



EXPLORE
American Whiskey

BIBENDUM

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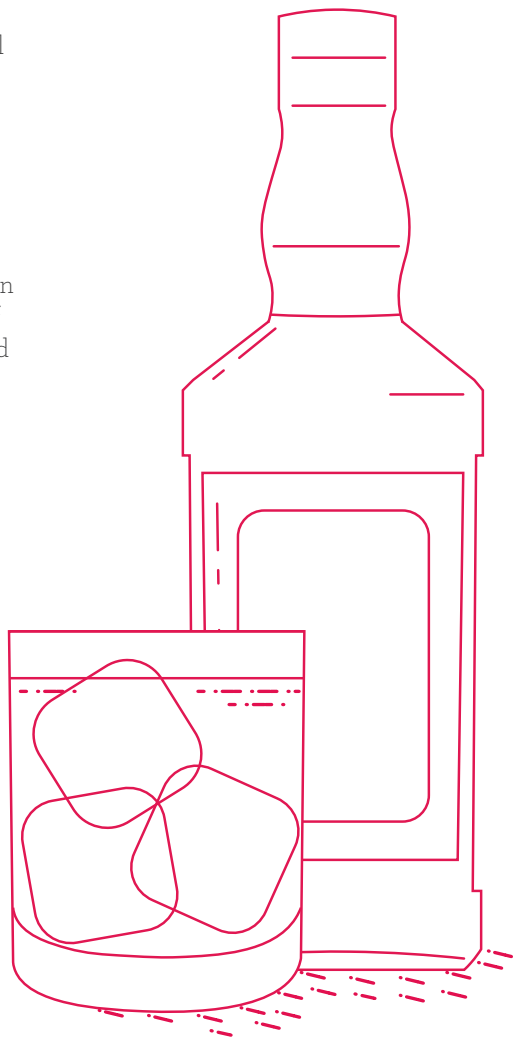
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INTRODUCTION TO *American Whiskey*

What is American whiskey?

Let me begin with stating, that we will only be looking at straight American whiskey. Blends will not be included in this guide. So what is straight American whiskey?

Very simply put, it's an alcoholic beverage, distilled from fermented grain mash and aged in oak. The grain used is usually a mix of some or all of the following: corn, rye, barley (malted and unmalted) and wheat.



Here's what US law has to say:

- The liquid can be distilled up to a maximum of 80% ABV
- It must be aged for at least two years in charred new oak barrels (with the exception of corn whiskey, which doesn't have to be aged)
- If the whiskey is aged for less than four years, an age statement on the bottle is mandatory
- The newly-distilled spirit cannot contain more than 62.5% ABV when it goes into the barrel
- The addition of colouring, flavouring, sugar or spirits other than straight whiskey is not permitted
- The minimum strength of the final product has to be at least 40% ABV
- If the whiskey is labelled "Bottled in Bond" or "BIB", it has to be aged for at least four years in a bonded warehouse, it has to be bottled at 50% ABV and it is the product of one distilling season only
- Straight Bourbon whiskey's mash bill has to contain at least 51% corn
- For straight rye whiskey it's a minimum of 51% rye
- Straight wheat whiskeys (though very rare) are made of at least 51% wheat
- Corn whiskey is based on a mash bill containing a minimum of 80% corn, it is either completely unaged or aged in either used or new, but uncharred, barrels
- Tennessee whiskey has to be made in Tennessee and comply to the same rules as Bourbon. It also undergoes a lengthy charcoal filtering process before ageing, called leaching or Lincoln county process

Easy, right? I know, I said we'd only be talking about straight Whiskey, but by now you must be immensely curious about what this un-straight whiskey might be. Okay, I'll tell you really briefly. If it only says "whiskey" on the label, the spirit can be distilled up to 95% ABV and the barrels have to be neither new, nor charred. If you come across a blended American whiskey, only 20% of the liquid has to be made up of straight whiskey. The rest could be whiskey, unaged grain spirit, neutral grain spirit, flavourings or colourings. You will rarely come across any blended whiskeys in the UK, but there are quite a few – especially newer - whiskeys around, that aren't straight whiskey, so having a closer look at the label is important if you want to determine whether the juice is worth the money.

Where does it come from?

The answer is in the name. If it is called Straight American Whiskey, it has to come from the US. However, only Bourbon and Tennessee Whiskey are exclusive to the United States (and only Tennessee to the state of Tennessee), whereas rye or corn whiskey are not protected and can come from anywhere in the world. Especially rye has a long history in Canada - although produced under different rules - and has become increasingly popular in Europe where it is now being produced in Germany, France and Scandinavia among others.

Ingredients

Corn

By far the most important ingredient in American whiskey production, it has the highest sugar content of all grains used, but also the sturdiest cell walls, which means after being milled, it has to be cooked at the highest temperature for the enzymes to be able to convert the starch into sugar.

Rye

Where corn gives soft curves, rye gives the spice, the bite and the edges. Usually used unmalted, rye also has to be cooked to free the sugars, but at a lower temperature, which means it is added to the mash after the corn has been boiled and the temperature has been lowered.

Wheat

Alternative to rye, some whiskies contain wheat as their second grain. Rarely, some straight wheat whiskeys can be found as well. Wheat is said to be softer and gentler in flavour than rye. A famous example for a Bourbon, that contains wheat instead of rye, would be Maker's Mark.

Barley

Even if barley malt usually constitutes only 5-15% of the final mash on average, it is absolutely essential for the fermentation. The enzymes that develop during germination of the grain are crucial to transforming the starch in the entire mash into sugars, which are then transformed into alcohol by the yeast. No malt means no enzymes, no enzymes means no sugar, no sugar means no fermentation. The barley malt is added to the mash last, after the temperature has been lowered some more.

