



What you're about to learn here

- What is whisky?
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Whisky is a spirit with an incredibly large taste variety. Whisky excites connoisseurs around the world. This guide helps you getting started and answers the most important questions. With this you can taste and enjoy your whisky in proper style.

If you want to learn more about whisky, you will find numerous articles with lots of photos and videos on whisky.com.

We wish you much pleasure in getting into the world of whisky!

What is Whisky? What Types of Whisky Are there?

According to UK & EU regulations an alcoholic beverage may only be called whisky if it was produced according to the following criteria:

- Made only from cereal
- Maturation in oak casks for at least 3 yrs
- Bottled with a minimum of 40% abv.

Vodka, most often a clear grain spirit, would also be whisky if it was matured in oak casks. Whisky has its origins in Scotland and Ireland from where it conquered the whole world. Especially in the USA, India and Japan it has become very popular. Over time slightly different production methods have developed which has led to distinct varieties.

Note: Irish and American Whiskey is spelled with an e before the y.

Single Malt Whisky

Most readers of this guide are interested in Scotch single malt whisky, which has the greatest variety. It is made exclusively from malted, i.e. germinated barley and is distilled in copper pot stills. After that it is matured in oak casks for many years. It may only be called "single malt" if it comes from a single distillery.

Blended Whisky

Blended whisky is a mixture of malt whisky and industrial whisky from different distilleries. Industrial whisky is produced from wheat or corn in large quantities in large industrial plants and often matured in casks only for the minimum time.

There are also other types of whiskies such as **Bourbon**, which is made predominantly from corn, or **Rye** from a grain mixture with at least 51% rye.

What Makes a Good Whisky?

Everybody knows that there's no accounting for taste. Some people swear by the mild whisky from the supermarket. But you often find only the simple brands there. More than 50% of the retail price of these whiskies belongs to the government in the form of taxes. The bottle, packaging and transport together with the costs of the supermarket make up another 45% of the bottle price. In the best case, there remains app. 1 Euro/Dollar/Pound per bottle for production and storage of the whisky. Is it really possible to produce quality this way? Popular brands that you know from advertising are more expensive, though not necessarily better.

High-quality whiskies are sold much less often and are rarely available in supermarkets,



where every part of the shelves has to generate high sales.

But how do you recognise a good whisky?

Your first step should be to look for the country of production. If it isn't stated, the ingredients have been compiled cheaply from all around the world. Also note the type of whisky. Single malt Scotch whisky offers the highest quality.

As a second criterion, the names of the renowned distilleries stand for continuous good quality.

The third criterion is the age of a whisky. As a rule of thumb, single malt only starts to become really good after 10 years of maturation. But not each cask matures into such a quality that it is bottled by the distillery under its own name. An old age on the label doesn't guarantee a superb whisky. 'Older' does not always equal 'better'. There are now many bottlings without an age statement, which instead emphasize on good taste.

Finally, the price may be an indicator for the content, too.

The following price ranges refer to typical prices of 0.7/0.75 litre bottles.:

1. Discount Whisky 8-10 €/\$/£
2. Blended Whisky 9-25 €/\$/£
3. Single Malt Whisky 25+ €/\$/£

With which Whisky Should I Begin?

When you start, it's important to first buy a few bottles with a very good price-performance ratio. You should postpone tasting complicated whiskies, whiskies with a high age, or single cask bottlings to later. That way you avoid initial disappointments that could spoil the joy of this special drink.

Avoid peated whiskies at the beginning. Initially non-smokers won't detect many other aromas beside the intense smoke.

Whisky is full of different aromas. From aniseed to zest you can smell and taste everything in a whisky. To experience the full potential of a whisky, start with a mellow Scotch single malt whisky.

Best-suited are the standard bottlings of well-known distilleries such as Aberlour 10Y, Auchentoshan 12Y, Balvenie 12Y, Glenlivet

12Y, Glenfiddich 15Y, Glenmorangie 10Y, Highland Park 12Y.

The special production process of single malt creates all sorts of aromas from sweet to bitter. Typical are vanilla, honey and toffee, as well as fruits such as berries, apples, exotic and citrus fruits. They may be accompanied by aromas of flowers, hay, malt, nuts and spices. Sometimes there are also bitter notes of coffee, chocolate, leather and tobacco.

Bad whiskies can smell like sulphur, old leather, soap or tar.

