

## PROHIBITION

The growth in commercial whiskey production during the 19th century meant that by 1874, in excess of 200,000 retailers across the US sold whiskey, 120,000 more than just a decade previously. The Prohibitionist Party was formed in 1869, and the temperance movement became ever more influential in the face of a perceived over-consumption of alcohol.



**Al Capone** flouted Prohibition laws.

In 1909 no fewer than 120,000 saloons were closed down and, by 1910, more than 45 percent of the country was “dry.” Many Tennessee distillers were forced to move their operations to Kentucky in order to continue. Nine years later, however, in the aftermath of World War I, Prohibition became a national issue.



**Temperance posters** such as this used sentiment to warn against the intoxicating effects of liquor.

health and hygiene in America.” Prohibition came into force in January 1920, but far from bringing about a decline in drinking, alcohol consumption actually rose by 15 percent.

Prohibition was also the trigger for large-scale criminality, with gangs led by high-profile figures such as Al Capone making fortunes smuggling alcohol into the US and supplying it to illegal drinking dens, known as speakeasies.

## NATIONAL PROHIBITION

The National Prohibition Act of 1919 enabled federal enforcement of the 18th Amendment to the American Constitution, which banned the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.” While wooing “dry” voters during the 1928 presidential election campaign, Herbert Hoover declared: “Our country has deliberately undertaken a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose.” Its stated aims were “to reduce crime and corruption, solve social problems, reduce the tax burden created by prisons and poorhouses, and improve

**Even prior to Prohibition**, bars were being closed down and stills such as this one in North Carolina were being confiscated by sheriffs.



New York alone was home to some 32,000 speakeasies. In the period just prior to Prohibition, the city had less than half that number of legal bars.

### AN ALCOHOLIC CRIME WAVE

Large quantities of homemade alcohol, often disparagingly referred to as “bathtub gin,” were distilled. Some of it was merely unpalatable, while the worst was lethal. A drink known as Jake, made from high-strength alcohol fluid extracted from Jamaican ginger with added wood alcohol, is estimated to have caused permanent paralysis in some 15,000 people. An astonishing 172,537 illegal stills were captured in 1925—five years later 282,122 were captured.

Safer was the branded alcohol imported illegally by the likes of Captain William McCoy, who used his schooner *Arethusa* to run spirits from Nassau in the

Bahamas to the the coast near Boston. McCoy specialized in genuine Scotch whisky, and his name ultimately entered the English language, with “the Real McCoy” becoming synonymous with authenticity. Vast amounts of Canadian whiskey were smuggled across the border into the US, and gangster Lucky Luciano claimed that during Prohibition Sam Bronfman, president of the Seagram Company, was “bootlegging enough whiskey across the Canadian border to double the size of Lake Erie!”

The American whiskey industry was forced to close down or diversify, with the exception of six Kentucky

distilleries, which were granted licenses to produce “medicinal whiskey.” Between them, they turned out 1.4 million gallons (5.3 million liters) per year of spirit, which was just as well, since Chicago doctors alone prescribed some 200,000 gallons (760,000 liters) of “medicinal” spirit in 1922.

### PROHIBITION'S LEGACY

The “noble experiment” of Prohibition was manifestly a failure, and the public mood, which had initially been supportive, changed significantly as the years passed. December 1933 saw the repeal of Prohibition, after which consumption of alcohol in the US actually fell by 25 percent. As the Scottish writer Neil M Gunn wrote, “the American experiment proved that you cannot legislate a people into sobriety.”



**Concealed pockets** were used to smuggle and sell illicit liquor.





## Brands

The US has many brands with distinct identities that stand apart from the distilleries that produce them. Indeed their ownership and provenance may have changed over the years, reflecting the industry's fluctuations.

**Buffalo Trace** produces many whiskey brands, and some recall great characters from America's whiskeymaking heritage.

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### ANCIENT AGE

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

Operated by the Leestown Distilling Company Inc., the Ancient Age Distillery was renamed Buffalo Trace in 1999 (see p188). The Ancient Age brand is, therefore, a homage to the former distillery name.

🍷 **ANCIENT AGE 10-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV • Complex and fragrant on the nose, with spices, fudge, oranges, and honey. Medium bodied and, after a slightly dry opening, the oily palate sweetens with developing notes of vanilla, cocoa, and a light char.

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### BAKER'S KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON

Distillery: Jim Beam

Baker's Kentucky Straight honors Baker Beam, former Clermont distiller and cousin of Booker Noe (see over), the high profile distiller who instigated small-

batch bourbon distilling in the 1980s. It is distilled using the standard Jim Beam formula, but aged longer and offered at a higher strength.

🍷 **BAKER'S KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 7-YEAR-OLD** 55.3% ABV

Baker's is a fruity, toasty expression of the Jim Beam formula: medium-bodied, mellow, and richly flavored, with mainstream notes of vanilla and caramel.

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### BASIL HAYDEN'S KENTUCKY BOURBON

Distillery: Jim Beam

Named after a pioneering Kentucky distiller, Basil Hayden's is produced to a high rye formula, as also used for Old Grand-Dad (see p216).

🍷 **BASIL HAYDEN'S KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 8-YEAR-OLD** 40% ABV • The nose of

Basil Hayden's is light, aromatic, and spicy, with soft rye, wood polish, spices, pepper, and vanilla on the palate.



**Basil Hayden's Straight Bourbon**



**Blantons Single Barrel Bourbon**

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### BLANTON'S SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

Colonel Albert Bacon Blanton was part-owner of what is now Buffalo Trace Distillery, where he worked for 55 years. And that's reason enough for this commemorative bourbon, named in his honor.

🍷 **BLANTON'S SINGLE BARREL BOURBON 6-8 YEARS-OLD** 46.5% ABV • The nose of Blanton's is soft, with toffee, leather, and a hint of mint.



The Buffalo Trace motif recalls the distillery's origins, at a Kentucky River crossing for herds of buffalo.

Full-bodied and rounded on the palate, this is a sweet bourbon, embracing vanilla, caramel, honey, and spices. The finish is long and creamy, with a late hint of spice.

## BOOKER'S KENTUCKY BOURBON

Distillery: Jim Beam

Named after Jim Beam's grandson, Booker Noe (*see p196*), this bourbon is made to the same Jim Beam formula as Baker's Bourbon, and is bottled unfiltered and undiluted to maintain its natural barrel favors.

### BOOKER'S KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 6-8 YEAR-OLD

61.5%-63% ABV • Big, fruity, and spicy on the nose, Booker's is sweet and slightly nutty on the palate, with heat and spiciness in the oaky finish. A big, traditional bourbon.

## BULLEIT BOURBON

Distillery: Four Roses

Bulleit Bourbon originated in the 1830s, where Augustus Bulleit was a tavern-keeper and small-time distiller. His whiskey became well known in Kentucky and Indiana, but production ceased with Bulleit's death in 1860.

However, Bulleit Bourbon was revived in 1987 by family member Tom Bulleit, who began to make the whiskey to the original recipe in association with Seagram Co. Ltd. in their Four Roses Distillery. Seagram subsequently took over the brand and, ultimately, it passed to Diageo. Bulleit Bourbon is now distilled for Diageo by Four Roses, and has a high rye content of 29 percent.

### BULLEIT BOURBON FRONTIER WHISKEY

45% ABV • Rich, oaky aromas lead into a mellow flavor, gathered around vanilla and honey. The medium-length finish features vanilla and a hint of smoke.

## EAGLE RARE SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

### EAGLE RARE SINGLE BARREL KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 10-YEAR-OLD

45% ABV • Soft and delicate on the nose, with honey, leather, vanilla, and oak. Sweet corn and stewed fruits hit the palate, with spices, vanilla, and rye notes. The finish is long and quite sweet, with a hint of ginger.

## ELIJAH CRAIG BOURBON

Distillery: Heaven Hill



Booker's Straight Bourbon

Craig (*see p183*) is widely regarded as the "father of bourbon." The expression that honors him is produced from no more than 100 barrels. It can justifiably be considered the first "small-batch" bourbon, although it actually predates the term.

### ELIJAH CRAIG KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 12-YEAR-OLD

47% ABV • Elijah Craig is a classic bourbon, with sweet, mature aromas of caramel, vanilla, spice, and honey, plus a sprig of mint. Rich, full-bodied, and rounded on the mellow palate, with caramel, malt, corn, rye, and a hint of smoke. Sweet oak, liquorice, and restrained vanilla on the finish.



Elijah Craig 12-Year-Old

### ELIJAH CRAIG SINGLE BARREL VINTAGE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 18-YEAR-OLD

45% ABV The oldest single barrel bourbon on the market, this expression has an aroma of caramel, vanilla, and oak. Almost cognac-like

on the palate, it is medium-bodied, with oak, honey, and rye. The finish is long, slightly smoky and dry, with oily rye notes.

## ELMER T LEE SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

ELMER T LEE SINGLE BARREL BOURBON 45% ABV • Produced at Buffalo Trace and named in honour of its former master distiller, Elmer T. Lee Single Barrel is aged for six to eight years. This expression offers citrus, vanilla, and sweet corn on the fragrant nose, while the palate is full and sweet, where honey and lingering caramel and cocoa notes are much in evidence.

## EVAN WILLIAMS KENTUCKY BOURBON

Distillery: Heaven Hill

The second biggest-selling bourbon after Jim Beam, Evan Williams takes its name from the man considered to be Kentucky's first distiller. Evan began distilling on the banks of the Ohio River in

1783. It is the flagship brand in the Heaven Hill portfolio.

**EVAN WILLIAMS BLACK LABEL KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 7 YEAR-OLD 43% ABV** • The nose is quite light yet aromatic, with vanilla and mint notes, while the palate is initially sweet, with caramel, malt, and developing leather and spice notes.

**EVAN WILLIAMS SINGLE BARREL VINTAGE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 43.3% ABV** • This is the world's only vintage-dated single barrel bourbon. It boasts an aromatic, malty nose and is medium-bodied, due to its comparatively high corn content. Vanilla, light caramel, marshmallow, and mild oak characterize the palate. There is a whiff of smoke, plus almonds and honey in the spicy, satisfying finish.

### GEORGE T STAGG BOURBON

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

This bourbon is named in honor of George T. Stagg, who owned what is now the Buffalo Trace Distillery in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**GEORGE T STAGG KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 71.35% ABV** Offered unfiltered, at cask strength, and at 15 years old, George T. Stagg boasts a big, rich Christmas cake nose, along with a hint of mint. Complex in the mouth, with oranges, spices, and lots of sweetness. The finish is long and sweet.

### HANCOCK'S PRESIDENT'S RESERVE BOURBON

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

**HANCOCK'S PRESIDENT'S RESERVE SINGLE BARREL BOURBON 44-45% ABV** • Oily on the nose, with liquorice, caramel and spicy rye. Sweet in the

mouth, with malt, fudge, and vanilla notes. Drying in the finish, with notable oak notes, but the whiskey's residual sweetness remains to the end.

### A.H. HIRSCH BOURBON

Distillery: Michter's

Hirsch Reserve represents a remarkable piece of American distilling history, as the whiskey was actually distilled back in 1974 in the last surviving Pennsylvania distillery. Michter's Distillery at Schaefferstown had its origins in a farm distilling operation that was in existence since at least 1753. In the years leading up to Prohibition in the 20th century, Michter's turned out significant quantities of rye whiskey. During the 1950s copper pot stills were installed, and pot still whiskey with a high rye content was produced. Sadly, Michter's closed in 1988, but a former

Schenley Co. executive, Adolf Hirsch, had acquired quantities of the spirit some years previously, and after they had been matured for 16 years they were filled into



Hancock's President Special Reserve

stainless-steel tanks to prevent further ageing. This whiskey is now available from Preiss Imports (www.

preissimports.com) of California.

**A.H. HIRSCH RESERVE STRAIGHT BOURBON 16-YEAR-OLD 45.8% ABV** Caramel, honey, and rye dominate the complex nose, with a whiff of smoke also drifting on through. Oily corn, honey, and oak are evident on the rich palate,

with rye and oak in the finish.

### I.W. HARPER PRESIDENT'S RESERVE BOURBON

Distillery: Four Roses

The historic and once best-selling I.W. Harper brand was established by Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, a major figure in the bourbon business at the turn of the 19th century. It is now distilled for Diageo by Four Roses Distillery, and is one of the leading bourbons in the Japanese market.

**I.W. HARPER PRESIDENT'S RESERVE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 43% ABV** • Pepper combines with mint, oranges, and caramel on the nose, while caramel and oak feature on the elegant palate. The finish is dry and smoky.

### JOHNNY DRUM KENTUCKY BOURBON

Distillery: Kentucky Bourbon Distillers

Johnny Drum is reputed to have been a Confederate drummer boy during the Civil War, and latterly a pioneer farmer in Kentucky. He started to distil his corn to generate extra income, and developed a reputation for making excellent whiskey. Johnny Drum bourbon was formerly produced in the Willet Distillery, located just



Evan Williams Bourbon Whiskey



Four Roses Distillery provides the whiskey for I.W. Harper President's Reserve Kentucky Bourbon.

outside Bardstown in Kentucky. It was established by the Willet family in 1935 and closed in the early 1980s when the last Willet retired. The plant was later acquired by Kentucky Bourbon Distillers Ltd., which now has a range of whiskies distilled under contract.

**JOHNNY DRUM KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 12-**

**YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV

Smooth and elegant on the nose, with vanilla, gentle spices, and smoke. This is a full-bodied bourbon, well-balanced and smooth in the mouth, with vanilla and a hint of smoke. The finish is lingering and sophisticated.

**KESSLER BLENDED WHISKEY**

Distillery: Jim Beam

One of the best known and most highly regarded blended American whiskies, Kessler traces its origins back to 1888, when it was first blended by one, Julius

Jim Beam Distillery produces several well-known brands, as well as its own range.

Kessler, who traveled from saloon to saloon in the old West, selling it as he went.

**☞ KESSLER BLENDED AMERICAN WHISKEY** 40% ABV • This whiskey has carried the “smooth as silk” slogan for 50 years, and certainly lives up to its billing. The nose is light and fruity; the palate sweet, with just enough complexity of liquorice and leather to highlight the fact that the bourbon in this blend has been aged for at least four years.



Knob Creek  
Straight Bourbon

**KNOB CREEK BOURBON**

Distillery: Jim Beam

Knob Creek is the Kentucky town where Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas, owned a farm and worked at the local distillery. This bourbon is made

with the same high rye formula as the Basil Hayden and Old Grand-Dad whiskey brands (see pp212 & 216).

**☞ KNOB CREEK KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON**

**9-YEAR-OLD** 50% ABV • It has a nutty nose of sweet, tangy fruit and rye, with malt, spice, and nuts on the palate, drying in the finish with notes of vanilla.

**NOAH'S MILL BOURBON**

Distillery: Kentucky Bourbon Distillers Ltd

Like Johnny Drum, Noah's Mill was formerly distilled in the now silent Willet Distillery, and is currently produced under contract. It is a hand-bottled, small-batch bourbon.

**NOAH'S MILL BOURBON 15-YEAR-**

**OLD** 57.15% ABV • Elegant and well-balanced on the nose, with caramel, nuts, coffee, dark fruits, and oak. A rich texture and notably dry on the palate, with nuts, spice, and background notes of soft fruit. Long, oaky finish.

**OLD CHARTER BOURBON**

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

Buffalo Trace produce several expressions in the Old Charter range, including 8, 10, and 12-year-old bourbons, plus the elegant 13-year-old Proprietor's Reserve.

**☞ OLD CHARTER KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 8 YEAR-OLD**

40% ABV • Initially dry and peppery on the nose, with sweet and buttery aromas following through. Mouth-coatingly rich, with fruit, vanilla, old leather, and cloves on the palate. A long and sophisticated finish.



**OLD CHARTER PROPRIETOR'S  
RESERVE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT**

**BOURBON 13-YEAR-OLD 45% ABV**

Initially dry and peppery on the nose, with developing buttery and sweet notes. Big-bodied and viscous, with fruit, vanilla, and worn leather on the palate. The finish is long, complex, and, as you'd expect of a 13-year-old bourbon, sophisticated.

**OLD CROW BOURBON**

Distillery: Jim Beam

Named in honor of the 19th-century Scottish-born chemist and Kentucky distiller James Christopher Crow (see p200), Old Crow is well rounded for a three-year-old whiskey. Along with Old Grand-Dad and Old Taylor, this brand was acquired by Jim Beam from National Distillers in 1987, and the three individual distilleries associated with these bourbons were closed. All production now takes place in Jim Beam's distilleries in Boston and Clermont.

**OLD CROW KENTUCKY  
STRAIGHT BOURBON**

**3-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV**

Complex on the nose, with malt, rye, and sharp fruit notes that combine with gentle spice. The palate follows through with spicy, malty, and citric notes—the citrus and spice to the fore.



**Old Crow  
Straight  
Bourbon**

**OLD GRAND-DAD  
BOURBON**

Distillery: Jim Beam

The Old Grand-Dad formula, with its high percentage of rye, gives a more heavily-bodied spirit than most Jim Beam whiskeys.

**OLD GRAND-DAD  
KENTUCKY STRAIGHT  
BOURBON 4-YEAR-OLD**

50% ABV • Oranges and peppery spices on the nose, while the taste is full yet surprisingly smooth. Fruit, nuts, and caramel are foremost on the palate, while the finish is long and oily.



**Old Grand-Dad  
Straight Bourbon**

**OLD TAYLOR BOURBON**

Distillery: Jim Beam

Old Taylor is named after Colonel Edmund Haynes Taylor Jr.—the man responsible for the Bottled-in-Bond Act of 1897, which guaranteed that bottles of whiskey bearing an official government seal would be 100 proof (50 percent ABV) and at least four years old.

**OLD TAYLOR KENTUCKY  
STRAIGHT BOURBON**

**6 YEAR-OLD 40% ABV**

Old Taylor is light and orange on the nose, with a hint

of marzipan; sweet, honeyed, and oaky on the palate.

**REBEL YELL  
BOURBON**

Distillery: Heaven Hill

Produced at the Bernheim Distillery in Louisville for St. Louis-based drinks company Luxco, Rebel Yell is made with a percentage of wheat in its mashbill instead of rye. A whiskey was first made to the Rebel Yell recipe back in

1849, and the whiskey has enjoyed popularity in the southern states for many years. The brand was finally released on an international basis during the 1980s.

**REBEL YELL KENTUCKY STRAIGHT  
BOURBON 40% ABV**

• A nose of honey, raisins, and butter leads into a big-bodied bourbon which again features honey and a buttery quality, along with plums. The finish is long and spicier than might be expected from the sweet palate.

**ROCK HILL FARM  
BOURBON**

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

**ROCK HILL FARM SINGLE CASK  
BOURBON 50% ABV**

Oak, raisins, and fruity rye on the nose, with a hint of mint. Medium to full-bodied, bittersweet, with rye

**The bottling plant** at Buffalo Trace copes with a wide array of whiskeys, from Blanton's Single Barrel to Weller's Special Reserve.



fruitiness, fudge, and oak. A long, sweet rye finish with a suggestion of liquorice.

## SAZERAC RYE WHISKEY

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

There are two Sazerac expressions: a young and feisty 8-year-old and a complex 18-year-old.

🍷 **SAZERAC STRAIGHT RYE WHISKEY 18-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV • The oldest rye whiskey on the market is big and spicy on the nose, with molasses, sultanas, vanilla, and lanolin. It coats the mouth with intense and oily rye, conveying dry spices and a hint of liquorice, then sweetens, with ripe bananas. The finish is long, with a sprinkling of pepper.

## SEAGRAM'S SEVEN CROWN

Distillery: Four Roses

One of the best known blended American whiskeys, Seven Crowns survived the break up of the Seagram empire and is now made at Four Roses Distillery.

🍷 **SEAGRAM'S SEVEN CROWN BLENDED WHISKEY** 40% ABV • A delicate nose with a hint of rye; clean and well structured on the spicy palate.

## WL WELER BOURBON

Distillery: Buffalo Trace

William LaRue Weller established the original W.L. Weller Bourbon brand in 1849. It employs wheat rather than rye as the "small grain," along with corn and a proportion of malted barley. This tends to produce big-bodied yet soft whiskeys.

🍷 **W.L. WELER SPECIAL RESERVE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON 7-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV  
Oranges, honey, and vanilla

on the nose, sweet in the mouth, with more vanilla, butterscotch, fruit, and spices. The finish is long, with pepper and fruity spices.

## VAN WINKLE WHISKIES

Distillery: various

Since 2002 Buffalo Trace Distillery has partnered the Julian Van Winkle brand in a joint venture whereby the distillery makes, bottles, and distributes the Van Winkle range of older whiskeys. The whiskeys are then matured at Van Winkle's now silent Old Hoffman Distillery at Lawrenceburg.

Julian Van Winkle specializes in small-batch, aged whiskeys, with as few as three or four barrels going into some bottlings. His bourbons are made with wheat, rather than the less expensive rye, to give them a smoother and sweeter flavor. Van Winkle also favors a long maturation period, and all whiskeys in the range are matured for at least 10 years in lightly charred mountain oak barrels. Though Van Winkle is a partner of Buffalo Trace, the current expressions were actually produced at a number of different distilleries.

🍷 **OLD RIP VAN WINKLE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY 10-YEAR-OLD** 53.5% ABV  
Caramel and molasses on the nose, followed by honey and rich,

spicy fruit on the profound, mellow palate. There follows a long finish, with coffee and liquorice.

🍷 **PAPPY VAN WINKLE'S FAMILY RESERVE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT**



Van Winkle  
13-Year-Old  
Family Reserve

## BOURBON WHISKEY

**15-YEAR-OLD** 53.5% ABV

A sweet nose of caramel and vanilla,

plus charcoal and oak. Full-bodied, round, and smooth in the mouth, with a long and complex finish of spicy orange, toffee, vanilla, and oak.

🍷 **PAPPY VAN WINKLE'S FAMILY RESERVE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY 20-YEAR-OLD** 47.8% ABV • Notably old for a bourbon. A sweet vanilla and caramel nose, plus raisins, apples, and oak. Rich and buttery

in the mouth, with molasses and a hint of char to balance the sweetness. The finish is long and complex, with a touch of oak charring.

🍷 **VAN WINKLE FAMILY RESERVE RYE WHISKEY 13-YEAR-OLD** 47.8% ABV  
Very old for a rye. The nose is powerful, with fruit and spice, while vanilla, spice, pepper, and cocoa dominate the complex palate. The long finish balances caramel against black coffee.

🍷 **VAN WINKLE SPECIAL RESERVE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY 12-YEAR-OLD** 45.2% ABV  
Caramel, vanilla, honey, and oak figure on the nose, while the sweet and full-bodied palate exudes caramel, vanilla, and wheat. The finish is long, well-balanced, and elegant.

## PAPPY VAN WINKLE

Julian Van Winkle is the grandson of legendary bourbon figure Julian P. "Pappy" Van Winkle Sr, who started working as a salesman for W.L. Weller & Sons in Louisville in 1893 at the age of 18. He went on to become famous for his Old Fitzgerald Bourbon, distilled in the now lost Stitzel Weller Distillery in Louisville.



Van Winkle  
15-Year-Old  
Family  
Reserve







# CANADA

Historically, Canada is one of whiskey's biggest players. And while it still commands loyal support, the fact remains that it has slipped from the top flight of whiskey-producing nations. But why is this so, and can the glory days return?

**C**anada has probably produced whiskey since the 1760s, with early distillation based around an area in the south of Ontario on Canada's east coast. By the mid-1800s, about 200 distilleries were established, and the country's reputation grew throughout the late 19th century and on well into the 20th. That was the period of Canadian whiskey's golden age, as the spirit flowed across the American borders. Whiskeymakers such as Hiram Walker, who had created the Canadian Club brand in the 1880s, and later Sam Bronfman at Seagram created vast commercial empires. As the golden age progressed into the mid-20th century, companies such as Seagram and Hiram Walker & Sons dominated not just the American market, but that of the entire world, with Seagram even building its own distilleries in Scotland, at Allt a' Bhainne and Braeval (*see pp49 & 53*).

