques, like one with instructions for "an wholesome liquor made from Indian corn" in 1761. A *Virginia Almanac* of 1770 included a lengthy article "upon the distillation of persimmons, communicated to the American Philosophical Society," while another 1770 *Virginia Almanac* included "directions for making cider in the manner foreign wines are made." David Rittenhouse's *The Virginia Almanack for the Year of our Lord God 1776* reprinted alcohol instructions from Malachy Postlethwayt's *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* and also discussed alembic stills. John Skinner's *The American Farmer*, a weekly newspaper begun in 1819, gave advice on making persimmon beer, ginger beer, cider, brown spruce beer, white spruce beer, and managing fruit trees. John Taylor of Caroline published a series of agricultural essays in a Georgetown newspaper in 1803 that included directions for making cider and distilling beverages, a series that he expanded into the book *Arator* in 1813. Most colonists who were literate read almanacs and newspapers, and both were read aloud in taverns for those who could not read, so numerous colonists had the chance to learn about the new stills and distilling techniques beginning in the 1760s.²⁸

For men who remained hesitant to assume women's work, scientific and agricultural societies also taught the new alcoholic beverage production techniques to men. In 1769 the American Philosophical Society began a series of weekly meetings for the "mutual improvement in useful knowledge" aimed at elite men in Philadelphia, and it published many of its members' papers in the *American Magazine*. By July of 1773, a group of one hundred Virginians had established a similar society called the Virginia Society for Advancing Useful Knowledge. The meetings and publications of these societies helped to spread alcoholic beverage experimentation among men. For example, Isaac Bartram, a fellow of the American Philosophical Society, presented a paper on the distillation of persimmons and urged farmers to cultivate persimmons for alcoholic beverages. Virginia planter John Mercer's papers include a circular from the Maryland Farmers' Club stating that the club had organized in order to "supply the means and the opportunity for the diffusion of useful knowledge and discovery." Agricultural societies traveled to give demonstrations to men who could not attend meetings, as, for example, John Skinner announced in *The American Farmer* that the Maryland Agricultural Society at Easton was giving traveling demonstrations. In the latter half of the eigh-

teenth century, men in the Chesapeake increasingly taught their fellows how to make alcoholic beverages, both in print and in person.²⁹

Why did men in the Chesapeake need publications and agricultural societies to learn how to make alcohol? Why did they not just ask their wives? The products they were making, especially brandies and rum, were unknown to Chesapeake women, and they also used technology, including alembic stills, that were also unknown to women. The inspiration and source for Chesapeake men was not their wives but the gentlemen scientists of England, who were themselves imitating men making distilled spirits in Italy and France.

Cidering was becoming much easier as well, allowing even families of small means to make much more cider. Seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century cider presses like John Worlidge's "ingenio for the grinding of apples" had been expensive and hard to obtain. Worlidge's press, which squashed the apples between rollers and then strained the pulp through a hair bag sieve or flannel cloth, cost £10, a prohibitive price in the seventeenth century.³⁰

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, small planters began making cider more efficiently. Soon almanacs began including instructions from books like Worlidge's (written to advertise his press), and homemade cider troughs and presses became common in estate inventories. The drop in the cost of cider presses is particularly evident in probate assessments. In 1744, Capt. Mathew Kenner's "2 apple mills cribs and platforms" was assessed at £3. By 1777, William Baily's "1 apple mill and press, tubs, flat forms and troughs," was valued at only £1 5s. In the latter eighteenth century, homemade cider troughs and presses were usually assessed at only £1.³¹

