Main Lesson: Prohibition

Day 6 – Resistance to Prohibition

Since alcohol was legal in neighbouring countries, distilleries and breweries in Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean flourished as their products were either consumed by visiting Americans or smuggled into the United States illegally. The [Detroit River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit_River), which forms part of the U.S. border with Canada, was notoriously difficult to control, especially [rum-running in Windsor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rum-running_in_Windsor), Canada. When the U.S. government complained to the British that American law was being undermined by officials in [Nassau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nassau,_Bahamas), [Bahamas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahamas), the head of the [British Colonial Office](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonial_Office) refused to intervene. [Winston Churchill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston_Churchill) believed that Prohibition was "an affront to the whole history of mankind".

Making alcohol at home was common among some families with wet sympathies during Prohibition. Stores sold grape concentrate with warning labels that listed the steps that should be avoided to prevent the juice from fermenting into wine. Some drugstores sold "medical wine" with around a 22% alcohol content. In order to justify the sale, the wine was given a medicinal taste. [Home-brewing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homebrewing) good hard liquor was easier than brewing good beer. Since selling privately-distilled alcohol was illegal and bypassed government taxation, law enforcement officers relentlessly pursued manufacturers. In response, people modified their cars and trucks by enhancing the engines and suspensions to make faster vehicles that, they assumed, would improve their chances of outrunning and escaping agents of the [Bureau of Prohibition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau_of_Prohibition).

Drinking establishments like bars and clubs were often run in secret by hiding them in back rooms of other businesses such as barber shops. Only people who could be trusted to keep the secret were told about the hidden liquor supplies. Despite the secrecy, law enforcement officers were often tipped off and subsequently raided these establishments; however, they were so profitable that they soon re-opened in a new location.

These attempts to bypass the ban on alcohol led to a number of expressions which are still part of the English language today, although some may sound a bit old-fashioned and others are not necessarily known by most people to stem from Prohibition times.

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| Bathtub Gin | A home-made liquor concocted from raw alcohol, water, essences and essential oils, often mixed in the bathtubs of people’s homes. |
| Blind Tiger / Blind Pig | A place where illicit alcohol is sold. There are several stories behind these terms, from the blinds being drawn to showing a blind animal for a fee and throwing in a free drink (wink wink). |
| Bootlegger | A person who smuggles illegal alcohol by putting flasks down the sides of his boots. |
| Booze Cruise | A boat ride far enough out to sea for drinking to be legal. |
| Moonshine | Illegally distilled alcohol. The word comes from the fact that illegal spirits were made under the light of the moon, with moonshiners working their stills at night to avoid detection by police. |
| Rumrunner | A person or ship engaged in bringing prohibited liquor ashore or across a border, specifically rum made from sugar cane in the Caribbean Islands and smuggled by ship into the U.S. |
| Speakeasy | A secret bar or club which can only be spoken about very softly to keep its existence secret. |
| Teetotaller | A person who abstains from the consumption of alcohol. The phrase is believed to have originated within the Prohibition era’s temperance societies, where members would add a “T” to their signatures to indicate total abstinence (T+total-ers). |