The initial fortunes of the country's whiskey industry had been greatly aided by Prohibition in the US. During that time, consignments of whiskey would sail down the rivers and through the Great Lakes into the US, where bootleggers

used it to slake the inexhaustible thirst for whiskey in the many speakeasies that sprung up across the States. It was the theft of a shipment of Canadian whiskey that prompted the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre in 1929.

## END OF THE GOLDEN AGE

From such a high point, the fall of Canadian whiskey in world terms has been a marked decline. For several decades now, Canadian whiskey has had a much lower profile and operated on a far more modest scale.

On the face of it, the future of the industry in Canada doesn't look particularly rosy. Where once 200 distilleries produced rivers of whiskey to serve an all but insatiable American market, now Canada is like a broken jigsaw, with just 10 distilleries, a sizeable number of them owned by Kentucky bourbon companies or international spirits producers. Dig a little deeper, though, and there are burning embers in the ashes. And the good news for lovers of Canada's unique whiskey styles—note the plural—is that Canadian whiskey producers aren't going to give up without a fight.

Although there were economic reasons for the industry's decline, there are two principal explanations for its continued

**Many Canadian distilleries** make use of pure glacial water that flows down from the country's Rocky Mountain Ranges in fast-flowing rivers.

comparatively low state, and part of the trouble is self-inflicted. Crucially, the industry has done little to sell itself in recent decades. While Scotch, Irish, American, and Japanese whiskies have been promoted internationally and regionally, and subtle distinctions from one another, little attempt has been made to champion the unique qualities of Canadian whiskey to the rest of the world.

Secondly, when Canadian whiskey has been praised, those extolling it have tended to be working in the cocktail sector, where the nature of the spirit has been celebrated for its mixing qualities. Quite rightly, as it happens, but that's not the whole story. And, because few people have explained Canadian whiskey's other virtues, it has all too often been accepted only as a cocktail whiskey—smooth, rounded, bland even, and best mixed with additional flavors.

### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Let's dismiss a few popular fallacies about the style of Canadian whiskey: it isn't bland, and nor is it an imitation of either Scotch blended whisky or American bourbon. While Canada's distillers may well produce individual whiskies that bear a resemblance to



distillate is uniquely Canadian.

Rye is the core of Canadian whiskey, but it's unlike the kind of rye whiskey you'll find in the US. Canadian whiskey uses a complex mix of strongly flavored malted and unmalted rye whiskies combined with a far greater amount of smooth and light grain whiskey.

An additional quality of Canadian whiskey is that it can include a small percentage of flavorings, such as fruit, sherry, or bourbon (*see p222*), further distinguishing its character, and usually contributing to its rounded and fruity character. It's the ability to blend all these elements harmoniously that marks out the most sophisticated Canadian whiskies.

It is high time that the country's whiskey was re-evaluated in international terms. As to whether a change of fortune is just around the corner, only time will tell.

**Massive silos**, such as these in Alberta, store the raw grain ingredients—wheat, corn, rye, and barley—for use in the whiskeymaking industry.



## DISTILLERIES

Canada's whiskey industry has blending at its heart. Because its distilleries can produce the variety of constituent whiskeys that contribute to a blend's mix, distilleries are intrinsically linked to the brands they produce.

### ALBERTA

✉ Calgary

🌐 [www.albertadistillers.com](http://www.albertadistillers.com)

👤 Open to visitors

Calgary sits on the verdant plains of Alberta, where some of the world's finest rye is cultivated, and beneath the awesome Rockies, from which pure mountain spring water can be drawn. Ideal, then, for a rye-producing distillery such as Alberta.

The distillery can produce in batches or continuously and has a pot still, used for making specialty whiskeys. There are two principal whiskey types distilled in the production process. The bulk of the distillery's blends are made up of a base spirit, unusually made with rye rather than the traditional corn. It is first distilled in a beer still and then again in a continuous rectifier (see p28). It is distilled to an alcohol level of around 95–96 percent ABV.

A second whiskey is made from rye, but this time it is distilled only once, the effect of which is to produce a spirit with a relatively low ABV of about 65 percent. One distillation means that oils and congeners are left in the spirit, making it heavy, oily, and rich in flavor.

The two spirits are blended and maturation then takes place in first-fill bourbon

casks, or even in unused new white oak casks.

#### ALBERTA PREMIUM 5-YEAR-

**OLD 40% ABV** • It tends to be that the longer rye is in the cask, the mellower it becomes, so the younger expressions of Alberta's output are the most aggressive, uncompromising, and impressive. For this reason, Alberta Premium, at just 5 years old, is held up in some quarters as a world-class whiskey.

#### ALBERTA SPRINGS 10-YEAR-

**OLD 40% ABV** • Having been aged for 10 years, the

Seagrams is no more, but in the mid-20th century, it was one of the giants of the industry.

Alberta Springs expression from the distillery is softer and sweeter. It therefore harks back to a more recognizable style of Canadian whiskey.

#### TANGLE RIDGE 40% ABV

This is the distillery's most commercial product; it contains 10-year-old whiskey, but in this case, it is blended with sherry and fruit flavorings—as permitted under Canada's whiskey laws (see p222).

**WINDSOR 40% ABV** • This is a fairly aggressive, rye-dominated blend.

### ALBERTA'S OUTPUT

Alberta Distillery was founded in 1946, and for the last 20 years, has been owned by Jim Beam. It is capable of producing about 4.5 million gallons (about 20 million liters) of alcohol per year. It's not the biggest producer in Canada—not by a long shot—but that's still twice what Scotland's biggest malt distillery, Glenfiddich, produces per annum.

Despite its formidable size and its international owner, Alberta has preserved its reputation as a maverick, producing an unconventional group of whiskeys dominated by rye. You might think that geography would have explained this, as rye grows easily here. These days, however, the obstacles to converting to other grain types have all but disappeared, so today's whiskey is made through choice, not circumstance.

**Rye is the grain** that grows best in Alberta, whereas, because of the temperature, corn fares less well.



## THE CHARACTER OF CANADIAN WHISKEY

That there is a big market for whiskey in Canada is no great surprise. Just consider the large number of early settlers who were forced to make the journey to North America from Scotland, and you'll understand why the nations' drinking tastes are linked.

However, while there are clear cultural links, as well as many similarities in the climate and terrain of the two countries, the whiskey bond is not such a snug fit. It is true that a small amount of pot-still produced malt is made in Canada today, but the greater part of the country's whiskey output is a very different beast.

What is widely accepted as the country's trademark style of whiskey is defined, not by its malted barley content, but by rye. And even in this regard it's in a category of its own. Unlike American straight rye, the style most closely associated with Canadian whiskey is, in its simplest form, a mix of a light base-grain whiskey (produced in a continuous still) mixed with a small proportion of rye whiskey.

In practice, Canadian whiskeys are complex and sophisticated, blending several different styles of rye with the base spirit. And to differentiate

**White oak barrels** such as these from the Canadian Mist Distillery add flavor to the whiskey over a minimum three-year maturation period.



**Highwood  
Centennial  
Whiskey**

Canadian whiskey still further, Canadian law permits a fraction over nine percent of the final whiskey to be made up of other flavorings, such as sherry or fruit —or indeed foreign whiskey. A handful of Canadian whiskeys contain some Kentucky bourbon, for example.

Canadian whiskey produced this way is notable for its smooth, rounded, and fruity style. It has been dismissed by some critics for being light and inconsequential, but, at its best, a Canadian whiskey offers a sophisticated master class in blending.

There is one other key aspect to the final whiskey's flavor—the impact of oak from maturation. The blending process may take place before or after maturation in oak casks, but, like Scotch whisky, the minimum maturation period is three years, rather than the two favored in the US.



## CANADIAN CLUB

See *Hiram Walker & Sons*

## CANADIAN MIST

✉ Georgian Bay,  
Collingwood, Ontario

📍 By appointment only

Canadian Mist is a testament to the boom times for Canadian whiskey, built with haste to catch the last wave of demand before it entirely passed by. It was built in the 1960s and, from

foundation stone to working distillery, the construction took just five months.

The plant sits in the heart of Ontario by Collingwood, a small town close to the freshwater beach of Georgian Bay. It is one of the few Canadian distilleries that produces only whiskey, as it was set up by the Kentucky bourbon makers Barton Brands (see p187) to expand upon the success they were already having with the Canadian Mist whiskey brand.

The distillery's location was just about ideal: close to communication channels for both Canada and the United States; close enough to the grain-producing regions; endowed with great stocks of water; and with a depressed economy that ensured favorable tax breaks for businesses from the government.

Canadian Mist has enjoyed continued success since the plant started up, and was in fact the top-selling Canadian whiskey in the US for many years. These days the distillery is owned by another Kentucky-based company, Brown-Forman (see p188), who also own Jack Daniel's and Woodford Reserve. It remains a big brand in the US market.



Canadian Mist

■ **CANADIAN MIST** 40% ABV  
The nose offers light fruit, a hint of toffee, and a little spice. Rich, sweet, and fruity on the palate, with toffee and vanilla too. The finish is soft, rounded, and pleasant.

## GIMLI

✉ Gimli, Manitoba  
🌐 [www.crownroyal.com](http://www.crownroyal.com)  
📍 Open to visitors

Gimli stands close to the edge of Lake Winnipeg, about

100 miles (160 km) north of the town of Winnipeg, amid a large Icelandic community. It is now owned by drinks giant Diageo, and in some ways its history is a microcosm of Canada's whiskey history as a whole. Gimli was built in 1968 to catch the same wave of popularity for Canadian whiskey that Canadian Mist was riding, and its modern design is a testament to just how high Canadian whiskey flew in relatively recent times.

It was one of a number of distilleries owned by Seagram, each of them producing spirit for the world's markets.

## A DISTILLERY LIKE NO OTHER

Canadian Mist is a continuous distillation plant. It is neither particularly pretty nor, on the face of it, particularly exceptional. Until, that is, you look at it purely from a whiskey enthusiast's technical point of view, for it has three peculiarities that make it unique. In fact, this distillery is a phenomenon that turns whiskey lore on its head.

Firstly, Canadian Mist is made without any exposure whatsoever to copper. The production equipment is entirely made from stainless steel, and purists will tell you that the finished whiskey should be sulfurous as a result. More than two million cases sold in the US each year argue rather emphatically that it's not.

Secondly, it is the only Canadian whiskey made with a mash of corn and malted barley. Malted barley is often used as the catalyst to help other grains begin to ferment, and in this plant, the process just wouldn't happen without it. It adds flavor, too, though that is incidental to the Canadian Mist operation.

And thirdly, the distillery does not produce any rye for flavoring. Instead it brings in rye from one of Brown-Forman's Kentucky distilleries, as well as an amount of Kentucky bourbon, which is allowed under Canadian law (see *opposite*). Canadian Mist is not to everyone's taste, but it is an enigma—and quite literally goes against the grain.

**Canadian Mist Distillery** uses stainless steel throughout, including these fermenters.





Samples of whiskey are selected from casks for appraisal at the former Seagram's Distillery.

One by one, however, the distilleries fell by the wayside, and Gimli was Seagram's last whiskey-producing plant before the company itself finally succumbed to the fall in the fortunes of the Canadian whiskey industry.

Gimli remains a monster of a distillery, however. Visit the website and you can find

out exactly how much corn and water are used in making the whiskey. Suffice to say that there are 1.25 million barrels stored on the site, a similar quantity to the number stored at Jack Daniel's Tennessee Distillery.

Gimli is also home to one of Canada's most iconic brands, Crown Royal. The brand was launched in 1939 to mark the visit to Canada of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain, and the blend has contributed significantly to Canada's whiskey exports ever since.

The base whiskey is made in three primary beer stills and a complex four-column rectifier, while bourbon and rye flavoring whiskies pass through a simpler two-column continuous still. No other non-whiskey flavorings are added.

The resulting whiskey is almost archetypally Canadian, its rich fruitiness and touch of spice blended to perfection. The special

and limited editions of Crown Royal contain older and rarer whiskeys. They may contain up to 50 whiskeys in the mix, and a distinctly bourbony flavor emerges.

Gimli also produces a number of smaller brands, including Seagram's 83 and Seagram's Five Star, a wistful nod to the distillery's history.

■ **CROWN ROYAL** 40% ABV • Rye spice, honey, and red fruit combine on the nose. It has a rounded, balanced palate, with fruit, spice, and oak; the finish is soft, sweet, and pleasant.

■ **CROWN ROYAL XR** 40% ABV  
A nice wave of spicy rye, and then bourbony vanilla, polished leather, and musk body spray. Decidedly male. The palate offers up-front rye and wood, and the polite bourbon taste expected from the nose, but gives ground easily and settles for a gentle caress rather than a hefty Kentucky slap—intriguing. As for the finish, well, the rye stays around longer after the whiskey, oiled to the sides of the mouth.

#### CANADA DAY COCKTAIL

Canadian whiskey remains very popular with modern mixologists because it is versatile and ideal for making modern and unusual cocktails, such as this one, which celebrates Canada Day.

##### Ingredients:

½ measure (10 ml) of Crown Royal whiskey  
½ measure (10 ml) of sloe gin  
½ measure (10 ml) of triple sec  
½ measure (10 ml) of Galliano  
About 2 measures (40–60 ml) of orange juice

**Method:** Stir all the ingredients over cracked ice. Strain over ice in to a highball glass and garnish with lemon and lime slices.



Crown Royal

## THE PROCESS OF MAKING CANADIAN WHISKEY

To achieve a perfectly balanced whiskey, Canadian distilleries make a range of different whiskeys at each plant. This will include using a variety of grains, varying the fermentation period and the mash bill, and employing different distilling techniques.

Although the basic method of production involves mainly column still distillation, copper pot stills often feature to make heavy, flavoring whiskey. Complicated combinations are employed, making Canada's production process among the most sophisticated in the world.

Unusually, it is common to distil with malted rye (rather than the more common unmalted form), and most distilleries will also produce a version of bourbon. Even basic Canadian whiskeys will use around 15 different whiskeys; some have well in excess of 20, and they can have up to as many as 50. Although

**Vast grain fields in Saskatchewan** and other parts of Canada produce plenty of top-quality grain for Canada's whiskey industry.



**Schenley's huge column stills** produce the bulk of the distillery's output.

the character of Canadian whiskey is defined by the dominant rye, malted rye is a crucial component for the smoothness and fullness of flavor in a Canadian whiskey. Despite its dominance, however, rye may only account for about 10 percent of the spirit in the mix, and that figure can often fall to as low as five percent.

Some single malt whiskey does exist in Canada, as do some single grain whiskeys, and generally the standard is very high. That quality, coupled with a renewed interest in rye among whiskey lovers, could prompt a reappraisal of Canadian whiskey.



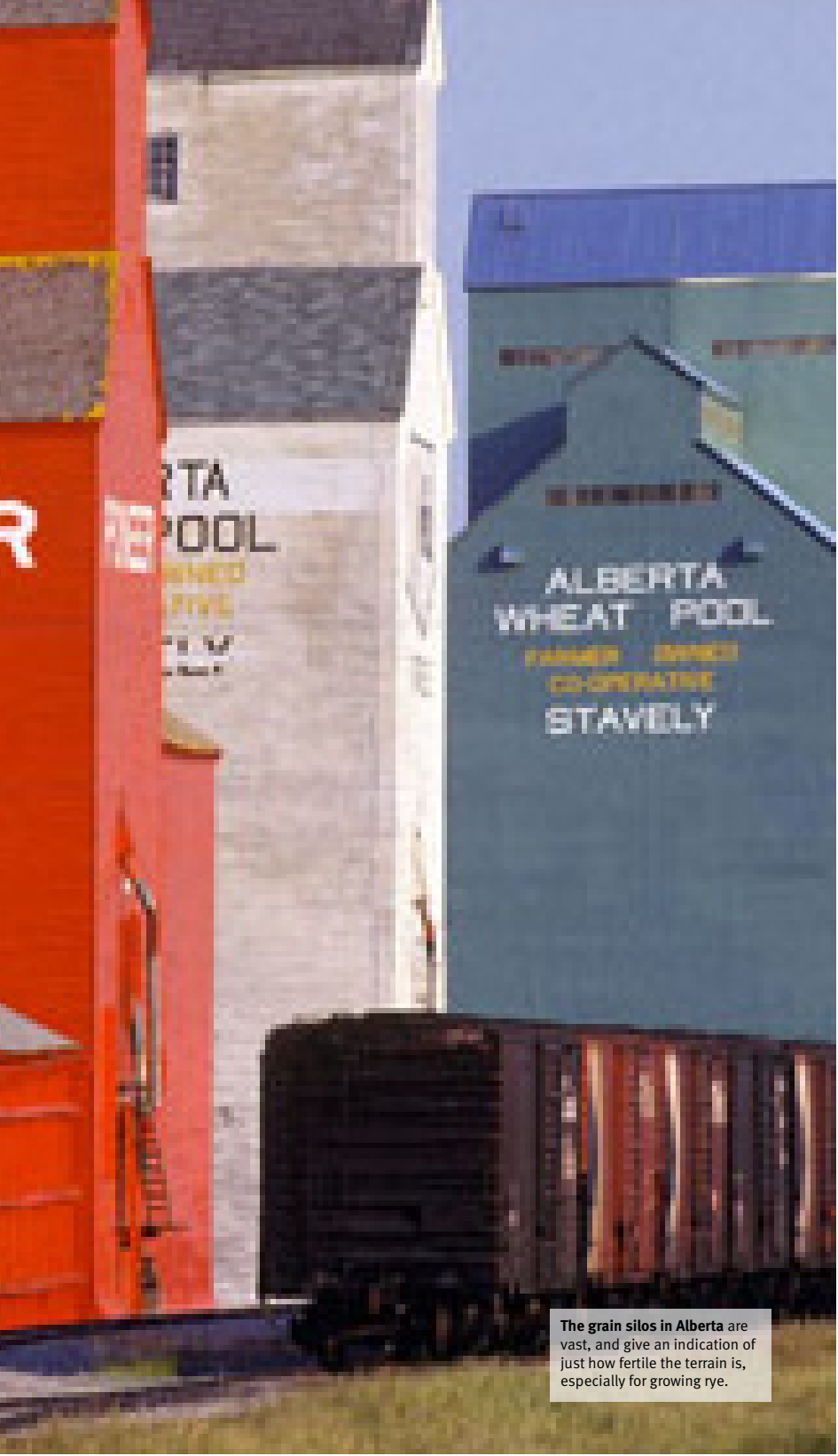


PIONEER

THE

F





ALBERTA  
WHEAT POOL  
FARMER OWNED  
CO-OPERATIVE  
STAVELY

ALBERTA  
WHEAT POOL  
FARMER OWNED  
CO-OPERATIVE  
STAVELY

The grain silos in Alberta are vast, and give an indication of just how fertile the terrain is, especially for growing rye.

## GLENORA

✉ Glenville, Cape Breton,  
Nova Scotia

🌐 [www.glenoradistillery.com](http://www.glenoradistillery.com)

🏠 Open to visitors

Nova Scotia means “New Scotland,” and when people draw comparisons between Scotland and Canada, it’s often of Nova Scotia that they are thinking. It should, therefore, come as no surprise to find Canada’s only single malt distillery, complete with imported copper pot stills, right here in Cape Breton.

Indeed, so close is the link between Cape Breton and the Scottish Highlands that Glenora has managed to upset the Scotch Whisky Association. It claimed the distillery’s Glen Breton whiskey caused confusion over its origin by the use of the word “glen,” so common to famous Scotch malts such as Glenlivet. It’s a claim that’s undermined, however, by the prominent maple leaf on the bottles.



**Glen Breton  
Ice Whiskey**

**Glenora** is a high-tech distillery, but produces that most traditional of whiskeys, single malt.

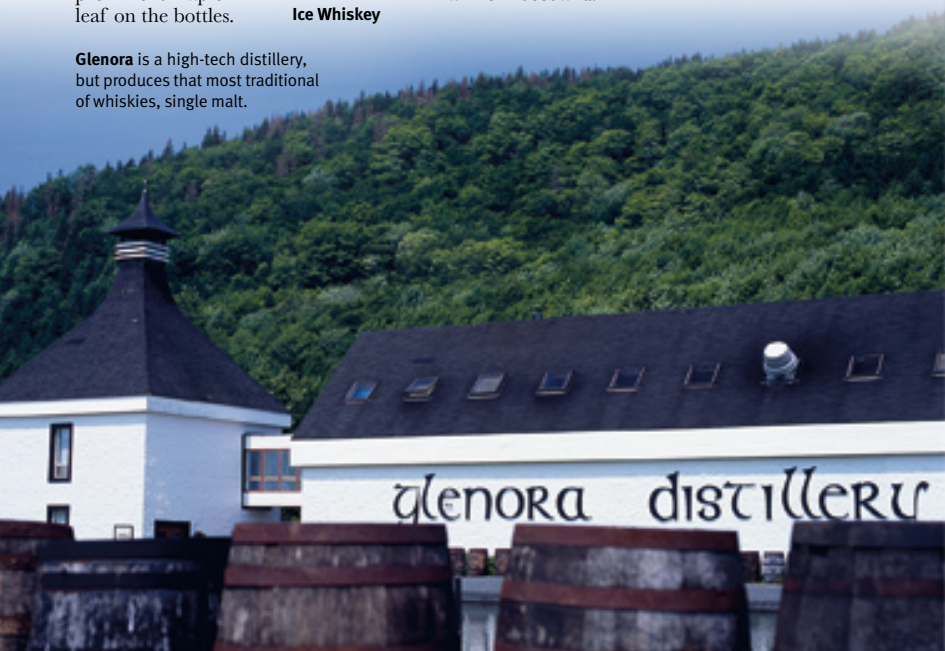


Glenora Distillery has been making whiskey for just under 20 years, and was the brainchild of Canadian businessman Bruce Jardine. The site was chosen because of the purity of its water source—a burn flowing over granite. However, within a few weeks of production starting, it stopped when the money ran out. After two stuttering years, it was sold to another local businessman, Lauchie MacLean, whose ancestors hail from Scotland.

**Glenora has chalets** for visitors close to the plant; they overlook the beautiful valley where the distillery is located.

Bruce died in 1994 before he could see his vision and investment bear fruit. But, from a tentative start, the distillery started to get its act together. Poor early spirit was redistilled, producing a triple-distilled whiskey. In the last few years it has continued to evolve nicely, and is now being bottled as an 8 or 9-year-old whiskey.

The distillery itself is built on a 300-acre (120-ha) site, comprising seven buildings.



It has a wash and a spirit still imported from Scotland and is capable of producing a modest 55,000 gallons (250,000 liters) of spirit a year—though the owners point out that the site has been designed to allow improvements that would quickly increase output to as much as twice that amount. The distillery has imported barley from Scotland in the past and has experimented with a range of peat levels, while favoring just lightly peated whiskey for its core expression, which is matured in bourbon barrels.

At present the distillery's main bottling is called Cape Breton Rare Canadian. It's an 8-year-old whiskey with a distinctive butterscotch and orange flavor. The distillery has also recently launched an expression called Glen Breton Ice, which is the same spirit, but matured in ice wine barrels—the world's first whiskey to be aged this way, it is claimed.

If you are thinking of making the journey out to this beautiful part of the world, consider staying at one of the nearby chalets, which are advertised on the distillery's website.

## HIGHWOOD

📍 High River, Alberta  
 🌐 [www.highwood-distillers.com](http://www.highwood-distillers.com)  
 🏠 Open to visitors

Highwood is a remote, independent operation that nestles in the middle of some of Canada's most fertile grain-producing land. This seems to be a distillery on the up, albeit from a fairly low starting point.