Experimentation with grafting introduced a new kind of apple to the region, which also increased small planters' production of cider and brandy. Until the mid-eighteenth century, Chesapeake colonists made their cider mostly from the Cattaline apple, which made a sour and ephemeral cider; or they used the small, bitter, and wormy local crab apples. The introduction of the Hewes (sometimes spelled Hughes) crab apple to the region in the mid-eighteenth century allowed planters to produce a sweeter, slightly cinnamon-tasting cider that lasted longer. In 1774 one northern Revolutionary War soldier sent to Virginia noted in his diary that "Hewe's crab-apple is much cultivated in Virginia. I have tasted better cider made of it than any I ever drank made from northern fruit. The cider is quite pale and clear, but of most exquisite flavor. 'Tis certainly worthy taking much pains to propagate these trees with us." The higher sugar content of the Hewes crab apple hastened and increased fermentation. Moreover, the Hewes crab apple was a sturdier apple, less susceptible to worm infestations and disease. It was a vigorous

grower, which helped its trees spread. It was simpler and faster to press the Hewes crab apple than previous apples because, as the author of an early-nineteenth-century manual about cidering pointed out, it did not need to be pressed through a sieve. The apple itself was “sufficiently fibrous and tough” to provide its own filter. The resulting juice was “white, and clear as spirit from a still, without any mixture of pulp,” “making a high flavored sprightly liquor, requiring but little fermentation, and easily fined.” Some planters selling orchard land stressed that the property contained Hewes crab apples. “To be sold,” John Fox advertised in 1772, “a valuable tract of land in Gloucester,” with “an orchard of Hughe’s apples, and several other choice fruits.” The other fruits Fox mentioned probably included the Taliafero, Roan, and Gloucester White apple varieties, all introduced in the mid-eighteenth century and all making a cider that was better than the original Cattaline apple cider. With the new alembic stills, colonists could distill this improved cider into non-spoiling apple brandy.³²

One way the new apple varieties spread was through the new commercial botanical trade, which let small-planter households obtain the same types and diversity of fruit as their wealthier neighbors. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, planters who wanted orchards had to hire grafters. In the second half of the eighteenth century, colonists could increasingly order trees from new commercial nurseries. William Smith advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1755 that he had forty-six types of fruit trees for sale; Christian Lenman sold “a quantity of very fine young apple-trees, both grafted and ungrafted . . . all in an excellent thriving condition and fit to plant out this ensuing spring” as well. “Any gentlemen that send their orders,” advertised nurseryman Thomas Sorsby, “may depend on being as punctually served as if they were present.” William Prince’s nursery in Long Island had a thriving catalog business by 1771. Prince sold 120 trees to George St. Tucker of Petersburg, Virginia, who then distributed scions and fruit pits from the new varieties to his friends and customers. Small planters could also learn how to graft their own fruit as articles on the topic appeared in newspapers and almanacs in the second half of the century. For instance, the 1769 *Virginia Almanac* included instructions on “Dr. Dimsdale’s directions for inoculation” of fruit trees.³³

As a result of the diffusion of the new apples, presses, and stills, travelers reported that even poor planters could make fruit ciders and brandies by the latter decades of the eighteenth century. Middling planter William McClemmey of Manakin, Virginia, left a still and worm to his two sons in 1750, for example; and Isaac Handy, a middling merchant, owned a still and one hundred gallons of cider to distill in it when he died in 1762. In 1791 a Frenchman traveling in Winchester,

Virginia, noted a poor German blacksmith who distilled and sold “whiskey,” meaning any distilled drink. (One traveler explained that “rum is distilled, which is a kind of whiskey.”) At the home of another poorer-sort family, the Frenchman noted, “I drank some old whiskey, distilled on his place.” Distilled drinks had become so popular that J. P. Brisson de Warville noted, while traveling through Blandensburg, Virginia, that “we found nothing to drink except eau de vie [brandy or spirits] or rum and water.” Even “the very meanest and hilly land are proper for peach trees,” commented one visitor, “every planter, almost having an orchard of these trees. The brandy made from that fruit I think is excellent and they [make] it in general in sufficient quantities.” By the mid-eighteenth century, all moderate farms had at least a small apple orchard, and many also had a peach orchard. In 1785 traveler John Joyce wrote to his uncle that in Virginia “the drink chiefly used in this colony it is generally cider, every planter having an orchard and they make from 1000 to 5 or 6000 [gallons] according to their rank and fortune.”³⁴

The American Revolution brings into sharpest relief the transfer of alcohol production from women’s hands to men’s. Halfway through the war, George Washington and the Quartermaster’s Department adopted rum and whiskey as part of the official ration. At the same time, they barred women from selling alcoholic beverages to the army as a way of reducing the number of people traveling with the army as camp followers. The result was that men had to make the alcohol. Thus the formal transition of labor that had begun in the scientific societies continued informally in the camps.

