



SPIRIT KNOWLEDGE

VODKA

Originated in Russia, the name vodka comes from the Russia word “vod”, meaning water. The addition of “ka” brings it meaning more closely to “little water”. Vodka is the world’s fastest selling spirit. There are many reasons for this, the first being that it is the spirit most easily approached by both the regular and non-regular drinker. Vodka’s distinct lack of flavor allows it to blend easily with any ingredients you desire. In the context of a mixed drink, vodka disappears seamlessly into the background, adding merely body and viscosity to the drink, laying the base for the smoothest of cocktails.

Two styles of Vodka: Straight Vodka - Vodka that is bottled without any flavor additives. Flavored Vodka - Vodka that is flavored through maceration or the addition of flavor extract.

Essentially Vodka is a neutral spirit gained from any sugar-bearing material. Potatoes, wheat, corn and grapes are the most common. It is distilled at or above 190 proof and reduced to somewhere between 110 and 80 proof. The spirit must be rectified to render a spirit without distinctive character, odor or taste. This is done by filtering with charcoal, quartz, or many other ground stones and diluted with pure water.

EXAMPLES – Smirnoff, Ketel One, Tito’s, Absolut, etc.

GIN

Until the late 1990's, gin seemed to all but have disappeared behind the more exciting and highly marketed vodkas, single malt scotches, and boutique 100% blue agave tequilas. Gin has a bad name because of its totally unique and intense flavor profile. Luckily, it has made a comeback and is embraced by classic cocktail drinkers, modern cocktail craftsmen, mixologists and bartenders alike.

Gin is a spirit made entirely from 100% neutral grain spirit and flavored with a juniper dominated collection of botanicals. Juniper is a bluish berry with unmistakable dry flavors of pine, menthol, and camphor. The collection of botanicals is what really makes the differences in gin flavor profiles. The most common being cardamom, coriander, angelica, citrus peel, bitter almond, cassia bark. Every gin producer has their own recipe.

EXAMPLES – New Amsterdam, Bombay Sapphire, Hendrick's, etc.

RUM

Rum is a spirit distilled from the fermented juice of the sugar cane plant, sugar cane syrup, molasses, or any other sugar cane by-product at less than 190 proof and bottled at or above 80 proof. With several styles and an amazing level of variety, just about every drinker can find rum that fits their palate.

Around 1650, the earliest forms of rum were first being distilled in the Caribbean Islands with molasses, a by-product of the quickly evolving sugar industry. Depending on the style, rum production begins in the sugarcane fields mainly in the Islands of the Caribbean basin. Once it reaches maturity, the sugarcane is harvested where, either the juice is pressed and directly fermented and distilled, or used to make sugar whose by-product, molasses, goes through the same process. Once the juice or molasses has been fermented, it is distilled in either pot or column stills and aged in various kinds of oak.

There are two distinctive styles of rum, Industrial Rum and Agricultural Rum.

EXAMPLES – Cruzan Aged White, Captain Morgan, Myers's Dark, etc.

TEQUILA

Tequila is a spirit achieved through distillation of the fermented sap of a plant known as the Blue Agave. The Blue Agave is one of 300 species of agave indigenous to the Mexican Countryside.

The agave plants were originally cooked in pits in the ground before fermentation which created Mezcal Brandy, known today as Mezcal. Eventually, it became known that the finest of these Mezcals came from the region in and around the town of Tequila, thus the Tequila designation of Mezcal was born. Today tequila is made by not cooking the agave plants in pits in the ground, but rather steam ovens before fermentation. This allows the starches to be converted to sugar, then the fermentation process allows the yeast to convert the sugar into alcohol. It then goes through the distillation process and is diluted and bottled or rested in wooden barrels to mellow and flavor this spirit.