In fact, it's effectively two distilleries for the price of one, because a few years ago Highwood bought

Potter's Distillery—at the time, British Columbia's only surviving distillery—and brought all its brands under the Highwood wing.

The plant was in fact first established as Sunnyvale Distillery in 1974, another distillery created to take advantage of the booming Canadian whiskey market. It changed its name in 1984 in recognition of the region within which it is producing, and now boasts a portfolio of some 50

different products, including premixed drinks and liqueurs. It has several little-known whiskey brands that sell mainly in the west of Canada, although there has been some expansion to the east and down to the US. It also bottles spirits for other companies.

Its point of difference from other Canadian distilleries is that it is the only one in Canada to produce its neutral base spirit from wheat rather than corn. The trouble is, wheat produces a lighter spirit that is ideal for

vodka production—which is key to the distillery's output—but is not necessarily so good for whiskey. Those who have tried the new make report that it is not only characterless but just about tasteless—and that, of course, doesn't bode well for the mature whiskey.

That said, though, the 13-year-old and 15-year-old whiskeys produced under the Century Reserve label are single cask pure rye whiskeys. They have a great deal of personality, and hint at the premium direction in which



Highwood's  
Potter's Rye  
Whiskey

this distillery could well move in the near future. Highwood is also home to the brands produced by Potter's—a name that recalls Ernie Potter, who founded the eponymous distillery in 1958. Distillery and brand were bought by Highwood in 2005.

## HIRAM WALKER & SONS

📍 Walkerville,  
Windsor, Ontario  
 🌐 [www.canadianclubwhisky.com](http://www.canadianclubwhisky.com)  
 🏠 Open to visitors

Founded in 1858, Hiram Walker's distillery was expanded in 1894, with great fanfare, and a town grew up around it to accommodate distillery employees. Known as Walkerville, the area is still home to the original distillery and much of it is a throwback to Hiram Walker's time. The production methods haven't changed massively either, and much of the old equipment remains in place, though not necessarily in use.

The Hiram Walker Distillery has long been associated with the Canadian Club brand (see over), although ownership has recently been split, with the distillery now falling under the Pernod Ricard umbrella; and Canadian Club now being part of Jim Beam Global.

Canadian Club has, of course, remained a world-famous brand, but under the one name is a range of distinct whiskeys. Mostly they are distilled and then



Highwood  
Rye Whiskey



Canadian  
Club whiskey

## HIRAM WALKER AND CANADIAN CLUB WHISKEY

There are some legendary names scattered through the history of Canadian whiskey, but none are bigger than Hiram Walker. Through the methods he used and through his Canadian Club brand, he more than any other was responsible for putting Canada on the whiskey map.

While it might be stretching it a little to credit him with inventing Canadian whiskey as we know it today, Hiram Walker's influence on its development is immense, and his way of producing whiskey has been emulated across the country ever since.

Early references to Canadian whiskey mention the wild and pioneering times of the 18th century, when distilled grain was consumed by trappers, hunters, and settlers to get inebriated. It would have been an unrefined hooch far removed from the smooth and sophisticated product it is today.

By the 1840s there were 200 distilleries in Canada, but it wasn't until 1858 that Walker, a businessman with interests in shipping and tobacco, founded a mill and distillery at a site near Windsor, Ontario.

**The Hiram Walker Distillery** pioneered the distinctive style of Canadian whiskey, marrying grain whiskey with a flavorful oil-rich rye.



Canadian Club Special Reserve

Initially, he made whiskey in the tried and tested fashion, mixing a dominant percentage of corn with other grains, including malted barley and rye, distilled through wooden continuous stills.

By the time he launched what was to become known as Canadian Club in 1884, though, the production method had changed to one that is now recognizably a Canadian style. The whiskey was made up of very strong base spirit mixed with a considerably weaker flavored spirit, often made with rye. For this, a copper pot still was used to make a heavy, oil-rich rye.

The result was lighter and cleaner whiskey than others of the time, and it was an immediate success, particularly across the border in the northern industrial cities of the US.

Its success prompted other producers to turn to the same production methods, and so it was that the Canadian boom began.





**Canadian Club**, as advertised in this French-Canadian poster, was popularized around the world as a mixing whiskey for cocktails.

blended before maturing. The standard Canadian Club is a 6-year-old, but Canadian Club Reserve is a 10-year-old and contains a higher proportion of rye. The Classic 12-year-old has a higher proportion of malted barley. Best of the range though are the 100 proof version and the Canadian Club Sherry Finish, which is an 8-year-old and benefits considerably from the additional fruitiness the second cask imparts.

■ **CANADIAN CLUB** 40% ABV

Spirity and winery on the nose. The palate is sharp and oily, with a splash of vanilla and then a spicy finish, which is both short and sharp.

■ **CANADIAN CLUB**

**CLASSIC** 40% ABV • Toffee and vanilla aromas on the nose, and a palate that offers a big dose of fruit, some oak spice, and then a rich caramel hit. The finish is drier, spicier, and longer than many Canadian whiskeys.



Canadian Club Classic

**WISER'S WHISKIES**

Hiram Walker is now also home to some of the whiskeys that used to be produced by the Corby Distillery, which closed in the 1990s. They include the highly respected range that appear under the Wiser's label (owned by Pernod Ricard), which have been distilled at Hiram Walker's for about 10 years.

■ **WISER'S DE**

**LUXE** 40% ABV

The nose is solid, with rye and fruit, and the

palate both grainy and oily, with some toffee and vanilla notes. There's lots going on, with oak and grain in attendance, and the finish is full and embracing. Distinctly moreish.

■ **WISER'S 18-YEAR-OLD** 40% ABV

Shy but complicated nose, with prune, overripe peach, polished leather, and honey. On the palate, this is whiskey's version of a sugar-coated candy, with a grain and oak coating and a chocolate and fruit center. The finish lashes out with a sharp prod at the end, then smolders in the mouth for a while. Not totally expected, but captivating all the same.

**KITTLING RIDGE**

✉ Grimsby, Ontario

🌐 [www.kittlingridge.com](http://www.kittlingridge.com)

🏠 Open to visitors Mar–Oct, or by appointment

If it is a dramatic location you want for your distillery, then Kittling Ridge Estate Wines and Spirits fits the bill perfectly. It sits close to the beaches of Lake Erie and about 40 miles (65 km) away from Niagara Falls.

**MAPLE LEAF**

**Ingredients:**

A little over 1 measure (30 ml) of Canadian Club Classic whiskey  
A third of a measure (8 ml) of lemon juice  
1 tsp of maple syrup

**Method:** Fill a mixing glass with ice. Add the whiskey, lemon juice, and maple syrup, then shake. Strain into a cocktail glass.

Chances are, you haven't heard of it. Kittling Ridge is a small, independent company, founded in 1971 by a Swiss stillmaster in order to make European-style fruit brandies. The operation was expanded soon after to produce other spirits. Despite the vineyard-sounding name—introduced no doubt to attract the growing number of Canadian wine enthusiasts—wine has been a relatively late addition to the company's offering.

The wine link came when original founder Otto Reider retired and winemaker John Hall took over. It is his precise and winelike approach to whiskeymaking that has helped define this distillery's products—in particular Forty Creek Barrel Select, one of Canada's most appealing and intriguing whiskeys.

Forty Creek is made using three grains, but there is no mash bill for them. That is because they are fermented in batches separately, and then individually distilled in copper stills. Each of them is then matured in white oak casks that have been selected specially for the individual spirits, and each cask has a different level of charring. Only when the whiskeys have been aged for between six and 10 years are they blended and finished for a further six months in oak casks that have previously contained sherry made by Hall himself.



**Valleyfield**, Canada's only French-speaking distillery, was once part of a strong whiskeymaking region.

The resulting whiskey puts to rest once and for all the erroneous assumption that Canadian whiskeys are bland and uninteresting. It has a varied and impressive taste profile that makes it not just unique to Canada, but unique in the entire world of whiskey. If you're looking for hope for the future of Canadian whiskey, this distillery is surely it.

Kittling Ridge does also produce a couple of more conventional whiskeys, in the shape of Pure Gold and the recently released Mountain Rock. The latter comes in an unbreakable plastic bottle—its sales pitch being that it is “easy to pack when traveling.”

**▮ FORTY CREEK BARREL**

**SELECT 40% ABV** • Assertive and inviting on the nose, Forty Creek Barrel Select is full of plummy sherry and fruity promise. The palate is fullsome, with chunky orange fruit, chocolate, and spice, followed by a

satisfying and quite intense finish. Impressive stuff.

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**PALLISER**

▮ Lethbridge, Alberta

Palliser Distillery lies about two hours' drive from the US border and is the home of the Black Velvet Distilling Company—a subsidiary of Gilbey, the gin makers. Gilbey launched Black Velvet Whiskey just after World War II, and opened the Palliser plant as the demand for Canadian whiskey exploded. As we know, though, the boom days weren't set to last, and Gilbey's original whiskey distillery was shut down and production of other spirits brought to Palliser.

Now the plant is best known for making Smirnoff. Black Velvet is also produced here again, and still enjoys

considerable success, selling in the region of two million cases worldwide. However, it very much plays second fiddle to the world-famous vodka brand.

The base neutral spirit for Black Velvet is produced

from a three-column continuous still and aged for about three years. The flavoring spirits are distilled in a one-column still and matured for about six years. In a break with conventional practice, the 6-year-old flavoring whiskeys are mixed into the base spirit when it is newly distilled and before it is matured.

The resulting whiskey is pleasant enough, without setting the world on fire.

**▮ BLACK VELVET 40% ABV**

The nose is malty, fresh, and spicy; the palate clean and with a nice balance between sweetness and spice. As for the finish, it heads for the exit signs almost immediately.

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**VALLEYFIELD**

▮ Valleyfield, Quebec

Quebec is, of course, the French-speaking part of Canada, and Valleyfield is the world's only French-speaking distillery outside France. Maybe the French influence has rubbed off on the whiskey production, because several of this large distillery's whiskeys are of the highest quality.

Also known as the Old Schenley Distillery, Valleyfield lies about 30 miles (50 km) outside Montreal. It was



**Black Velvet Canadian Whiskey**

once part of a proud distilling region in Quebec, where there were eight distilleries 45 years ago. Now Valleyfield is the last one.

Originally a brewery, it was acquired by Schenley—which had been successfully producing spirits in Pennsylvania—at the end of World War II. New stillhouses and warehouses were built and, as the demand for Canadian whiskey soared, it was expanded in the 1960s. As early as 1950, the distillery was producing 8-year-old whiskeys which are said to have been of exceptional quality. They included Gibson Straight Rye and a straight bourbon.

The distillery is now capable of producing about 5.5 million gallons (25 million liters) of spirit each year. Not all of it is whiskey, however. Vodka and rum have been produced at the distillery, which is now owned by Kentucky bourbon producers Barton Brands, who bought it just before the end of the millennium.

Barton own Black Velvet and so have a sister distillery (Palliser, *see above*) in Alberta. Quebec is well placed to meet the demands of America's eastern seaboard; while Alberta can satisfy the needs of the west.

That's only part of the story though. The distillery has been designed with flexibility in mind, and can produce a range of different styles of whiskeys. It boasts



In the early 1980s, Valleyfield Distillery filled its three millionth barrel of whiskey.

large open-top fermenters, and produces its flavoring rye in copper pot still doublers. The system seems to have been tailor-made to produce a surprisingly characterful corn spirit, and it's this that lies at the heart of some of its award-winning whiskeys. These include the Gibson's range and the Schenley whiskeys.

🍷 **SCHENLEY GOLDEN WEDDING** 40% ABV • One of Canada's best-sellers, Schenley Golden Wedding is a young and stylish, but ordered, whiskey. Everything about it is light, smooth, and impeccably well behaved.

🍷 **SCHENLEY OFC** 40% ABV • The name OFC stands for Original Fine Canadian, a whiskey produced for the domestic market as an 8-year-old, as opposed to the 6-year-old version that is exported to the US. OFC is defined by its rich toffee and vanilla characteristics.

## WINCHESTER CELLARS

✉ Vancouver Island  
🌐 [www.winchestercellars.com](http://www.winchestercellars.com)  
🏠 Open to visitors

It is fitting that the last of the distilleries to be featured in the Canadian section is Winchester Cellars, because it is from microdistillers like this that the future of Canadian whiskey might well develop and be defined.

Winchester Cellars is a highly respected wine producer on Vancouver Island, the biggest wine growing area in Canada. Established by Ken Winchester 25 years ago, it has expanded gradually and is now turning its attention to single malt whiskey, though it has some way to go before it produces its first bottle for consumption.

Ken Winchester has a long history in distilling, but mainly of brandy and grappa. Now he is intent on producing premium single malt whiskey commercially.

## LADIES

### Ingredients:

A little over 2 measures (60 ml) of Canadian whiskey  
2 dashes of Pernod  
2 dashes of  
Angostura bitters  
2 dashes of Anisette

**Method:** Fill a mixing glass with ice. Add all the ingredients and shake. Strain the liquid into chilled cocktail glass.



Ken Winchester and the German pot still that he is using to distill peated malt from Scotland.

Ken has a 55-gallon (250-liter) German pot still, which he says is "small but sophisticated." With it, he is experimenting with unpeated and lightly peated Scottish malt, though he is in talks with local Canadian barley producers and plans to experiment with peat from the island. In time, he says, he wants the whiskey to be made entirely with produce from the island. He will mature the spirit he produces in the finest French oak casks, which he has already sourced for his winemaking.

A new distillery is always a cause for celebration. And one that adds more variety to the marketplace is even more reason to cheer. As for future of Canadian whiskey, it's further proof that the embers still burn brightly.



OLYMPIA

bee

SUNTORY



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THE SUNTORY



# JAPAN

The first grain spirit made in Japan would possibly have been a form of *shochu* made in Kyushu (where a barley-based spirit is still made today), and there are records of *yoshu* (foreign spirits) being made at the end of the 19th century in Japan.

**O**ne of the firms experimenting with *yoshu* was Gisuke Konishi, which was selling something that it called whiskey in the late 1880s. Shinjiro Torii, a nephew of its owner, was employed at the firm before he left in 1899 to establish his own liquor retail and importing venture, Kotobukiya. By 1919 his brand, “Tory’s Finest Liqueur Scotch Whisky,” was being sold. Torii had the whiskey bug—now he needed a distillery. By the start of the 1920s, Torii had bought a large tract of land between Kyoto and Osaka to build his distillery. All that was missing was a whiskeymaker. Enter Masataka Taketsuru.

A scion of a *sake* brewing family from Hiroshima, Taketsuru was sent to Glasgow in 1918 to study whiskeymaking by Kihei Abe of Osaka-based distiller Settsu Shuzo. Although Takesuru studied chemistry at Glasgow University, he gained his whiskeymaking experience at first hand, with apprenticeships at Longmorn and Hazelburn distilleries (see also p248). In 1920 he returned to Japan, along with his Scottish wife, and was soon snapped up by Torii as manager of Yamazaki, Japan’s first malt distillery.

In 1929, Japan’s first whiskey was introduced. Called Shirofuda (“White Label”), it was a blend of Yamazaki malt and grain spirit from the firm’s Osaka distillery. By the start of the next decade, Yamazaki’s whiskies were being exported. Then, in 1934, Taketsuru left.

It appears that he and Torii were suffering from the distilling equivalent of musical differences. Taketsuru argued that the distillery should be located in the cool north, not in the middle of humid Honshu. His preference was for peaty whiskies, whereas Torii felt that a lighter style would better suit the Japanese palate and have greater commercial appeal.

## COOL NORTHERN CLIMES

Taketsuru founded Dai-nippon-kaju. To locate the perfect spot for a distillery, he followed his instinct and went to Japan’s northernmost island, Hokkaido. Here, at Yoichi, he found everything he felt he needed to make whiskey his way: peat, barley, a cold climate, and plentiful water supplies. In 1934, Yoichi Distillery started its production. Torii’s firm Kotobukiya now had a rival, and this duopoly has dominated Japanese whiskey ever since.

Kotobukiya pressed on with a raft of new brands, though it wasn’t until the end of World War II that the Japanese whiskey industry could start in earnest.

**Advertised here in Tokyo, Suntory** was the first whiskey produced in Japan and remains a leading brand, famous at home and abroad.

By then Taketsuru had changed the name of his firm to Nikka, while, in 1952, Torii founded a chain of bars, called Tory's, to promote its whiskeys.

By now, other distillers were joining in. Hombu began distilling in Kagoshima Prefecture in the early 1950s, while in 1956 Daikoku-budoshu converted a winery on the slopes of Mount Asama into its Karuizawa Distillery. *Shochu* distiller Takara also got in on the act, making whiskey for its King brand at the Shirakawa Distillery in Fukushima (see p251).

It was around this time that the *mizuwari* style of drinking whiskey long and heavily diluted became the preferred way to imbibe among the "salarymen" who helped fuel Japan's postwar economic boom. They also helped to fuel a boom for Japanese whiskey.

## THE RISE OF SUNTORY

New brands continued to appear, along with a new dominant personality. Keizo Saji, Shinjiro Torii's son, took over as president of Kotobukiya in 1963 and renamed the firm Suntory (a combination of the firm's port brand Akadama, which translates as "red ball," aka "sun," and Torii's surname). Under his stewardship, new brands Suntory Royal, Red, White, and Reserve all appeared—the last in 1969, the same year that Taketsuru's firm (now called Nikka) started whiskey production at its new Sendai Distillery.

In 1973 a further two plants opened: Gotemba, a joint venture between Kirin breweries and Seagram; and Suntory's Hakushu, one of the world's largest malt distilleries.

By the end of the 1980s the industry was in expansionist mode and needing to guarantee supplies of Scotch to be

**Hakushu**, which is owned by Suntory, was the world's largest malt distillery in the mid-1980s.

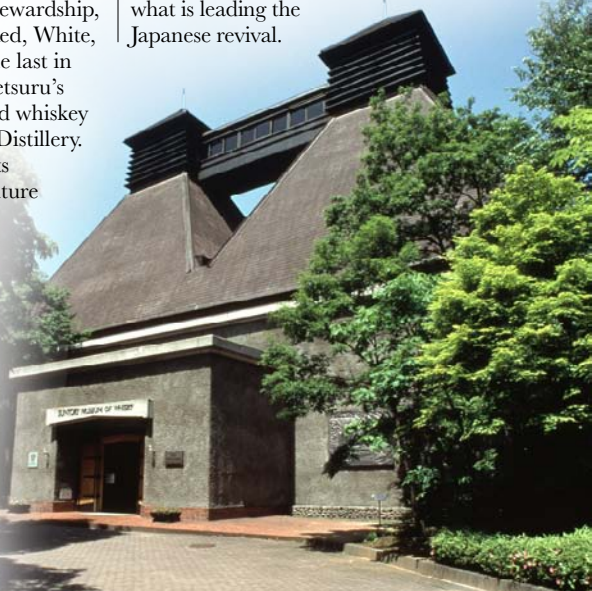
## JAPAN'S DISTILLERIES



mixed into the domestic blends. Accordingly, Nikka bought Ben Nevis Distillery in Scotland, while Takara followed suit, buying Tomatin (then Scotland's largest single malt distillery). In 1994 Suntory joined the overseas adventure, buying Morrison Bowmore and taking a stake in Macallan.

All were brought back down to earth three years later when the Asian financial crisis hit. Sales plummeted and, against expectations, did not bounce back. Like their colleagues in Scotland, Japanese distillers believed that each new generation would consume whiskey in ever-larger quantities. The decline may have been initiated by a financial crisis, but it was also due to a generational shift away from dark spirits and toward lighter alternatives. In Britain and the US, vodka was in the ascendency; in Japan it was the turn of *shochu*.

The downturn in sales put most distilleries in mothballs; others closed forever. The consequent whiskey surplus forced distillers to find new ways to sell their stock. As in Scotland, single malt was the answer, and that is what is leading the Japanese revival.



# DISTILLERIES AND MALTS

Despite the industry's setback in the mid-1990s, there are signs of a new confidence in Japanese whiskey-making. With more interest in quality malts, it is clear that Japanese whiskey is unique and can exist on its own terms.

## GOTEMBA

✉ Shibanta 970, Gotembashi, Shizuoka

🌐 [www.kirin.co.jp](http://www.kirin.co.jp)

🏠 Open to visitors

At 2,000 ft (620 m) above sea level, Gotemba is cool, and the maturation profile is, therefore, similar to that of Suntory's Hakushu Distillery (see p239). That is beneficial, the firm believes, for longer ageing. There's a further similarity with that alpine distillery, as both were built in 1973, during the Japanese whiskey boom. Gotemba is, however, the only example of a foreign firm—in this case the Canadian distiller Seagram—investing in the infrastructure of the Japanese distilling industry.

The style is similar to that of Hakushu, though whether this is due to altitude or a result of the “Seagram template” is unclear. What is certain is that Kirin (the present owner) believes that it is making a genuine Japanese style—delicate and light, and designed to accompany the country's cuisine.

Not overly constrained by space considerations, the site is sprawling. The production unit is surprisingly small, however, with a malt plant in one room and a grain distillery in another. Four types of malt, from unpeated to heavily peated, are used, and the Japanese model of crystal clear wort and a long, cool fermentation in stainless steel (using, in this case, one of three yeasts cultured at the plant) is employed to assist in the creation of all-important esters.

The four pot stills were modeled on those at



**Gotemba Distillery** was built in 1973 by Canada's Seagram.

a single column still, a linked column still, and a doubler (as used by Kentucky whiskey-makers) to produce three very different styles of grain whiskey. All

Scotland's Strathisla Distillery (see p74), an ex-Seagram plant. The distillation is run so as to maximize the interaction between vapor and copper, which assists in the creation of a light spirit.

The grain distillery houses three different types of still:

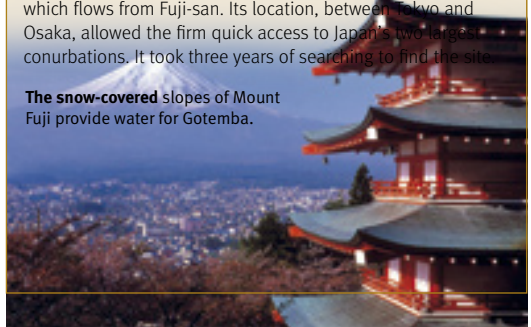
the spirits are aged in American oak barrels.

Today, Gotemba is Japanese-owned. When Seagram sold its distilling interests, the drinks firm Kirin bought back its share of the business—and snapped up the Four Roses

## FINDING THE RIGHT LOCATION

Picking a site for a distillery is never an easy task. A number of different criteria need to be considered. Water is an obvious one; ease of access to market is another. Space comes into the equation too. This last issue is of no concern to Kirin, the brewer that owns Gotemba. If you stand on the viewing platform on the top of the distillery, there is nothing in front of you but the slopes of Mount Fuji. The area behind is also clear, as it is used as a Japanese Defense Force training site. While many distillers may balk at building their still between an active volcano and a bombing range, it doesn't appear to concern the workers at Gotemba. The main issue for choosing the site was the plentiful supply of lava-filtered snow melt, which flows from Fuji-san. Its location, between Tokyo and Osaka, allowed the firm quick access to Japan's two largest conurbations. It took three years of searching to find the site.

**The snow-covered** slopes of Mount Fuji provide water for Gotemba.



## THE HAKUSHU STORY

Hakushu is spectacularly situated in the “Japanese Alps,” a three-hour bullet train ride from all the bustle of Tokyo. Above the distillery rise the granite slopes of Mount Kai-Komagatake, while opposite it looms the active volcano Mount Yatsugatake.