Take your time. It takes some practice before you can clearly identify the individual aromas. Invite some friends and exchange your experiences.

The Tasting

John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart have led the way. A tough guy drinks whisky from the bottle or from a bulky whisky glass. Experts call these glasses tumblers. Ads for the well-known brands suggest other forms of enjoying whisky, such as 'on the rocks' or 'with Coke'. But all these approaches only serve the purpose to hide the actual taste and the exquisite aroma of a good whisky. This begs the question: „Do they have anything to hide?“

The best way to enjoy whisky is at room temperature out of a nosing glass. These glasses are tulip-shaped and taper at the top. The smell of the whisky can't escape that quickly and is concentrated in the glass. On the contrary coldness binds the aromas in the whisky and prevents them from rising up. The palate is numbed, too.

Take a moment of time and smell the whisky extensively. We can absorb much more aromas through the nose than with the tongue. Which flavours can you detect?

Then take a small sip and spread it in your mouth. Do the flavours change? Do new flavours appear?

Only then swallow the whisky and enjoy the lingering aftertaste, which the experts call finish.

Then start the whole process again.

Do you find a whisky too pungent? Scottish and American master distillers always add some drops of still water at room temperature to their whisky. The aromas can unfold much better this way. But don't add too much or you'll water the whisky down.

The world's highest-quality whiskies are bottled undiluted. This is called cask strength. With 50% to 60% abv, the alcohol content of these whiskies is so high that the lips would be numbed by the strong alcohol if it was drunk undiluted. These whiskies need a few drops of still water.

Take your time when you discover and taste new whiskies. You will be surprised that the same whisky tastes different the next day.



Nosing Glasses

Health Advice

We don't want to deal with the risks of alcohol consumption here. You can read the relevant literature yourself. However, we want to give you the following advice:

Drink less, but be aware.

Some people drink one litre of beer or half a bottle of wine on the evening. How much alcohol do you consume this way? The table shows the alcohol content of a typical amount of these drinks.

Beverage	% abv	Amount	Pure Alcohol
Beer	~5%	0,5 Litres	25 ml
Wine	~12%	0,25 Litres	30 ml
Whisky	~40%	0,04 Litres	16 ml

This might hold a surprise for the layman. A double whisky contains the same amount of alcohol as a glass of wine.

Important! Never drink alcohol en passant, but enjoy a small amount of good whisky deliberately and slowly. You shouldn't drink whisky alongside beer or wine, as you would with a shot, but you should drink it instead of wine or beer. You surely smell and sip a good whisky for as long as a hastily drunk beer.

You shouldn't quench thirst with beer, wine or whisky - for thirst, there's pure water.

Whisky: Stability and Storage

An open whisky bottle can be stored for half a year to one year. Then the oxygen in the air starts to change the taste of the whisky (through oxidation). The whisky doesn't go bad this way, but it loses flavour.

You can extend the durability of an open bottle by carefully refilling it into a smaller bottle (avoid bubbles). Always keep the bottle closed or the alcohol will evaporate.

Unopened bottles are best stored upright. In contrast to wine, whisky has a multiple-use

cork. Since the bottle is often opened and closed again, the cork mustn't sit as tightly as the cork of a wine bottle. When a bottle lies on the side and the cork is a bit loose, whisky could leak.

Don't expose whisky to direct sunlight or excessive heat since it could bleach out. Damp basements are unsuitable since the label could soak and become mouldy.

Whisky as an Investment

Collecting single malt whiskies has become a popular hobby in recent years. The oldest whiskies that are still available are from the 50s. Connoisseurs must pay 1,000 to 3,000 €/\$/£ for such a bottle. The post-war vintages are also extremely rare and expensive.

However, also some cheaper whiskies have extremely increased in value within just a few years. For example, the limited bottling 'Black Bowmore' regularly achieves prices of more than 3,000 €/\$/£ in auctions. In 1996, you could still regularly buy this whisky for roughly 130 €/\$/£.

Do you want to start collecting whisky? Please don't just collect at random, but pursue

a strategy, so the value of your collection increases more. There are several possible collecting strategies:

- All bottlings of a single, renowned distillery
- All distillery bottlings of one region (Highlands, Islands, Islay, ...)
- One exquisite distillery bottling from each distillery
- Limited editions of renowned distilleries

Beware! Investing in whisky casks is usually not worth it since only a small part of casks mature into the highest quality. Bottling and distribution are also very expensive.

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