There are two main styles of Tequila, Mixto Tequilas and 100% Blue Agave Tequila. Mixto Tequilas are made with at least 51% agave and usually 49% less expensive cane sugar, added usually in the form of syrup during the fermentation process. This is the most inexpensive way to produce tequila. 100% Blue Agave Tequila is distilled from a fermentation of 100% Blue Agave and, by law, must say it on the bottle. This style represents the finest expression of the spirit.

TEQUILA, cont'd

The three main designations of Tequila are Silver, Reposado and Añejo.

Silver, Plata or Blanco can age in oak for up to 60 days. It carries the truest flavor of the Blue Agave and is usually fresh, fruity, with a definite hint of pepper and spice.

Reposado tequilas have been aged from 2 to 12 months in oak or wooden casks. This is the most popular tequila among the Mexican people as this light aging process rounds out a few of the rough edges found in many unnamed tequilas.

Añejo tequilas are aged more than 1 year in oak casks, are exceptionally smooth, and best drunk on their own to appreciate their flavor and craftsmanship.

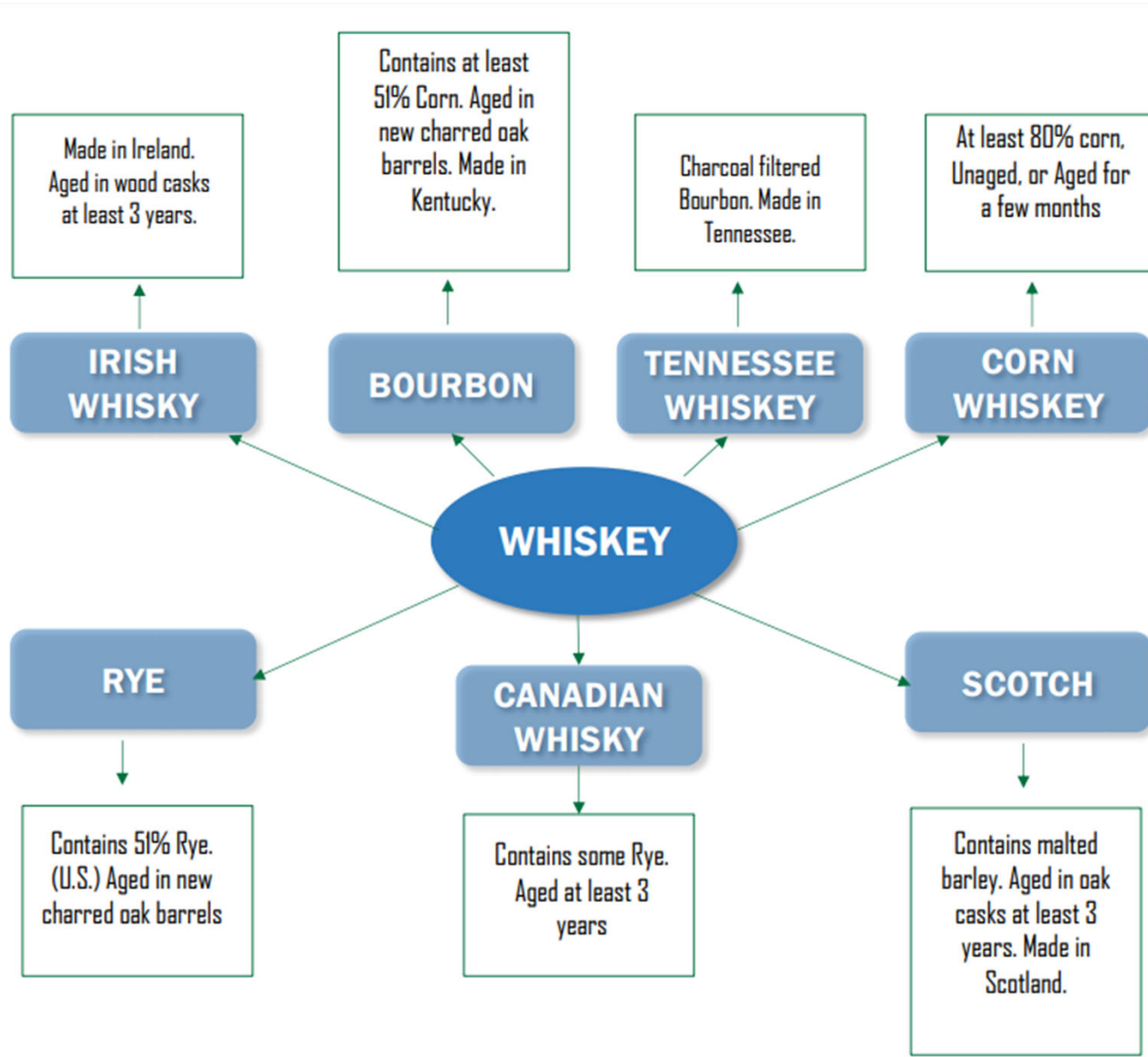
EXAMPLES – Camarena Silver, 1800 Reposado, Patron Añejo, etc.