The air at Hakushu is clean and cool, the first indication that the distillery sits at 2,300 ft (700 m) above sea level—more than twice as high as Scotland’s highest single-malt distillery. The maximum summer temperature reaches 82°F (28°C)—one reason why this part of the country is a popular destination for city-bound people seeking a short respite from the stifling summer plains.

Despite the distillery site covering 9 million sq ft (850,000 sq meters), there is an absence of any thoughts of industrialization. Hakushu, for all its size, blends into the deep green forests. Over half of the site is kept as a nature reserve, and the distillery’s (extremely soft) process water is also bottled and sold by owner Suntory (therefore making the perfect dilutant for the single malt). It was the

**Hakushu** employs a great variety of pot stills to create many different distilling conditions and therefore a wide range of whiskies.



**Hakushu  
10-Year-Old**

water that attracted Keizo Saji (son of Suntory’s founder, Shinjiro Torii) to the location, not only for its purity and softness, but also because of the volumes that could be captured from the rivers that flow off the surrounding mountains.

Hakushu was one of the distilleries built as a result of the Japanese whiskey boom and it was built on a grand scale. Even so, in 1983 Suntory decided to build a second wing, Hakushu East, which made it the largest malt whiskey producer in the world. These days, things have been reined back considerably. The original distillery, with its large pot stills, remains mothballed, and production centers on Hakushu East. Even so, the multiple variations on a theme, which typify Japanese whiskey-making, remain the central distilling ethos. Two types of barley are imported, unpeated and heavily peated. This, in theory, will allow the distiller to blend barleys to produce even more variations.



Distillery (see p189) as well. Since then, a new brand, Fujisan, has been launched as both a single malt and a blend. Hopefully, this will signal the start of a concerted push behind Gotemba's whiskies.

🍷 **FUJI-GOTEMBA**

**18-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV  
Classic Gotemba lightness of character on the nose, with biscuit and pear hints.

The same leathery note as Fujisanroku, but slightly more oily. The palate is dry and slightly tannic, with some sweet biscuit notes and tobacco. The finish is nutty.

🍷 **FUJI-GOTEMBA SINGLE GRAIN**

**15-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV • One of a very limited number of Japanese single grains available. The Gotemba Distillery uses maize for the base cereal. The whiskey is very sweet, almost like a liqueur, with some honey, sesame, and plenty of coconut from ageing in American oak barrels. The palate is extremely soft, with a mix of succulent spirit and buttery wood.



**Fuji-Gotemba**  
**18-Year-Old**

or fall abruptly. There's even one spirit still with a detachable lyne arm—one arm points up, another goes down. The different distilling conditions created by this set-up will yield dramatically different spirits ... and that is the point. Hakushu was not built as a distillery to produce one style of bottled single malt, but was developed to make as wide a variety of flavoring whiskies as possible for Suntory's range of blends.

It is impossible for a visitor to make sense of the complicated set-up here. A quick look below the stills, for example, reveals twice the number of receiving tanks that you would expect. Whatever their methods, Suntory are keeping them to themselves.

An on-site cooperage carries out recharring and repair work on different types of cask, all of which are held in 22 warehouses.

It is estimated that 35 million gallons (160 million liters) of whiskey are maturing on site.

Hakushu's whiskies are a crucial component of Suntory's blends, but the distillery is also building a reputation for its single malt. It first appeared as a "Pure Malt" with no age statement in 1988, but today the range comprises 10, 12, and 18-year-old expressions. The distiller claims that its reputation is partially due to the altitude of the distillery, which encourages low-pressure distillation, which allows fewer heavier elements into

the spirit. All this esoteric distilling theory becomes academic, however, once the single malt is tasted.

🍷 **HAKUSHU 10-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV  
Light in character with a slight floral, almost pinelike aroma, and just a hint of smoke.

🍷 **HAKUSHU 12-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV  
This is in many ways the perfect introduction to the Hakushu style. Clean and pure, with touches of light grass, cut flowers, pine, and a little peach juice. A hint of linseed oil indicates its relative youth. The palate starts very sweet, and then the peachy note returns before nuts come back toward the (very clean) finish. A light whiskey, but a well-balanced one.

🍷 **HAKUSHU**

**18-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV

The oak is extremely well balanced—almost restrained in the distillery's older expression. The flowers have shifted to a more general vegetal character, alongside some green plum. The peach juice has moved into mango, while the green grass has shifted to dry hay.

There's a fresh acidity cut with a delicate sweetness. The palate shows more toasty oak. Best drunk with water on the side.



**Hakushu**  
**18-Year-Old**

## HAKUSHU

✉ Torihara 2913-1, Hakushucho, Komagun, Yamanashi

🌐 [www.suntory.co.jp](http://www.suntory.co.jp)

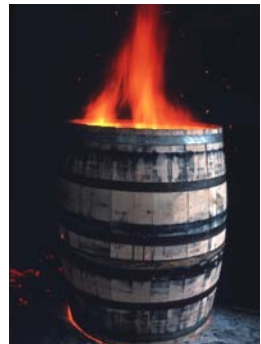
🏠 Open to visitors

The key to Hakushu lies in the stillhouse. The assortment of equipment at this distillery is nothing short of astonishing. There are six wash stills and five spirit stills—all bar one direct fired—but of a wide variety of type, size, and shape. They run from minuscule "Macallan-type" pots to large "lamp-glass" monsters.

Lyne arms stretch upward, dip gently,



**Hakushu**  
**12-Year-Old**



**Hakushu Distillery** handles the important process of charring its casks at its on-site cooperage.

## HANYU

[www.onedrinks.com](http://www.onedrinks.com)

Even in the complicated world of Japanese whiskey, Hanyu occupies a special place. This is a distillery whose single malts—masterminded by master distiller Ichiro Akuto—have exploded onto the whiskey scene, picking up rave reviews and international prizes. Yet, there is currently no Hanyu Distillery.

Akuto's family started in the liquor trade in the early 17th century when it established a *sake* brewery in Chichibu. In 1941, the decision was made to expand into other areas, and Ichiro's grandfather, Isouji Akuto, built a new *sake* brewery and *shochu* distillery in the town of Hanyu. Five years later his firm, Toa Shuzo, began to blend whiskey, though it was not until the early 1980s that the firm began to distill its own whiskey. The Japanese obsession with the right water resulted in supplies being trucked 31 miles (50 km) from Chichibu to the distillery.

The firm's style (sold under the Chichibu and Golden Horse labels) was in the



**Hanyu Single Cask 1988**

Yoichi/Karuizawa vein of fuller-bodied, peated whiskeys. This adversely impacted on sales, though, as in the 1980s, Japanese whiskey drinkers tended to knock back their drams *mizuwari* style (see p236). Though Ichiro Akuto had plans to launch a range of single-malt expressions, a downturn in the market bankrupted Toa Shuzo. In 2000 it was sold to a *sake* and *shochu* producer, and the distillery dismantled.

Thankfully, Ichiro Akuto received backing from *sake* brewer Sasanogawa Shuzo to buy back much of the whiskey stocks, which he began releasing under the Ichiro's Malt label (see p251), as the Card Series.

The reaction, particularly on the export market, has been astonishing. The whiskeys are revealed as being highly complex, medium to full bodied, but with classic Japanese precision of flavor. The happy ending to the story is that, in 2007, Ichiro Akuto began distilling at his new distillery in Chichibu. The Card Series will be eked out until his new malts are mature.

■ **HANYU VINTAGE 1988, NUMBER 1 DRINKS COMPANY** 55.6% ABV • This was bottled for Hanyu's UK importer. The whiskey was aged in an American oak



**Karuizawa** is a small-scale, boutique distillery that focuses on one particular style of whiskey.

hogshead and then given a period of finishing in Japanese oak. The nose is a mix of the softly fragrant (vanilla pod, lemon zest, white chocolate) and the exotic—even some black olive tapenade. Light smoke adds another layer. The palate follows in this vein and demonstrates the ability of the best Japanese whiskeys to have complexity while retaining a very bright character. The finish is slightly tarry.

## KARUIZAWA

✉ Maseguchi 1795-2, Oaza, Miyotamachi, Kitasakugun, Nagano  
 ☎ [www.mercian.co.jp](http://www.mercian.co.jp)  
 🏠 Open to visitors

“Boutique” is the term that best describes Karuizawa. While most of Japan's other distilleries sprawl over huge sites, it is squeezed into a few buildings on the outskirts of Miyota-cho. Behind it rises the smoking cone of Mount Asama. Originally, this site was a vineyard and the buildings housed a winery. After World War II its then owner, Daikoku-budoshu, in common with a number of other domestic liquor producers decided to join Japan's nascent whiskey business. In 1962, it merged with Mercian, another drinks business.

### KARUIZAWA'S BARLEY

This could be the only malt distillery in the world still insisting on using Golden Promise barley exclusively. Karuizawa's whiskeymakers believe that this barley strain gives a heavier and more oily character and is better suited for extended maturation. These days, the barley is unpeated. Until the mid-1990s, however, heavily-peated malt was used, and this type still appears in the older bottlings.

## JAPANESE WHISKEY: WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT?

Strip away all the clues that you are in Japan—cicadas, shrines, *bento* boxes in the café, the signage—and a visit to a Japanese distillery is rather familiar for the visitor already well versed in Scottish malt distillation. There are mash tuns, washbacks, double distillation in pot stills, and maturation (predominantly) in the same mix of woods.

How do Japanese distillers craft a style of whiskey that, though similar to its Scottish cousins, has its own individual—

Japanese—character?

To start, maybe it is best to define that Japaneseness. The difference was best expressed by Dr. Mas Minabe at Suntory, who talked of a “transparency”

of flavor that exists in Japanese malts and is not present in Scottish ones. On one hand this means a precision of character, an ordered array of aromas and flavors that seem to line up on the palate and can be tasted almost individually while still making up a complex whole. This isn’t to say that these are light whiskeys. Transparency is spot on. You can see into them.

Another defining element is that Japanese single malt is not malty.

**Suntory uses wooden mash tuns**, like these, as well as more modern stainless-steel tuns to create further variety in the spirit they produce.



**Suntory** is the best-known producer of Japanese whiskey.

There are no cereal notes. Even a non-malty Scotch will seem to be filled with cereal notes when compared to a Japanese malt. In order to achieve this, Japanese distillers avoid any solids from the grist being brought through from the mash tun to the washback. Scottish distillers talk of clear and cloudy worts, but none have

the clarity of wort achieved in Japan.

A wide mix of yeasts, some unique to a single distillery, is also employed, allowing the creation of distinct flavors, while the widespread use of long fermentation helps to build complexity and aromatic elements and reduces cereal elements.

Japan itself has a part to play. Its climate has an influence on the way the whiskey matures. As Masataka Taketsuru says: “whiskeymaking is an act of cooperative creation between the blessings of nature and the wisdom of man.”





The differences between Karuizawa and its colleagues is clear from the start. No creation of a range of flavors here. The distillery is set up to make one style of malt whiskey, end of story.

The fermentation process is intriguing and appears to take its inspiration from *sake* brewing. A small percentage of wort is pumped into a tank and yeast is added. Only once this “starter” is active is it transferred to the washback where the rest of the worts and a small extra amount of yeast is added.

The stillhouse—actually, it is more of a stillroom—gives the impression of being slightly too small for the pots it contains, even though they could hardly be described as gigantic. The necks of the two pairs of wash and spirit stills arch into the wooden rafters. Distillation is relaxed, and maturation in the ivy-festooned, fungus-blackened stone warehouses is predominantly in European oak ex-sherry barrels, which have been remade to hold 88 gallons (400 liters)—less to do with wood interaction and more to do with fitting into the racks.

The Japanese climate has its part to play too. Winters can be very cold—the train from Tokyo is often filled with skiers then—but summers are sultry and humid, causing the maturation to vary its pace markedly—another Japanese twist in what at first seems a classic, old-style Scottish set-up.

Taste Karuizawa and the terms “fat,” “full,” “power,” “sweet,” and “weight” appear regularly. These are robust but balanced whiskeys. A range of aged malts and vintage-dated bottlings is available as well as occasional releases by other bottlers.

## SENDAI'S SETTING

Nikka's second malt distillery is set among the mountains on the road to the cherry orchards, mountain temples, and hot springs of Tone, in Miyagi Prefecture to the northeast of Tokyo. Its large buildings are scattered across the river plain, separated by mini plantations of pine and cradled by the waters of the Nikkawa and Hirose rivers.

It was the confluence of these two rivers at this point that prompted Masataka Taketsuru to start building here in 1969, at the end of a three-year search for a suitable location for a second distillery. Company legend has it that Masataka came here, tasted the water and pronounced it good. In an echo of the founding of Yamazaki, he also felt the humidity from the rivers was conducive to a good maturation profile.

Sadly, Karuizawa has been mothballed for a number of years. There was a frisson of hope in 2007 when Mercian was bought by Kirin, though it appears the brewer was more interested in that firm's wine business. Hopefully this will change. The full-blooded Karuizawa style would make a wonderful counterpoint to the delicate Gotemba malts.

### ■ KARUIZAWA VINTAGE 1988

59.8% ABV • A rich melange of fruits (black cherry, green fig)

alongside chocolate, eucalyptus, and a vegetal aroma that recalls wet grass or bamboo. The palate is where the deeper notes begin to show.

Tongue-coating with layers of flavor and good weight. Long finish.

### ■ KARUIZAWA

15-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV

This runs counter to most of the distillery's bottlings as it appears to have come from an American oak

(ex-bourbon) cask. Lighter in character with some grassiness but a soft, fruity weight as well: ripe pear, baked peach, honey. Karuizawa's chewy quality is there on the palate along with coffee and some smoke (the malt was peated until 1994).

### ■ KARUIZAWA 17-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV

This is more in line with what is thought of as the classic

Karuizawa style: huge and meaty with truffle/dried shiitake mushroom, even hints of balsamic—a sure indication of greater age. The smoke is slightly sooty along with roast chestnut and a slight earthy note. The sheer weight and heaviness of character is slightly atypical of most Japanese malts. One for after a meal.

## SENDAI (MIYAGIKYO)

✉ Nikka 1, Aobaku, Sendai-shi, Miyagiken

🌐 [www.nikka.com](http://www.nikka.com)

🏠 Open to visitors

There is some confusion as to what this site is actually called. The distillery's name originally was Sendai, because that is the closest major city. This was of no concern until Nikka decided to start bottling it as a single malt. Calling your brand after a city with over one million people is akin to a Scottish distiller naming its single malt “Glasgow.” A new name was devised: Miyagikyo. Kyo is Japanese for “valley,” Miyagi is the name of the prefecture, so the name could be loosely translated as “Glen Miyagi,” which is more appropriate. These days, the single malt is called Miyagikyo, while the distillery itself remains as Sendai—though some early bottlings of the malt have Sendai on the label.



Karuizawa  
17-Year-Old

The plant has been expanded twice (in 1979 and 1989) since its founding, and now has malt and grain distilleries and extensive warehousing. Though the capacity of the malt site is 132,000 gallons (600,000 liters) a year, it is currently operating at just one third of that. The whole process is computerized and monitored from a central control room.

As far as malt production goes, variety is the key, and the approach is similar to the one taken at Yoichi, though here only unpeated and lightly peated malt is used. Two lauter tuns produce worts that run as clear as the Nikkawa's water. Different yeasts are used to help produce a range of flavors in the wash, which ferments slowly in 22 stainless-steel washbacks.

Distillation takes place in eight stills (four from the original distillery and a second quartet), which are set up to run in pairs. They are large and heavy-bottomed, and have fat necks that allow plenty of time for the vapor to

interact with the copper, helping to create a light style of spirit.

Ageing takes place in 18 warehouses scattered around the site. American oak hoggies are the favored type of cask, though some European butts are still used. They are only ever stored two high as this is an earthquake zone.

#### THE MIYAGIKYO WHISKIES

Five types of whiskey are made, but the standard Miyagikyo is fruity with an aromatic, estery lift. It's a lighter dram than Yoichi, with less peat and a floral edge that drifts into soft fruits: fresh in younger examples; dried or caramelized in older expressions.

The grain plant contains two Coffey stills for continuous distillation of grain spirit. The stills were installed in 1999, and provide spirit for Nikka's blends. A number of styles are made: a malt/corn blend, a 100 percent corn distillate, as well as

one made from 100 percent malted barley. The firm has launched, in limited quantities, a "Coffey Grain."

Malt devotees who taste this whiskey are usually pleasantly surprised.

In the export markets, Miyagikyo is somewhat overshadowed by its more robust northern brother, Yoichi, but its make is more in keeping with the Japanese style of estery and lightly fruity

whiskies. And these single malts possess an appealing depth of character.

#### MIYAGIKYO 10-YEAR-OLD 45% ABV

The standard bottled product shows Miyagikyo to be a gentle and fruity malt with light floral touches and good depth. The 10-year-old is light and aromatic with hints of lily and fennel on the nose, with a butterscotch nuttiness. Very clean and precise. This is a medium-bodied malt with a light texture, touches of tangerine, and a pinelike finish.

**Sendai has a beautiful setting** on a watery plain where the Hikkawa and Hirose rivers meet.



Miyagikyo  
15-Year-Old



Miyagikyo  
12-Year-Old



**MIYAGIKYO 12-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV  
By the time the whiskey has reached 12 years old, the flavor has filled out with dried peach and heavy vanilla overtones. Medium-bodied, it also shows a little more oaky grip than the younger example.

**MIYAGIKYO 15-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV  
By 15 years everything has deepened and softened. Toffee, chocolate, and ripe soft fruits on the nose. There's also a touch of raisin on the palate. The most complex of the three, though the fresh grassy notes of youth are still discernable.

## YAMAZAKI

☒ Yamazaki 5-2-2, Honcho, Mishimagun, Osaka

🌐 [www.suntory.co.jp](http://www.suntory.co.jp)

👤 Open to visitors

Arriving at Yamazaki is unlike the approach to any other distillery. You exit at a small train station,

surprised at being in what seems to be the country after the clustering chaos of Kyoto. The noise of cicadas is deafening as you walk through narrow streets, over a level crossing, and on towards a looming brown building. Over the tracks, you arrive in a wooded and landscaped garden. There, one path leads to the huge distillery, while another takes you through the *torii* gate to a Shinto shrine high in the trees.

The shrine is an indication of the auspicious nature of this location, which is one reason why, in the 16th century, it was chosen as the site of the first tea house built by Sen no Rikyu, the creator of *chanoyu* (the tea ceremony). He was drawn by the fact that Yamazaki is at

the confluence of four rivers: namely Katsura, Kamo, Uji and Kizu; all four flow into the Yodo river.



**Yamazaki 25-Year-Old**

While Rikyu came looking for tranquility, Yamazaki's founder, Shinjiro Torii (see p238), was more excited by the misty humidity generated by the river waters. These, he felt, would assist with maturation at this, Japan's first malt whiskey distillery.

The main distillery buildings that can be seen today were built when Yamazaki was doubled in size in 1958. They are not at all pretty, and are topped with two rounded pyramidal protuberances that give the plant the air of a stylized frog. Rather than being in any way decorative, though, they originally had a functional use as pagoda-style chimneys for the distillery's on-site maltings. The maltings closed in 1972, and now, in common with every other Japanese distillery, Yamazaki imports its malted barley, either from Scotland or Australia.

There were further expansions in 1980 and 1989 as the Japanese whiskey boom took hold. If you had visited over the last decade or so, however, you would have found a very different sight. Like every other Japanese distillery, Yamazaki was on an enforced cut-back in production as its owner Suntory tried to balance its stock surplus.

The tough times appear to be receding, however, and in 2005 Yamazaki had yet another makeover, conceivably its most radical yet. While the first Yamazaki had large steam-fired stills, and the 1989 rebuild saw medium-sized steam-fired stills being brought in, the new Yamazaki has small, direct-fired stills. These have been introduced with the aim of making a heavier style of whiskey. A mix of condensers and worm tubs are also used. Production is now half of the previous capacity, meaning that only one of the distillery's two mash tuns is being used.

## A NEW AGE OF CONNOISSEURSHIP

The slump in sales of Japanese blended whiskey from the late 1990s left distillers with excess whiskey. Suntory had launched Yamazaki as a single malt in 1984, but the firm's main business was blend based. However, premium whiskey and malt were to receive ever-greater focus as Suntory tried to persuade a new generation of drinkers to drink less quantity but better quality.

This necessitated creating brands that would appeal to this new consumer. The malt-drinkers' palate, as they discovered, is different to that of the blend lover. The old ways of *mizuwari* (lots of ice, lots of water) with whiskey as a thirst quencher was being replaced by a new connoisseurship where malts (and top blends) were served as shots with glasses of iced water on the side. *Mizuwari* drinkers needed light flavored whiskey; the new premium drinkers demanded flavor above all else.

A change in approach by the consumer, Suntory felt, justified a change in approach at the distillery. Scottish distillers may tweak their plant or wood policy to cope with shifts in demand. Suntory changed the stillhouse.

**Yamazaki's 1984 Single Malt**



## A PLETHORA OF STYLES

Unlike their Scottish counterparts, Japanese distillers do not exchange whiskies for their blends. The onus is, therefore, on the firm's distilling teams to make a number of different styles at each site. Suntory's way is to introduce as much variation in the stillhouse as possible. Japanese distillers become rather secretive when asked about how many flavoring whiskies they make, and Yamazaki is no exception in this regard.

The stillhouse remains one of the most remarkable in the whiskey world. There are six pairs of stills, mostly running in tandem, but all are differently shaped.

The make that appears as a single malt is a medium-bodied, fruity malt with a subtle depth in the middle of the palate. (You might pick up some smoke on future bottlings). Like all the country's whiskies, Yamazaki has a clarity of flavor that clearly differentiates it from Scottish single malt.

In recent years Yamazaki has launched a range of single-cask whiskies from a wide variety of woods: the

standard American oak barrel and hoggie and European oak butts; but also new oak and, most exciting for whiskey enthusiasts, Japanese oak (see p249). The originator remains at the forefront of the new age of Japanese whiskey.

### YAMAZAKI'S HOUSE STYLE

The first malt distillery in Japan, Yamazaki produces a wide range of styles for Suntory's blender, Seiichi

Koshimizu, to work with. The core style, however, is a sweet, fruity single malt, which almost seems to slow down in the middle of the palate to reveal its full complexity. It is a malt that appears to benefit from a slightly longer period in the cask.

■ **YAMAZAKI 10-YEAR-OLD** 40% ABV • The lightest of the range, at 10 years of age, this Yamazaki expression has yet to develop its defining succulent fruitiness. There's a spicy note in here, along with some oak. A light lunchtime drink.

■ **YAMAZAKI 12-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV This expression is very clean and crisp with touches of pineapple, citrus, flowers/

blossom, dried herbs, and a little oak. The palate is quite sweet with a hint of smoke before the dense and fruity character hits in the middle of the tongue, followed by the spices surging through. Very precise and classically Japanese. There's some raisin and coconut as well, suggesting a variety of casks have been used in the mix.

### ■ YAMAZAKI 18-YEAR-

**OLD** 43% ABV • With greater age, Yamazaki acquires more influence from oak. The estery notes of the younger variants have been replaced with ripe apple, violet, and a deep, sweet oakiness that's reminiscent of a walk in the woods in fall. This impression continues on the palate, where a mossy, pinelike character is evident, along with the classic Yamazaki richness in the middle of the mouth.

An extremely classy whiskey.



**Yamazaki  
12-Year-Old**



**Yamazaki  
18-Year-Old**

**The stills** at Yamazaki Distillery are in six pairs of varying shapes and sizes, and lyne arm angles.







**Pure snow melt** from the slopes of Mount Fuji supplies the water for Gotemba Distillery.

## TAKETSURU'S SCOTTISH TRAVELS

Taketsuru's experiences in Scotland were of profound importance to his approach to whiskeymaking. His travels, all meticulously recorded in a series of notebooks, centered around a short period at Longmorn in Speyside, and a longer spell of work experience at Hazelburn in Campbeltown.

