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Celebrating Tennessee's Female Makers & Shakers

From Global Icons To Small Town Superheroes, The State Is Filled With Powerful Women

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Devin Walden (Master Distiller at Big Machine Distillery) and Katisha "Tish" Mattison (Chief Mixologist at The Mossback Distilling Company). [High-res photos](#) courtesy Tennessee Tourism unless additionally noted in image title.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Feb. 21, 2025) – With International Women's Day on March 8 (and Women's History Month celebrated throughout the month), it's time to put the spotlight on Tennessee's incredible female makers & shakers. From global icons to small town superheroes, these women are innovating and inspiring on a daily basis.

A Country Music Legend — And Much More

We all know **Dolly Parton** for her musical talent and magnetic personality, and she is equally celebrated for her deep commitment to philanthropy. One of her most notable contributions is the [Imagination Library](#), a program she founded in 1995 to foster a love of reading among children. Inspired by her father's struggles with literacy, Dolly started the program in her home county and has since expanded it across five countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and Ireland. Through partnerships with local communities, the Imagination Library now distributes over 2 million books each month, free of charge, to children from birth to age five.

- **Good To Know:** Dolly recently teamed up with Tennessee Tourism to create the [Tennessee Playcation Kid's Guide](#). Available now at [DollyPlaycation.com](#), the 90-plus page guide sparks creativity and pure imagination, helping families map out their dream getaway.

Women In Whiskey

In the Tennessee whiskey world, a remarkable group of women are leading the charge and reshaping the industry with innovation, expertise, and passion.

- **Devin Walden**, the Master Distiller at [Big Machine Distillery](#), is pushing boundaries with her hyper-local approach to ingredients and a focus on premium small-batch whiskies, continuing to elevate the distillery's craft.
- At [The Mossback Distilling Company](#), **Katisha "Tish" Mattison** serves as Chief Mixologist, blending 15 years of international experience to create a cocktail program that draws crowds to Mossback's tasting house, The Battery, where her creativity has earned her a dedicated fanbase.
- **Dara Carson**, Community Manager for [Nelson's Green Brier Distillery](#), has revitalized the brand's legacy with her storytelling, reintroducing the historic family name to a new generation of whiskey lovers.
- **Fawn Weaver**, CEO and founder of [Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey](#), is not only an entrepreneur but also a bestselling author and speaker, while **Victoria Eady Butler**, the Master Distiller at Uncle Nearest, carries on her great-great-grandfather Nathan "Nearest" Green's distilling legacy. Together, they've made Uncle Nearest the best-selling African American-founded spirit brand of all time.

Nashville's Best Bestseller

Ann Patchett stands as one of Tennessee's most influential female figures, not just for her career as the best-selling author of such favorites as *Bel Canto* and *State of Wonder*, but also for her steadfast dedication to independent bookstores. As the owner of [Parnassus Books](#), a beloved independent bookstore in Nashville, Patchett has worked tirelessly to create a space where readers and writers alike can connect. Founded in 2011, Parnassus has become a cultural hub for book lovers in Nashville, stocking an impressive range of books, including a dedicated local author section. It isn't just a bookstore; it's a refuge, a venue for literary events and a part of the city's vibrant cultural fabric.

Creative Community-Minded Businesswomen

These Tennesseans are not just entrepreneurs; they are community leaders shaping their towns with creativity, hospitality and passion.

- **Marion Ibsen**, the owner of [Creator's Corner Studio](#) in Ardmore, has cultivated a creative haven where individuals of all ages can come together for painting parties, craft classes and art lessons, all while enjoying the charm of the studio's vintage wares.

▪ **Concetta West**, the heart and soul behind [The Local Place](#) in Centerville, has created a cozy café that serves delicious homemade ice creams and waffle bread sandwiches — and provides an authentically welcoming atmosphere of Southern hospitality.

▪ **Rachel Hughes** is the owner of [Ye Peddler Gift Shoppe](#) in Columbia, a shop that blends Southern charm with curated home goods, clothing and gifts, while also offering expert tips on entertaining and gifting.

Chopped Chef

Based in Nashville, **Chef Maneet Chauhan** is widely regarded as one of Tennessee's most influential and inspirational women, celebrated as an award-winning author, prominent TV personality and James Beard Award of Excellence winner. Chef Chauhan is a permanent judge on the Emmy Award-nominated Food Network show *Chopped* and has made numerous appearances on renowned TV programs such as *Iron Chef* and *The View*. Her recently opened [Chauhan Masala & Ale](#) eatery is a truly unique dining experience in Nashville, blending Chauhan's Indian roots and affection for Southern cuisine into a menu that perfectly combines Indian fare with traditional Tennessee dishes.

ABOUT TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) is dedicated to driving economic growth and tourism in all 95 counties. TDTD's global marketing efforts increase visitation to Tennessee, which boosts tax revenue, creates jobs and attracts new investment across the state. Tennessee is a global destination of choice offering visitors world-class music, live entertainment, family-friendly experiences, charming communities, innovative and classic culinary creations, renowned scenic beauty and outdoor adventure—all centered at the crossroads of rich history and unrivaled hospitality. Vacations "sound perfect" in Tennessee. Visit [TNvacation.com](#) and follow @TNvacation on social media for travel inspiration.

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