

# Get the taste of 2016 out of our mouths!

## Unusually flavorful whiskies

A whiskey tasting panel at Penguicon 2017

Presenter – Greg Williams



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# To “e” or not to “e”?

That is the question

The word *whisky* (or *whiskey*) is an [Anglicization](#) of the Classical [Gaelic](#) word *uisce* (or *uisge*) meaning "water" (now written as *uisce* in Irish Gaelic, and *uisge* in Scottish Gaelic).

Distilled alcohol was known in [Latin](#) as [aqua vitae](#) ("water of life"). This was translated to Classical Gaelic as [Irish](#): *uisce beatha*/[Scottish Gaelic](#): *uisge beatha*"water of life".

Early forms of the word in English

included *uskebeaghe* (1581), *usquebaugh* (1610), *usquebath* (1621), and *usquebae* (1715) - Wikipedia

**Generally, it breaks into these camps (with exceptions, of course)**

## Whisky

- Assuredly Scotland
- Used outside the US (except EIRE)
- USA prior to 1960 (sometimes)
- US brands George Dickel, Maker's Mark, Old Forester
- Ironically, US Distilled Spirits Standards
- Canada

## Whiskey

- USA, post-1960 (mostly)
- Ireland

# Whisky in General

These definitions are standard in the industry

**Malt whisky** is made primarily from malted barley.

**Grain whisky** is made primarily from any other type of grains.

(Barley is used in almost all whisky to promote fermentation of the mash)

Malts and grains are combined in various ways:

- **Single malt whisky** is whisky from a single distillery made from a mash that uses only one particular malted grain. Unless the whisky is described as single-cask, it contains whisky from many casks, and different years, so the blender can achieve a taste recognizable as typical of the distillery. *Macallan 12 Is a perfect example – the Bud Light of Scotch*
- **Blended malt whisky** is a mixture of single malt whiskies from different distilleries.
- **Blended whisky** is made from a mixture of different types of whisky. A blend may contain whisky from many distilleries so that the blender can produce a flavor consistent with the brand. American blended whisky may contain neutral spirits.
- **Cask strength** (also known as barrel proof) whiskies are usually only high quality whiskies, bottled from the cask undiluted or only lightly diluted.
- **Single cask** (also known as single barrel) whiskies are bottled from an individual cask, and often the bottles are labelled with specific barrel and bottle numbers. The taste of these whiskies may vary substantially from cask to cask within a brand.

# Whiskey in The USA

Because 'Merica!

US production of any alcoholic beverage is regulated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). The production and labeling of American whiskey are governed by Title 27 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.

**Not surprisingly, we have the most complicated set of rules in the world.**

## US Whiskey Types:

- **Rye whiskey**, made from mash that consists of at least 51% rye
- **Rye malt whiskey**, made from mash that consists of at least 51% malted rye
- **Malt whiskey**, made from mash that consists of at least 51% malted barley
- **Wheat whiskey**, made from mash that consists of at least 51% wheat
- **Corn whiskey**, made from mash that consists of at least 80% corn
- **Bourbon whiskey**, made from mash that consists of at least 51% corn (maize)

## Then it gets a little more complicated:

Unless the whiskey is labeled as **blended**, to be labeled as one of the types listed above, the whiskey must be distilled to not more than 80% alcohol by volume, and aged in charred new oak barrels. Unlike Scotch (3 years+1day) or Irish (3 years) **US whiskey has no minimum age.**

American corn whiskey does not have to be aged at all – but, if it **is** aged, it must be aged in used or uncharred oak barrels at not more than 62.5% alcohol by volume (125 proof)  
In practice, if corn whiskey is aged, it usually is aged in used bourbon barrels.

# Whiskey in The USA

But Wait, there's more!

**Surely, you didn't think those were ALL the rules?**

**Other Classifications (abbreviated rules):**

- **“Unqualified” whiskey**, mash contains less than 51% of any grain but must “maintain the characteristics generally attributed to whiskey”
- **“Straight” whiskey**, Either unqualified or Grain specific, must be aged at least two years in charred new oak, and carry a minimum age statement, unless it's aged more than 4 years, in which case then the age statement is optional.
- **“Bottled In Bond”** Any US whiskey may be labeled as bottled in bond if it has been aged for at least four years in a Federally bonded warehouse, is bottled at 40 percent alcohol by volume (100 proof), and is the product of one distilling season.
- **Blended whiskey**, A mixture which contains straight whiskey or a blend of straight whiskeys containing not less than 20 percent straight whiskey (on a proof gallon basis), and, separately or in combination, other whiskey or neutral spirits, flavors and colorings.  
**This is why the term “Blended” has a bad reputation in the US !**
- **Blend of Straight Whiskeys** – as above, but no neutral spirits are allowed. Still Crap.
- **Light whiskey**- Produced in the United States at more than 80% alcohol by volume and stored in used or uncharred new oak containers. Essentially fancy moonshine.
- **Sprit Whiskey** - which is a mixture of neutral spirits and at least 5% of certain stricter categories of whiskey. **Your presenter highly advises you not to drink this.**

**By the way, these rules can all be ignored, if the spirit is to be sold outside the US!**

# Whiskey in The USA

## Pop Quiz !!!!

Based on what we've learned so far, what type of American whiskey would Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 be considered?