Yeast

The yeasts used are hardworking cultured yeasts that transform the mash into distiller's beer with an abv of up to 11%. Unlike in Scotch or Irish whiskey production, the solids are not removed before the several days long fermentation (or even the distillation) and remain in the mash to give the brew additional flavour and depth.

Additives

None are permitted.

Water

Huge amounts of water are used in whiskey production and most distilleries are close to special fresh water sources. Water in Tennessee and Kentucky is naturally filtered through , which makes it high in calcium and low in iron salts, which makes it favourable to the yeast. Nevertheless, all distilleries will have their own filtering and processing facilities, regardless of the source of water.

How whiskey is made

Note: This refers to how straight American whiskey is made only.

We won't be dealing with Tennessee whiskey separately in every step, as almost all of its production steps are the same as Bourbon.

What do you need?

To make whiskey, you need grain (malted and/or unmalted), water and yeast. Typically, the grain used will be corn, rye or wheat and barley (usually malted). Although most whiskeys contain a mix of three grains, some examples can be found which are made with only two or even just one (in which case a part has to be malted). Modern day distilleries don't have their own malting facilities anymore, they buy the grain already malted. They do however have their own mills, which are usually attached to the mash tub. Every grain has its own mills, which is why most traditional distilleries will have three different mills. This is the reason why no one makes four-grain whiskies - the facilities just aren't built for it.

Mashing and fermenting

After milling, the grains are cooked to break down the cell walls and allow the enzymes in the malt to convert starch to sugar. It starts with the corn, which has to be cooked at the highest temperature. Then the mash is cooled before adding first rye (or wheat) and then the barley malt. After that, yeast and backset are put into the mix and the mash gets pumped into the fermenter. Fermentation usually takes between three to seven days, depending on the strand of yeast and the temperature of the fermenter. Unlike the wort used in Scotch production, the mash that goes into the fermenter still has all its solids in order to extract more flavour and structure during fermentation. The same goes for the resulting 'beer', that goes from the fermenter into the beer still. At that point, the liquid has an ABV of up to 11%.

Distillation

The beer still is a single column still, where the first of two distillations takes place. The result is a liquid called 'low wines' which has a strength of 55-60% ABV. The low wines then get redistilled in a copper pot still called the doubler. Some use a variation called the thumper, which makes thumping noises due to being heated by steam. The more common doubler uses direct heat. After the second distillation, we get a clear spirit, called white dog or green whiskey, at usually 65-75% ABV.

Before the new make goes into the brand new, charred oak barrel, it has to be diluted to no more than 62.5% ABV.

But I'm sure I've seen higher alcohol whiskeys...

You've probably come across some older Bourbons or ryes with a much higher ABV than 62.5%, usually single barrel or true small-batch bottlings. But, how does this happen? The answer lies in the size of water and alcohol molecules, the position of a barrel in the rickhouse and the Kentucky climate. Water molecules are smaller than alcohol molecules, which means they can penetrate the wood more easily. In both directions. Kentucky summers tend to be hot and dry, with the top rows in a rickhouse even more so. So a barrel stacked high under the roof of a baking warehouse will lose water, while the alcohol stays inside. Alcohol and flavour are concentrated, which leads to rapidly-aged, intense, complex and very boozy whiskeys.

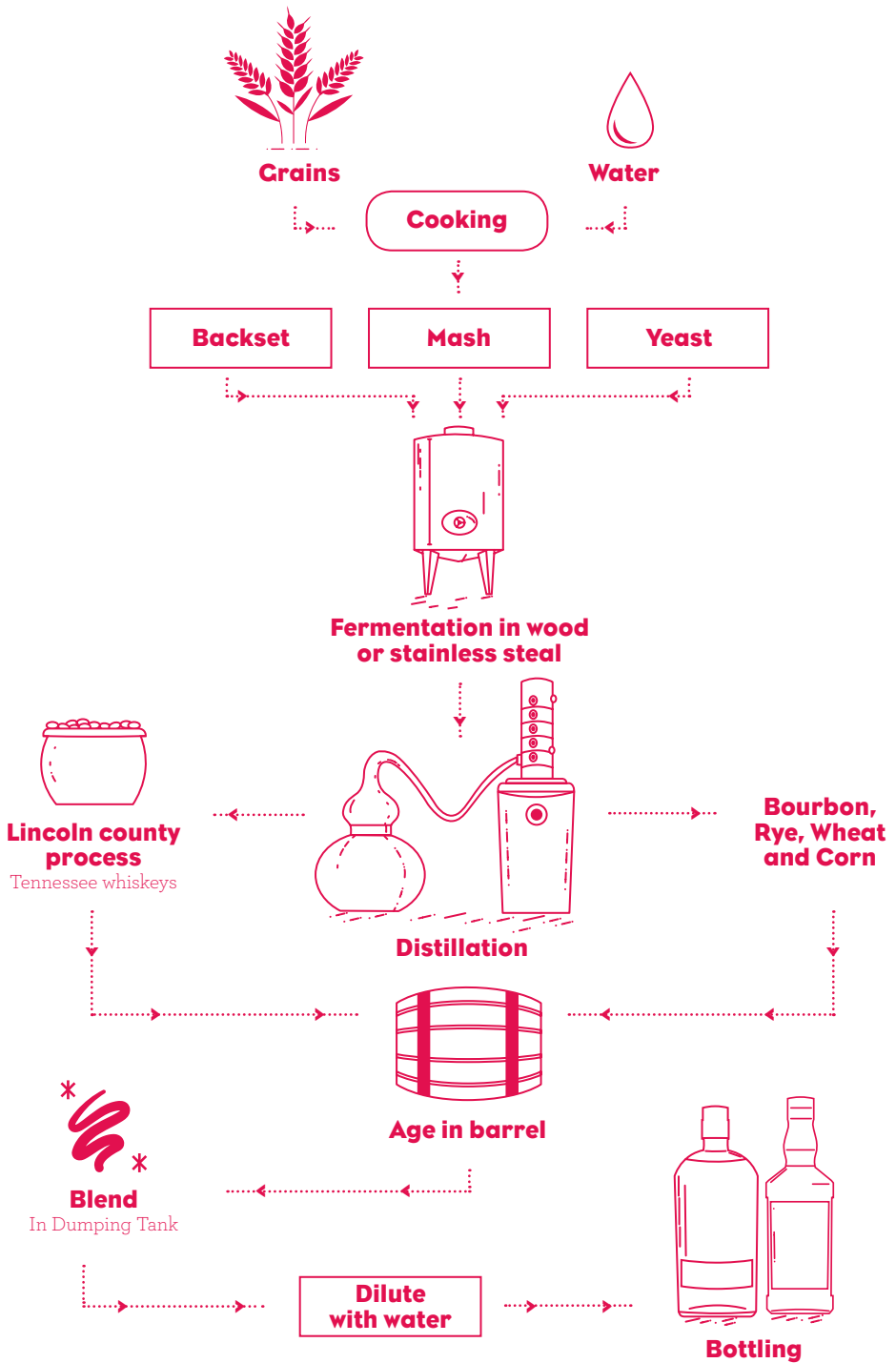
Contrary to that, at the bottom of the rickhouse it will be much cooler and more humid (think basement) than outside. Water can therefore creep into the barrels and make for slower ageing and a lower ABV. Usually these things even each other out since almost all whiskeys are blends of different barrels. However some producers choose to bottle some of these extremely flavourful barrels as single barrel or small-batch whiskeys. And this when you might come across those boozy bottles.

