The Art of Vodka

How to Make Vodka, Brannvin, and Schnapps from Scratch

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Introduction

I want to thank you for downloading “The Art of Vodka.” This guidebook will prepare you for distilling you own potato based spirts at home. You will be shown how to complete the entire distilling process. I will cover everything from buying and setting up your still, picking out fine ingredients, the different distilling methods, the ways to flavor your vodka, and how to bottle and store it. Most importantly, you will learn to complete the distillation safely. The spirits that you distill will be flavorful, low in impurities, and save you a ton of money.

Vodka is one of the fastest growing alcohol categories. If you have ever wondered how you could make your own vodka or liquor, then this book is for you. After reading this book, you will be prepared to enter the wonderful world of home distilling. I will also show you how you can easily adjust the process to produce a wide range of liquors, and how to vary the recipe for different flavors.

Chapter 1: The History of Vodka

Vodka is one of the older liquors that we have record of. The first use of the word was back in the early 1400's in court document s in Poland. It was likely around earlier than this, and originated somewhere in Eastern Europe. It is believed to have been first produced somewhere in the 8th or 9th century. Historical records show that the first distillery was opened in 1174.

These old vodkas were very different from the clear vodkas of today. Due to the mash and distillation process you would end up with brownish liquor similar in appearance to whiskey. It would also be quite low in proof, and require multiple distillations to reach the ~80% alcohol by volume (abv) that we associate with vodka today. Each of the distillates were known and sold by different names. The first distillation would yield brantowka. Brantowka would have around 20% abv. The 2nd distillate was known as szumowka. This would typically be a light amber in color, have in the high 40's abv, and have a much smoother taste. The third distillate was known as okowiata or aqua vitae. This was closest to the vodka's that are common today.

During this time period is very likely that vodka was used primarily as a medicine to treat a wide range of illnesses. Herbs would be crushed, added to the vodka, and then sold. Different herb/vodka mixes would be used to treat everything from fertility and increasing lust to treating headaches, cuts, and colds.

For the next few centuries vodka production would be owned by the nobility. Distilling was a very profitable business, and the nobility opened distillery after distillery. Some of these brands are still around today. Zubrowka was started in the 1500's, while Starka and Goldwasser are from the late 16th to early 17th century. As these distillers grew larger they begin to experiment with other types of distilling methods. They were able to use a very similar process to making vodka to make different types of schnapps using fruits to make the mash. There was one distiller that was even famous for offering "vodka of carrot."

Vodka made a dramatic change in the late 1800's. It was during this time that the clear vodka was invented. Up until this time vodka had always had a darker tinge due to impurities in the materials, process, and equipment used to make it. As the new distillation process came to be used the alcohol

content of the vodka sky rocketed. It had always been limited to less than 40% alcohol by volume. With this new process it was able to distill at up to 75% ABV.

Vodka production was historically concentrated in Poland and Western Russia. However, these two countries are not the countries that produce an alcohol similar to vodka. Sweden distilled fermented grain and potato mashes to yield brannvin (burn-wine). It was only in the 1950's that the East Europeans "vodka" would replace the word brannvin. Sweden is still a large vodka producer with some of the most popular brands in the world like Absolut Vodka.

Chapter 2: The Types of Vodka

Today it is possible to make vodka from any plants that are high in starch or sugar. This includes the common grains used to distill alcohol, corn, rye, wheat, and sorghum. Vodka made from these four grains is referred to as grain vodka. The vodka connoisseur will generally consider rye and wheat to be the superior tasting vodka due to its flavor profile and texture. However, the most common types of vodka are made from potatoes and sugar beets. Other popular recipes use soybeans, molasses, soybeans, and even rice. It is even possible to use yeast to ferment a sugar solution, and distill that into vodka. This book will not focus on the lesser vodkas. While these vodkas can still provide a good drink, they pale in comparison to the real vodkas and brannvin made from grains, potatoes, and sugar beets. Methods of making schnapps will also be introduced.

The flavor profile of your vodka will controlled by three things. First, you need to make sure that you are sourcing high quality ingredients. The other two factors are even more important. They are the distillation process, and the filtering process. Each of these can be used to shape the taste, texture, and flavor of your vodka. Western vodka brands tend to be heavily filtered. They rely on filtration to remove impurities, while the distillation process is allowed to contain higher levels of flavor yielding impurities.