- A. Corn Whiskey
- B. Bourbon
- C. Straight Whiskey
- D. Bottled in Bond
- E. All of the above
- F. None of the above

### Key Info:

- Aged at least 4 years in JD warehouses  
(bonus trivia - Gentleman Jack gets an extra 2 years)
- Their Mash Bill is 80% Corn, 8% Rye, and 12% malted barley
- Aged in charred new oak barrels



# Answer – It's a Trick Question! Ha!

By the standard definitions, Old No. 7 COULD be ...

- A. Corn Whiskey –TRUE but barely, just making the 80% minimum
- B. Bourbon – TRUE By content and process, it meets this standard
- C. Straight Whiskey –TRUE Yessir, aged more than 4 years!
- D. Bottled in Bond – NOPE – not aged in a Federal bonded warehouse!
- E. All of the above FALSE – see “D” above
- F. None of the above –Technically, this is also TRUE. Why?



Old No. 7 is a **Tennessee whiskey**.

There are only four brands of Tennessee whiskey that are currently bottled – Jack Daniel's, George Dickel, Benjamin Prichard's, and Collier and McKeel. Three of the four brands of currently produced Tennessee whiskey use a production process that involves a filtering stage called the **Lincoln County Process**, in which the whiskey is filtered through a thick layer of maple charcoal before it is put into casks for aging.

Tennessee whiskey is a recognized name defined under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as a straight bourbon whiskey, lawfully produced in the state of Tennessee.

In 2013, Tennessee House Bill 1084 was passed, requiring the Lincoln County process to be used for products produced in the state labeling themselves as "Tennessee Whiskey" with a particular exception tailored to exempt Prichard's, and included the

# Who the F\*#K is MGP?

The biggest Distillery you never heard of, but have definitely tasted.

Honestly – this is one case where Wikipedia says it better than I can (see below) But I'll preface by saying that just because a whiskey is mass produced, doesn't make it bad. In fact, MGP's consistency in flavor from batch to batch is the envy of many smaller distilleries. Most startup brands use MGP product initially, because their own product, even if they ever intend to make one, won't be ready for years once they start production.

From Wikipedia - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MGP\\_of\\_Indiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MGP_of_Indiana)

**MGP of Indiana** (where MGP is an abbreviation for Midwest Grain Products<sup>[1]</sup>) is a [distillery](#) in [Lawrenceburg, Indiana](#).<sup>[2]</sup> The distillery was founded in 1847 and currently produces a range of [distilled beverages](#).<sup>[3]</sup> The facility is the source of many spirits that are sold under about 50 different brand names by various [bottling companies](#), some of which are misleadingly marketed as [small batch](#) brands by artisanal "craft" [microdistilleries](#).<sup>[4]</sup> The company does not directly produce any brands of its own.<sup>[4]</sup> The facility's master distiller is Greg Metze,<sup>[5][2]</sup> and its largest customer is the London-based multinational beverage giant [Diageo](#).<sup>[6]</sup>



# **Before we get drinking...**

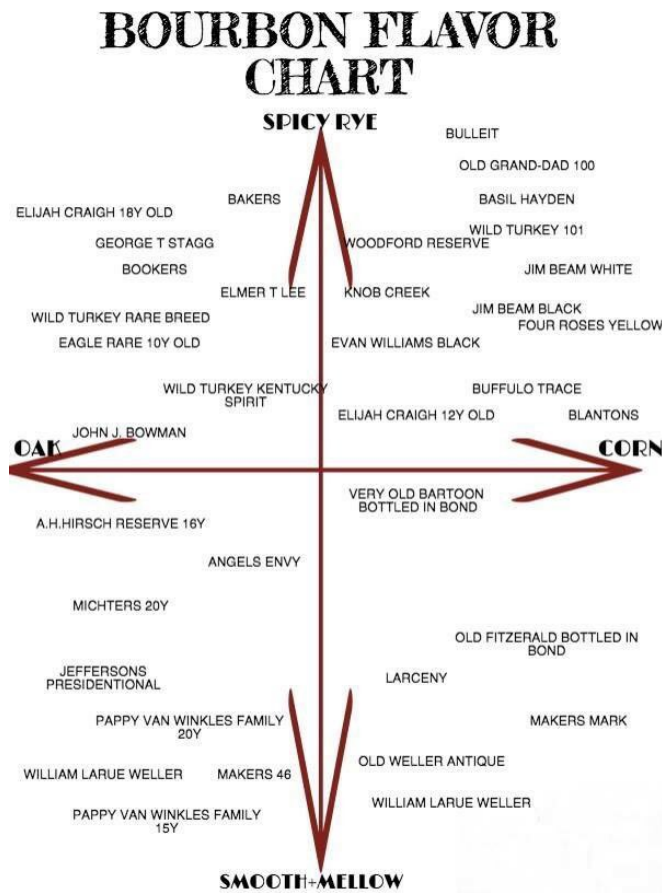
**First and foremost – always drink responsibly.  
Please don't ever let alcohol endanger you, or others.**