And what about Tennessee whiskey?

In the case of Tennessee whiskey, one more step has to be taken prior to ageing: charcoal mellowing. Also known as Lincoln county process or leaching, this is when the new make is filtered through (or steeped into) a 3-4 metre thick layer of maple charcoal. This can take days or even weeks. The process is said to remove any impurities from the spirit and soften the whiskey.

Ageing requirements

By law, the minimum ageing period is two years (three if the whiskey is made in California). An age statement is only required if the whiskey stays in barrel for less than four years. Most big brands will exceed those requirements and allow their product to age for six to eight years before it gets diluted to the desired strength (no less than 40% ABV) and is bottled.



The history of American whiskey

The history of American whiskey begins with rye whiskey (Bourbon's older brother, so to speak) in the mid-eighteenth century...

It all started in Pennsylvania

Back then, Pennsylvania was dominated by Irish, Scottish, but also German settlers (the founder of Jim Beam was the German Johann Jakob Böhm). While the Irish and Scottish brought their knowledge of whisk(e)y production, the Germans were experts in growing and processing rye. Barley malt, the main ingredient in Scotch and Irish whisk(e)y, was rare and costly to produce, so people began to mix it with unmalted barley and also rye.

People quickly realized that rye gave the whiskey a spicy character. This rye spirit was still unaged at this point, and was drunk on site more or less immediately after distillation. The drink was so popular that it was soon shipped to the most remote corners of the country, as well as further afield, to Europe and Asia. The spirit spent weeks and months (or more) in barrels before it reached its destination and was finally consumed, by which time it was not only darker in colour but also much smoother and more palatable. It didn't take long for people to put two and two together... and so barrel ageing was born.

The birth of Bourbon

Now we have rye whiskey in Pennsylvania. But how did it get to Kentucky? And how did corn get involved?

When the American border moved west to the Allegheny Mountains in the late-eighteenth century, settlers came upon a new grain: the native corn or maize.

It didn't take long for them to start mixing it into their mash bills and by the time Bourbon County was established in 1785, there were already dozens, if not hundreds of small farmer-distillers that made corn whiskey. When Bourbon County was divided into several smaller counties, the region around today's Kentucky continued to be known as 'Old Bourbon', and the corn whiskey from that region became widely known as 'Old Bourbon Whiskey', even though it was neither old nor from what then remained as Bourbon County! In order to distinguish their product from rye whiskey, which was still the predominant spirit sold in the country, people started to call all corn-based whiskies 'Bourbon'.

The dark days of prohibition

Now that we know how rye and Bourbon came to be, it's time to look at the more recent history of American whiskey and with that, its darkest hour. Although that 'hour' officially lasted 13 years, beginning way before 16 January 1920. I am talking about 'the noble experiment', of course, otherwise referred to as prohibition, which had its roots in the temperance movement as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, when alcohol was cheap, plentiful and available to anyone at any time. With saloons and distillers completely ignoring the movement and refusing all calls for moderation and regulations, more and more counties outlawed the sale of alcohol and forcefully closed saloons. By 1910, already half of the country was dry. Ten years later, the Anti-Saloon-League's lobbying succeeded and the whole country went dry.

With the prohibition of the production, sale and transport of alcohol came the rise of illicit stills, bathtub gin, bootleggers and speakeasies, and as a result the rise of organized crime - the mafia - in America.