Eastern vodka brands tend to have very minimal filtration, while relying on their distillation process to create their unique vodka. You can easily taste the difference in these two approaches. Western vodkas tend to occupy a much smaller range of flavors, and tend to have a very similar texture. On the other hand, Eastern vodkas have a much more powerful taste and aroma that can vary widely.

Typical impurities that are removed in distillation are ethyl acetate, ethyl lactate, and fusel oils. Collectively, these are commonly referred to as the head and the tail of the distillation. Vodka is unique in that it is ruthless in eliminating traces of these impurities. In comparison, many other popular types of distilled liquors will allow some of these impurities to remain. The impurities are one of the causes of hangovers, which means that vodka is one of the best spirits to consume if you have issues with the day after a night of drinking,

The Mash

Nothing is more important in determining the flavor of your vodka than the mash. Making the mash is the first step of distillation, and is what you begin to ferment to create the alcohol. The mash is what determines what type of vodka you will have at the end of distillation. The most common mash is made from potatoes, and gives rise to the typical Russian potato vodka that is world famous. There are many other types of vodka mash that are made from ingredients as diverse as wheat, barley, corn, berries, and even plum. Citrus fruits tend to make poor mashes, and it is advisable that you instead flavor your vodka if you desire this type of taste.

If you are looking for a new taste then I would recommend using rye. This is a grain that is very commonly used in Eastern European stills, and in my opinion makes some of the finest non potato vodkas. Rye lends itself to a very flavorful taste, with a pungent spiced aroma.

Wheat could be considered the opposite of rye on the grain scale. It will produce a very mild vodka, and is good for anyone who is looking for a more neutral spirit for mixers. I would not recommend many wheat vodkas to be served straight. If you want to try one, I would recommend searching for a wheat vodka that has been distilled two or three times.

Flavored Vodka

Non flavored vodka is known for having a fairly neutral taste, with a slightly slick texture. The texture is what separates good vodka from a terrible vodka. Adding flavors will change both the taste and texture of your vodka, so make sure that you are test the flavoring before you flavor an entire batch. One great thing about home distillation is that you have complete control over the types of flavors that you add. You can distill one batch of vodka, and use flavorings to create a dozen different types. This is much cheaper than buying different flavored vodkas.

The most common type of flavoring to add is fruit flavoring. Banana, coconut, orange, strawberry, and the like are commonly used. Much less common are using other vegetables to flavor the vodka. I highly recommend that you give chili peppers, cucumbers, and avocado a try. Once you have a few distillations under your belt you will be amazed at what you can use for flavoring. Chocolate is always a popular option, but be careful when adding sugary flavorings. Sugar will change the texture of the vodka substantially, eliminating the silkiness that is commonly associated with vodka.

How to Flavor Vodka

Adding flavoring is not difficult. I have given you a recipe for using fruits, but you can use this type of recipe for pretty much any flavoring.

Flavored Vodka Recipe

1. **Prepare the Fruit Flavoring–The first thing that you need to do is to prepare your fruit. Take whatever fruit you have decided on and chop into small pieces. It if fine to leave the skin on the fruit. In fact, leaving it on will even add additional flavor. If you have a small fruit like blueberries then you do not need to cut into pieces.**
2. **Add Spices – Add the fruit and any additional spices or herbs to a large jar or bucket that you can seal completely. If there was any juice from step 1, make sure to add it too.**
3. **Add Vodka –** Add the vodka to your large jar. Seal it tightly so that air cannot enter or escape.
4. **Place in Sunlight –** The next step is to place the jar in direct sunlight. This will allow the juice to infuse the vodka, and the sunlight will help break it down.
5. **Wait** – It takes a few days for the vodka to be completely infused. For a milder flavor wait three days. If you want a more intense fruit taste you should leave it for five.
6. **Separate** – Now you need to separate out the fruit. The best way to do this is to use a filter paper and strain all the vodka through it. This will remove fruit pulp, seeds, and other undesirable solids from your vodka.
7. **Bottle** – Congratulations. You have made your first fruit infused vodka, and can now enjoy at your leisure. I recommend that you use a tightly sealed bottle to store. If it is not sealed you will lose vodka due to evaporation.