Alcohol was essential for soldiers. Alcoholic beverages provided much-needed calories for soldiers, made the spoiled food somewhat more tolerable, offered an alternative to disease-ridden water, and supplied a sense of warmth during the numerous clothing shortages. Constant shortages of salt meant that much of the food that soldiers received was rotting or spoiled — when they received food at all. At Morristown, men often went without meat and bread for a week at a time. At Valley Forge, one officer recorded a recipe for cooking spoiled pork and hog fodder. The only utensil issued to troops was a camp kettle: one kettle for every six men. Private Elijah Fisher recorded during a campaign near White Marsh, Pennsylvania, in December of 1777, that the lack of utensils required anyone cooking meat “to throw it on the coals and broil it.” Wood shortages also made cooking difficult and sometimes required soldiers to eat their meat or fish raw. Soldiers on active operations were supposed to receive hard bread, but it was frequently unavailable, and soldiers learned how to mix flour with water and “cook” it on hot stones into dirty sodden cakes. As Fisher explained, “The water we had to drink

and to mix our flour with was out of a brook that run along the camp, and so many a dipping and washing it which made it very dirty and muddy.”³⁵

Alcoholic beverages not only improved the food but were also thought to promote health and reduce fatigue. Army doctors frequently prescribed two or three bottles of wine per sufferer per day to cure “putrid fevers.” Henry Knox urged the commissary to give the soldiers rum because “we have found by experience that this would support the men through every difficulty.” “The lives of our men,” George Washington reminded Quartermaster Robert Morris, “depends upon a liberal use of spirits in the judgment of the most skilful physicians.” Alcohol consumption rose further because of fears of water drinking. For instance, in 1780 Captain George Fleming wrote to his superior that “I have been unfortunate in losing Peter Young, by his taking a hearty draught of cold water.”³⁶

Granting extra alcohol rations was one of the few ways that army authorities could urge men to fight and reward them for their work. Potential soldiers were recruited with alcoholic beverages. Colonial militia leaders provided alcohol after drills to persuade men to join, and the resulting soldiers expected the additional drinks to continue after drills, battles, and on special occasions. On St. Patrick’s Day, for instance, officers in the Pennsylvania Line drew a quart of rum each. On July 3, 1777, General Lachlan McIntosh gave his Savannah troops an extra quarter cask of rum “to celebrate the anniversary of the most extraordinary and glorious revolution in the history of mankind.” “I felt very unwell, this whole day,” soldiers frequently noted in their journals, “from last night’s carouse.”³⁷

Soldiers were given extra alcoholic beverage rations before battle. They typically also received a gill (about four ounces) of rum before marching into a fight. Soldiers received double rations of rum during sieges or in cold or wet weather and for any task, such as digging trenches, that was deemed extraordinary service. For example, on March 15, 1781, Nathanael Greene ordered that the soldiers each be given an extra gill of rum at breakfast to prepare for what would come to be known as the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. And when the Southern Army marched to the Battle at Eutaw Springs, Colonel Otho Holland Williams recorded that “we halted, and took a little of that liquid which is not unnecessary to exhilarate the animal spirits upon such occasions.”³⁸

Until 1781 the official ration during the war included “1 quart of spruce beer or cider per man per day, or nine gallons of molasses per company of 100 men per week,” with the molasses to be brewed into molasses beer. The Continental Congress encouraged the army’s men to obtain their food the way English armies had traditionally done: by living off the land or by purchasing from licensed sutlers or

local residents. Congress assumed that the traditional methods would continue to suffice, and it published lists of the supplies the army needed, including beer and cider, as a way of encouraging sutlers to attend to the army. An example of local procurement occurred in the summer of 1775 when Richard Backhouse supplied Thompson's Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment with small purchases of beef from local farmer John Hendershot, mutton from Ann Snook, and bread from Jane Allen. Elizabeth Beard of Campbell County, Virginia, submitted a petition to be repaid for the nine diets (complete rations) that she had provided for the North Carolina Light Dragoons in February of 1779. Widow Agnes Jones submitted a petition for providing 450 pounds of beef to the army, while William Arthur asked to be repaid for thirty-eight gallons of brandy. Captain Rogers recorded in March of 1777 that he had purchased two bottles of wine, supper for six men, and one sheet from Elizabeth Wilson in Maryland.³⁹