WHISKEY & WHISKY

Whiskey is the fermentation and distillation of grain mash aged in oak. This aging smoothens out the raw spirit and adds its own unique flavor profile. The simplicity ends here, though with each whiskey having its own individual history and cultural affects, production method, and aging style.



TYPES OF WHISKEY



BOURBON

Bourbon is a spirit made in the United States with a mash bill of at least 51% corn, distilled at no more than 160 proof, barrel aged at no more than 125 proof, and aged a minimum of two years in new charred oak barrels. Further, all Bourbon whiskeys aged at least four years must contain an age statement on the bottle. Production begins with the harvest of corn, rye and other grains which are sent to the distillery, malted and or mashed, milled and added to warm water where enzymes convert the starches into soluble sugars. At this point, solid materials are separated, and the liquid is led into the fermentation tank where yeast is added, and the sugars are converted to alcohol. This fermented matter is then distilled in either pot or column stills, diluted, aged in charred oak barrels, and bottled.

SMALL BATCH

These are bourbon whiskeys bottled from blends of specially selected barrels.

SINGLE BARREL

These bourbons are aged bottled from a single cask, and represent the highest expression of the bourbon distiller's art.

EXAMPLES - Maker's Mark, Jim Beam, Woodford Reserve

RYE WHISKEY

Rye Whiskey is a spirit made from a mash bill of at least 51% rye grain, distilled to no more than 160 proof, barrel aged at less than 125 proof, and aged a minimum of two years in new charred oak barrels. Rye whiskey came before Bourbon whiskey. It was created by Scottish and Irish immigrants in America seeking a distillable replacement for the malted barley used to make whiskey in their homeland. Production begins with the harvest of rye and other grains which are sent to the distillery for mashing and/or malting, milling, and added to warm water where enzymes convert the starches to fermentable sugars. At this point, solid materials are separated, and the liquid is led into the fermentation tank where a proprietary yeast culture is added, and the sugars are converted to alcohol. This fermented matter is then distilled in either pot or column stills, left to rest in charred oak barrels, and bottled.

SMALL BATCH

Rye Whiskeys bottled from a blend of whiskies from specially selected barrels

SINGLE BATCH

Rye Whiskeys are aged and then bottled from a single cask and represent the highest expression of the whiskey distiller's art.

EXAMPLES - Bulleit Rye, Templeton Rye, High West Rye

TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Tennessee Whiskey must be made in Tennessee and like bourbon whiskey, contain a minimum of 51% corn and be distilled at less than 160 proof. What differentiates this whiskey, though, is a unique filtration solution known as the Lincoln County Process, where the whiskey is fed through 14 feet of sugar maple charcoal before bottling which adds its characteristic round body and silky finish. This creates a soft and mellow American whiskey that clearly differentiated itself from Rye and Bourbon.

