

EXPLORE

# AMERICAN WHISKEY

HERITAGE, STYLE *and* TASTE



# AMERICAN WHISKEY

The history of American Whiskey can be traced to the beginning of the colonial period in what is now known as the United States. George Washington, the first President of the United States, was a distiller. He began producing American Rye Whiskey in 1797 and his recipe is still used today to distill whiskey at the original site in Virginia.

For centuries, American distillers have experimented with a range of grains such as corn, wheat, barley and rye to create uniquely American Whiskeys that are cherished around the globe. Today, a global resurgence of cocktail culture and interest in premium and super-premium spirits have helped U.S. distillers export spirits to over 130 countries around the world.



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# MAKING AMERICAN WHISKEY

From mash bills to char levels, production can be a complex process, but four main factors go into making American Whiskey.

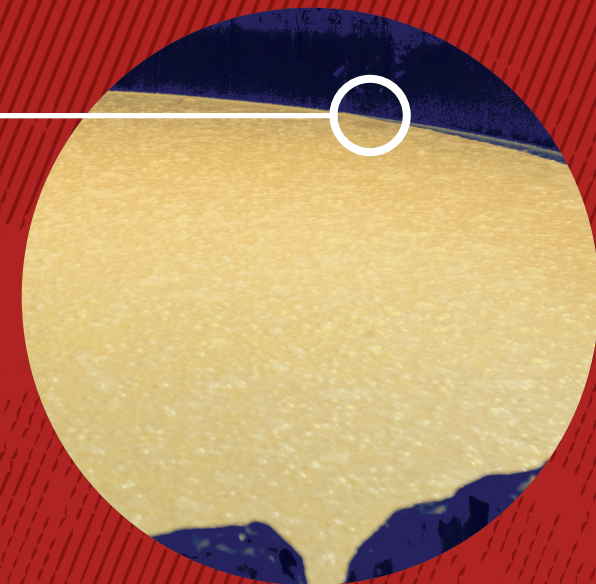
## GRAIN

Many American Whiskeys use multiple types of grains which gives rise to the term “mash bill”—the whiskey’s recipe. American Whiskey can have 100% of one type of grain, or a combination of other grains. Corn provides creamy sweetness. Rye adds a spicy/peppery flavor, while wheat gives a soft mellowness. Distillers will sometimes list their mash bill on the bottle to hint at the spirit’s flavor.



## YEAST

Each distillery uses a unique proprietary yeast strain to make their whiskey. These secret processes can either be sweet or sour. In the sweet mash process, fresh yeast is added to the mash for fermentation; while the sour mash process mixes leftover mash from previous distillation with new mash instead of yeast.



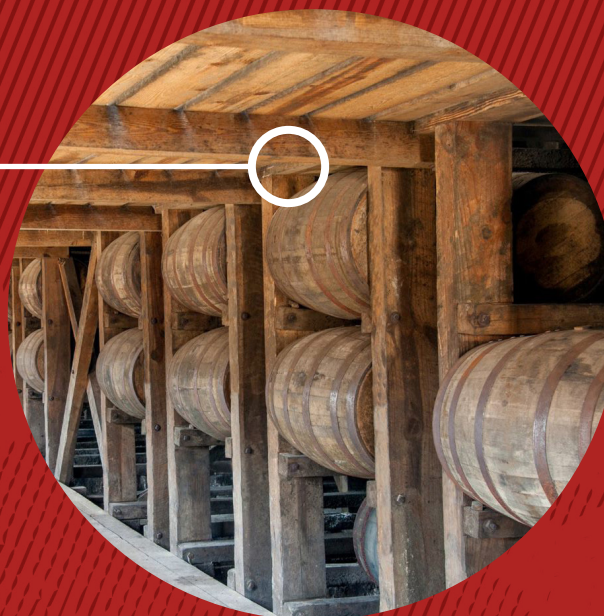


## WATER

Many U.S. distilleries are located near natural water sources that they use in their whiskey distillation. Local reservoirs provide distilleries with water that is naturally filtered and rich in minerals. Water in states like Kentucky and Tennessee is naturally filtered through limestone rocks and completely iron-free.