Chapter 3: How to Set Up a Still

The most important thing when starting to distill vodka is to have a proper still. You do not have to go overboard when purchasing your set up. You will be best served investing in a few small quality pieces unless you are planning on producing in bulk. I will assume that you are primarily interested in producing a few bottles for your personal use, and will recommend using a small set up.

The Components of a Still

A basic home still only needs a few components. You need a heat source, a container that can be heated under pressure, a condenser tube, a condenser, and something to collect the distillate. I recommend that you use the following

- **Heat Source** – Electric Stove. Using your stove is the easiest way to provide long term constant heating. Alcohol is flammable, so it can be difficult to use a flame stove correctly.
- **Container** – Copper pressure cooker. You can also use stainless steel, but I find copper produces the most authentic tasting spirits. You also need a cork or plug for the pressure cooker that you can drill two small holes in.
- **Condenser Tubing** – 8mm copper tubing. This is easy to find at most hardware stores in the plumbing section. You will need at least 10 feet, but 20 feet would be better. You will also want a coupling.
- **Condenser** – Small water cooler. I recommend a 2 or 3 gallon size.
- **Bucket** – A five gallon bucket or other container that you can seal air tight. Five gallons will be more than large enough, so smaller collecting containers can be used for small batches.
- **Extras** – You will also need access to a drill, thermometer, and silicon sealant.

Building Your Still

Setting up your still is not that difficult. You just need to follow these steps.

Step 1.) **Bend Condenser Tubing** – You want to bend your copper tubing into a spiral shape that will fit into your small water cooler. There should be about 1 inch in between the tubing and the inside edge of the water cooler on all sides. Start by marking 6 inches down the tubing, and then bend at roughly a 90 degree angle. Leave another 6 inches of a straight section, and then start to bend into a spiral. After the spiral is done, you want to leave a 6 inch straight section, then another bend, then another 6 inch straight section.

Step 2.) **Construct Condenser -** Drill two holes into your water cooler. You want the first to be located on the side, and will be where the first end of the coil comes out. The second hole should be placed in the lid, and will be where the other end of the tubing is placed. Once the holes are drilled you can insert the copper tubing into the side hole. You want several inches of tubing sticking out of the water cooler. Once this is done, use your silicon sealant to seal around the tubing where it exits the cooler.

Step 3.) **Construct Condenser Lid** – The next step is to fix the lid. You need to cut the upper end of the copper tubing. You will be using your coupling to connect the coil and the cut end. This makes it much easier to open the lid, and makes it so you can connect and disconnect the condenser from the rest of the still very easily.

Step 4.) **Connect Pressure Cooker -** Now you need to fit the copper tubing into the plug for your pressure cooker. You need to drill two holes into the plug; one will be for the copper tubing, the other will be for your thermometer. When you insert the tubing, make sure that it is only a little bit into the pressure cooker. You do not want it to touch the liquid that you will be distilling. The thermometer should be placed a little deeper, but should not touch the sides or liquid. You want it to be measuring the temperature of the air given off from the alcohol you are distilling.

You should now have an easy to build home still that can produce a few liters of vodka within a few hours. Remember that it is important to always practice safety when using your still. You have things that are being heated, and things under pressure. This means that they can be dangerous. Make

sure that you are not using an open flame and monitor the levels of mash when using the pressure cooker.

Chapter 4: Sourcing and Prepping Your Ingredients

Now that you have a still you are ready to begin your first production run. Vodka can be prepared from many different type of base ingredients. The most important thing is that you start with something that has both sugar and starch. This will allow it to ferment and produce alcohol which you can then distill into vodka.

Choose the Base

Vodka is typically produced from potatoes, wheat, corn, or barley. For your first time I would recommend using either potatoes or corn. These ingredients are easy to get, easy to use, and produce a high quality end product. After you have distilled once or twice then you can move on to wheat, barley, or even rye or malted grains.

Once you have done a few of simple basic distillations you are ready to start experimenting to make your own recipe. Adding sugar in the form of molasses or pure cane sugar is a very common way to add an entirely different flavor to the vodka. It gives it a silkier texture on the tongue. Another common way of adding sugar is by adding fruits. This gives you not only the sugar, but also flavonoids and oils that give a fruity taste.