It became increasingly clear that prohibition did not prevent people from drinking, but it did divert important income for the country into the pockets of criminals. It also promoted the drug trade, since people who weren't bold enough to seek out speakeasies, went to 'tea houses' instead, to smoke marihuana, which ironically was still legal until 1937.

The stock market crash of 1929 and the subsequent economic crisis made it impossible for the state to continue without an industry that provided crisis-proof jobs and flooded the government's pockets with taxpayer money. Thus, prohibition ended on 5 December 1933.

Rebuilding the American whiskey industry

By that time, the damage done was immense. Only six distilleries managed to survive on licenses for medical alcohol, whereas thousands had been closed down and dismantled. But it wasn't only the production side that had been altered. The American palate had grown accustomed to the smuggled Canadian whisky and Scotch, both lighter, blended whiskies. The whiskey produced during prohibition had been poorly-made moonshine, which was not only barely palatable, but could also blind or kill people. It took decades for the American whiskey industry to not only rebuild itself, but regain the confidence of whiskey drinkers at home and abroad.

The fact that the newly-rebuilt distilleries didn't have any aged whiskeys and needed cash, didn't help, as it led to the market being dominated by mass-produced blends instead of well-crafted, properly-aged, flavourful whiskey. During prohibition, a lot of bartenders fled to Cuba, Canada and Europe, where they discovered local spirits.

They returned with new ideas, promoting rum, vermouth, amari, brandy, international whiskeys, gin and vodka. American whiskey seemed dead and buried.

The renaissance of rye

The biggest loser of the prohibition was probably rye whiskey. Since rye was more expensive and harder to procure, it almost completely disappeared from the mash bills of any remaining whiskey distillation during the alcohol ban. And since rye whiskey had always been spicier and edgier than Bourbon, it was even more out of fashion. Sales were dire and only a few distilleries continued to make rye whiskey at all. It wasn't until the 1990s that rye whiskey was exported to Europe again. It was the resurrection of the classic cocktail and the rediscovery of old, pre-prohibition recipes at the end of the last century that led to a resurgence of American whiskey (and rye in particular) all over the world, all of which would never have been possible without the internet and its nerdy cocktail bloggers...

Want to know more?

This is just a tiny snippet of the exhilarating tale of American whiskey. If you want to learn more, read Gary Regan's "The Book of Bourbon" and Charles K. Cowderly's "Bourbon, Straight".

Christina's favourite American whiskey drinks

I hate it when brands tell you how to best serve their product, usually giving you specs that make for horrible drinks that use lots of their booze. So instead I would like to introduce you to some very dear friends of mine, the way I make them, hoping you will love them as much as I do and make them your own – the way you see fit.

Bensonhurst

New York in the early 2000s was the cradle of a bunch of Brooklyn variations like the Red Hook, the Greenpoint and the Bensonhurst, all of which are absolutely delicious. The reason why it is the Bensonhurst that made this list, is that it has my all-time favourite fairy dust, the bitter that makes everything better, Cynar, in it! The man to thank for this piece of art is Chad Solomon, who created it at The Pegu Club in 2006.

Ingredients

50ml	Straight rye whiskey (or high rye bourbon), Bottled in Bond
25ml	Noilly Prat
5ml	Cynar
5ml	Maraschino

Serve

Up with a cherry

Darkness over Frisco

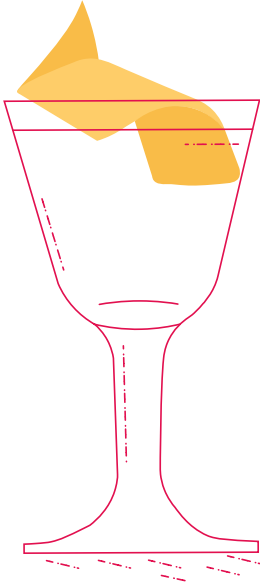
You know those drinks, that you whip up for a regular during service, that turn out to be really, really good? The ones that usually don't get a name and never end up on the menu because they're just too simple? This is one of them. Made on a busy night at Happiness Forgets about four years ago, this drink has never been written down by me but has been served to a bunch of whiskey lovers over the last four years in one form or another. It's clearly a riff on a Frisco (which can be found in David Embury's 'The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks'), with the sherry balancing the sweetness of the Benedictine.

Ingredients

50ml	Straight rye whiskey (or high rye bourbon)
10ml	D.O.M. Benedictine
10ml	Bone dry amontillado sherry
2 dashes	Angostura Bitters

Serve

On the rocks with a lemon twist



Scofflaw

This long forgotten oldie was first mentioned in the Chicago Tribune in 1924 and three years later appeared in Harry McElhone's 'Barflies and Cocktails' (a genius little book that also includes the first mention of the Boulevardier, by the way). It was created in 1924 in Harry's New York Bar in Paris by a guy referred to as 'Jock'. The original recipe demands equal parts of rye and vermouth, but I prefer it to be a bit feistier. Obviously, what makes or breaks the drink is the grenadine you use. I would always choose homemade, which tends to be tarter than commercial ones, which is why I go for equal parts lemon and grenadine.