He returned to Japan convinced of a number of basics that he felt were essential in making great whiskey. Water and barley were both a given. What was more important was peat and a cold temperature for long, steady maturation. Taketsuru had experienced big, rich whiskeys in Scotland—even today, Longmorn is one of the richer Speysiders, and though Hazelburn has long since gone, the distillery was known for



**Masataka Taketsuru**

making a classic oily, smoky, and rich "Campbeltown" style. If that was his template, it was one that ran counter to the vision of his first boss in Japan, Shinjiro Torii, who wanted a more delicate whiskey and was happy with maturing in the warmer locations closer to the main markets of Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo.

It is not surprising therefore that after helping to establish Yamazaki, Taketsuru headed north to Hokkaido. It is a fanciful notion, but maybe the sight of the herring boats heading off into the Sea of Japan near Yoichi reminded him of Campbeltown. More prosaically, there was water and barley, peat close by, oak forests, and the temperature was as close as he could find to that of Scotland.

## YOICHI

✉ Kurokawacho 7-6, Yoichimachi, Yoichigun, Hokkaido

🌐 [www.nikka.com](http://www.nikka.com)

🏠 Open to visitors

Japan's most northerly distillery is situated in a small fishing port of 24,000 people on the east coast of the island of Hokkaido. Mountains rise around it on three sides, and on the other is the Sea of Japan. If you were to sail due west you would reach Vladivostok on the coast of Russia. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the setting is reminiscent of Scotland, particularly if

**Yoichi Distillery** was founded in the 1930s, and is Japan's most northerly whiskeymaking plant.

you head here in the winter when snow lies thick on the ground and covers the red-roofed pagodas of the kiln.

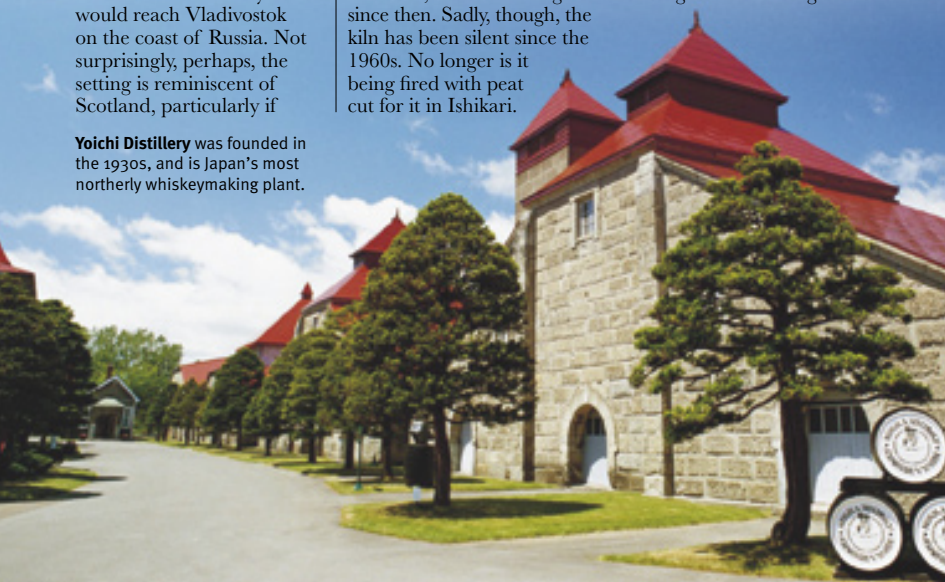
This is where Masataka Taketsuru headed when he left Kotobukiya (now Suntory) to set up on his own in the 1930s (*see also p235*).

Building started on the Yoichi Distillery in 1934 and the first spirit ran from the stills two years later. By 1940 Yoichi's whiskeys were on the Japanese market. On the face of it, little has changed since then. Sadly, though, the kiln has been silent since the 1960s. No longer is it being fired with peat cut for it in Ishikari.

Now the barley arrives ready peated from Scotland.

Malting in Japan is simply too expensive an option for the country's distillers, who are already faced with higher fixed costs than most whiskey makers elsewhere.

In common with its great rival, Nikka needs to produce a wide selection of different flavored whiskeys at this one site, though the approach is different to that taken by Suntory. Although the single-malt bottlings are



all peaty, there is unpeated barley used here as well. In addition, Nikka uses different strains of yeast in order to create a range of flavor profiles, while fermentation times (always on the long side), are varied to assist in this process.

The stills are all large and plain—similar, Nikka likes to say, to the stills with which the founder first worked at Longmorn in Scotland. Direct firing is used and the distillate is condensed in worm tubs. Varying cut points will also assist in

widening the flavor spectrum, but the key at Yoichi is weight on the palate. These are deep whiskies that need cool maturation—in a variety of casks from both European and American oak—to demonstrate their full complexity. Nikka has regular (though limited edition) bottlings from a wide range of the different styles



**Yoichi  
10-Year-Old**

made at the distillery.

#### YOICHI'S WHISKIES

It was a Yoichi whiskey that helped to trigger the worldwide interest among malt connoisseurs for Japanese whiskey. In 2001, the 10-year-old cask strength won the inaugural “Best of the Best” blind tasting organized by *Whisky Magazine*. A year later, the Scotch Malt Whisky Society broke with tradition and bottled a single cask.

From these two small events, the start of Japanese whiskey's acceptance across the world started. Yet although these whiskies are among the fullest that are created in Japan, they still have the precision of flavor that defines the essential Japanese whiskey character. Taketsuru may have been

aiming to recreate whisky from Scotland. What he actually succeeded in doing was to give birth to an entirely new and subtly different family of whiskies.

■ **YOICHI 10-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV  
A rare creature in Japanese whiskey, Yoichi 10-year-old is a slightly malty dram. The peated element is quite light on the nose, though giving a salty note. Sweet toffee notes balance things well. The palate is slightly oily with sooty smoke on the back palate along with muted dried flowers. Deep and full-flavored, but with the energy of youth.

■ **YOICHI 12-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV • Here, the full Yoichi character is on

show: rich deep flavors with an earthy, almost dusty, quality. The sooty smoke remains, though by now the fruits are beginning to emerge. The palate has an interesting mix of burned heather, liquorice, and cooked fruits.

Robust, yet elegant.

■ **YOICHI 15-YEAR-OLD** 45% ABV • By this stage, the whiskey has added another layer. The rough edges of the 12-year-old have been thoroughly smoothed off, and this is as sleek as Yoichi gets. Citrus notes, light tannin, plenty of rich oak, and the ever-present smoke, but there's sufficient weight to give balance. A big whiskey.



**Yoichi  
15-Year-Old**

### THE WEIRD WORLD OF JAPANESE OAK

The aroma was familiar, yet alien—in its acidity and zestiness reminiscent of a young rye whiskey, yet more perfumed and greatly more intense. It's rare that you come across a completely new aroma in whiskey, but this was one such moment. Seiichi Koshimizu, chief blender at Suntory, explained: “we say it smells of temples.” It was spot on. The aroma was of Japanese incense, with the heady aromas of *oudh*, or aloeswood.

It transpires that this whiskey (a single cask from Yamazaki) had been matured in Japanese oak (*Quercus mongolica*). This is rare, as most Japanese oak has already been felled (some say to make coffins for British soldiers in World War II, others maintain as the result of the clearance program in Hokkaido to create pasture land). Distillers didn't particularly like Japanese oak casks, as they tended to leak, though they had to be used after World War II as there was no alternative. In addition, blenders didn't like the strong aroma the oak imparted, and as soon as ex-bourbon and ex-sherry casks were available, the industry switched. Suntory coopered its last Japanese oak cask in 1975.

Now, however, with the rise of single malt and of flavor, it is slowly finding favor once again. Suntory has its own new plantation and has started a very limited coopering program. Koshimizu-san is using Japanese oak as part of his blending palette, while Ichiro Akuto is also laying down stock of new barrels. The startling aroma may yet have a future.

**Ichiro's Two of Clubs Malt, 2000** was finished in Japanese oak, giving an acidic finish to the whiskey.





# BRANDS AND BLENDS

Japanese blends have made a great impact internationally in the last decade, winning acclaim and awards. Unlike distilleries in most other countries, those in Japan do not trade with competitors, so one distillery will produce a wide range of whiskeys to make up its blends.

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## FUJISANROKU

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**Distillery:** Gotemba

The newest brand to appear from Kirin's Gotemba Distillery, Fujisanroku is bottled both as a blended whiskey and a single malt, so read the label carefully. The distillery style is light and estery. The single malt has older malts up to 24 years old blended in with it.

**FUJISANROKU SINGLE MALT**

**18-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV • The aroma shows good age: there is a slight leathery note combined with dried peach.

**At Suntory's Yamazaki Distillery,** the emphasis is on producing a variety of flavors for the blends.

The wood element appears as notes of pine sap. Water releases citrus oils, elderflower, honeycomb, and lime blossom. Estery and perfumed. A delicate palate, but still offering a complex array of flavors. A slight waxy note allows it to hold to the tongue.

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## GOLDEN HORSE

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**Distillery:** Hanyu

This is the brand name originally used by Toa Shuzo, which owned the old Hanyu Distillery. The trademark has

now passed to the new owner of the company, which continues to bottle some old stock. Golden Horse is not to be confused with the Ichiro's Malt range (*see opposite*).

**GOLDEN HORSE 8-YEAR-OLD**

**40% ABV** • A youthful and quite energetic attack on the nose with an aroma rarely seen in Japanese whiskey—a touch of branlike maltiness. Some nutty oak as well. The palate is light and crisp with some grip from the oak, which is, at this point in its life, still fighting with the inherently sweet spirit rather than working in harmony with it.





Hibiki 30-Year-Old

## HIBIKI

Producer: Suntory

Suntory's flagship premium blended whiskey was launched in 1989 to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the company's founding. The 21-year-old followed in 1994. A decade later the 30-year-old won the Trophy at the International Spirits Challenge, the first Japanese whiskey to do so. The same whiskey won best blend in the World Whiskies Awards in 2007.

■ **HIBIKI 17-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV

There is a distinct fruitiness to the nose mixed with some more delicate estery notes, a smooth, creamy sweetness, and a hint of citrus. The palate is rich and filled with vanilla, rosehip, black cherry, and a touch of firm oak. Complex and balanced.

■ **HIBIKI 17-YEAR-OLD** 50.5% ABV

Suntory also bottles Hibiki 17-year-old at a higher



Hibiki 21-Year-Old



Hibiki 17-Year-Old



strength. The sweetness is accentuated, touching on golden syrup. There's also some dried orange peel and an aromatic note reminiscent of cocoa butter. Bigger in the mouth (thanks to the higher alcohol) with a mix of raspberry and peach, caramel toffee, and a nuttily sweet finish.

■ **HIBIKI 30-YEAR-OLD**

43% ABV The multi-award winner is huge in flavor with quite assertive wood at first on the nose. A polished walnut table somehow springs to mind. There are

caramelized fruits and a touch of aniseed. The flavors go deep, recalling Oxford marmalade. The effect is velvety and rich. Not shy.

## HOKUTO

Producer: Suntory

This blended (vatted) malt was created by Suntory to try and appeal to a new generation of drinkers who were coming into whiskey through

**Suntory's sponsorship** of golf tournaments began in the early 1970s, and has done much to popularize the brand image.



Hokuto  
Pure Malt  
12-Year-Old

*shochu*. The key production quirk that sets it apart lies in the fact that it has been filtered through bamboo.

■ **HOKUTO PURE MALT**

**12-YEAR-OLD** 40% ABV

This blended malt is very gentle on the nose, with some banana, pear, and cut flowers. A very soft palate too, with touches of sweet spice, particularly on the finish.

## ICHIRO'S MALT

Distillery: Hanyu

This selection of single-cask bottlings is drawn from the stock of whiskey that Ichiro Akuto managed to buy back when his family distillery was sold in 2000. He is releasing these slowly on to the market to bridge the period between the end of the old distillery and the release of whiskies from his new site (scheduled to be complete in 2007). The whiskies were distilled between 1985 and 2000 and each cask has been named after a different playing card;

collectively they are referred to as the Card Series. Most of them have been given a period of secondary maturation in a selection of different casks: American, European, and Japanese oak.

#### 🍷 ICHIRO'S MALT, TWO OF

**CLUBS, 2000 55% ABV** •

Distilled in the Hanyu Distillery's final year, this young whiskey has been finished in Japanese oak. The nose is very intense with some vanilla as well as a maraschino lift. The palate is very soft and smooth initially, and water brings out a



creamy character. This then gives way to the fragrant, quite acidic finish that typifies Japanese oak. Young, but with bags of character.

#### 🍷 ICHIRO'S MALT, QUEEN OF HEARTS, 1990 54% ABV

• This French-oak finished member of the series shows an interplay between the fat and the lean. The nose is round and plump with light red fruits and a touch of sweet wood. A light touch of smoke with an estery lift gives an added perfume. The palate is lighter than expected, though there is a succulent quality to the middle palate. The French oak gives a spicy kick to the finish.

#### 🍷 ICHIRO'S MALT, KING OF DIAMONDS, 1988 56% ABV

One of the most complex of the Card Series, the King of Diamonds was finished in ex-sherry barrels made from American oak. The nose is a mix of cream and toasted almond, with some dry sacking notes indicative of age. As usual there's light smoke and when water is added there's a fragrant sandalwood edge

**Ichiro Akuto** is seen here taking delivery of a copper pot still for his new distillery in 2007.

alongside pineapple, lemon, and pine sap. The palate is equally complex. Though old, it has a floral freshness and the smoke and oak are never dominant. Balanced.

#### 🍷 ICHIRO'S MALT, ACE OF SPADES, 1985 55% ABV

• One of the oldest in the series, the Ace of Spades (or the Motorhead malt, as some call it) was finished in ex-sherry barrels made from Spanish oak. This has given it an aroma of chocolate-covered raisin, and treacle with a hint of creosotelike smoke. The palate is very thick and chewy, like melting toffee in the mouth. The finish recalls prunes macerated in brandy. Not a shy beast.



**Ichiro's Malt, King of Diamonds**



**Ichiro's Malt, Ace of Spades**

### OTHER DISTILLERIES

Situated in the town of Miyata in the Kiso mountain range, **Shinshu Distillery** is Japan's highest. Owned by **Hombu**, a *shochu* and liqueur producer, this small distillery with two pots was built in 1985 and sells its malt under the Komagatake label. The distillery is currently silent. Hombu actually had been making whiskey off and on since the early 1950s. Its first distillery was in Kagoshima, on the southerly island of Kyushu, the spiritual home of *shochu*. It was making whiskey until 1984, but the plant has now reverted to the production of sweet potato *shochu*. The Satsuma single malt from the distillery is still available.

**Shirakawa Distillery** in Fukushima is long silent. It was owned by Takara Shuzou, whose only interest in whiskey distilling these days comes from its ownership of Tomatin Distillery in Scotland (see p97) and co-ownership of the Blanton's range of small-batch bourbons (see p212). It's King blend is still available in Japan.

### NIKKA

Distilleries: Sendai (Miyagikyo), Yoichi

This major distiller, now part of Asahi Brewery's was founded by Masataka Taketsuru



**Nikka Pure Malt Series, Black**



**Nikka From the Barrel Malt**

**PURE MALT SERIES: WHITE** 43% ABV • White is the most phenolic of the trio, moving into a perfumed zone with hints of dried lavender along with light nutty notes. Slightly herbal on the nose, there is a slight soapiness on the palate.

**PURE MALT SERIES: BLACK** 43% ABV • Black is the biggest of the three with a deep, chocolatey, almost

(see p235) and is Suntory's main (some would say only) rival on the domestic market. As well as a range of single malts from its two distilleries, Yoichi and Sendai (Miyagikyo), the firm produces blends, blended malts, and single grain under its own name and proprietary brands.

**PURE MALT SERIES: RED** 43% ABV Red is the lightest of the color-coded series, using a high percentage of Miyagikyo malts. Estery with the aroma of apple, powdered almond, and a crisp oakiness. The palate is light and floral with a zesty citric lift. Good as an aperitif.

**Sendai Distillery** provides malt for many brands, notably the Nikka and Taketsuru pure malt series.

leathery nose. The smokiness gives it an earthy quality. Dry for a Japanese whiskey, the high proportion of Yoichi malt used here adds density and weight, though there is a blackcurrant sweetness in the center and a peppery finish.

**NIKKA ALL MALT** 40% ABV • A blend of pot still malt and 100 percent malt from a Coffey still. An intriguing mix of sweet and dry oak on the nose alongside some banana, the palate is soft and unctuous with silky, juicy fruits to the fore.

**FROM THE BARREL** 51.4% ABV • A blend of grain and malt, which have been vatted together and then given a period of

secondary ageing in barrel. It is bottled at cask strength. This has the most intense nose of the Nikka range with a resinous perfume intensity hinting at rosemary oil while some dried chocolate and cherry adds interest. The palate is a mix of sweet and savoury with a heavy dose of spices on the finish. Complex.

## TAKETSURU

**Distilleries:** Sendai (Miyagikyo), Yoichi

A duo of vatted malts from Nikka are named after the legendary founder of the company. The constituent parts are drawn from the multitude of whiskies made at their two distilleries.



**Taketsuru Pure Malt 17-Year-Old**

**TAKETSURU PURE MALT**

**17-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV • A highly complex whiskey, this leads with marzipan,

light smoke, polished wood, and tobacco.

In time a tropical fruit note emerges alongside eucalyptus and vanilla. The palate is very juicy and the vanilla deepens into cocoa.

There's oak but sufficient clean pure fruit to balance. Very precise and complex.

**TAKETSURU PURE MALT 21-YEAR-OLD**

43% ABV • Winner of best blended malt in the 2007 World Whiskies Awards, beating rivals from Scotland, this older expression has more smoke on show, along with layers of sweet toffee, sultana, and rich oak, and a slightly fungal note that you get from mature whiskies. Tropical fruits seen in the younger expression (conceivably part of the Miyagikyo contribution) are more concentrated in this expression.



**Taketsuru Pure Malt 21-Year-Old**





# EUROPE

Although Ireland and Scotland are recognized as the cradle of whiskey distilling, at the same time that their industries were forming in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, distilling was in full swing elsewhere in Europe—but not whiskey.

**D**ue to the climate, the southern part of Europe concentrated on distilling fruits into a variety of *eaux-de-vie*, whereas the north used barley to brew beer, or distilled gin and vodka from other grains, usually flavored with herbs, spices, and fruits. Austria for instance is famous for its wide variety of schnapps, flavored with whatever berries the makers can lay their hands on. France's most noble distillates are Cognac, Armagnac, Calvados, and Mar, each made in specific regions. The Germans also provide the lover of strong liquor with a variety of schnapps, while Scandinavian countries have been enjoying aquavit for ages. The Dutch have their own sort of gin, "genever;" the process for making this comes closest to the making of whiskey if flavoring were left out and maturation introduced.

In the last 10 years or so, however, the interest in making whiskey has grown slowly but surely on the Continent. Companies have kept a watchful eye on the development of whiskey in particular, since it was the only liquor showing growth figures, whereas drinks like genever, schnapps, and Cognac showed

a marked decline in sales. Typically distilleries were started by existing companies, either producers of *eaux-de-vie* or brewers of beer. After all, without the hops, whiskey is distilled beer.

Today Austria is home to five whiskey distillers, Germany ten, France eight, and the Netherlands three. Several other countries have just one or two whiskey-making distilleries. Spain, for example, has been making a blended whiskey since 1959 at DYC. The distillery is owned by Fortune Brands, which also owns the Islay single malt Laphroaig, the bourbons Maker's Mark and Jim Beam, and Teacher's blended Scotch.

Continental European whiskey-distilling history is in most cases a short one and whiskey needs time to mature. Currently the Continentals offer rather young whiskeys to the market in order to make an early return on their investments. Most whiskeys in this section are less than 10 years old and some have just passed the legal minimum of three years' maturation. Those young ones are hard to judge and it will take another 10 to 15 years to see how they develop and which distilleries survive. In any case, aficionados follow them with great interest and can hardly wait to taste fully matured 12 to 18-year-old European single malts.

**Zuidam Distillery** in the Netherlands, which has this attractive windmill on site, introduced their Millstone 5-Year-Old Malt in 2007.

# DISTILLERIES AND BRANDS

A growing number of European distillers are turning their hands to whiskey, producing an intriguing mix of styles. Time will tell how well these spirits develop with age, but there are plenty of signs of promise.

## BAUERNHOF

Switzerland:

☒ Talacher, 6340 Baar

🌐 [www.swissky.ch](http://www.swissky.ch)

Brennerei Zentrum Bauernhof makes a variety of fruit liquors and has started to go into whiskey distilling. Their first product is a single malt called Swissky with no age statement. The latest expression is St. Moritzer Single Malt. Apparently, the malt used is *rauchmalz*, a local variety from Bamberg in southern Germany, but the distillery tends to be secretive about its casks and maturation methods.

## EUROPEAN DISTILLERIES



## BERTRAND

France:

☒ 3 Rue du Maréchal Leclerc, Uberach

🌐 [www.distillerie-bertrand.com](http://www.distillerie-bertrand.com)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Uberach is a small village in the north of the Alsace and its distillery was founded in 1874 to produce brandy and liqueurs. Whiskey production started in 2002. Since Bertrand also owns a brewery, malt is shared between the beer and whiskey producers. Bertrand has two expressions. Uberach Single Malt is a blend using different casks (ex-Banyuls sweet wine and new wood), aged between three and four years. Uberach Single Cask Malt is a non-filtered whiskey, and is matured in Banyuls casks for three years.



**Bertrand's Uberach Single Malt**

🏠 **UBERACH SINGLE MALT** 42.2% ABV

• This straw-colored malt is young leather and cut grass, hay, light honey, becoming waxy. Dried fruits (apricots) and a spicy, peppery finish.

🏠 **UBERACH SINGLE CASK MALT**

43.8% ABV • Amber with pink tones. Chocolate aromas, with hints of old plum and a little peat; deep, with fruity roundness.

## BLAUE MAUS

Germany:

☒ Bamberger Strasse 2, Eggolsheim-Neuses

🌐 [www.fleischmann-whisky.de](http://www.fleischmann-whisky.de)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Robert Fleischmann started in 1980 with a brandy wine distillery on the premises of the original family company

—a grocery and tobacco shop. Three years later he attempted for the first time to make pure malt whiskey. Many attempts would follow, honoring his motto: “Practice, practice, practice.” Fleischmann began selling his whiskey in 1996. In 2000 his son Thomas and wife Petra took over the company.

The current offerings number five different single malt whiskeys.

🏠 **GRÜNER HUND VINTAGE 1991**

40% ABV • At first slightly sour, almonds, then floral, nutty. Toasted almonds, slightly bitter, though creamy, with a malty sweetness.

The finish is warming and medium long.

🏠 **BLAUE MAUS VINTAGE 1993** 40%

ABV • Malty with oak notes. Sweet-sour with a slightly spicy and peppery finish.

🏠 **KROTTENTALER VINTAGE 1994**

40% ABV • Sweet, malty with a decent oaky note. Creamy,

slightly sweet vanilla oak. A medium to long finish ends in a beautiful taste of almonds.

🍷 **SCHWARZER PIRAT**

**VINTAGE 1995** 40% ABV Dry, peaty, and sweet, with an almond flavor which echoes sweetly in a medium finish.

🍷 **SPINNAKER VINTAGE**

**1997** 40% ABV

Malty, lightly nutty, and creamy. Sweet like marzipan, with a short, dry-sweet finish in which the marzipan lingers on.



Des Menhirs' Eddu Grey Rock

notes, floral scents of rose, and heather. Fruity touches of honey, marmalade, and spicy notes of nutmeg. Velvety on the palate with pleasing touches of vanilla oak.