I recommend that everyone try using a fruit juice to produce your vodka. When using a fruit juice or fruit as the main flavoring you are producing schnapps. Schnapps are a vital component of any well stocked bar, and are a quick way to make a fruity tasting mixed drink. You can also use a variety of spices in your base. This can drastically change the taste and texture of your final product. I recommend making some brannvin. All you need for this is a corn base, and add caraway, cumin, and angelica.

A great way to find these ingredients is to visit your local farmer’s market. This way you get fresh high quality produce which will yield the purest, strongest, and best tasting vodka. I do not recommend using ingredients that you purchase online, or that you find in a regular grocery store. I always get a better end product when I use the freshest ingredients I can find. The only exception to this is if you are using milled grains. In this case it is likely that you will not be able to find them very fresh, and you may have to settle for using whatever is available at your local supermarket.

Enzymes

After you have decided on your base you need to determine if you will need to add enzymes to your mash to get it to ferment. If you are using a grain or potatoes you will need to add food grade amylase enzyme powder. This can be purchased online, or at any brewing store. If you are using a malted whole grain you do not need to add an enzyme. Likewise, if you are using a base high in sugar you do not need to add anything. When adding the enzyme powder you want to make sure to follow the instructions and use the correct amount. Too much enzyme will ruin the batch. You will still be able to distill some alcohol from it, but it will not have the taste or the texture of vodka.

If you are using a high starch no sugar base, such as potatoes or un-milled grain, you will need to gelatinize the starch. This is not difficult, and simply requires that you heat the base in water. Potatoes, barley, and wheat will gelatinize between 150 and 155 degrees Fahrenheit. All you need to do is to use your thermometer to heat water to this temperature, add your base, and mix in your enzyme powder. It is important that you monitor the temperature of the base. Anything over 158 degrees will ruin the enzymes that you are using. So make sure to keep your temp in the green zone of 150 – 155 degrees.

Flavorings

The last ingredient in a vodka distillation is any flavorings that you want to add. I always recommend not using any flavorings for your first couple of distillations. If you used a high sugar base you are likely to already have some additional flavoring in the final vodka. Molasses or fruit will take away some of the spiciness associated with pure grain or potato vodka.

Once you have a few distillations under your belt you are ready to start experimenting. Maple syrup, chocolate, candy, and jams are all good ideas to try flavor wise. If you want to get away from sweet, Wasabi, chilies, and even hot sauce can be used if you are looking for a kick. You can even go savory and make bacon vodka, buttered vodka, dill vodka, or even salted caramel vodka.

There are two primary ways to add flavor to your vodka. The first is to add it to the mash. This will give a more subtle flavor, and will change the texture and consistency of the vodka. This style of flavoring is great if you are looking for something that is not overwhelming in flavor. You can also infuse your vodka after it is distilled. This is the best method if you are looking for intense flavorings. I will explain both of the methods in more detail in later chapters.

Chapter 5: Making and Fermenting Your Mash

Now that you have your still set up and have your ingredients you are ready to begin the actual distillation. The first thing that you need to do is to make the mash. You will be learning a process called infusion mashing. This is the easiest way to make a mash at home, and is very effective at yielding a high alcohol content. Making mash is not difficult. All you have to do is add your grain to water, add in your enzyme powder, and heat. The main difficulty comes from monitoring the temperature to ensure that it is not raised too high as this will cause the enzyme to denature and stop working.

For the next few chapters I will be using a straight potato base to walk you through the distillation process. I recommend that you follow along and distill potato vodka first. There will be a chapter later in the book devoted to other distillation recipes, and will show you how to distill from sugar, molasses, corn, rye, wheat, and more.

Gather Your Ingredients

You will need the following:

- 10 pounds potatoes
- Yeast
- 1 pound malted barley
- Amylase powder – The amount can vary depending on the brand you buy. Follow the instructions on the powder for the right amount.
- Fermenter
- Food processor

Prepare Potatoes

Now you need to prepare your potatoes. Make sure that you leave the skin on, and cut the potatoes into medium sized pieces. You should get 8-10 pieces per potato. Make sure to wash any dirt off of the potatoes before you cut them. You want to boil the potato chunks until they soften. This should take 20-25 minutes. Once the potatoes are cooked you want to strain off the water, and add them to your food processor. Blend them until they are almost liquefied, and then add them to your fermenter.