Ingredients

45ml	Straight rye whiskey (or high rye bourbon), bottled in bond
20ml	Dry vermouth
15ml	Fresh lemon juice
15ml	Grenadine
1 dash	Orange bitters

Serve

Up with a lemon twist

Seelbach

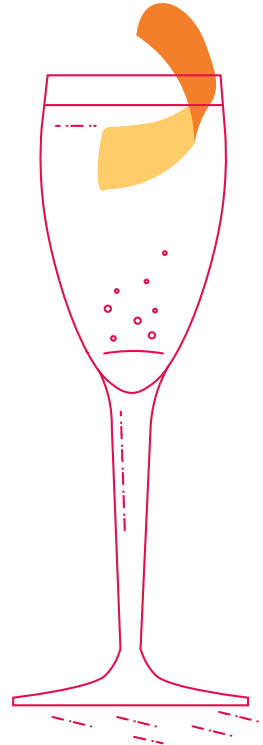
This fizzy number has had some bad press in recent years. Having been included in numerous books, such as Ted Haigh's "Vintage Spirits and Forgotten Cocktails" and Gaz Regan's "New Classic Cocktails" as a rediscovered pre-prohibition classic, it turned out the drink was actually created in 1995 at the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville by Adam Seger. Seger wanted to create some buzz around his creation so he invented a story about finding an old recipe of the hotel's alleged signature cocktail from 1912. We think duping Ted Haigh and Gaz Regan makes for an even better story and the drink is bloody tasty!

Ingredients

40ml	Bourbon
10ml	Triple sec
7 dashes	Angostura Bitters
7 dashes	Peychaus Bitters
Top up with Champagne	

Serve

In a Champagne glass with an orange twist



Glossary

Age statement

Age statement on American whiskey bottles always refers to the youngest component in the blend. They are legally required for whiskeys aged for less than four years, but not for older ones.

Backset

Also called slop, stillage, spent beer or spent mash, it's what remains at the bottom of the beer still at the end of distillation after virtually all of the alcohol has been extracted from it. Those remains are low in PH, which is why they are used in the sour mash process.

Barrel

The traditional barrel size is 53 gallons (200 litres). By law, they have to be made from white American oak, have to be charred on the inside and have to be brand new. Ex-Bourbon barrels are then usually sold on to Scotch, Irish whiskey or rum producers to age their spirits.

Barrel proof

Or barrel strength, equivalent to the Scottish cask strength, describes a whiskey that has not been diluted after ageing. Barrel proof whiskey can be as boozy as 70% ABV or more if they have spent a long enough time in the barrel.

Beer

The thick liquid resulting from fermentation, still containing the cooked, milled grains and up to 11% ABV. Also known as the fermented mash.

Beer still

Large column still in which the beer is distilled to 'low wines', which contain around 55-60% ABV.

Blending

Although not all whiskeys are blended whiskeys, pretty much all whiskeys undergo blending after ageing. Since barrels tend to age very differently, depending on their position in the rickhouse, the resulting liquid can differ immensely in ABV, flavour, concentration and oak influence. So in order to produce a consistent product, almost every whiskey is the result of a blend of 20-200 barrels, depending on the size of production. The exceptions are single barrel bottlings.

Bottled in bond

In order to protect customers from the watered down, flavoured, coloured and potentially dangerous booze that was sold across the country as whiskey in the nineteenth century, the bottled-in-bond act was introduced in 1897. Still today, a label carrying those words guarantees that the liquid inside the bottle comes from one distillery, has all been distilled in the same year, aged in a government-supervised warehouse for at least four years and was bottled under government supervision at exactly 100 proof or 50% ABV.

Doubler

Basically a small, less pretty copper pot still, in which the second distillation takes place. It transforms the low wines (55-60% ABV) into new make (usually 65-75% ABV, legally up to 80%)

Green whiskey

Also called new make or white dog is technically not yet whiskey. This clear spirit is what is left of the twice-distilled liquid after heads and tails have been discarded.

Mash

Thick liquid made up of milled and boiled grains, water, yeast and almost always backset, which makes up 20-25% of the mix.

Mash bill

The recipe of the grain mix used for the mash. A typical Bourbon mash bill might be 75% corn, 15% rye and 10% malted barley.

Monogahela

The Monogahela river runs from Pennsylvania to West Virginia and its valley was home to the first broadly recognised American whiskey style back in the late-eighteenth century. It was a spicy whiskey, made from only rye and malted barley which didn't use any sour mash.

Proof

Traditional measure of strength of alcohol. Unlike UK proof, American proof is exactly double the European % alcohol by volume.

Rackhouse

Also known as rickhouse. A warehouse where American whiskey is stored. Most rackhouses have several stories and lack climate control, which means that the temperature differs greatly between the top rick and the barrels at the bottom. It also varies a lot from the outside to the middle of the warehouse. When Whiskey was still sold in barrels to saloons and wholesalers, it was common practice to rotate barrels within the warehouse to assure a somewhat consistent quality. This labour-intensive practice is no longer used since almost all barrels are now dumped into a big tank and blended to get to the desired end product.

Single barrel

Single barrel whiskeys are the exception to the above rule. Sometimes a distiller comes across a barrel of exceptional quality and decides to bottle the liquid on its own without blending it with other barrels. Very often, single barrel whiskeys are also bottled at barrel strength.

Small batch

In theory, small-batch whiskeys are in between single barrel and big volume standard bottlings, which are the result of up to 200 barrels per batch. The idea is to have a smaller number of hand-selected barrels that are then blended to a small batch of relatively rare and high quality whiskey. The first big company, who widely used the term, was Jim Beam in the 1990s with the introduction of Basil Hayden, Knob Creek, Booker's and Baker's. Unfortunately, the term is not actually legally tied to production size and free to be used by anyone.

Sour mash

The sour mash process, although still mentioned on some labels, is the standard way of producing American whiskey. Up to 25% of backset from the last distillation is added to the mash in order to stabilise the fermentation, protect the mash against unwanted bacteria and give the final spirit consistency from batch to batch.