The army ration from 1775 to 1778 called for simple brews — spruce beer, molasses beer, and cider — that had long been women's province. The sources of this alcohol were camp followers and sutlers. Camp followers were the wives, children, and prostitutes who followed and supplied the army to make money, assist their husbands, and support the revolution. These women washed, sewed, cooked, and brewed for the troops and nursed them when they were sick and injured. Women had long played a valuable role in provisioning the English and colonial armies and were proud of their work. For example, Martha May stressed her commitment to the army when she wrote to Henry Bouquet in 1758, "I have been a wife 22 years to have traveled with my husband every place or country the company marched to and have worked very hard ever since I was in the army." When Mary Cockron applied for a pension in 1837 for her own and her husband's service to the Continental Army, she stated that she "drew her rations as other soldiers did."⁴⁰

At the beginning of the Revolution, Congress and army officials tried to ban soldiers from drinking rum, arguing that cider, ale, and beer were healthier and caused less drunkenness. For example, George Washington twice attempted to bar purveyors of distilled liquor. In reaction, soldiers stole liquor, sold their clothes and other items to purchase liquor, and rebelled when they did not receive liquor rations. Washington then tried instituting price controls and punishing sutlers for selling liquor to soldiers. Typical punishment for a sutler found selling rum to a soldier was two hundred lashes and forfeiture of the liquor. Soldiers who were discovered drinking rum or were found drunk had their alcohol rations withheld and were frequently court-martialed and whipped for their offenses.⁴¹

Congress and army officials found it difficult to keep the army supplied, to provide ale or beer for the soldiers, or give them the necessary ingredients to make the

drinks. Molasses, yeast, malt, and hops were continually in short supply. "I find no malt yet," supply agents frequently informed the Commissary General of Provisions, Joseph Trumbull. When Trumbull asked agents to buy hops, they reported that they, too, were scarce. Congress tried to provide beer and cider by decree, such as when it told the Board of War on July 25, 1777, to contract for a supply of beer and cider. As usual, George Washington noted ten days later that no such supply had been procured. Washington was forced to conclude that "no army was ever worse supplied than ours with many essential articles of it. . . . Neither have they been provided with proper drink. Beer or cider seldom comes within the verge of the camp." Consequently, alcoholic beverage rations became essentially anything the soldiers or officers could locate, be it cider, ale, beer, wine, rum, or whiskey, which they usually obtained from local men and women.⁴²

George Washington, Robert Morris, and Congress were working to reduce the role of women in the army, particularly their role as sutlers. In April of 1778, Ephraim Blaine, the Deputy Commissary General of Purchase of the Middle Department, approved George Washington's request that the soldiers be issued "1/2 gill of rum or whisky per day in lieu of beer." Not only did the army reverse its disapproval of the use of rum and whiskey, it then turned to men, and men alone, to provide the new rations. In 1781, Congress instituted a system in which Congress would offer contracts to individual men to provide a complete set of rations to a particular section of the army for one year. The specific daily ration to be supplied included one pound of bread, one pound of beef or three-quarters of a pound of pork, and one gill of rum per man per day, as well as one quart of salt, two quarts of vinegar, eight pounds of soap, and three pounds of candles for every hundred rations.