Add Enzymes

Add hot water to your fermenter until nearly full, and then measure the temperature with the thermometer from your still. You are looking for a temperature between 150 and 155 degrees Fahrenheit. If you are not under this range you need to boil some water and add it to bring the temp up. If you are over just wait for it to cool.

While waiting for it to cool, use a small mixing bowl to mix your malted barley and amylase powder. Use lukewarm water when mixing, as hot water can deactivate the amylase. Once mixed together, add the mixture to your fermenter and mix well. You need to make sure that your fermenter is insulated. A few old blankets will work well to keep the heat in. Let it ferment overnight.

Add Yeast

Before you can add the yeast to your potato mash you need to prepare it. This is called making a yeast starter, and is what will jumpstart the alcohol production. Take a half gallon of the mash from your fermenter, and add it to a large bowl. You need to measure the temperature. You are looking for the temperature that is named on your yeast packet. This is generally going to be between 65-76 degrees Fahrenheit. Once the mash cools into your yeast's temperature range you can add the yeast and stir thoroughly. Wait a couple of minutes, and then stir your yeast starter back into your fermenter. Make sure that you check your liquid levels at this time, and that there is some space at the top of the fermenter. If it is overfull it may cause pressure build up and explode while it is fermenting. If this happens, you will lose a portion of your vodka mash and have a big mess to clean up.

Ferment

This step of the process takes the longest time. Your mash will continue to ferment for about 2 weeks, plus or minus a few days. During this time you will notice that the airlock on the fermenter bubbles. This is letting gas produced during the fermentation process escape, and is a sign that the fermentation process has not completed. You want to wait until this airlock completely stops bubbling before you stop the fermentation. This is the process that produces the alcohol that you will be distilling in the next chapters.

During the 2ish weeks of the fermentation process you will notice that solids float up from the potato mixture into the vodka wash. Every twelve hours or so, you should try to stir these solids back into the mash. It is ok if you are not exact on your timings, but try to stir at least twice a day and space them out.

Racking

Once the fermentation has finished you no longer need the potato solids. The alcohol will be located in the liquid wash on top of the solids. You need to pour the entire mixture through a sieve. This will remove the solids, and allow you to collect the wash. Store the wash in a cold and dark place for 2 days. This process is called racking, and helps your distillation purity.

Once racking is complete you should congratulate yourself. You have made your first vodka mash, and are ready to start the distillation process.

Chapter 6: Distilling, Filtering, and Bottling

Most people agree that the optimal number of times to distill vodka is 3. Most vodka that you find on store shelves will be either triple filtered, or triple distilled. Triple filtered means that a carbon filter was used three times to remove impurities from the vodka. Triple distilled is when the vodka has been run through your still three times. There is a smaller but still significant minority of people who think that single distilled vodka yields the best flavor and texture. I think that it is much harsher this way, and does not yield the neutral taste of a triple distilled. If you prefer single distilled you can only distill once, but I would recommend that you do not use larger portions of the body and tail of the distillation. You should also use a carbon filter to filter the vodka to make sure that all dangerous impurities are removed.

Setting Up Your Still

Go ahead and set up your still. If you need a refresher, refer to chapter 3 for a quick walkthrough on setting it up. Once it is set up you want to siphon off the vodka wash from your fermenter into your pressure cooker. Try to get as few solids as possible when siphoning. The solids will only be near the very bottom of the wash. There will be small particles in the upper portions of the wash. This is fine.

I recommend that you pack your condenser with ice. This will cool the copper tubing to a very low temperature, and will turn the vapor back to liquid quite quickly. You can also use water, but ice is the preferable method.

You want to make sure that you stay safe when distilling. One precaution to take is to only distill outdoors. This is not an option for everyone, so make sure that you take proper precautions. This includes keeping a fire extinguisher close at hand, as alcohol is highly flammable. You also want to make sure that you are not leaving your still unattended during the distillation process. You have both heat and pressure, so things can go wrong in a hurry. Make sure that you are paying attention throughout the process.