Thumper

Sometimes used instead of a doubler, a thumper is heated with steam (as opposed to direct heat in case of the doubler) which causes a thumping sound, that is the source of its name. It works similarly to a doubler in carrying out the second fermentation, resulting in a new make of similar strength and quality.



PRODUCERS & products



Producer and product information provided by suppliers.

BROWN-FORMAN

BASED

Louisville, Kentucky

ESTABLISHED

1870

The Brown-Forman Corporation is one of the largest American-owned companies in the spirits and wine business. The company was founded in 1870 by George Garvin Brown, a young pharmaceuticals salesman in Louisville, who had the then-novel idea of selling top-grade whiskey in sealed glass bottles. This was an innovative approach at a time when whiskey was commonly sold by the barrel. What was initially named 'J.T.S. Brown and Bro.' with his half-brother, later became 'Brown-Forman' when he entered in a partnership with George Forman, his accountant and friend.

Today, the Brown-Forman Board of Directors includes fifth-generation Brown family members and their UK-distributed portfolio contains Jack Daniel's (family of brands), Woodford Reserve, Slane, Finlandia and Chambord.

JACK DANIEL'S OLD NO.7

Sweet, with a light body and mouth-feel. Dutch chocolate and toasty notes combine with orange, perfumed wood and cinnamon.

Distillation method and ageing:

After fermentation, the liquid is pumped into column stills that are steamed from the bottom. The stills are made of copper, which is very important because copper works as a catalyst for making the spirit smoother. The spirit enters a doubler, also made of copper, to see a kind of a second distillation. Afterwards it is cooled down through the condensers and ready for the next step.

The new spirit, called white whiskey, is now put into big tanks that are filled with charcoal. This happens drop by drop and the white whiskey runs through the charcoal very slowly. While passing through the 10 feet of grained and compressed charcoal the spirit is filtered and gets even smoother.



ABV: 40%

Mash bill: 80% corn, 8% rye and 12% malted barley

Size: 70cl

WOODFORD RESERVE

Rich, chewy, rounded and smooth, with complex citrus, cinnamon and cocoa flavours. Toffee, caramel, chocolate and spicy notes abound.

Distillation method and ageing:

Woodford Reserve ferments for a full six days, one of the longest fermentations in the industry. After this, it is distilled three times in pot stills. Only the third still is put to barrel to become the Woodford Reserve. The spirit is then mixed with filtered water from Glenn's Creek and brought down to 110 proof for barrelling. To be considered a bourbon, a whiskey must be barrelled no higher than 125 proof. The barrels are toasted before they are charred.

The whiskey is aged in brick stone rack houses that date back to 1870, through a process called cycling, which involves heating and cooling the warehouse to manage maturation. Woodford is aged for an average of seven years before it's blended and bottled.



ABV: 43.2%

Mash bill: 72% corn, 18% rye and 10% malted barley

Size: 70cl

WOODFORD RYE

Clove, rye, mint, molasses, sorghum and honey mingle together with hints of apple and malt.

Distillation method and ageing:

Woodford Rye ferments for a full six days, one of the longest fermentations in the industry. After this, it is distilled three times in pot stills. The spirit is then mixed with filtered water from Glenn's Creek and brought down to 110 proof for barrelling. To be considered a bourbon, a whiskey must be barrelled no higher than 125 proof. The barrels are toasted before they are charred.

The whiskey is aged in brick stone rack houses that date back to 1870, through a process called cycling, which involves heating and cooling the warehouse to manage maturation. Woodford is aged for an average of seven years before it's blended and bottled.



ABV: 45.2%

Mash bill: 53% rye, 33% corn and 14% malted barley

Size: 70cl

BULLEIT

BASED

Louisville, Kentucky

ESTABLISHED

1987

Augustus Bulleit was a tavern keeper in 1830s Louisville, Kentucky, dedicated to a single goal: the creation of a bourbon unique in flavour. After experimenting with countless varieties, he finally came upon a bourbon with the character he had long sought for. Tom Bulleit was inspired by this recipe, created by his great-great grandfather, Augustus Bulleit, more than 175 years earlier. Crafted using pure limestone-filtered water and charred American oak barrels for all of the colour and some of the flavour, Bulleit is especially high in rye content, giving it a bold, spicy character with a distinctively smooth, clean finish.

BOURBON

Medium amber in colour, with a gentle spiciness and sweet oak aromas. The mid-palate is smooth, with tones of maple, oak and nutmeg. The finish is long, dry and satiny, with a light toffee flavour.

Distillation method and ageing:

Crafted using pure limestone-filtered water and charred American oak barrels.



ABV: 45%

Mash bill: 68% corn, 28% rye and 4% malted barley

Size: 70cl

RYE

Russet in colour, with rich oaky aromas. The taste is exceptionally smooth, with hints of vanilla, honey and spice. The finish is crisp and clean, with long, lingering flavours.

Distillation method and ageing:

Crafted using pure limestone-filtered water and charred American oak barrels.



ABV: 45%

Mash bill: 95% rye and 5% malted barley

Size: 70cl

JIM BEAM

BASED

Clermont, Kentucky, USA

ESTABLISHED

1933

In 1795 a German immigrant farmer named Jacob Beam produced the first barrel of whiskey in Kentucky that would become Jim Beam; an enduring family business now overseen by seventh generation Beam master distiller, Fred Noe. Using water filtered naturally through local limestone, Hammer mills grind the mix of corn, rye and barley malt, combined with 'set back' portions of a previous batch. A 65 foot column still heats the mash and the resulting wine is moved to new, alligator-charred American white oak barrels to be stored in Jim Beam's famous rack houses to age for at least four years.