Tennessee Whiskey is made in the same manner as bourbon with the addition of filtration through a bed of sugar maple charcoal.

SMALL BATCH

These Tennessee Whiskeys are bottled from specially selected barrels

SINGLE BATCH

These Tennessee whiskeys are aged and then bottled from a single cask and represent the highest expression of the whiskey distiller's art.

EXAMPLES - Jack Daniel's, Gentleman Jack

CANADIAN WHISKY

Canadian Whisky can be made anywhere in North America from a mash bill that contains at least 50% of one grain, distilled to under 190 proof, and aged 2 years in oak. Canadian Whiskies are generally distilled to a higher proof making them lighter, smoother, and less flavorful. Canadian Whisky rose in popularity during American prohibition to take the place of the popular rye whisky. While they generally contained rye, they were diluted with neutral grain spirit making it cheaper to produce and smoother on the palate. After prohibition, Canadian Whisky's popularity exploded as the American palate had become more comfortable with this softer style and were under the impression that Canadian Whisky and Rye Whiskey were the same thing. Canadian Whisky is made following the same production processes of rye and bourbon often taking advantage of modern column distillation process.

SMALL BATCH

These are whiskies bottled from specially selected oak barrels.

SINGLE BATCH

These whiskies are aged and then bottled from a single cask and represent the highest expression of the whisky distiller's art.

EXAMPLES - Crown Royal, Seagrams 7 Crown, Canadian Club

IRISH WHISKEY

Irish whiskey is a dry, light whiskey made in Ireland from malted and unmalted barley and grain aged for a minimum of 4 years in new or used oak barrels. Production begins with the selected barley being dampened and allowed to germinate making the starch available for conversion to sugar. Germination is then halted when the kernels are heated in closed kilns to terminate the process. Following this heating process, the dried germinated barley is then milled and mixed with warm water at which point enzymes convert the starches into fermentable sugars. This liquid is then strained and becomes what is known as the wort. Yeast is then added which results in the transformation of sugar to alcohol. The fermented matter is then distilled usually three times in pot stills and placed into barrels for aging.

SINGLE MALT

Irish whiskey made at a single distillery with 100% malted barley.

BLENDED

These are a blend of pot distilled barley malt and a lighter column distilled grain spirits.

PURE POT STILL

Irish whiskey made in large stills from malted and unmalted barley giving it a spicy smoothness unique to Irish whiskey alone.

EXAMPLES - Jameson, Bushmills, Proper 12, Redbreast

SCOTCH WHISKY

Scotch Whisky must be made in a Scottish distillery from malted barley and other grains, distilled to less than 190 proof, aged in oak for more than 3 years, free of flavor and color additives, and bottled at a minimum of 80 proof. Originally, Scotch Whisky was made strictly in Catholic Monasteries by monks who produced it for medicinal purposes. Production begins with the select barley being dampened and allowed to germinate which is done to open the hard cell walls of the grain, making the starch available for conversion to sugar. The germination process is then halted when the kernels are left to dry on screens over open kilns stoked by peat fire. This interaction between peat smoke and barley is what accounts for Scotch Whisky's completely unique and unmistakable flavor profile. Following the heating process, the dried germinated barley is then milled and mixed with warm water at which point the starches are converted to fermentable sugars. This liquid is then strained and becomes what is known as wash. Yeast is then added which results in the transformation of sugar to alcohol (wort). The fermented matter is then distilled usually twice, in pot stills and placed into barrels for aging.

BLENDED

These make up nearly 95% of all Scotch Whiskies in the world and are a blend of 100% barley malt and grain spirit. The highest quality blends will contain more malt whiskey than grain.

SINGLE MALT

These whiskies are made at a single distillery from 100% malted barley. The beauty of this spirit truly lies in where it is born, and its styles are defined by regional differences in climate and proximity to the ocean.

EXAMPLES - The Glenlivet, Macallan, Johnnie Walker