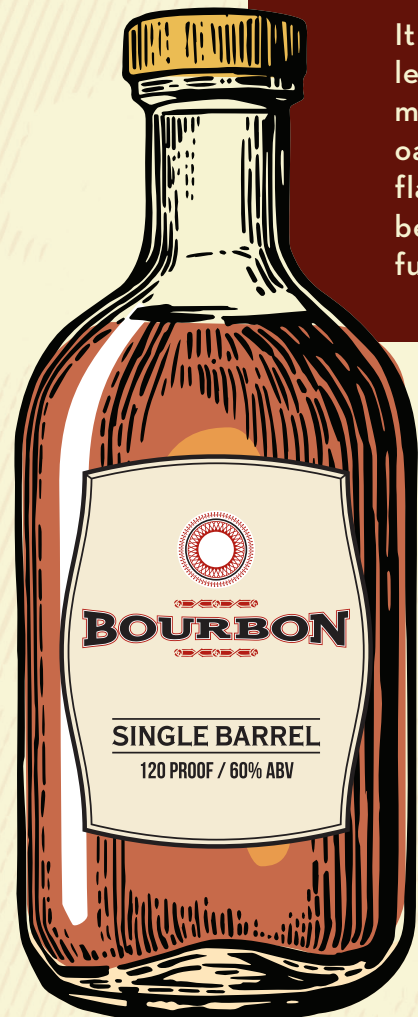
## BARREL

Barrels provide the vibrant color and some of the flavor of American Whiskey. The barrels are first toasted, allowing the heat to pull the wood sugars to the surface which are charred. This transforms the surface sugars into dark caramel. Different degrees of charring may be preferred by specific distillers.



# BOURBON WHISKEY

In 1964, the American Congress recognized Bourbon Whiskey as “a distinctive product of the United States.” It is also recognized as a “distinctive product” of the U.S. by 44 countries.



It must be distilled to no more than 80% or less than 40% alcohol by volume. Bourbon must be aged for some time in new, charred oak barrels and cannot include coloring, flavoring, or other spirits. Bourbon that has been aged for at least two years may be further designated as “straight.”



## REGION

Can be made anywhere in the United States

## GRAIN

Mash bill must be at least 51% corn. The remaining 49% can consist of malted barley, rye or wheat.



## CHARACTERISTICS

Higher wheat content or “wheated” bourbons tend to have softer and sweeter profiles.



Are all American Whiskeys Bourbon?  
Are all Bourbons American Whiskeys?



All Bourbons are American Whiskey, but not all American Whiskeys are Bourbon.

Tennessee Whiskey is characterized by charcoal filtering called the “Lincoln County Process.” Like Bourbon, it is recognized as a “distinctive product” of the U.S. by 44 countries.

# TENNESSEE WHISKEY




**REGION**  
Can only be made in Tennessee

In the “Lincoln County Process,” the whiskey is filtered through a column of sugar maple charcoal. Like Bourbon, Tennessee Whiskey must be aged for some time in new, charred oak barrels and cannot include coloring, flavoring, or other spirits. Each distillery has its own technique in producing and filtering whiskey through sugar maple charcoal.