🍷 **EDDU GREY ROCK**

40% ABV • Amber gold, woody and with broom-flower flavors. Orange and apricot notes, slight mineral sea breeze aromas with a touch of cinnamon. A balance of flavors

and an astounding persistence on the palate.

## DES MENHIRS

France:

✉ Pont Menhir, 29700 Plomelin  
🌐 [www.distillerie.fr](http://www.distillerie.fr)

This distillery was built in Brittany in 1986 to distill apple cider. In 1998 a separate still was installed to produce whiskey, solely made from buckwheat.

The whiskey is called Eddu (Breton for buckwheat) and available in three expressions. Eddu Silver is double-distilled and matured in French oak casks, though the maturation period is not specified. Eddu Gold is similar, only higher in alcohol. Eddu Grey Rock is a blend, with 30 percent buckwheat whiskey.

🍷 **EDDU SILVER** 40% ABV

Gold amber hue, aromatic

## DOMAINE MAVELA

France:

✉ Brasserie Pietra  
Route de la Marana  
20600 Furiani Corsica  
🌐 [www.brasseriepietra.com](http://www.brasseriepietra.com)  
🏠 Open to visitors

Brasserie Pietra and Domaine Mavela on the French island of Corsica have been cooperating for a number of years to present their P&M whiskey to the market. Pietra, which was founded in 1996 and was originally a brewery, makes the wash and Mavela distills.

Pietra offers three expressions: P&M Blend, P&M Blend Supérieur, and P&M Pure Malt. This malt matures in casks that are made of oak sourced from

## DENMARK'S MICRO

Located in an old warehouse in Koge Harbor, to the south of Copenhagen, the

**Braunstein** microdistillery ([www.braunstein.dk](http://www.braunstein.dk)) started to distil whiskey in March 2007. The spirit matures in ex-sherry casks of 50 gallons (225 liters), and the first Braunstein Danish Single Malt is expected in 2010, when it can legally be called whiskey. The distillery plans to bottle the drink at cask strength.

the Troncet forest. The casks are primed first with malmsey and muscatel. The spirit matures for an unspecified period of time after which it is vatted in barrels that have previously contained *eaux-de-vie* originating from Domaine Mavela.

🍷 **P&M BLEND SUPÉRIEUR** 42% ABV

Strong, fruity, and with a beautiful amber color. This is a rich, complex, and very imaginative whiskey, and the flavors linger for a long time in the mouth.

🍷 **P&M PURE MALT** 42% ABV

A subtle aroma of honey, apricot, and citrus fruit on the nose. An extremely complex, and highly aromatic, bouquet.

**French oak** is used for the casks at Des Menhirs, which makes its whiskey using buckwheat.







**Glann ar Mor** is a Breton phrase meaning “beside the sea,” which describes its location perfectly.

## DYC

Spain:

☒ **Beam Global España SA**  
Pasaje Molino del Arco,  
Palazuelos de Eresma, Segovia

📞 [www.dyc.es](http://www.dyc.es)

This was the first Spanish distillery, founded in the 1950s near Segovia. It was built by the Eresma River—famous for its excellent water quality—and whiskey started to flow in 1959. The distillery is now owned by Fortune Brands, who put all its wines and spirits under its subsidiary Beam Global.

DYC, which stands for Distilerias Y Crianza del Whisky, comes in three versions, a 5-year-old and an 8-year-old expression, both blends of various grains, and a malt whiskey with no age statement. The spirits mature in American oak barrels. They are primarily sold on the home market. The Spanish drink it in a mix with cola and ask at the bar for a “whiskey-dyc” (pronounced “dick”).

☒ **DYC 5 40% ABV** • A pale straw color, clean, with a hint of fruit, spice, and toasted wood. Malty, spicy, with a smooth, creamy mouthfeel and a smoky, spicy finish.

☒ **DYC 8 40% ABV** • Golden amber with a floral, spicy, smoky, grassy nose, and hints of honey and heather.

A smooth, creamy mouthfeel, malty, with vanilla, marzipan, and apple and citrus fruits. A long, bittersweet, smooth finish.

☒ **DYC MALT 40% ABV** • A fragrant, golden amber malt, with hints of citrus, sweetness, and vanilla, making a sophisticated bouquet. A full-bodied, rich malt flavor, and a long, subtle, finish.

## FISSELLIER

France:

☒ **56 rue du Verger, Chantepie**  
📞 [www.jacques-fisselier.com](http://www.jacques-fisselier.com)

Fisselier was founded in 1968 as a producer of fruit liqueurs. However, for the past few years, the distillery has produced two whiskeys: Gwenroc Whiskey Breton and Whiskey de Bretagne. Both are blended whiskeys, with the latter containing a higher percentage of malt.

## GLANN AR MOR

France:

☒ **Crec'h ar Fur, Pleubian**  
📞 [www.glannarmor.com](http://www.glannarmor.com)

Glann ar Mor Distillery opened in 2005 after eight years of planning. In 1999 a small amount of spirit was distilled and matured in ex-Bordeaux casks for five years. It was eventually bottled as

Taol Esa in 2004, just before the distillery proper opened.

In June 2006 the second “first” new make ran from the stills. The spirit is made from 100 percent malted barley in a peated and an unpeated version. The first 3-year-old single malt from this Breton distillery is due to appear in the summer of 2009.

Taol Esa is Breton for “the essay.” Let’s hope it grows into a novel in years to come!

## GRUEL

Germany:

☒ **Neue Strasse 26, Owen**

Christian and Inge Gruel started making whiskey after visiting distilleries in Scotland in the 1990s. They have made three types—all single grain whiskeys. Named Gruel Single Grain Whiskey, they are aged at five, seven, and nine years.

## GUILLON

France:

☒ **Hameau de Vertuelle, Louvois**  
📞 [www.whisky-guillon.com](http://www.whisky-guillon.com)  
🏠 **Open to visitors**

The Guillon Distillery is located in the Champagne region and was built in 1997 to make whiskey. The first spirit flowed from the stills in 1999. Annual production in 2007 was about 400,000 bottles.

Guillon offers an impressive range of different expressions. The single malts include Le Single Malt Guillon No. 1, Le Single Malt de Louvois Champagne, and Le Single Malt de Louvois Banyuls. Guillon’s blend, called Le Premium Blend, consists of 50 percent malt and 50 percent grain whiskey. The whiskeys are quite fruity and elegant—the result



**Le Single Malt Guillon No. 1**

## THE FUTURE IS GOTLAND

One to look out for in the near(ish) future is Sweden's Gotland Distillery. It is due to start distilling in 2008, so the wait will be several years, but in the meantime you can check on progress at the distillery's website: [www.gotlandwhisky.se](http://www.gotlandwhisky.se).

of maturation in ex-burgundy casks first, followed by a six-month finish in a sweet wine cask, most notably former Sauterne, Maury, and Banyuls casks. Guillon chose not to use more traditional casks, such as ex-sherry, port, or American bourbon.

## HOF HOLLE

Switzerland:

✉ Hollen 52, Lauwil

🌐 [www.single-malt.ch](http://www.single-malt.ch)

🏠 Open by appointment only

The Hollen is a farm in the country near Basle. It has had its own little distillery for fruit liquor for a long time. Until 1999 in Switzerland it was strictly forbidden to distil spirit from grain, since it was considered a food staple. The day the law

**Guillon Distillery** chooses its casks to impart a fruity flavor to the finished whiskey.



changed (July 1, 1999), the Bader family started to distil from grains and thus became the first whiskey distillery in Switzerland.

The whiskey is mainly sold as single cask malt, therefore the taste differs slightly with each bottling. The most mature expression available is just over five years old. Maturation takes place in French oak casks that previously held either white or red wine.

### ■ HOLLE SINGLE MALT WHISKEY

42% ABV • Delicate, not smoky, unobtrusive aromas of malt, wood, and vanilla combine with a flavor of wine. There is also a cask-strength version, which is bottled at 51.1 percent ABV.

## HÖHLER

Germany:

✉ Kirchgasse 3, Aarbergen

🌐 [www.brennerei-hoehler.de](http://www.brennerei-hoehler.de)

🏠 Open to visitors

Höhler originated in 1895 as a fruit liquor distillery. The current owner, Holger, is the fourth generation Höhler. Since 2001 he has made small batches of whiskey from a recipe of corn, wheat, and malted barley. They mature for three years and when bottled sell out almost at once. Höhler sometimes calls his product Whesky—a fusion of Whiskey and



**Höhler whiskey** is produced in small, distinctive batches that are in great demand.

Hessen, the province where the distillery is located.

Currently the following expressions are maturing in his warehouse: Dinkelwhisky 2004, Haferwhisky 2004, and Brauer-Whisky 2005. They are difficult to find, since the product is not sold in stores and demand is larger than output.

Previous expressions from 2003 were a rye Whesky and an Irish-styled Whesky made from barley, malted barley, rye, and oats.

■ **WHESKEY, IRISH STYLE** 44.5% ABV  
Light gold in color, with cereal grains on the nose and bitter lemon, grains, and sour peppermint on the palate. Thin body, short finish.

■ **WHESKEY, SCOTTISH STYLE SINGLE MALT** 45.7% ABV • Aromas of stables, tea, straw, and cedar wood. The taste: stewed earl grey tea and peppermint, but slightly honeyish. Thin in body, and the finish has notes of bitter lemon.

■ **WHESKEY, RYE STYLE** 45.7% ABV  
Menthol and grains on the nose, with old strawberry candies. Peppermint, dried fruit, apricot, and strawberry on the palate. Slightly oily, with a pleasant, warm finish.

■ **WHESKEY, BOURBON STYLE** 45% ABV • Nose: cooked grains, cooked pear, apple, apricot jam. Taste is a bit musty: mushrooms, cardboard, cherry bubble gum.

**WHISKEY, BOURBON STYLE, CASK STRENGTH** 61% ABV • Fuller than the 45 percent ABV, with citrus zest and a hot finish. Flatter with water.

## LATVIJAS BALZAMS

Latvia:

✉ A. Caka iela 160, Riga

🌐 [www.balzams.lv](http://www.balzams.lv)

Latvia's only distillery is in the capital of this tiny Baltic state which joined the EU in 2004. The Latvian term for whiskey is *viskij*. It comes in two expressions, "Alexandrs" and LB. Both are made from local rye and have a smooth, light taste that is unusual for rye-based whiskey.

## MACKMYRA

Sweden:

✉ Bruksgatan 4, Valbo

🌐 [www.mackmyra.se](http://www.mackmyra.se)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Swedish engineer Magnus Dardanell founded Mackmyra in 1999 with a group of friends. The stills were made by Forsyth's of Rothes, in Scotland. Swedish washbacks and a German mash tun complete this truly European distillery. In 2006 Mackmyra launched the first bottling in a limited series, Preludium 01. Preludium 02, 03, 04, and 05 soon followed. Their latest is Preludium 06. Each is bottled at a high 52–55 percent ABV.

The whiskey comes in different expressions.

**Mackmyra Distillery** creates its individualistic whiskies using equipment from many countries.

"Elegant" is the original recipe. "Smoke" is spiced with herbs and so cannot really be called whiskey. Mackmyra Reserve matures in exceptionally small 6.5-gallon (30-liter) casks, speeding up the maturation process hugely.

Individuals can buy their own spirit and select a cask (ex-bourbon, ex-sherry, or new Swedish oak) in which to have their whiskey matured.

**MACKMYRA, PRELUDIUM**

05 48.4% ABV • Marzipan, custard, and a light citrus note on the nose. Taste: crème brûlée, bitter chocolate, lemon zest. A bit oily; slightly metallic and grainy in the finish—creamier with water.

## MAISON LES VIGNETTES

France:

✉ Les Vignettes 6, Ardon

🌐 [www.swhisky.ch](http://www.swhisky.ch)

🏠 Open to visitors

Les Vignettes has distilled whiskey since December 2000. The product matures

in ex-Burgundy casks. Currently, three ranges are offered. Each range has various expressions.

The Collection Club range consists of "Challenge" and "Skipper." The Collection Prestige range consists of Annouim, Abred, Gwenwed, and Keugant. The Collection Must range has "1825" and Grand Crû.

All expressions are labeled as "Glen Vignettes Single Malt

Sw whisky;" cask-strength is 56.2 percent ABV. They are exported to France, Belgium, Germany, and Japan.

**ANNOUIM** 45% ABV

Light, fruity—an aperitif.

**GWENWED** 45% ABV

Lively, fruity, hints of prunes and toast. Makes for a pleasant evening.

**ABRED** 45% ABV

Smoky. Fresh leather. For the unconditioned...

**KEUGANT** 56.2% ABV

Cask strength. Powerful, with tones of pepper and ginger. Be sure to have a bed nearby!



Belgian Owl  
Single Malt



## THE OWL

### Belgium:

☒ Rue Sainte Anne 94,  
Grâce-Hollogne

📞 [www.belgianwhisky.com](http://www.belgianwhisky.com)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Founded in 2004, the distillery has already changed names a couple of times in its short history—it was previously known as the Lambicool and Pur.E. Distillery. Master distiller Etienne Bouillon uses only home-grown barley (Scarlet and Prestige) and first-fill bourbon casks to age his spirit, which is known as Belgian Owl.

The entire production process takes place on the premises. Bouillon bottles his whiskey at the legal age of three years. He also provides professional tasters with new make from 6, 12, and 18 months old to let them discover for themselves how the spirit matures.

The first cask was filled in October 2004. The 3-year-old Belgian Owl Single Malt Whiskey, released in the fall of 2007 is bottled at 46 percent ABV, unfiltered.

🍷 **BELGIAN OWL 17-MONTH SPIRIT**  
Fresh, direct, white and green flowers in the nose. Apple-cinnamon, pear, and a whiff of banana, developing into aromas of plum pudding and pearl sugar, with a malty fruity finish.

## RABEL

### Germany:

☒ Berghof, 73277 Owen-Teck

📞 [www.berghof-rabel.de](http://www.berghof-rabel.de)

Originally a schnapps distillery, Rabel has started making Schwäbischer whiskey. It is a blend of barley and wheat. Whiskey von der Alb is matured for

eight years in oak casks. The water used runs through limestone—like a lot of American whiskey (see p183)—and owner Thomas Rabel describes the whiskey he produces as a cross between Scotch and bourbon.

## REINER MÖSSLEIN

### Germany:

☒ Untere Dorfstrasse 8,  
Zeilitzheim

📞 [www.weingeister.de](http://www.weingeister.de)

This is a winery that also produces various schnapps and one malt whiskey. The whiskey matures in oak casks for five years and has a smoky aroma. It is labeled Fränkischer Whiskey.



Reiner  
Mösslein Malt  
Whiskey

## REISETBAUER

### Austria:

☒ 4062 Axberg 15

📞 [www.reisetbauer.at](http://www.reisetbauer.at)

Originally a producer of fruit distillates, Hans Reisetbauer ventured

into whiskey distilling in 1995. He planted ten acres of summer brewing barley, dedicated to the making of single malt. In 2002 the first Reisetbauer bottling appeared as a 7-year-old expression. For maturation, Reisetbauer uses casks that contained Chardonnay and Trockenbeerenauslese wines.



Reisetbauer 7-Year-Old Single Malt

## THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Once, when still called Czechoslovakia, this country harbored four whiskey distilleries. Two of them, Tesetice and Dolany, are now mothballed. The former used to make King Barley, the only Czech single malt. The two distilleries currently producing are **Rudolf Jelinek** ([www.rjelinek.cz](http://www.rjelinek.cz)) and **Stock Plzen** ([www.stock.cz](http://www.stock.cz)), both founded in the late 19th century. Jelinek bought the brand Gold Cock, previously owned by Tesetice. For its two expressions, Jelinek uses Moravian barley and water that comes from an underground well, rich in minerals. Its two whiskeys are: Gold Cock Red Feathers, 3-year-old blended whiskey; and Gold Cock, 12-year-old malt. Stock Plzen distills Printer's, a 6-year-old malt whiskey. They also use this whiskey for a cream liquor.

🍷 **REISETBAUER 7-YEAR-OLD** 56%  
ABV • Delicate, multilayered on the nose with roasted hazelnuts and dried herbs; notes of bread and cereals, slightly smoky with fine spice; aged, yet full of verve.

## SLYRS

### Germany:

☒ Bayrischzellerstrasse 13,  
Schliersee-Ortsteil Neuhaus

📞 [www.slyrs.de](http://www.slyrs.de)

🏠 Open to the public

Slyrs was founded in 1999 and makes a decent whiskey, which is distributed by Lantenhammer, a schnapps distillery in the same village. Slyrs Bavarian Single Malt is matured for an unspecified time in new 50-gallon (225-liter) American white oak barrels. The supply is limited and bottles can be purchased only via a select number of

## TURKEY'S TEKEL

Teke Distillery is owned by the Turkish government and produces a whiskey called Ankara. It is bottled as a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old. There is some confusion as to whether it is real whiskey. The former is made from malted barley and rice, so it cannot be called whiskey. The latter however states on the label that it is manufactured from malted barley only.

retailers. Since 2002, a 3-year-old has been bottled and sold each year; in 2015 the company plans to present a 12-year-old single malt.

## SONNENSCHIN

Germany:

✉ **Alter Fährweg 7–9, Witten-Heven**  
 🌐 [www.sonnenschein-brennerei.de](http://www.sonnenschein-brennerei.de)

Sonnenschein started in 1875 with the production of fruit liquors and brandy wine. In 1990 a single malt was distilled in readiness for the plant's 125th anniversary celebrations in 2000. The whiskey was matured in oak casks from Scotland and finished in sherry wood. It is no longer available, but Sonnenschein continues to make a Sonnenschein 10-year-old single malt, still using casks originating from Scotland. It comes in a nifty 50cl bottle.



Valley Single Malt Spirit

2000 and gave it a second maturation in Finland, with their own wood finish. Apparently a couple of years in the Finnish climate enhances the flavors of the original whiskey, resulting in a full and slightly spicy taste. Recently, Teerenpeli has started to distill whiskey as well, although it is not yet bottled as a single malt.

## US HEIT

Netherlands:

✉ **Snekerstraat 43, Bolsward, Friesland**  
 🌐 [www.usheidistillery.nl](http://www.usheidistillery.nl)  
 🏠 **Open to visitors**

Friesland (or Fryslân) is one of the northern provinces of the Netherlands and considers itself a country within a country. Its language, Frysian, comes from a different root to the Dutch language. Frysk, as it is properly spelled in the “native” tongue, is officially recognized as the second language in the Netherlands.

The province of Friesland also has its own flag, parliament, and broadcasting company, but not currency. Us Heit, meaning “our father,” was originally a brewery. Owner Aart van der Linde used his brewing skills to make the first Dutch whiskey, but gave it a

Frisian name: Frysk Hynder—which honors a famous Frisian horse, apparently.

Frysk Hynder is sold as a 3-year-old and comes in two different expressions. One has been matured in wine casks and the other matured in sherry casks.

🍷 **FRYSK HYNDER WINE MATURED**  
 43% ABV • A sweet character, surprisingly smooth considering its young age. Pleasant and fruity.



**US Heit** is the first Dutch whiskey; the expression shown here is matured in wine casks.

🍷 **FRYSK HYNDER SHERRY**

**MATURED** 43% ABV • Sweetish, and soft for a 3-year-old whiskey. Tasty, with wood notes from the sherry cask.

## VALLEI

Netherlands:

✉ **Asschatterweg 233, JP Leusden**  
 🌐 [www.valleibieren.nl/whisky](http://www.valleibieren.nl/whisky)  
 🏠 **Open by appointment only**

The Dutch word Valleï means “valley” or, even better, “glen.” In 2002 owner Bert Burger started some distilling experiments

## POLISH WHISKEY

Although some whiskey writers have referred to a product called “Dark Whiskey” as a Polish whiskey, the parent company, Polmos Zielona Gora (part of the Swedish-based V&S group), clearly states that its brand is in fact a blend of Scotch whiskeys. The Polish distillery itself, based at Zielona Gora, produces a wide variety of spirits, including vodka, gin, rum, and several liqueurs. Therefore, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as genuine Polish whiskey ... yet.

## TEERENPELI

Finland:

✉ **Hämeenkatu 19, Lahti**  
 🌐 [www.teerenpeli.com](http://www.teerenpeli.com)  
 🏠 **Open to visitors**

Teerenpeli is a brewery and a bar. The company started to import Scotch whisky in



**Volker Theurer** is one of Europe's older spiritmakers, but its whiskey distilling began relatively recently.

at home in his kitchen. His neighbor, a farmer, supplied him with barley and allowed him to convert a calf barn into what is a true farm distillery. The official founding year was 2004.

Burger single-handedly malts, mashes, ferments, distills, fills casks, and bottles his product. To make some money, the first spirit was released as a malt whiskey liqueur in November 2006. Currently, larger quantities of spirit are in the process of maturing, closely monitored by Burger.

The new make spirit has pleasantly surprising fruity aromas, but we'll have to wait to sample a mature whiskey from this one-man-band.

🍷 **VALLEY SINGLE MALT SPIRIT** 43% ABV • A cask sample offered a spirit and fruity nose, with hints of apricots and cloves. Liquorice and dried fruit on a slightly metallic palate, and the finish was dry, with liquorice again and spice.

## VOLKER THEURER

Germany:

✉ Jesinger Hauptstrasse 55/57, Tübingen

🌐 [www.lamm-tuebingen.de](http://www.lamm-tuebingen.de)

🏠 Open by appointment only

The host of the Hotel Gasthof Lamm apparently enjoys distilling very much. A large assortment of schnapps is available to guests and, for the whiskey

**Waldviertler Roggenhof Distillery** produces five different whiskeys using rye and barley.

devotee, Mr. Theurer offers Original Ammertal Whiskey, which is also known as Black Horse Original Ammertal Whiskey.

## WALDVIERTLER ROGGENHOF

Austria:

✉ 3664 Roggenreith 3

🌐 [www.roggenhof.at](http://www.roggenhof.at)

🏠 Open to visitors

This company claims to be the first whiskey distillery in Austria and was founded in 1995. Besides distilling,

owner Johann Haider has also created the "Whiskey Experience" in his premises, which consists of a permanent exhibition all about whiskey and a seminar room. Seminars are regularly given and are based on Haider's own book *Fascination Whiskey*.

Roggenhof produces five different whiskeys. All of them mature for a period of between 3 and 12 years in Manhartberger summer oak casks. The whiskey is bottled exclusively as a single cask offering, with the alcoholic strength varying between 41 and 54 percent ABV.

🍷 **RYE WHISKEY JH** • Made from 60 percent rye and 40 percent malt, this whiskey is harmoniously balanced by the two corn varieties. It has a light vanilla flavor, and matures in Manhartberger summer oak.

🍷 **PURE RYE-MALT WHISKEY JH**

A gentle, sweet taste of honey harmonizes perfectly with light vanilla in this 100 percent malted rye whiskey. Like the mixed rye, it is matured in Manhartberger summer oak.

🍷 **PURE RYE-MALT WHISKEY JH**

"NOUGAT" • The malted rye is roasted to a darker shade, which gives the whiskey an intense malty taste with a touch of both chocolate and nougat.

🍷 **SINGLE BARLEY MALT WHISKEY JH**

Made from 100 percent lightly malted

barley, this whiskey offers a light, crisp, and, of course, malty caramel flavor.

🍷 **SINGLE BARLEY MALT WHISKEY JH "KARAMELL"**

Made from 100 percent dark malted and roasted barley, the Karamell whiskey is both smoky and dry, and has an intense flavor of—yes, you've guessed it—caramel.



Volker Theurer's Ammertal Whiskey label



## WAMBRECHIES

France:

✉ 1 rue de la Distillerie  
59118 Wambrechies

🌐 [www.wambrechies.com](http://www.wambrechies.com)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Wambrechies was founded in 1817 as a genever (gin) distillery and still produces an impressive range of genevers. Some are called Pur Malt and Vieux Malt (old malt), but are not to be confused with malt whiskey. The distillery produces one whiskey: Wambrechies Single Malt, which is bottled without an age statement.

