PRESENTER: Dr. Sonat Birnecker Hart and Mr. Robert Birnecker
Koval Distillery Ravenswood, Illinois

TITLE: Micro-Distilleries in the United States

ABSTRACT:
While Prohibition decimated what was once a strong American tradition of artisan distilling, like the craft beer industry a few decades ago, small batch distilling is finally experiencing a revival. There are many reasons why the ‘craft distilling’ movement has a lot to offer the industry, not least because a large percentage of artisan spirits make use of traditional techniques that are not always part of big industry models. These differences as well as a variety of distilling approaches will be addressed to elucidate the process behind the making of distilled spirits.

BIOGRAPHICAL:
Dr. Sonat Birnecker Hart and Robert Birnecker are co-owners of Koval Distillery located in Ravenswood, a suburb of Chicago, IL. Robert, a native of Austria, has learned the art of distilling from his grandparents, who have been distilling beverages for over 40 years. Prior to opening Koval Distillery, he was the press secretary at the Austrian embassy in Washington, D.C., where he met Sonat, who was professor of Jewish studies at Baltimore Hebrew University. In 2008, together they founded Koval Distillery, a micro- or boutique-distillery, where they make numerous spirits, such as vodkas, liqueurs, brandies, and grappas. As the sole U.S. representative of Kothe Distilling Technologies, a German still manufacturer, they frequently give workshops and seminars for beginning distillers.

DATE • TIME • LOCATION:
September 14, 2010, 4:00 PM, 105 Agricultural Engineering Building