Congress and the state assemblies also took the opportunity to pass restrictions against women accompanying the troops. General Braddock permitted Virginia and Maryland troops only six women for the Regiments and Independent companies; five women to the Light Horse, seamen, and artillery; and four women to the carpenters of the Rangers. In contrast, a British account of March 1779 shows more than 1,550 women and 968 children traveling with 4,000 British soldiers. Congress also barred sutlers and local men and women from selling alcoholic drinks to soldiers. These actions combined to give the business of supplying the Continental Army's alcohol to men alone.⁴³

Other factors in the army's new system favored men. The calls for proposals for contractors were advertised in newspapers, at a time when the majority of the lower sort, minorities, and women were illiterate. Moreover, it was impossible for a married woman to sign a contract, since all *femes covertis*, or married women,

were considered legally dead and thus were ineligible to engage in contracts. Merchants who could provide the entire ration were deemed preferable to individuals who could only provide partial rations. It became increasingly important to Morris and others that the contractors have excellent reputations and letters of credit built from years of business. When Morris offered to write a letter on behalf of Baltimore merchants Matthew Ridley and Mark Pringle for obtaining European goods for the army, he wrote, "I am most perfectly satisfied of your honour, integrity and solidity [and] I very readily agree to guarantee the payment of any bills which your Matthew Ridley esq. shall give."⁴⁴

Finally, the new contracts called for rum, not the traditionally female-produced cider, spruce beer, or molasses beer. There were good reasons for the army to switch to rum. Distilled liquors were less likely to spoil, required less space since they contained greater alcohol by volume, and saved the grains used in brewing beer for flour and bread. However, the decision to use rum as staple issue clearly favored men.

The effective favoritism shown to men by Congress and the Quartermaster Department was not unintentional. It was the culmination of a century of concern about the role of women and armies. In the mid-seventeenth century, some Englishmen attempted to prevent female brewers from joining the army because of fears of women distracting men. For example, Lord Bridgewater requested in 1641 that the constable replace his troops' female brewer by "find[ing] out a man to do it." During the colonial wars, Americans noted British camp-follower practices and their ambivalence toward women. Women were needed and tolerated by the British army to wash clothes, brew beer, and make soap, but they were also inspected for venereal disease and often were drummed out of camp. During the Seven Years War, the concern about women traveling with the army expressed by Lord Bridgewater in 1641 grew among the leaders of the American provincial troops. In 1780 Washington ordered women who were not wives to leave the camps, and in 1781 he purposely adopted the contract system that favored men and a rum ration made by men to reduce women's roles further. Thus war itself cemented the transition of alcohol production and provision from women to men.

George Washington would have liked to remove women from the army entirely because he felt that women slowed the army's movements and made it look less professional. But he knew that he would lose husbands and fathers if he did not allow women to follow and supply the army with rations. However, he made certain that women did not feel welcome in the army. When the army marched on Yorktown, Washington ordered the troops to deposit both their baggage and their women at West Point so as not to slow the army's progress. He issued similar

orders lumping women with baggage on other marches. Army officials also required women who washed and brewed for the troops to undergo regular examinations for venereal disease. For example, on July 1, 1777, the commander of a Delaware regiment ordered “that the women belonging to the regiment be paraded tomorrow morning and to undergo an examination [for venereal disease]. . . . All those that do not attend to be immediately drummed out of the regiment.”⁴⁵

The army’s transition to alcohol made by men cemented the idea that in the new American republic making alcohol was men’s work. And by the late eighteenth century, the diffusion of the new apples, presses, and stills meant that even men of small-planter status could make most of their alcohol their households required at home. Individual households still continued to run out of what they wanted, and not every household made each kind of liquor. Small-planter households still needed to shop or trade for some alcoholic beverages. However, it is interesting that in the late eighteenth century, when small planter households needed alcoholic beverages, they eschewed trading with the large planters, instead developing a trade with each other and occasionally purchasing rum at the increasing array of stores and distilleries.

Francis Taylor and his father, small to middling planters in Virginia, provide an example of the neighborhood trade among men (only) of like status. Francis Taylor (1747–1799) was a Revolutionary War officer. His diaries (a generous term, since the entries are terse and sporadic) commence after the war ends and record Taylor’s day-to-day-life in Orange County, Virginia, from 1786 to 1799. Although his ancestors were wealthy, property divisions over generations meant that his inheritance was modest. “Midland” comprised four hundred acres of land and a two-story frame house of twenty-five by twenty-three feet with one room on each level. Like a typical small to middling farmer, Francis Taylor owned one slave and four horses, and had no cattle or servants.