## WARENGHEM

France:

✉ Route de Guingamp  
22300 Lannion

🌐 [www.distillerie-warenghem.com](http://www.distillerie-warenghem.com)

🏠 Open to visitors in summer only

Warenghem was founded in 1900 to produce apple cider and fruit liquors. In its 99th year of existence, the distillery ventured into whiskey production. It now makes two varieties: Armorik Single Malt, which is released without an age statement; and Breton Whiskey WB, a 3-year-old blend of 25 percent malt and 75 percent grain alcohol. Both are released at 40 percent ABV.

**Spelt is closely related** to common wheat, but is higher in protein and has a nuttier taste; Weidenaue Distillery use it for Dinkel Whiskey.



**Whiskey Castle** have added to their core distilling business with a new events facility.

## WEIDENAUER

Austria:

✉ Leopolds 6, 3623 Kottes

🌐 [www.weidenaue.at](http://www.weidenaue.at)

🏠 Open by appointment only

This 19th-century fruit liqueur distillery has produced whiskey since 1998. Their Hafer Whiskey is made of oats, while their Dinkel Whiskey is made from spelt (a type of wheat, ancestor to modern wheats).

## WEUTZ

Austria:

✉ St Nikolai 6  
8505 St Nikolai im Sausal

🌐 [www.weutz.at](http://www.weutz.at)

🏠 Open by appointment only

About 15 years ago this fruit liqueur distillery started to experiment with distilling

from grains. Currently it produces five different single malts—marketed as Hot Stone, White Smoke, Maroon, Moonshine, and Franziska—and one corn whiskey, which is known as Sugar Corn. Weutz calls the Sugar Corn “bourbon new make,” though technically this is incorrect, since bourbon can only be manufactured in the US.

## WHISKEY CASTLE

Switzerland:

✉ Schlosstrasse 17  
5077 Elfingen

🌐 [www.whisky-castle.com](http://www.whisky-castle.com)

🏠 Open to visitors

Käfers Schloss, as the Whiskey Castle is called in Swiss, is owned by Ruedi

## THE RUSSIAN BEAR

Russia is a large, growing market for (Scotch) whiskey but does not have a whiskey distillery yet. It did try in the past, however. During the reign of Stalin, a whiskey devotee himself, a plan was developed to build a whiskey distillery that would use potatoes and sugar beet as its base product. Since whiskey, whether it is Scotch, bourbon, blend, or rye, has to be made from grains, the Russians would not have qualified as whiskey distillers, but the question is academic as the project never got off the ground. Nevertheless, this market is potentially so large that several Scottish distillers have been enlarging their capacity to meet the expected demand. No doubt the Continental distillers will try to conquer a small piece of that emerging market in times to come, and maybe in the near future a vodka producer will venture into whisky distilling.





**Wolfram Ortner** offers tours of its distillery and sells a range of luxury items in its shop.

and Franziska Käser. They started to produce whiskey in 2000 and expanded their business in July 2006 with a new building where whiskey-related events can be hosted. The Käasers organize four-course dinners, whiskey-jazz brunches, and the like.

Whiskey Castle produces single malts as well as blends that are made from rye, wheat, and oats.

## WOLFRAM ORTNER

Austria:

✉ Untertscherner Weg 3  
9546 Bad Kleinkirchheim

🌐 [www.wob.at](http://www.wob.at)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Wolfram Ortner specializes in luxury products—especially cigars, glasses, chocolates, coffee, and fruit liqueurs. The distillery was founded in 1989 and the company started to produce Nockland Whiskey in 1996.

The whiskey is also referred to as Wob Dö Malt. It is matured exclusively in new casks. For these, Ortner makes his choice from a wide variety of European oak, including casks that come from wine-producing regions, such as Limousin, Allier, Nevers, and Vosges. He also uses some American white oak casks.

🍷 **NOCKLAND WHISKEY** 48% ABV

Sweet and malty on the palate, with flavors of spice and tobacco adding to the whiskey's complexity.

## ZUIDAM

Netherlands:

✉ Weverstraat 6  
5111 PW, Baarle Nassau

🌐 [www.zuidam-distillers.com](http://www.zuidam-distillers.com)

🏠 Open by appointment only

Zuidam is renowned for its excellent genevers and *korenwijn*—a variety of genever that's matured in oak casks for up to 10 years. In 2007 brothers Gilbert and Patrick Zuidam, sons of the founder, introduced a 5-year-old single malt called Millstone, which is aged in ex-bourbon, ex-sherry, and new American oak casks. Around 5,000 bottles have been sold, and there are plans to release a similar quantity as a 10-year-old.



**Wolfram Ortner**  
Nockland Whiskey

🍷 **MILLSTONE** 40% ABV

Sweet and fruity, with aromas of honey, vanilla, wood, and grain. It tastes beautifully woody, sweet, a bit spicy, and spirity, with notes of honey and citrus. The finish is lightly drying, with notes of fruit, honey, vanilla, wood, and a touch of coconut.

## ZÜRCHER

Switzerland:

✉ Nägeligässli 7, Port

Brennerei Zürcher launched its first whiskey in 2006.

It is called Single Lakeland Malt Whiskey—not to be confused with the whiskey that may or may not eventually emerge from the English Lakeland (see p181). It is matured for three years in Oloroso sherry casks.

🍷 **SINGLE LAKELAND**

**MALT WHISKEY** 42% ABV

Pure, woody; aromatic, with a taste of sweetish grains and a slightly astringent finish.

**Zuidam Distillery** has had considerable success with its Millstone 5-Year-Old Single Malt.







# AUSTRALASIA

Clean water, fresh air, and quality barley ought to make for a perfect whiskey-producing environment. Yet it is really only in recent years that Australia and New Zealand have begun producing and exporting quality malts of their own.

**N**ew Zealand's very first distillery, simply named the New Zealand Distillery Company, opened as long ago as 1869, in response to a change in legislation that reduced the levy on locally distilled spirits to just half that of imports. However, pressure from Scottish distillers and concern about the drop in excise revenue forced the government to increase duty six years later. Conditions became too difficult for the new distillery, and it was forced to close.

Around the same time, a man from Aberdeenshire in Scotland started a new brewery in the New Zealand town of Dunedin. He went into partnership with his brother-in-law James Wilson, a fellow Aberdonian, who in turn enlisted the help of his son Charles. It was Charles who made the malt extract Maltexo a staple part of the New Zealand diet. It wasn't until 13 years after his death in 1951, however, that his successors took the link between malt and brewing a step further to transform the company into Wilson Distillers Ltd. in 1964. It became the country's first legal distiller in almost a century. In those intervening years, a prolific and illicit "moonshining" tradition had erupted.

**Hobart in Tasmania** is home to the Lark Distillery, the first modern Australian whiskey producer. The distillery has a harborside location.

Australia tells a similar tale, beginning with the opening of the Sorrell Distillery in 1822. The output of this legal distillery was augmented by a plentiful supply from illicit stills—Tasmania (then Van Diemen's Land), especially, was awash with them. In response to the illicit trade, Lieutenant Governor Franklin introduced legislation in 1939 that required distilleries to have a minimum wash capacity of 594 gallons (2,700 liters), which put an end to the Tasmanian distilling industry in favor of ale production.

It wasn't until the mid-1980s—when Bill and Lyn Lark had to change federal legislation to allow them to operate their own still on the island state of Tasmania—that Australia saw production of its first legally produced single malt in more than 100 years. Made with a specially developed strain of barley to tolerate the cool Tasmanian climate and local peat for the malting, the Larks' first whiskey was released in 1998.

To best accommodate the fact that the domestic industry has only been operating for such a short time, many distilleries opt to use smaller casks than their Scottish counterparts, which results in the spirit maturing much faster. The result of this is whiskey that has been favorably compared with some of the best malts from Scotland.

# DISTILLERIES

In the 1980s and 90s, whiskey distilleries finally became fully established in Australia and New Zealand with some degree of permanency. Many now produce fast-maturing single malts of high quality.



**At Nant Distillery** the barley is grown, malted, distilled, and matured all on the one site.

## BAKERY HILL

✉ Balwyn, Victoria, Australia  
 🌐 [www.bakeryhilldistillery.com.au](http://www.bakeryhilldistillery.com.au)

David Baker began making his own malt in the late 1990s, hoping that he could craft something reflective of the “Australian Spirit.” With a scientific background that included years investigating fermentation, and after many visits to Tasmanian distilleries, David set out to prove that Australia could produce a malt to match the Scottish product. He’s had great success, with distillery awards as well as a number of gold and silver medals for his whiskey at blind tastings by the Malt Whiskey Society



**At Bakery Hill** the spirit is distilled in a copper pot still and passed through a locked spirit safe.

of Australia.

All the whiskeys released are single cask offerings. Some of the bottlings are diluted with spring water to reduce them to a traditional strength, one is finished in a wine cask to impart a slightly different flavor, while the others are bottled at a powerful 60 percent ABV. The malts are free from the addition of any caramel so the flavor you get is purely from the production and maturation processes.

### 🍷 CASK STRENGTH PEATED

60% ABV • Golden cedar in color; a sharp peat on the nose with crisp salt and dark cherry notes. Toffee and honeycomb on the palate along with rich malt and a rounded lingering finish.

### 🍷 CASK STRENGTH CLASSIC

60% ABV • Rich amber to gold color, with overtones of vanilla, orange, and bitter dark chocolate. It’s mouth-cleaning on the tongue with hints of spiced orange Turkish delight intertwined with cereal and oak.

🍷 CLASSIC SINGLE MALT 46% ABV  
 Green apples, spiced honey, and cider on the nose, while on the palate the flavors move through nutmeg, spiced honey, and on to cereal and malt to finish.

## AUSTRALASIAN DISTILLERIES



**Bakery Hill  
 Cask Strength  
 Peated Malt**

### 🍷 PEATED MALT 46% ABV

A rich gold color with a subdued peat aroma.

Kumquat and fruit mince tart scents give it a sweetness. On the palate are hints of tobacco leaf along with the smoky peat. This malt carries with it a long finish.

### 🍷 DOUBLE WOOD MALT

46% ABV • Matured in former Jack Daniel’s barrels, and then finished in French oak previously used for wine. The nose opens with apricot, coconut, and plum.

These aromas are followed by golden syrup, plum pudding, and cloves. The palate is subdued with marmalade overtones and a nougat sweetness offset by oak. All contained in a burnished bronze color.

## GREAT SOUTHERN

✉ Albany, Western Australia, Australia

🌐 [www.distillery.com.au](http://www.distillery.com.au)

This distillery is temporarily set up on the outskirts of the Western Australian town of Albany while the owner, Cameron Syme, awaits the completion of his purpose-

built distillery and visitor center. So new is this distillery that production barrel numbers are still under 100 at the time of writing, but as soon as the new facility is up and running, the output is expected to grow rapidly. The southwestern location not only provides pristine source material for making spirits, but also supplies 75 percent of their electricity via wind power.

Having learned the trade in Scottish and Tasmanian distilleries, Cameron runs the business with day-to-day distillery manager Tony Browne. Great Southern will be bottling its first expression, "Limeburners," in the second quarter of 2008. Currently the whiskey is being matured in a combination of ex-bourbon, ex-brandy, and American and French oak casks.

### HELLYERS ROAD

☒ 53 Old Surrey Road, Burnie, Tasmania, Australia

📞 [www.hellyersroaddistillery.com.au](http://www.hellyersroaddistillery.com.au)  
 🏠 Open to the public

The largest single malt distillery in Australia is a highly automated site, everything being computer controlled and capable of being remotely monitored from the home of the head distiller. Hellyers Road is a subsidiary of Betta Milk Co-operative Ltd., and years of running a successful milk processing plant has given owner Laurie House a wealth of experience in maintaining constant environments, critical temperature points for liquids, controlled storage, and a sizeable level of capital to establish a distillation plant. With what could possibly be the largest single investment in a distillery in the southern hemisphere, Hellyers has also opened up a 60-seat café and visitor information center, and offer tours of the distillery 7 days

a week. Things have come a long way since they distilled their first whiskey in 1999, and they now have over 2,600 casks maturing.

#### 🍷 ORIGINAL PURE AUSTRALIAN MALT

46.2% ABV • A pale straw-colored liquid with vanilla, citrus, and floral scents on the nose. Mouth-warming, it opens with cereal flavors followed by bitter dark chocolate and just a hint of smoked oak.



Lark Single Malt Whiskey

the setting up and production of a number of the malts now being produced in Australia, while his wife Lyn has found inventive ways to include local fruits in the production of unique liqueurs. Their new harborside location offers visitors a chance to walk through the distilling process, sample a few drams at the whiskey bar, or simply take in the atmosphere.

#### 🍷 TASMANIA SINGLE MALT

40% ABV Malty and lightly peated on the

### LARK

☒ 14 Davey Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

📞 [www.larkdistillery.com.au](http://www.larkdistillery.com.au)  
 🏠 Open to the public

Having opened the first legal distillery in Australia in the last 100 years, Bill and Lyn Lark are considered by many to be the modern pioneers of the Australian whiskey industry. Bill pondered why it was that, with such an abundance of quality raw material and ideal conditions, Australia was not producing a single malt of its own. The idea gained support, and eventually the government was persuaded to overturn an 88-year-old piece of legislation that stood in the way of founding a new distillery. Bill's experience has led him to be involved in

nose, it is complemented by the peppery spices that follow, with hints of butterscotch. More malt on the tongue, offset with a clean, fruity flavor and powdery oak to offer further complexity. The finish is spiced and delicate.

### NANT

☒ Bothwell, Tasmania, Australia  
 📞 [www.nantdistillery.com.au](http://www.nantdistillery.com.au)

The entire operation here is situated on a large riverside farm, allowing Nant to control the process from barley to bottle. Franklin barley is grown on the farm and ground in a former flour

**Lark Distillery** on Hobart Harbour has a specialist whiskey bar with indoor and outdoor seating.



mill (originally built by convicts). Mashing, brewing, distilling, and ageing are all carried out here, and the first bottles will be ready in 2008. Visitors have the chance to stay overnight and experience a fully Scottish-inspired whiskey experience that extends to a round of golf on the adjoining course and fly fishing in the on-site stream.

### SMALL CONCERN

☒ Ulverstone, Tasmania, Australia  
 ☞ [www.tasmanianwhisky.com.au](http://www.tasmanianwhisky.com.au)

As its name suggests, this was a little distillery. The water for its whiskey came from a stream that begins in the nearby Cradle Mountain National Park and flows along volcanic paths that are scattered across the island. Such purity of water ensured a clean crispness in the final whiskey once produced here.

Unfortunately production of their malts ceased in the late 1990s, and the distillery equipment was sold. Supply is obviously limited, but two Small Concern whiskeys can be found. Cradle Mountain Single Malt is triple distilled and smoother than most in the region. Cradle Mountain Double Malt is a blended malt, made by combining the Cradle Mountain Single Malt with Springbank Single Malt from Campbeltown in Scotland, which adds a little coastal saltiness.

**The mill house** where the distilling process takes place at Nant Distillery.

☞ **CRADLE MOUNTAIN SINGLE MALT** 43% ABV • Citrus notes on the nose with hints of nuts and honey. The mouthfeel is clean, as is the finish.

☞ **CRADLE MOUNTAIN DOUBLE MALT** 46–54.4% ABV • Lightly peaty, with fruit, possibly pear, followed by honey. The Springbank imparts an obvious saltiness on the nose and the palate, with a soft finish.

### SMITH'S

☒ Angaston, South Australia, Australia  
 ☞ [www.yalumba.com](http://www.yalumba.com)

In the late 1990s, Samuel Smith & Sons decided to make use of a pot still formerly used to produce brandy at their Yalumba winery. On a few occasions in the late 1990s and again in 2000, it was used for making whiskey. It has since been decommissioned, which is a shame as it produced a fine whiskey that was similar in quality and taste to Wilson's Lammerlaw (*see opposite*). The spirit was distilled from wash made from local barley, and was aged in old sherry, old French, old American, and new American casks.

☞ **SMITH'S ANGASTON 7-YEAR-OLD** 40% ABV • This is a blend of the various casks from the

same distillation run. It has a sweet, fruity nose with hints of spice and nuts. The palate is buttery in the mouth with chocolate and sherry flavors. It is followed by a toffee and honey finish.

### THE SOUTHERN DISTILLING COMPANY

☒ Stafford Street, Timaro, New Zealand  
 ☞ [www.hokonuiwhiskey.com](http://www.hokonuiwhiskey.com)



**Smith's Angaston 7-Year-Old**

Sadly this is the only distillery still actively producing new whiskey in New Zealand. Thankfully, Malcolm Willmott and Peter Wheeler, the founders of the distillery, are using it to keep the traditional spirit of the New Zealand whiskey alive. Using a recipe dating back to the late 1800s, the distillery has tried to keep a whiskey that is true to its moonshining roots.

This moonshine is now bottled and sold legally by the distillery as "Old Hokonui," and despite the skull and crossbones on the bottle's label and the somewhat intimidating packaging, it is a pleasant drink with a smooth, sweet finish. The rest of the whiskeys from this distillery take on a more traditionally Scottish style with an island-





The MacKenzie Blended Whiskey

style level of peatiness. Southern adopts a unique approach to charring their oak barrels to impart the distillery's own special characteristics into the malt. Driftwood and seaweed are burned to smoke the barrels prior to use, adding an extra level of complexity to the smokiness—a light saltiness, as you may imagine.

🍷 **THE COASTER** 40% ABV • A single malt with a deep amber color. The nose is full of cereal in addition to the light smoke and peat notes. The palate has a light brine note followed by rich malt and smoky caramel. Smooth and lasting finish.

🍷 **THE MACKENZIE** 40% ABV • A light golden blend with caramel and oak on the nose. Across the palate it is light and carries the caramel and cereal flavors. The finish is again quite smooth.

## TASMANIA

📍 1/14 Lamb Place, Cambridge, Tasmania, Australia

🌐 [www.tasdistillery.com.au](http://www.tasdistillery.com.au)

A boutique distillery that has changed hands and locations numerous times over the past 10 years, Tasmania Distillery employs only two people on a full-time basis. Patrick Maguire is quick to admit that early batches of their whiskey left something to be desired. However, the 7-year-old has since been awarded gold and silver medals in blind tastings by the Malt Whiskey Society of Australia. With such a small distillery, though, it is difficult to spread focus and Patrick has decided for the

time being to close the bar, shop, and museum and focus on producing a quality product. Getting your hands on a bottle of this non-peated malt can be incredibly difficult.

### 🍷 SULLIVAN'S COVE SINGLE BARREL CASK STRENGTH

A powerful nose offers a strong malt scent. As the whiskey hits the tongue, there is an immediate rush of malt yet again, quickly followed by oak and sweet vanilla and chocolate notes. The finish is smooth and lingering.

### 🍷 SULLIVAN'S COVE SINGLE BARREL CASK STRENGTH PORT FINISH

A surprisingly floral nose on this malt is followed by a deep, rich aroma of a Guinness-like stout. Across the palate it is dry but warming, with a sweet finish.

## WILSON'S

📍 Dunedin, New Zealand

Wilson's had the good fortune to be the first legalized distillery in New Zealand in the past 100 years. But that is pretty much where the good fortune ended. After producing Lammerlaw, a quality single malt, Seagram's purchased the company in 1994 and before long, all its stills were dismantled. It officially closed in 2000.

Lammerlaw was quite highly acclaimed and did well to set a benchmark for other up-and-coming producers in the region. Bottles of Lammerlaw are rarely available, but a collection of unbottled casks



Tasmania Distillery's Sullivan's Cove range of whiskies

## TASMANIA'S NEW ARRIVAL: QUOLL QUAFF

The latest to open among the Tasmanian-based distilleries is Quoll Quaff. The Quoll is ageing its whiskey in small 22-gallon (100-liter) casks. Although this will speed up the ageing, they are still maturing the spirit for at least 8 years, so the first bottling will not be available to the public until 2009. A "premium" 10-year-old and a 15-year-old will be made available in 2011 and 2014. All variations will be made using domestically sourced barley, water, and peat. Check on the whiskey's progress at [www.whiskyofthequoll.com.au](http://www.whiskyofthequoll.com.au).

have made their way into the Milford Whiskey range, and continue to be aged and bottled under the Milford brand until stocks run out.

🍷 **LAMMERLAW** 40% ABV Similar in style to a lowland Scottish malt, it has light citrus notes on the nose and a touch of honey. The palate is again light, with lemon and caramel notes, and a smooth, lasting finish.

🍷 **MILFORD 10-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV A dry nose but one that really opens up with a dash of water to offer vanilla, marmalade, and peaches. Across the tongue, it recalls the citrus notes of the marmalade again, but with a creaminess and malt added to the mix.

🍷 **MILFORD 12-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV Light cereal aromas and a hint of wet straw. The taste is of orange and nuts with a peppery aftertaste.

🍷 **MILFORD 15-YEAR-OLD** 43% ABV Creamy cereal and custard when first nosed, it develops into a slightly sour kumquat scent. In the mouth it is smooth, the fruitiness becoming more pearlike, with ginger and spice opening up. The finish is warm, with a hint of aniseed.





# ASIA

Asia continues to be not only the largest growth market for whiskey, but also the largest consumer. India alone consumes over 60 million cases each year, accounting for around 47 percent of global whiskey consumption.

**T**he definition of whiskey can be very different in Asia from that generally accepted elsewhere. This is to such an extent that some spirit produced in the region and labeled as whiskey is derived from alcohol made from molasses or sugar cane (much like rum) combined with additives and spices to impart a whiskeylike flavor and color. And what is termed blended whiskey may have only a passing inclusion of malt whiskey (legally as little as 4 percent), with the rest made up of what's known as extra neutral spirit (*see p276*), which could be distilled from molasses or a variety of grains that grow well in the region but are unusual to whiskey, such as rice.

Asian whiskey is rarely aged, partly because the region's climate is bad for maturation. The higher temperatures mean that the angels' share (whiskey lost from the cask due to evaporation while maturing) can be as high as 15 percent each year. Therefore, the whiskey needs to be bottled early to be at all profitable. By the time the whiskey has been casked for its traditional minimum 3-year maturation, the distillery could have lost 40 percent of the original volume. The increased heat does partially offset this

disadvantage, however, by allowing the maturation to occur more quickly, giving Asian whiskeys a complexity that belies their age.

A few distilleries have attempted to replicate the Scottish conditions more closely. Mohan Meakin's Kasauli Distillery, originally founded by an Englishman in the 1820s, is located in the cooler climes of the Himalayas. Less is lost to the "angels," and traditional barley, more suited to cooler temperatures, can be used in the production.

## WHISKEY IN A DRY STATE

Also to be found in Asia is one of the few distilleries operating in an Islamic country. The Murree Brewery in Pakistan is permitted by the local government to produce alcohol for non-Muslims and foreigners. Although it started up in 1860, it wasn't until a century later, in the 1960s, that the distillery began producing a single malt.

Scottish distillers have had difficulty selling whiskey in much of Asia, but eastern Asia has been a considerable consumer, and South Korea leads the way with their consumption of the major premium export Scotch blends, such as Chivas Regal and Johnnie Walker. Surely it won't be long before they have a distillery of their own.

**Barley grown in the fertile plains** at the base of the Himalayas is used for whiskeymaking by Amrut Distillers; they also source their water from the region.



# DISTILLERIES AND WHISKIES

Asia has many distilleries, most of which produce ENA (extra neutral alcohol) from molasses and other agricultural by-products (*see p276*). Those selected here, however, focus at least part of their output on whiskey made from barley or grain using traditional methods and ageing.