Heat Your Mash

Once you have set up your still you are ready to start your first distillation. Go ahead and turn on your heat source. You want a relatively low amount of heat. This is enough to boil off the alcohol, but gentle heating so that it gives a slow boil. This will allow for the highest conversion of alcohol, and the lowest conversion of fusel oils, methanol, and other contaminants. While the distillation process is occurring you want to make sure that you take regular temperature measurements. You want to make sure that the temperature starts around 170-175 degrees. Water will boil at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. If your mash reaches this temperature you will find that the distillation is useless and has to be repeated in order to remove the excess water and concentrate the alcohol.

You will find that the alcohol vapor is forced through the condenser, cools, and then drips into your collecting bucket. The distillation will yield three different products; the head, the body, and the tail.

The Three Parts of a Distillation

The Head

The head is toxic. This is the first part of the distillation, and will contain methanol. Ingesting methanol can cause blindness, brain damage, and even death. To avoid collecting any methanol you want to discard at least the first 100 milliliters of what you distill. This is a little more than most distillers recommend, but it is better to be safe when home distilling. You should aim to discard the first 50 milliliters collected for every five gallons of wash that you have in the still.

The Body

The body is what you will be drinking. This is the middle portion of the distillation. The body is the portion that is collected after the head, and up until the temperature gets close to the 208-210 degrees Fahrenheit. This temperature is where the body ends. Higher temperatures will mean that more and more fusel oils contaminate your vodka. This can yield an unpleasant taste, so make sure that you monitor your temperature especially closely as it approaches this temperature range.

The Tail

The tail is another portion that should be thrown out. This is the portion that is distilled after 208-210 degrees Fahrenheit, and has a high amount of fusel oils. This will make it taste quite bitter, and it should not be consumed. Anything distilled between the temperature range of 208-210 can be kept to be distilled further. You can expect to notice a difference in the taste and texture of the final vodka spirit.

Set Up the Second Distillation

Collect the body, and set it aside for now. Make sure that you have discarded both the head and the tail. You can let the temperature run past 212 before stopping the first distillation, as anything remaining after that will not yield any more alcohol. After the first distillation it is highly likely that your Vodka is of high alcohol content. You can use a hydrometer to test the exact percentage if you want to know, but it likely lies somewhere in the range of 35%. Repeated distillations will let you raise this number to as high as 50%.

Before starting another distillation you need to clean out your pressure cooker. It will have some remaining solids, and perhaps even a milky froth remaining. This can all be safely discarded. You will need to thoroughly clean the inside of the cooker. This will remove any remaining contamination, and will increase the purity of your final product.

Once you have a clean pressure cooker you can add the body to it, seal it into your still, and turn on the heat. You should perform the second distillation just like you performed the first. Monitor the temperature while it is distilling, discard the head, collect the body, and then discard the tail. The temperature ranges you are looking for are the same, though at the end you can adjust the stopping temperature of the distillation according to your tastes.

Distill a Third Time

Once you complete the second distillation you should go ahead and distill one additional time. Three is generally considered to be the perfect number of distillations to yield the purest most neutral tasting spirit. The third is repeated just like the second. Make sure that you clean out your still completely between each distillation in order to ensure the highest purity. After you complete your third distillation you should use a hydrometer and measure your vodka. If you have an alcohol content over 40% you are done distilling. If you are still under 40% then you should think about continuing to repeat distillation until you are over this number. 40% is generally accepted as the minimal acceptable number for concentration.

Carbon Filtering

The final step when distilling is to pass the vodka through a carbon filter. This will leave the alcohol, but remove many of the impurities that may still be remaining. You can either buy a specialized carbon filter from a brewshop, or you can use a typical carbon filter that is normally used to purify water. I highly recommend using a filter as this will ensure that you are getting rid of any remaining fusel oils. This will make a dramatic difference in the overall taste of your vodka.

After you have ran the vodka through a carbon filter you can bottle it in any container that you can make airtight. The vodka will keep essentially forever this way. If it is not airtight, the alcohol will slowly evaporate from the bottle.

Chapter 7: Advanced Distilling Methods

This chapter will be of use to anyone who has distilled before. These are some advanced tips and methods that you can use to increase the amount of alcohol you can distill, create better tasting vodkas, and even get a higher concentration.