WHITE LABEL

Sweet on the nose with notes of vanilla, corn and cut hay, like the bluegrass Kentucky fields. A rounded mouthfeel with a hint of peppery spice leads to a toasty, oaky finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Twice distilled and aged for four years in new alligator charred American oak barrels.



ABV: 40%

Mash bill: A closely guarded secret using corn, rye and barley malt

Size: 70cl

DOUBLE OAK

Full bodied vanilla, old peppery oak, chocolate and light spice. A rich and smooth bourbon with touches of fruity malt and a long, toasty finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Twice distilled and aged for four years in two stages, using two fresh-charred barrels.



ABV: 43%

Mash bill: A closely guarded secret using corn, rye and barley malt.

Size: 70cl

KNOB CREEK

Unflinching balance of deep, old-style flavour with a natural oak sweetness. Rich, full-bodied and fruity with aromas of toasted nuts, grains and oak.

Distillation method and ageing:

Bottled at 100 proof and aged for nine years in maximum-charred barrels.



ABV: 50%

Mash bill: 73% corn, 13% rye and 10% barley

Size: 70cl

MAKER'S MARK

BASED

Loretto, Kentucky, USA

ESTABLISHED

1933

Maker's Mark began with one family's quest to create a bourbon they enjoyed drinking and sharing with friends. Bill Samuels Sr. began with his family's trusted 170-year-old recipe, but set the only copy on fire: "Give me a bourbon that won't blow my ears off!" Bill experimented with his own mash bill and baked loaves of bread with grain combinations, instead of distilling them to save ageing time. This led him to swap out the traditional rye grain for soft, red winter wheat, giving the delicate sweetness Maker's is known for today. His wife Margie was similarly revolutionary; the bottle, name and iconic red wax topper are her doing. She also wanted distillery visitors to feel at home and she ensured the Loretto distillery received the same attention to detail as the whiskey. Today, third generation Rob Samuels presides over the industry's most environmentally-conscious distillery.

KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON

Woody oak, caramel, vanilla and wheat prevail in the nose. A taste of sweet and balanced caramel, vanilla and fruity essences with a pleasantly smooth and subtle finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Twice distilled and aged to taste, not time.



ABV: 45%

Mash bill: 70% corn, 16% red winter wheat and 14% malted barley

Size: 70cl

BUFFALO TRACE DISTILLERY

BASED

Kentucky, USA

ESTABLISHED

1999

In tribute to the mighty buffalo that migrated across the Kentucky River and the rugged, independent spirit of the pioneers who followed them westward, Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey was created and has been made the same way for more than 200 years. Buffalo Trace is the flagship bourbon from the Buffalo Trace Distillery. It's hand crafted, using the finest Kentucky and Indiana corn, selected rye and superior malted barley. The liquid is gently aged in new American Oak Barrels for eight years to create a perfectly balanced flavour of sweet oak and spice, leaving a long, smooth finish.

KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON

This deep amber whiskey has a complex aroma of vanilla, mint and molasses. Pleasantly sweet to the taste with notes of brown sugar and spice that give way to oak, toffee, dark fruit and anise. This whiskey finishes long and smooth with serious depth.

Distillation method and ageing:

Column and pot still distillation and aged in the middle floors of the warehouses to hit a balance between grain and wood notes.



ABV: 40%

Mash bill: Low rye
mash bill

Size: 70cl

EVAN WILLIAMS

BASED

Kentucky, USA

ESTABLISHED

1783

As America's second-largest selling Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Evan Williams honours the man recognised as Kentucky's First Distiller, who set up his stills in 1783 on the banks of the Ohio River in Louisville.

EXTRA AGE

Lots of oak, vanilla and a touch of marmalade on the nose. It has a crisp entry on the palate with spicy oak and a light grainy touch. Develops well with more oak combining with a little mint and apple. Finishing with a rich, slightly rustic note and a kick from the spirit.

Distillation method and ageing:

Aged 4.5 to 5 years



ABV: 43%

Mash bill: 78% corn, 10% rye and 12% barley

Size: 70cl

BOTTLED-IN-BOND

With a bright gold colour, it has caramel and hints of vanilla, oak and barley on the nose. There is citrus, vanilla and black pepper on the palate, with a warm, long and dry finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Aged under government supervision and meeting the exact requirements for a Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon. Aged 4.5 to 5 years



ABV: 50%

Mash bill: 78% corn, 10% rye, 12% barley

Size: 70cl

RITTENHOUSE RYE

Rittenhouse Straight Rye Whiskey has a storied past with a heritage that commemorates Philadelphia's famous Rittenhouse Square. Bottled-in-Bond, today's Rittenhouse carries the distinct, spicy flavour that is long associated with the brand. It has a sweet, spicy taste and distinctive character.

Distillation method and ageing:

The distillation process is similar to Bourbon, but the mash must be 51% rye. It is four years old.



ABV: 50%

Mash bill: 51% rye

Size: 70cl

ELIJAH CRAIG SMALL BATCH

The signature Bourbon bearing the name of Rev. Elijah Craig, a Bourbon pioneer who is credited with being the first distiller to age his whiskey in charred oak barrels. Long before the term 'small batch' even existed, Elijah Craig's master distillers were hand-selecting just the right number of barrels. This expertise and attention to detail gives this Bourbon the right balance of rich flavour and full body. Each small batch carries a signature warm spice and subtle smoke flavour.

Distillation method and ageing:
Aged in charred oak barrels.