## AMRUT

India:

✉ 36, Sampangi Tank Road, Bangalore

🌐 [www.amrutdistilleries.com](http://www.amrutdistilleries.com)

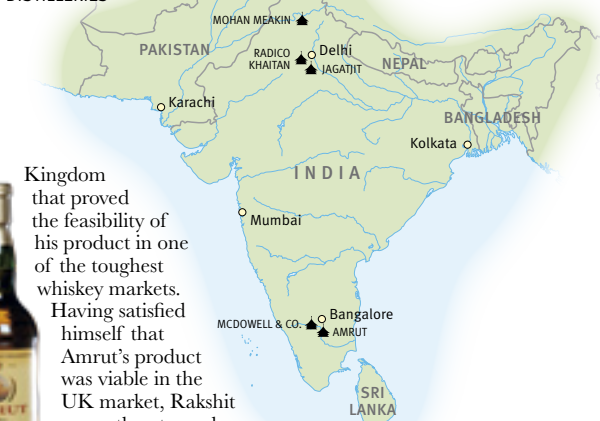
In Indian mythology, the meaning of the word Amrut is similar to “ambrosia,” or “the elixir of life.” Although the distillery was founded in 1948, it was not until the 1980s that Amrut included malt whiskey in its list of distilled products. With assistance from some Scottish experts, and a business plan crafted by the British-educated grandson of the founder, Amrut has managed to position itself quite prominently in the Scottish market.

In particular, it has gained a grip in the numerous Indian restaurants in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland. It was the tactic of the ever-creative Rakshit Jagdale to trial miniatures of the distillery’s single malt in 85 Indian restaurants throughout the United



Amrut Single Malt

## INDIA AND PAKISTAN'S DISTILLERIES



Kingdom that proved the feasibility of his product in one of the toughest whiskey markets.

Having satisfied himself that Amrut’s product was viable in the UK market, Rakshit promptly returned to India to become Executive Director of Amrut and to commence exporting.

Amrut Single Malt Whiskey is made from select Indian barley, grown in the foothills

of the Himalayas, and cultivated by old and traditional agricultural practices. The barley is carefully malted and mashed in water flowing from the Himalayan mountain range. Distillation, in traditional pot stills, occurs in small batches and maturation takes place in oak barrels, for a minimum of 3 years.

The maturation site, which is situated at an altitude of 3,300 ft (1,000 m) above sea level in Bangalore, the garden city of India, has a unique tropical condition. During maturation, the whiskey loses almost half its volume as “the angels’ share.”

As well as Amrut Single Malt, the distillery also produces MaQintosh

Premium Malt Whiskey, which uses 5-year-old Scotch blended with ENA.

🍷 **AMRUT SINGLE MALT**

40% ABV

Flowery and fruity on the nose, there is just a light spice added by some ginger and aniseed notes. The palate is smooth with a surprising amount of spice and malt, while the finish is short and sweet.

## JAGATJIT

India:

✉ 4th Floor, Bhandari House, 91 Nehru Place, New Delhi

🌐 [www.jagatjit.com](http://www.jagatjit.com)

Jagatjit Industries was founded in 1944 by the late LP Jaiswal in the erstwhile state of Kapurthala. The distillery was set up under the patronage



Jagatjit Aristocrat



Amrut operates in a warm, humid climate, and consequently much of its maturing spirit evaporates.



**McDowell's has headquarters** and distilleries in Bangalore and at Ponda (pictured) in Goa.

of its Maharajah, Jagatjit Singh. Today, the plant produces a variety of ENA spirits and blended whiskies, as well as one malt whiskey, which is called Aristocrat Premium Malt Whiskey.

## KASAULI

See *Mohan Meakin*

## MCDOWELL'S

India:

✉ 51 Le Parc Richmond,  
Richmond Road,  
Bangalore

🌐 [www.clubmcdowell.com](http://www.clubmcdowell.com)

These days McDowell's, India's biggest brand of whiskey, is owned by United Spirits (a division of the mighty UB Group), but the

original company was first established in 1898. The name McDowell is derived from Macdougall, which came from the Gaelic *Dubh gall*, meaning "dark stranger," and almost certainly referred to the Danish Vikings that began to settle in Scotland 1,000 years ago.

Whatever the etymology, it was one Angus McDowell who started the firm in Scotland to market products to Britons staying in various corners of the Empire. In India, the McDowell base had its warehouses north of Fort St. George in Madras.

From its beginnings in 1898 as a small importer of wine and spirits to India, McDowell grew to become the subcontinent's undisputed leader in the spirits market. In 1951, the late Mr. Vittal Mallya, founder of the UB Group, acquired McDowell. The

UB Group grew rapidly and expansively by several mergers and acquisitions. Along with many whiskey brands, it now owns the famous Scottish distillers and blenders Whyte & Mackay (see p154).

The malt whiskey arm of the UB Group has always followed the "Scottish Rite," with distillation in pot stills and maturation in oak casks under the strict observation of traditional periods of ageing. McDowell's also carry out their malting and kilning on site.

Locally cultivated barley and water of the utmost purity contribute to the shaping of a unique base product such as McDowell's Single Malt, made at the group's distillery at Ponda, in the province of Goa.

One of the largest distilleries in India, Ponda is responsible for the production of a range of malts and blends for both domestic and international markets. The most successful of these is the No. 1 McDowell's Whiskey, which, according to the company's sales figures, is the 5th best selling whiskey in the world; it is also quite possibly the fastest growing. The distillery uses traditional pot stills, and the whiskies are usually aged for no more than 3 years, because of the fact that they mature quickly in the warm climate.

🍷 **MCDOWELL'S SINGLE MALT**  
42.8% ABV • A very light nose, with just a hint of grain and malt

**McDowell No 1**

## SATISFYING THE LOCAL MARKET

The lion's share of Asian distilleries are either converted ethanol factories or ethanol factories that also distil some neutral alcohol as a side operation. Few were initially set up as sole producers of alcohol for consumption, with the exception of those established by British expatriates.

At the time of writing, only a handful of Asian whiskey producers distil spirit that passes international guidelines for what constitutes whiskey (see p276). Consequently, Asian whiskies seldom find their way onto the supermarket shelves of the global market. Local whiskeylike products rarely travel beyond their national borders, except as tourist souvenirs.



## UNDERSTANDING ASIAN WHISKEY

The Asian spirits industry was established by expatriates in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries to distil and bottle alcohol primarily for the British forces. Western types of alcohol such as brandy, gin, rum, vodka, and whiskey became collectively known as “LMFL.”

The initials LMFL stood for “locally made foreign liquor.” The term was used widely in Asia, though in India the term IMFL, or “Indian Made Foreign Liquor,” was preferred. This categorization became an instrument to balance the domestic alcohol industry against the import trade. No national rules defining raw material and process were, or indeed are, attached to the LMFL/IMFL. However, if production is destined for export aimed at a specific market, such as the European Union, then regulations prevailing at the target market have to be followed. With tight EU rules for whiskey designation, very little Asian spirit reaches this market.

### DEFINITIONS

**ENA WHISKEY** Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) is fermented and distilled in continuous stills using molasses, rice, millet, buckwheat, or any other fermentable product. ENA whiskey is



MacDowell's  
Vintage

usually color adjusted with spirit caramel, and is not matured. Most Asian whiskeys are in this category.

**BLENDED WHISKEY** Asian blended whiskeys are a mix of ENA whiskey and a portion of either locally produced malt whiskey or bulk imported Scotch whisky. Sometimes an age statement is given. In such cases it is the age of the bulk imported whiskey that is presented. However, as the product contains ENA, it does not meet EU whiskey regulation.

**PURE MALT WHISKEY** These are blends of 100 percent malt whiskeys from two or more domestic or foreign distilleries. Any pure malt whiskey matured in oak casks for 3 years or more qualifies for the EU classification.

**SINGLE MALT WHISKEY** As with a Scottish malt, this is a pure malt whiskey from a single distillery.

**The bottling plant at the Jagatjit Distillery** produces a wide variety of spirits, but just one malt whiskey, Aristocrat Premium.





### MEHKONG WHISKEY?

Thai Beverage Public Company Ltd. (ThaiBev) was incorporated in 2003 in an effort to consolidate Thailand's leading beer and spirits businesses. ThaiBev now controls all the major Thai "whiskey" brands, including the well-known Mehkong Whiskey. However, these spirits are no longer marketed by ThaiBev as whiskey, but as "Thai Rum."



MacDowell's Single Malt

that combine to form a creamy note. The palate is soft and somewhat reminiscent of stewed peaches. A short, sweet finish.

Among the other whiskeys produced by MacDowell's are: MacDowell's Vintage, which is a pure malt whiskey, matured in oak casks; MacDowell's Premium Blended, a blend of pure

malt whiskeys; and No. 1 McDowell's Centenary Blended, which is a traditional blended Scotch, using malt and grain whiskey.

### MOHAN MEAKIN

India:

✉ Solan Distillery and Brewery, Shimla Hills, Solan, Himachal Pradesh; Kasauli Distillery, Solan District, Himachal Pradesh

🌐 [www.mohanmeakin.com](http://www.mohanmeakin.com)

The origins of Mohan Meakin go back to the mid-19th century and to an Englishman named Edward Dyer. He set up the first brewery in India at Kasauli in 1855, and made indigenous beer available to Indians as well as Britons. The Kasauli plant switched to distilling when the brewery moved to nearby Solan, and Dyer went on to set up further breweries at Simla, Murree, Rawalpindi, and Mandalay.

Another entrepreneur from the UK, HG Meakin, came to India and bought the old Simla and Solan breweries from Edward Dyer. He added more breweries at Ranikhet, Dalhousie, Chakrata, Darjeeling, and Kirkee in the early 20th century. The Dyer and Meakin businesses merged in 1937. Following India's independence in 1947, NN

**When he built his distillery,** Edward Dyer had to sail the British-made equipment the entire length of the Ganges River (pictured) to reach Kasauli.

Mohan became the majority shareholder in the company and then its managing director in 1949. The firm eventually changed name to Mohan Meakin in 1967.

Today, the company has two distilleries, one at Solan and the other at Kasauli, in the Himalayas. At an altitude of over 6,600 ft (2,000 m), Kasauli is the highest distillery in the world.

When he established the distillery, Dyer brought with

### NEPAL'S DISTILLERY

Founded by Mathura Prasad Maskey, **Shree Distillery** at Naxal in Kathmandu, Nepal, has been producing liquors since 1992, with the technical assistance of T & A MacClelland Ltd. and Morrison Bowmore Distillers of Scotland. Although their produce uses ENA, and so doesn't qualify as whiskey in the internationally accepted definition, the Mount Everest brand is worth a mention, as it is blended with Scotch malt supplied by Morrison Bowmore Distillers.

him distillation equipment from England and Scotland that had to be shipped the full length of the Ganges River before being carted up the Himalayas to its current location. Some of the same equipment is still in use today.

The difficult location was selected not just because of the abundance of fresh spring water and because the climate was similar to the cooler climes of Scotland, but also because it was then ruled by the British, so there was a ready market for those that were stationed abroad and homesick for their traditional spirit.

It was the growth of the town of Kasauli that precipitated the move to Solan, as demands on the mountain spring water grew. But while the brewery was forced to move, it left room for the distillery

to develop. It is, in fact, the oldest whiskey distillery in Asia, and one of the oldest distilleries in the entire world.

Among the whiskeys produced by Mohan Meakin are Colonel's Special Whiskey and Solan No. 1 Whiskey—both are blends.

## MURREE



**Murree  
8-Year-Old**

Pakistan:

✉ National Park Road,  
PO Box No. 13,  
Rawalpindi

🌐 [www.murreebrewery.com](http://www.murreebrewery.com)

As well as founding the Solan and Kasauli distilleries, Edward Dyer also established the Murree Brewery, which was originally constructed in 1860. It is now situated in Rawalpindi, though its name recalls a hill station near the earlier plant, built by Dyer, at Ghora Galli in the Pir Punjal

## DRINKING IN PAKISTAN

Under the laws of Pakistan, Muslims are prohibited from consuming alcoholic drinks. Non-Muslims and foreigners require a consumption permit which is issued by provincial governments and Islamabad (for the capital territory). However in most cases a liquor retailer will assist in obtaining a permit.

range of the Western Himalayas. The original intention for the brewery was to supply locally produced alcohol to British troops stationed in India, but the beer also became a local hit and was in high demand with the rest of the populace.

Providing a steady supply proved to be difficult, however, as a series of earthquakes and fires caused interruptions to the production process. Scarcity of water at Ghora Galli became an emerging problem also, and by the 1920s, production was mostly transferred to the Rawalpindi Brewery, though the malting continued at Ghora Galli until the 1940s. The Rawalpindi site is blessed with aquifers delivering water of a very high quality.

In 1947, when the new state of Pakistan was formed, Murree became the country's first and only legal single malt whiskey distillery. The distillery, designed as a classic scotch malt whisky distillery, underwent several modernizing programs from the 1960s onward. In 1967 a German brew house was installed, followed by a box maltings system in 1971. More recently, the distilling capacity was increased in the 1990s by the installation of two alcohol rectification columns for producing alcohol from molasses.

An ambitious long-term—and still ongoing program

## TAIWAN'S NEWEST DISTILLERY

A Scottish design and manufacturing firm has recently (in 2006) completed a \$30 million project to create Taiwan's first-ever malt whiskey distillery. Forsyth's, which has its headquarters in Rothes, Scotland, was heavily involved in the successful construction and design of the distillery, which is located in northeast Taiwan.

Working in association with the distillery's owners, King Car Food Industrial ([www.kingcar.com.tw](http://www.kingcar.com.tw)), a Taiwanese soft drink and food firm, Forsyth's built and installed the milling, mashing, and distilling equipment. It produced the four-ton stainless-steel mash tun, with a copper cover, two 2,500-gallon (11,000-liter) wash stills, and two 1,450-gallon (6,500-liter) spirit stills, complete with their condensers and spirit safes. In addition, Buhler UK supplied the milling system, while all other equipment, vessels, and pipework, were designed by Forsyth's and built in Taiwan. Casks acquired for maturation are predominantly ex-bourbon. Maturation will be performed in line with Scottish guidelines.

The fully automated distillery, which took a year to design and build, is set to produce 220,000 gallons (one million liters) of alcohol every year. All the operations at the distillery can be remotely monitored from Grants engineering firm at Dufftown in Scotland. There, staff will be able to keep a check on all the distilling processes right around the clock. Grants (not to be mistaken with WM Grant & Sons) is part of the Forsyth group.

to mature malt whiskies was introduced in the late 1960s. Over the past four decades oak casks and vats have been acquired, not only from North America and Spain, but also from Australia. Murree's two underground cellars now hold over 110,000 gallons (half a million liters) of malt whiskey under controlled temperature conditions. The whiskey is ageing for varying periods of maturation, some of it for up to 20 years.

An unusual aspect of this distillery, due in part to the rather diversified interests most of the major distilleries in Asia have, is that the company produces its own glass bottles within its glass division.

#### MURREE'S PREMIUM MALT WHISKIES

The premium malt expressions from Murree are produced from a malt mash, distilled in traditional pot stills, and matured in imported oak-wood casks for guaranteed periods. The range includes the Millennium Reserve 21-Year-Old Single Malt, Murree's Millennium Reserve 12-Year-Old Single Malt, and Murree's Classic 8-Year-Old Single Malt.



Radico Khaitan's Whytehall

## PONDA

See McDowell's

## RADICO KHAITAN

India:

☒ Plot J-1, Block B-1,  
Moham Co-operative Industrial  
Area,  
Mathura Road, New Delhi

☎ [www.radico khaitan.com](http://www.radico khaitan.com)



Radico Khaitan's  
8PM Royale

Radico Khaitan is one of India's oldest and largest liquor manufacturers.

Formerly known as Rampur Distillery, it was established in 1943, but it wasn't until 1999 that the company remarketed itself and produced the 8PM brand, designed to appeal to a more international customer base.

Prior to that, the products were mostly

spirits made using ENA (extra neutral alcohol), in which molasses or other flavorings were added;



Radico Khaitan's 8PM

rectified alcohol; as well as ethanol and gasoline for an industrial market. The distillery's brands now include the previously mentioned 8PM, 8PM Royale Whiskey, Whytehall, and Royal Cambridge. Its smaller, regional brands include 8PM Contessa Deluxe, Crown, and Golfinger. All are blended whiskies.

Since 1999, Radico Khaitan has started to produce a decent range of blended whiskies, and is having success with 8PM brand.





# Glossary

**ABV (alcohol by volume)** This is the proportion of alcohol in a drink, expressed as a percentage. Whiskey is most commonly bottled at 40% or 43% ABV.

**analyzer still** *see* continuous still

**angels' share** The expression given for the amount of liquid that evaporates from the cask during the period of *maturation*.

**batch distillation** Distillation carried out in batches, as opposed to *continuous distillation*. Each batch may be marginally different, which gives the method an artisanal quality.

**barrel** *see* cask

**cask** The oak container in which whiskey is matured. There are many different styles and sizes of cask, as well as a principle distinction between the type of wood used: American or European oak. In the US, whiskey is most commonly matured in barrels (48–53 gallons). American barrels are re-used elsewhere; in Scotland, they are often broken down and re-assembled as re-made hogsheads (66 gallons). Butts and puncheons (both 132 gallons) are the largest casks used for maturing whiskey, having first been seasoned with or used to age sherry.

**cask finishing** Using a different cask for the final period of maturation, such as port, madeira, or French wine casks.

**cask strength** Whiskey that is bottled straight from the cask rather than first being diluted. It is typically around 57–63% ABV.

**clearic** *see* new make

**continuous distillation** The process of creating spirit as an ongoing process as opposed to *batch distillation*. It cannot be carried out in a pot still and requires instead a *continuous still*.

**condenser** Vaporized spirit driven off the stills is turned into liquid in a condenser. Traditionally, these were “worm tubs”—a tapering coil of copper pipe set in a vat of cold water outside the still house. Worm tubs have largely been superseded by shell-and-tube condensers, usually inside the still house.

**continuous still** A continuous still (also known as a Coffey, Patent, or column still) consists of an analyzer and a rectifier. *Wash* enters the analyser and is heated by steam, vaporizing the alcohol. The alcoholic vapor leaves the analyzer and enters the rectifier. There, it goes through a process of heating and partial condensing until it reaches the

top of the still, where the vapor leaves to be condensed as a very pure (90+%ABV) spirit.

**cut points** In the process of pot still distillation, the operator divides the *run* into three “cuts” to separate useable spirit from rejected spirit, which must be redistilled. The first cut contains the *foreshots*; the middle cut is the section of useable spirit; the end cut contains the *feints* or aftershots.

**draff** The Scottish name for the remains of the grain after mashing. It can be dried and used for cattle feed.

**eau de vie** Literally, “water of life,” and usually used in reference to grape-based spirits. Compare with *uisge beatha*.

**expression** The term given to a particular whiskey in relation to the overall output of a distillery or spirits company. It may refer to the age, as in a 12-year-old expression, or to a particular characteristic, such as a cask strength expression.

**end cut** *see* cut points

**feints** The final fraction of the spirit produced during a distillation *run*. Feints (also called tails) are aromatically unpleasant, and are sent to feints and foreshots receiver to be mixed with low wines and redistilled with the next run.

**fermenter** Another name for a *mash tun*.

**first fill** The first time a cask has been used to hold whiskey other than bourbon, it is referred to as a first-fill cask. A first-fill sherry cask will have held only sherry prior to its use for maturing whiskey; a first-fill bourbon cask will have been used once only to hold bourbon prior to its use in maturing whiskey.

**foreshots** The first fraction of the distillation run in pot-still distillation. Foreshots (also known as heads) are not pure enough to be used and are returned to feints and foreshots receiver to be redistilled in the next run.

**grist** Ground, malted grain. Water is added to grist to form the mash.

**heads** *see* foreshots

**high wines** (US) A mix of spirit that has had its first distillation and the *foreshots* and *feints* from the second distillation, at around 28% ABV. High wines undergo a second distillation to create *new make*.

**kilning** Heating of the “green malt” to halt its germination and thereby retain its starch content for turning into sugars in the mashing stage and, ultimately, alcohol.

**low wines** The spirit produced by the first



distillation. It has a strength of about 21% ABV. Compare with *high wines*.

**lyne arm** (or “lye pipe”) The pipe running from the still to the condenser. The lyne arm’s angle, height, and thickness all have a bearing on the characteristics of the spirit.

**malting** The process of deliberately starting and then stopping germination in grain. As the grain begins to germinate (through the influence of heat and moisture), it becomes “green malt” (grain that has just begun to sprout). The green malt undergoes *kilning* to produce malt.

**marrying** This refers to the mixing and maturing of whiskies. It most often applies to blends, where whiskies of different types and from several distilleries are combined for a period in vats or casks prior to bottling.

**mash** The mix of *grist* and water.

**mash tun** The vessel in which the grist is mixed with hot water to convert starch in the grain into sugars, ready for fermentation.

The fermentable liquid that results is known as *worts*; the solid residue (husks and spent grain) is *draff*.

**maturation** For *new make* spirit to become whiskey, it must go through a period of maturation in oak casks. The length of time varies; in Scotland and Ireland, the minimum period is three years.

**middle cut** *see* cut points

**new make** The clear, useable spirit that comes from the spirit still. It has a strength of about 70% ABV, and is diluted to around 63–64% before being put into casks for *maturation*. In the US, new make is called white dog.

**peating** Adding peat to the kiln ovens when malting barley to impart a smoky, phenolic aroma and taste to the whiskey. Barley that has undergone this process is known as peated malt.

**poteen** *see* uisce poitín

**pot still** The large onion-shaped vessels, nearly always made of copper, used for batch distillation. Pot stills vary in size, and these variations affect the style of whiskey.

**proof** The old term for the alcoholic proportion of a spirit that has been superseded by *ABV* in most countries. The American proof figure, which is different to Imperial proof, is twice that of the *ABV*.

**rectifier still** *see* continuous still

**reflux** The process by which heavier alcoholic vapors fall back into the still rather

than passing along the lyne arm to the condenser. By falling back, these vapors are redistilled, becoming purer and lighter. Certain shapes of still contribute to the degree of reflux, which may or may not be desirable, depending on the style of whiskey being made. Long-necked stills have a greater degree of reflux and produce a lighter style of spirit than squatter stills, which tend to make heavier, “oilier” whiskies.

**run** In batch distillation—as carried out using pot stills—the extent of a distillation is referred to as a run. The spirit produced during the run is variable in quality, and is divided by *cut points*.

**silent distillery** a distillery in which whiskeymaking has stopped, but possibly only temporarily.

**silent spirit** neutral-flavored spirit.

**spirits safe** a glass-fronted cabinet through which the distilled spirit passes and which is used to monitor the purity of the spirit. The stillman operates the spirits safe during a *run* to make *cut points*.

**still** The vessel in which distillation takes place. There are two basic types: a *pot still* and a *continuous still*.

**tails** *see* feints

**triple distillation** Most batch distillation involves two distillations: in a wash still and in a spirits still. Triple distillation, the traditional method in Ireland, involves a third distillation, which is said to produce a smoother spirit.

**uisge beatha / uisce beatha** The Scots gaelic and Irish gaelic terms, respectively, from which the word whiskey derives. The term means “water of life,” and so is synonymous with *eau de vie* and *aqua vita*.

**uisce poitín** Historically, the Irish gaelic term for non-licensed whiskey, usually known as poitín or poteen.

**wash** The resultant liquid when yeast is added to *worts*, fermenting into a kind of ale. Wash has an alcoholic strength of about 7% ABV. It passes into the wash still for the first distillation.

**washbacks** The fermenting vessels in which yeast is added to the *worts* to make *wash*. Called “fermenters” in the US.

**white dog** *see* new make

**worm / worm tubs** *see* condensers

**worts** The sweet liquid produced as a result of mixing hot water with *grist*.





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