The Sugar Wash

Adding sugar to your mash is one of the easiest and cost efficient ways to increase the total amount of alcohol that your distillations will yield. You should add 2 pounds of white table sugar for ever pound of barley malt that you use when making the mash. It should be added right before you add the enzymes and barley malt when creating your mash. Stir it in thoroughly. This will allow you to distill to a much higher overall purity, as well as yielding a higher amount of alcohol. You can expect a sugar wash to create about 25% more alcohol, and allow you to distill up to 60 or even 70 percent easily.

Dilution

Just because you can distill the vodka to a very high alcohol content does not mean you should keep it there. A very high alcohol by volume is important to decrease purities, but many find vodkas above 50% to be very harsh. To minimize this, you can dilute the vodka to a level between 37.5% and 50%. Simply add water until you reached the desired alcohol concentration. This may seem counterintuitive after you went through the distillation, but completing both steps will yield you a better spirit.

Splash in Rye

I recommend that everyone try adding some malted rye to the malted barley before adding to the mash. Rye leads to smoky spicy tasting spirits when used in small quantities. This is a very easy way to yield an entirely new type of vodka, and is one of the first methods I recommend trying after your first distillation is completed.

Aging

One interesting property of distilled spirits is that over time they can take on some of the taste of the container that houses them. This is most common with whiskey which is commonly aged in charred barrels. This yields a very distinctive taste. You can add a similar effect to your vodka, though you may have a hard time convincing vodka purists that it still counts as vodka.

To start aging the liquor all you need is a cask. Oak is very commonly used, but different woods will all yield a different flavor profile. You should store it to age in a cool dark place. Make sure that it is sealed tightly, and allow to age for a month or two. It is not uncommon for the color of the vodka to change, and expect it to have a more pungent aroma.

Add Flavorings

You have two opportunities to add an entirely different flavor to your vodka. The first is to add different ingredients to the mash. This is a more subtle method, but will still yield a noticeable difference in taste. Fruity flavors are often recommended for vodka, as they overwhelm the neutral alcohol taste. Adding sweet fruits will also have an effect of adding more sugar for the yeast to ferment. This will improve your ultimate yield.

The other and more common way of adding flavorings is to infuse the vodka. This is fairly simple. All you need to do is to add the ingredients that you are using to flavor to the vodka, and allow to infuse for a few days to a week. Fruits are again the most common way of infusing. It is important that you cut whatever you use into small pieces, as this will allow for the greatest surface area and lowest volume. This means that you will get much more of the oils and molecules that give the fruit its flavor.

Change How Fast the Still Runs

One quick way to change the taste of your spirits is to change the flow rate of your distillation. To do this you simply need to change the heat settings to produce or lessen the amount of heat that your stove is giving off.

Chapter 8: Distillation Recipes

The previous chapters in this book explain the basic steps of making a potato vodka. There is very little difference when making different types of vodka. All you need to do is to adjust the ingredients that you select for your mash.

Wheat Vodka

For wheat vodka, simply substitute 2 pounds of flaked wheat instead of the potatoes, and use wheat malt instead of barley malt. You want to heat the flaked wheat between 150 and 150 degrees Fahrenheit. Once you stir in the malt, you are looking for a temperature of 149 degrees. Let it cool to 85 degrees before adding your yeast, unless a different temperature is called for.

Corn Vodka

Corn vodka is made the exact same way as wheat. The only difference is that you use 2 pounds of flaked corn instead of flaked wheat. This can very often be found quite cheaply at Mexican grocery stores.

Rye Vodka

Most of the alcohol in rye vodka is produced from fermenting sugar. Your mash should be made with 10 pounds of sugar. You want to add 1 cup of rye flour when you add your yeast. The main difference with this method is that you want to adjust the ph of the mash in order to produce the highest amount of alcohol. To do this, all you need to do is add ½ cup of sodium citrate before you ferment, and mix it into the mash thoroughly.

Conclusion

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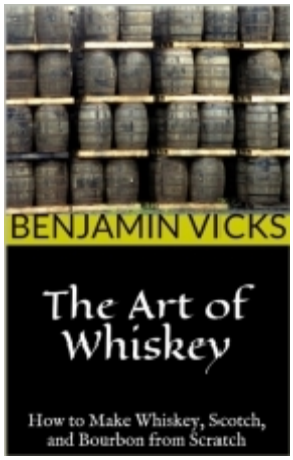

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