**GRAIN**  
Follows the “Bourbon rules” (at least 51% corn)



**CHARACTERISTICS**  
The charcoal filtration is said to create a more distinctive mellow richness and dark color.



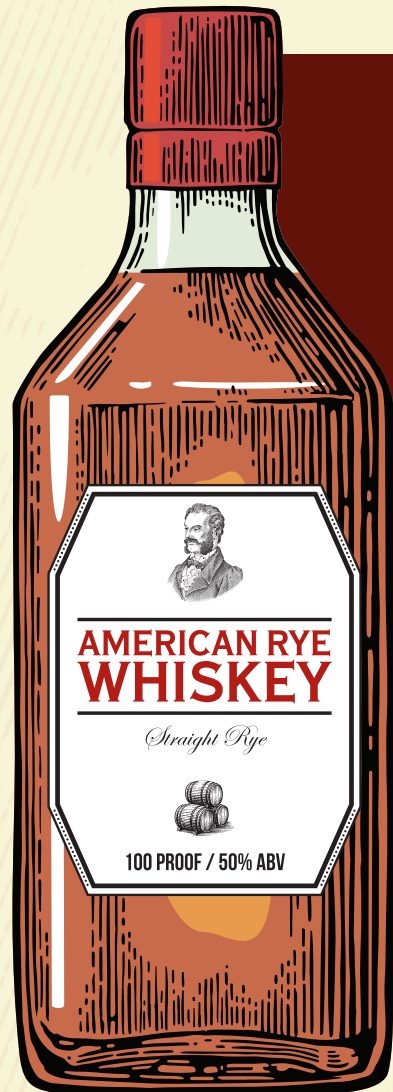
**Q:** Is Tennessee Whiskey a Bourbon?

**A:** There are a many similarities between Bourbon and Tennessee Whiskey, but if it comes from Tennessee and it is charcoal filtered before it’s aged—it’s a Tennessee Whiskey.



# AMERICAN RYE WHISKEY

American Rye Whiskey largely disappeared after the 1920s, but has made a resurgence over the past decade.



American Rye Whiskey, as with bourbon, must be aged for some time in new, charred oak barrels with no added coloring, flavoring or other spirits. American Rye Whiskey that has been aged for at least two years may be further designated as “straight,” as in “Straight American Rye Whiskey.”



## REGION

Can be made anywhere in the United States

## GRAIN

Mash bill must be at least 51% rye. The remaining 49% can consist of malted barley, corn or wheat.



## CHARACTERISTICS

American Rye Whiskey generally has a spicier profile than other American Whiskeys.



Is American Rye Whiskey regional?



Two styles of American Rye Whiskey blossomed during the colonial era: Pennsylvania or Monongahela-style, a full-bodied, spicy American Rye Whiskey, and Maryland-style rye, which was believed to be a mellower, sweeter American Rye Whiskey. Today, distillers can source grains from farms throughout the United States allowing them to create unique and innovative American Rye Whiskeys.



The term “single malt” typically means that the spirit has been distilled entirely at one distillery.

# AMERICAN SINGLE MALT



## REGION

Can be made anywhere in the United States

Over the past decade, the popularity of American Single Malt Whiskey has grown considerably among whiskey connoisseurs around the world. Definitions or qualifications have yet to be officially determined.

## GRAIN

Although there is no standard of identity, most American Single Malts have a mash bill of at least 51% malted grain (barley, corn or wheat).



## CHARACTERISTICS

Terroir, or geographical factors, are believed to shape the flavor profiles of American Single Malt Whiskeys.



Is American Single Malt Whiskey aged like Irish and Scotch Whiskies?



American Whiskeys are typically aged fewer years than Scotch and Irish Whiskies because the greater fluctuation of temperatures in the United States (hotter summers and colder winters) increases the interaction between the whiskey and the wood thus enhancing the ageing process.

# ABOUT

**The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) is the leading voice and advocate for distilled spirits in the United States.**

DISCUS' Cheers! Spirits from the U.S.A. campaign, supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Market Access Program (MAP) & Agricultural Trade Promotion (ATP) program, aims to educate the hospitality industry, adult consumers and media in key spirits export markets on the taste, heritage, and style of American distilled spirits. DISCUS' initiatives focus on the range of American spirits, but with a particular focus on the unique qualities of American Whiskeys, including Bourbon, Tennessee Whiskey, American Rye Whiskey, and American Single Malt Whiskey, which account for most U.S. spirits exports worldwide.

The U.S. distilled spirits industry is committed to social responsibility. For those adults who choose to drink, they should do so in moderation and responsibly at all times.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, Inc., prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, or other protected status.

For more information, please visit [www.distilledspirits.org](http://www.distilledspirits.org).



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OF THE UNITED STATES**





cheers!

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