**While there is less pretension surrounding American whiskey than Scotch or Irish, (No-one is pretentious about Canadian), it's worth repeating my blanket statements about whiskey drinking:**

- Find your flavor profile(s) – certainly experiment, find what YOU like to drink!**
- Don't let other people tell you what “Good” whiskey is – spirits are a very subjective experience, much like food, or sex.**
- Neither age nor cost are absolute barometers to the quality of a distilled spirit – Especially one with minimum standards in place.**
- Never be intimidated by color, nose, or flavor terminology – as with wine, most of that shit is made up anyway, and your descriptions are as valid as anyones.**
- Drink it the way YOU like to drink it – Ice, water, mixers or straight up – don't worry about what anyone else thinks, the distillery is happy to make more!**

# Flavor Profiles

Finding what you like to drink can take some experimentation, but there are a lot of resources out there to help you narrow it down. Determining your preferred profile(s) can help you identify other whiskey similar to ones you know you enjoy. Sweet? Spicy? Citrus? Oaky? It's up to you!



This is a great graphic – go to [SeanSeidell.com](http://SeanSeidell.com) to see it!

# Tasting #1 – Jefferson's Ocean

The Bourbon aged around the world!

WHISKEY TYPE – Kentucky Straight Bourbon

ORIGIN – Sourced, various US – aged on an ocean vessel

AGE (Stated or approximate) 6-8 years

PRICE POINT - \$80-85

TASTING NOTES – Spices, raisins, citrus, salt, brine

## THE PITCH

"Inspired by the original Jefferson's Ocean, which was new-filled bourbon barrels, the Jefferson's Ocean: Aged at Sea takes older bourbon barrels and brings it around the world. Stopping in 5 different continents and crossing the equator 4 times, this bourbon truly is a world beater." -The Distillery "A boat is a singularly uncommon place to age bourbon, but inspiration struck Trey on the deck of his friend Chris Fischer's research ship. While watching Jefferson's Reserve bourbon rock gently in its bottle, they wondered what would happen to bourbon aged on the bow of a ship. The caramelizing of the sugars in the barrel combined with the constant motion of the ship resulted in a dark bourbon with a briny, savory taste aged beyond its years. The first batch of Jefferson's Ocean was bottled in 2012. Distilled in Kentucky and aged for four years on the deck of a research vessel in the tropics, its dark, complex flavor rivaled whiskeys several times its age and it quickly sold out. "Now, the next round has headed out to open sea and this time, the barrels, aged up to 8 years, will be going all the way around the world." -The Distillery



## Greg's Notes:

Generally rated in the 90's Pricey, IMHO for what it is, but you really do get the taste of ocean in it, which makes it unusual.

# Tasting #2 – Evan Williams 1783

Good Ol' Kentucky Bourbon!

WHISKEY TYPE – Kentucky Straight Bourbon

ORIGIN – Heaven Hill Distillery, Bardstown, KY

AGE (Stated or approximate) 4+ years

PRICE POINT - \$15-20

TASTING NOTES – Oak, vanilla, buttered corn, peanut

## THE PITCH

"Evan Williams 1783 is our signature, small batch Bourbon meaning that each batch is pulled from no more than 80 hand-selected barrels. It is extra-aged and uses the same sour mash process and traditional recipe made popular by our namesake. The result is a classic Bourbon- smooth rich, and worthy of the name.

Evan Williams earned the title “Kentucky’s First Distiller” in 1783, when he began his distillery on the banks of the Ohio River. Today that pioneering heritage is honored in the crating of this special Bourbon. Evan Williams 1783 has earned the “Highest Recommendation” from Wine Enthusiast Magazine.



## Greg's Notes:

Ratings vary  
People love or hate this one, I like it myself, and it's a great bargain in the midrange bourbon space

# Tasting #3 – Bastille 1789

Surrender your taste buds to French Whisky!