What is particularly striking in the Taylor diary is the impression that men like Francis Taylor no longer depended on large planters for their alcoholic beverages or supplies. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, small planters were sharing the tasks of the alcoholic beverage trade with each other: exchanging advice, ingredients, tools, and drinks.⁴⁶

The shift began with advice. “Saw J[oseph] Clark,” Taylor recorded in August of 1792, “who says he thinks it will be worth getting peaches to make brandy.” Taylor checked this suggestion with his father, who agreed that additional peaches would be necessary. “He says he does not think there will be enough to make brandy,” noted Taylor. In April of 1788, Taylor took Major Moore’s advice and

grafted some of his pear trees with Moore's pear stocks. Exchanging graftings to encourage the variety and hardiness of fruit was another way that small planters expanded alcohol production through small planter and kin exchange. In March of 1790, Taylor "sent to Mr. Ingram's and got some young trees out of his apple orchard." In October of 1795, Taylor gave extended relative and neighbor Joseph Taylor some peach tree graftings. Likewise, when Joseph Ball wanted to move his peach trees to fresher soil, he wrote to his friend for "some help from the other plantations with carts and men."⁴⁷

Small planters stayed aware of what alcohol their neighbors were producing, which was important if they wanted to observe the process, ask for advice, offer suggestions, or purchase the product. For example, Francis Taylor knew that Hubbard Taylor was cidering and that Joseph Taylor had "sent his cart to H[ubbard] Taylor for [a] cask of cider." This same cart in turn brought thirty-five gallons of cider for George Taylor. Francis Taylor's father then bottled the cider that Hubbard Taylor had sent. In April of 1789, Francis Taylor went to Thomas Jones's store and found that Jones had obtained a quart of brandy from George Taylor. In September of 1789, Joseph Taylor sent for and received a jug of Francis Taylor's brandy.⁴⁸

Neighbors sometimes shared the labor of producing alcohol. "Mr. Shepherd came in the evening," wrote Francis Taylor, and "brewed persimmon beers." In October of 1786, Francis Taylor beat cider at Hubbard Taylor's house. On another occasion, Francis Taylor remarked that George Taylor had gone to Joseph Clark's farm and that the two men had made brandy together, each taking a share home. Joseph Taylor sent apples to Francis Taylor's plantation several times to be beaten into cider. Neighbors also assisted each other with obtaining ingredients. For example, in September of 1796, Joseph Taylor borrowed a cask from Francis Taylor. When he returned it, he brought Francis seventeen gallons of brandy from Major Daniel. In December of 1786, Francis Taylor went to town and paid shopkeeper May Lee for the two gallons of molasses that Joseph Taylor had brought from the store to make Francis Taylor's molasses beer a week earlier.⁴⁹

Small planters and kin also loaned and borrowed the materials necessary for alcoholic beverage production. Francis Taylor "boiled persimmon beer and put [it] up with hops and yeast in a cask borrowed of Capt. Burley" in February of 1790. He borrowed apples from Charles Taylor in October of 1786 and again in September of 1790. Robert Taylor borrowed Francis's father's still to make apple brandy in September of 1792; while in May of 1792, Francis Taylor returned a gallon pot to Mr. Howard that Taylor's father had borrowed to stew apples.⁵⁰

Finally, small planters and their kin exchanged the products of their labor. For example, Francis sent a slave with an empty keg to Mr. Graves to obtain eight gal-

lons of brandy in April of 1789. On the same day Thomas Barbour stopped by Francis Taylor's house and asked if he wanted a cask of cider; and in July of 1789, Francis Taylor gave some of his brandy to Charles Taylor in exchange for whiskey. In November of 1789, Francis Taylor exchanged brandy for rum with Major Lees, mirroring a similar exchange made by Taylor's father four months later.⁵¹

