

Flavorman and Distilled Spirits Epicenter awarded GLI's small biz of 2013

by [Steve Coomes](#)



David Dafoe, founder of Flavorman and Distilled Spirits Epicenter.

Whoever said making and refining booze is no respectable way to make a living never hung around with Dave Dafoe.

The combined work of his companies — chiefly [Flavorman](#) and its subsidiary, Distilled Spirits Epicenter— netted Flavorman the Greater Louisville Inc.'s 2013 Inc.credible Award for Small Business of the Year.

The award is given annually to companies with 10 to 100 employees and recognizes the achievements and contributions of small businesses in the region.

Flavorman was chosen from 119 nominees, recognition Dafoe credits to his staff and the surging popularity of bourbon.

"It was definitely a cool morale boost to win it," said Dafoe, who created Flavorman two decades ago, then opened up DSE last year. "The say the award is for me, but it's for everybody who works here.

"The judges saw all we're doing as a group , and that's been tremendous so far. We'll probably double last year's numbers this year, and we've added employees."

Judges sought find companies involved in the betterment of their communities, showed job growth and positive overall financial performance.

Since its opening, DSE has grown its staff to 34 from 26 and held multiple bourbon education classes and distilling courses.

Dafoe said those classes and courses led to near-term openings of [Riverhorse](#) and [Peerless Distilling](#) in Louisville. He also said some existing distillers who've taken DSE classes are considering moving their companies to Louisville to be closer to the bourbon boom.

"The timing for us has been good all around, and I think the judges recognized that," said Dafoe, whose company has also created and/or refined hundreds of non-alcoholic beverage recipes. "We want to keep creating and promoting this whole epicenter feel with bourbon, and if we keep bringing in vendors that serve that market and entice people to come here and open a micro-distillery, then we're doing that."

The company has also garnered national attention from two reality TV shows. "Bizarre Foods America," hosted by Andrew Zimmern, visited last year as part of its Louisville show. (On that episode, which aired in August, Zimmern tasted a non-alcoholic bourbon created in Flavorman's laboratory.)

But a recent visit from the production crew of "[Moonshiners](#)"—appropriate, no?—should generate a lot of interest.

Dafoe said show regulars Bill and Josh, the hard-luck hill jacks whose complex still blew a gasket at season's end this year, came to visit to—ostensibly—make their illegal whiskey less dangerously.

"The crew was here all day filming; it was a long one," said Dafoe. "Moonshiners", who "went legit" recently, has also visited DSE. "I'm not supposed to talk about what they did, so I won't, but I was told that the show will likely air in October or November."