WHISKEY TYPE – “Handcrafted” French Blended

ORIGIN – Daucourt Ste, Angouleme, FR

AGE (Stated or approximate) No age statement

PRICE POINT - \$30-35

TASTING NOTES – Dried/candied fruit, baking spices, orange, pepper

THE PITCH

"

We believe in selection of our grains, the purity of our water and our Savoir-Faire.

Jean-Marc Daucourt selected the highest quality of malted barley and wheat grown in northeast of France, where some of the world's finest Scotch producers source their malt.

BASTILLE 1789 uses the purest water naturally filtered for centuries through limestone. Jean-Marc uses his "Savoir-Faire" and his heritage of a family distilling spirits for 150 years.

BASTILLE Whisky is Hand crafted. The aging process is made in small batches of different varieties of wood cask, including the most luxurious French Limousin oak.



## Greg's Notes:

Rated 94/100

Gold Medal winner

I haven't tried this yet – let's find out together!

# Tasting #4 – Redbreast 15

Special for Penguicon's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

WHISKEY TYPE – Irish Blended

ORIGIN – Middleton Distillery, County Cork, EIRE

AGE (Stated or approximate) 15+ years

PRICE POINT - \$90-100

TASTING NOTES – Floral, cherry, dried fruits, bread, apricot

## THE PITCH

One of the most decorated Irish whiskeys, Redbreast is the largest selling Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey in the world. Regarded as the definitive expression of traditional Pot Still Irish whiskey, Redbreast dates back to 1903 when Jameson entered into an agreement with the Gilbeys Wines & Spirits Import Company to supply them with new make spirit from their Bow St. Distillery. The custom of that era was that distilleries sold bulk whiskey to 'bonders' who, being in the business of importing fortified wines such as sherry and port, had ample supplies of empty casks in which to mature new make whiskeys under bond. Redbreast 15 Year Old was first created in 2005 for La Maison du Whisky in Paris, France. Due to the positive attention it received, it is now in regular production at the Middleton Distillery, Co. Cork. It is a 15 year old whiskey and is bottled at 46% ABV.



## Greg's Notes:

Rated 96/100

Gold Medal winner

One of my favorites!

Delicate opening, rich mouth feel with deep flavor, fades to a light finish. YUM!

Disclaimer – my family IS from County Cork...

# Tasting #5 – Ardbeg 10

“Enoug’ wi yer wee piddly whisky! Gi’ me some F\*#kin’ PEAT!”

WHISKEY TYPE – Islay Single Malt Scotch

ORIGIN – Ardbeg Distillery Argyll Scotland, Isle of Islay

AGE (Stated or approximate) 10+ years

PRICE POINT - \$60-65

TASTING NOTES – Peat, Peat, citrus, Peat, and Peat

THE PITCH

“Ardbeg Ten Years Old is revered around the world as the peatiest, smokiest, most complex single malt of them all. Yet it does not flaunt the peat; rather it gives way to the natural sweetness of the malt to produce a whisky of perfect balance. “

NOTE – serving this last, because F-ing honestly, after this one, your palate would be WRECKED for the other ones. This is the type of Scotch that makes people say “I hate Scotch whiskey”. Which is sad, because not all Scotch is peated, and they miss out on other fantastic expressions.



## Greg’s Notes:

Rated 96/100

Gold Medal(s) winner

2008 World whisky of the year  
Known as a benchmark in Islay  
whiskeys – archetypical.

If you like peat, you’ll love this  
– if you don’t, just smell it, and  
leave the drinking of it to the  
rest of us!

# Attributions / Sources

Some of the content in this presentation was used from other sources – so let's give credit where credit is due:

- CC image - <http://creativecommons.org/>
- Etymology and Typing info - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whisky>
- Title 27 text (enjoy that)  
<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2008-title27-vol1/pdf/CFR-2008-title27-vol1-sec5-22.pdf>
- Bourbon flavor chart <https://twitter.com/granewhiskey/status/684431747031773184>
- Whiskey color rainbow <http://www.esquire.com/food-drink/drinks/a33731/esquire-guide-to-whiskey-2015/>
- 18 flavors of whisky - Sean Seidell -  
[http://seanseidell.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/18-Flavors-of-Whiskey\\_web.png](http://seanseidell.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/18-Flavors-of-Whiskey_web.png)
- Jameson Distillery Redbreast page <https://shop.jamesonwhiskey.com/products/redbreast-15-year-old>
- Heaven Hill Distillery <http://heavenhilldistillery.com/>
- Bastille Whisky <http://www.bastillewhisky.com/#!home>
- Jefferson's ocean [http://jeffersonsbourbon.com/product.php?product\\_id=3](http://jeffersonsbourbon.com/product.php?product_id=3)
- Ardbeg Distillery <https://www.ardbeg.com/visit-us/distillery>
- This is a great way to try a shit ton of whiskey in one place - <http://whiskyadvocate.com/events/>