While all this neighborly sharing of the labor and products of ciding and distilling helped to build good feeling and small planter and kin relationships, at its foundation it was economic. Francis Taylor recorded these transactions because he expected to be repaid. "B[enjamin] Taylors letter mentioned [sending] three gallons," of alcohol, noted Francis Taylor, "but measured only two [and] 5/8 gallons." In another example, Francis Taylor recorded that Joseph Taylor borrowed "about two gallons" of brandy from him, while in May of 1788, Francis recorded that he had "paid Hansford for the cider I had last week." When Reuben Taylor, Richard Cowthorn, and Joseph Langham called on a seemingly neighborly visit, their central purpose was to obtain the "two quarts brandy my father owed Langham."⁵²

Sarah Fouace Nourse's brief diary, kept sporadically from 1781 to 1783, offers similar evidence of small-planter alcohol exchanges. Sarah and her husband, James, lived in Berkeley County, Virginia. At the time that Sarah Nourse's diary begins, James Nourse, who had spent fifteen years as a woolen draper in London before immigrating to Virginia in 1754, was at least in his sixties. Sarah Nourse opened her diary by noting "Mr. Nourse brewing" in April of 1781. James Nourse later bought a still from his neighbor, Mr. Briscow, in May of 1781. Before he could buy the still, according to the diary, James Nourse visited his neighbors to "raise the money for the purchase" and collected what they owed him from previous exchanges. James Nourse then engaged in distilling with a person that Sarah called "the stiller." Distilling, or "the stiller," evidently did not suit Nourse, because by October Sarah noted that her husband and "the stiller" had "agreed to part."

The Nourses relied on small planters and kin to sell their alcohol for them, perhaps because their age made travel difficult. Sarah noted on one such occasion that "Bob returned — made but a middling sale of the beer." "Bob and Jack," she wrote on another occasion, "gone early with beer for sale to prisoners at Winchester," but the Nourses were again disappointed with their sales. Another time when a neighbor from Winchester came with a wagon to pick up liquor, he "brought no money," and Sarah declined to give him anything. Neighbors they might be, but Sarah Nourse expected to be paid.⁵³

The journal that Colonel James Gordon of Lancaster County, Virginia, kept from 1758 to 1768 provides further evidence of men assuming the alcohol trade.



This drawing, from a manual advising women on how to stock a pantry, indicates some of the tasks women had to complete for the household and suggests why they did not resist men's claims to alcoholic beverage production. Hannah Woolley, *The Queene-Like Closet* (London, 1681), reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

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Like Francis Taylor, Gordon knew what his neighbors were concocting. “Robert Hening began to still whiskey,” Gordon recorded in April of 1758, “which I believe will answer very well.” In July, Gordon knew that Colonel Conway was selling brandy, and he traveled to Conway’s residence to purchase three gallons of it. Gordon himself focused on cider, reporting regularly that he was “very busy with our cider” and recording his desire to make five hundred gallons of cider in the fall of 1758. Like Taylor and Nourse, Gordon exchanged farming and brewing methods with his family and neighbors, for example, when he “went out with my brother to see his farm, which is very well managed.” Gordon also exchanged recipes and advice with neighbors: “Sent to [the] mill for meal to make brandy,” Gordon noted in his journal, “according to Mr. Criswell’s directions.”⁵⁴

Despite the shifts, even following the Revolution, cidering, distilling, and brewing in the Chesapeake was less advanced than in England. By the late 1780s, almost all London breweries employed steam engines, powerful pumping systems, and mechanical mashing rakes. By 1800, commercial alcoholic beverage producers in urban England no longer needed to hire men or horses to carry, rake, or grind grain because they had machines to do this for them. In contrast, most Chesapeake men either made alcoholic beverages by hand or oversaw their slaves making alcohol by hand. In the Chesapeake, as in the rest of the West, alcoholic beverage production was no longer women’s province.

Chesapeake women rarely resisted this change. In fact, women supported the transition to an exclusively male concept of alcohol production when they purchased the alcohol that men had produced. It is possible that early American women wanted to masculinize alcoholic beverage production as much as did anyone. Since women gained little by making alcohol in the early Chesapeake, they might have been just as happy to forget that making alcohol had once been women’s work.