ABV: 47%

Mash bill: 78% corn,
10% rye and 12% barley

Size: 70cl

TINCUP

BASED

Denver, USA

ESTABLISHED

1972

Tincup was an old mining town on the western side of the Rockies, named after the old cups the miners would drink from. The name Tincup Whiskey and the cap on the bottle are both nods to this piece of Colorado history. Distilling since 1972, Tincup is in honour of Colorado's first whiskey drinkers and the tin cups they drank from. Tincup is a blend of two great American whiskeys, each aged in #3 charred oak barrels. 'High rye' bourbon, distilled and aged in Indiana, and blended with a small amount of Colorado single malt whiskey. These whiskeys are then cut with Rocky Mountain water.

WHISKEY

Prominent spice and fruit on the nose of apple, cinnamon, clove and toasted, spiced brioche. This combines with rich toffee and caramel, ginger nut biscuits and sweet oatcakes with honey. The palate is quite light with sweet grain, cinnamon spice and apple notes. Toffee follows, with spicy rye and toasted fruit loaf. It has notes of cinnamon toast, tannic raisins and soft caramel sweetness on the finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Aged in medium and heavily charred virgin white American oak barrels for four to five years.



ABV: 42%

Mash bill: 32% rye, 64% corn and 4% malt

Size: 70cl

HIRAM WALKER

BASED

Canada

ESTABLISHED

1998

Lot 40 was first distilled in 1998 by Michael Booth, since he retired, in order to create a high quality, premium Canadian Whisky. It was Michael's interpretation of what a 100% rye whisky was back in the early 1800's. Lot 40 is named after a plot of land occupied by one of Booth's ancestors.

LOT 40

Warmed honey, vanilla and ripe pears on the nose combine with heavy rye spices and walnuts on the palate. It has a warm finish of English toffee and dark fruit.

Distillation method and ageing:

Copper column distilled, then copper pot still distilled. Aged in virgin oak casks for three years.



ABV: 43%

Mash bill: 100%
Canadian rye

Size: 70cl

FOUR ROSES

BASED

Kentucky, USA

ESTABLISHED

1888

It began when Paul Jones Jr., the founder of Four Roses Bourbon, became smitten by the beauty of a Southern belle. It is said that he sent a proposal to her, and she replied that if her answer were “Yes,” she would wear a corsage of roses on her gown to the upcoming grand ball. Paul waited for her, and when she arrived in her beautiful gown, she wore a corsage of four red roses. He later named his Bourbon ‘Four Roses’ as a symbol of his devout passion for her.

In 1884, Paul Jones Jr. moved his thriving business to Louisville, Kentucky, where he opened an office in a section of historic Main Street called, Whiskey Row. In 1966, a man named Jim Rutledge, who would later become one of the world’s most legendary master distillers, joined Louisville Plant’s Research and Development Department.

BOURBON

Fruit, floral essences, gentle spice and honey on the nose, followed by a crisp, yet soft and smooth palate with fresh fruit, hints of pear and apple. The finish is mellow, long and pleasant.

Distillation method and ageing:

Four Roses Yellow Label is an average of six and a half years old, but includes bourbons as old as 12 years in the blend.



ABV: 40%

Mash bill: By combining two unique grain recipes and five proprietary yeast strains, Four Roses produces 10 unique bourbon recipes.

Size: 70cl

SMALL BATCH

Mellow spice and rich fruit, with hints of sweet oak and caramel on the nose. The palate is mellow, with ripened red berries and dried spice. It is rich, yet well-balanced, with a soft, smooth and pleasantly long finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Small Batch is on average 7.75 years old, and a single barrel is typically over nine years old.



ABV: 45%

Mash bill: By combining two unique grain recipes and five proprietary yeast strains, Four Roses produces 10 unique bourbon recipes.

Size: 70cl

WILD TURKEY

BASED

Lawrenceburg, Kentucky

ESTABLISHED

1855

In 1865 the Ripey family founded the distillery that would go on to be the home of Wild Turkey in Lawrence, Kentucky. It wasn't until 1942 that the especially spicy whiskey that the company president used to bring to his hunting trip got its name. His friends kept asking him to "bring some more of that Wild Turkey" and the name stuck.

Since 1954 the brand lies in the hand of master distiller Jimmy Russell, who was joined by his son in 1981. His whiskeys always have that extra bit of spice that makes them a perfect companion for a cold November night.

WILD TURKEY 101 PROOF

A marriage of 6-8 year old Bourbons, best enjoyed neat, on the rocks or in a classic cocktail such as the Old Fashioned Deep. Rich amber colour, vanilla and caramel on the nose, hints of honey and orange lead to a gentle yet rich, spicy palate with a fruity, peppery finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Aged 6 to 8 years



ABV: 50.5%

Mash bill: Closely guarded secret

Size: 70cl

WILD TURKEY KENTUCKY STRAIGHT

A blend of 5-8 year old Bourbons, made for mixing or sipping on the rocks. Classic Wild Turkey spice, yet full of fruit, cereal, butterscotch and toasted oak. Cigar-box sweetness, caramel and vanilla, burnt caramel finish.

Distillation method and ageing:

Aged 5 to 8 years



ABV: 40.5

Mash bill: Closely guarded secret

Size: 70cl

WILD TURKEY STRAIGHT RYE

A mingling of 4-5 year old straight rye whiskeys. Naturally spicier than Bourbon, rich aromas of spice and vanilla indicate corn in the mashbill, and this is witnessed on the nose. Sweet pears, char and burnt sugar follow on the palate, while the finish is long, supple and clean.

Distillation method and ageing:

Aged 4 to 5 years



ABV: 40.5

Mash bill: Closely guarded secret

Size: 70cl



BIBENDUM

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