

Whiskey in the Mitten

A whiskey tasting panel at Penguicon 2016

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. *i.e. Johnny Walker*
- **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 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



Whiskey in The USA

Answer – It's a Trick Question! Ha!

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

- A. Corn Whiskey – but barely, just making the 80% minimum
- B. Bourbon – By both content and process, it meets this standard
- C. Straight Whiskey – Yessir, aged more than 4 years!
- D. Bottled in Bond – NOPE – not aged in a Federal warehouse!
- E. All of the above
- F. None of the above – But 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.

Mitten Distillery Map

Craft Distillery Members

- AMERICAN FIFTH**
EST. 2011
- 01 American Fifth Spirits**
112 N Leitch St, Lansing
517 999 2631
[w] americanfifthspirits.com
[f] facebook.com/americanfifth
[t] twitter.com/americanfifth
- 02 Bier Distillery - Cellar Brewing**
500 E Division St, Sparta
616 883 0777
[w] bierdistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/bierdistillery
[t] twitter.com/bierdistillery
- 03 Black Star Farms**
340 McKinley Rd East, Traverse City
231 944 1300
[w] blackstarfarms.com
[f] facebook.com/blackstarfarms
[t] twitter.com/bstar2009
- 04 Black Star Farms**
10844 E. Revoild Rd, Suttons Bay
231 944 1270
[w] blackstarfarms.com
[f] facebook.com/blackstarfarms
[t] twitter.com/bstar2009
- 05 Tastes at Black Star Farms**
Grand Traverse Commons
800 Cottage View, Ste 35, Traverse City
231 944 1549
[w] blackstarfarms.com
[f] facebook.com/blackstarfarms
[t] twitter.com/bstar2009
- 06 VinBar - Black Star Farms**
111 West Liberty, Ann Arbor
734 368 9750
[w] blackstarfarms.com
[f] facebook.com/blackstarfarms
[t] twitter.com/bstar2009
- 07 Civilized Spirits**
13512 Peninsula Dr, Traverse City
231 944 1349
[w] civilizedspirits.com
[f] facebook.com/civilizedspirits
[t] twitter.com/drinkcivilized
- 08 Coppercraft Distillery**
164 120th, Holland
616 796 8274
[w] coppercraftdistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/Coppercraftdistillery
[t] twitter.com/codistillery
- 09 Detroit City Distillery**
2462 Ripelle St, Detroit
313 358 3760
[w] detroitnessdistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/detroitcitydistillery
[t] twitter.com/detroitcitydist
- 10 Grand Traverse Distillery**
781 Industrial Circle, Ste 5, Traverse City
231 947 8635
[w] grandtraverseedistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/grandtraverseedistillery
[t] twitter.com/GTDistillery
- 11 Grand Traverse Distillery**
215 E Front St, Traverse City
231 946 1259
[w] grandtraverseedistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/grandtraverseedistillery
[t] twitter.com/GTDistillery
- 12 Grand Traverse Distillery**
110 Lake St, Suite N-3, Leeland
231 256 0128
[w] grandtraverseedistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/grandtraverseedistillery
[t] twitter.com/GTDistillery
- 13 Grand Traverse Distillery**
The River Place Shops
925 S Main St, Ste B6, Frankenmuth
989 652 2483
[w] grandtraverseedistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/grandtraverseedistillery
[t] twitter.com/GTDistillery
- 14 Grand Traverse Distillery**
Downtown Market, 435 Ionia St SW, Ste A116,
Grand Rapids
616 268 5442
[w] grandtraverseedistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/grandtraverseedistillery
[t] twitter.com/GTDistillery
- 15 Journeyman Distillery**
109 Generations Dr, Three Oaks
269 820 2050
[w] journeymandistillery.com
[f] facebook.com/journeymandistillery
[t] twitter.com/journeymandist

16 Long Road Distillers
537 Leonard St NW, Grand Rapids
616 228 4924
[w] longroaddistillers.com
[f] facebook.com/longroaddistillersg
[t] twitter.com/longroadgr

17 New Holland Artisan Spirits
684 Commerce Ct, Holland
616 510 2239
[w] newhollandbrew.com
[f] facebook.com/newhollandbrew
[t] twitter.com/newhollandbrew

18 New Holland Artisan Spirits
66 E 8th St, Holland
616 355 6422
[w] newhollandbrew.com
[f] facebook.com/newhollandbrew
[t] twitter.com/newhollandbrew

Fed Cedar spirits*
19 Red Cedar Spirits
2000 Merritt, East Lansing
517 908 9950
[f] facebook.com/RedCedarSpirits

20 Round Barn Distillery
10993 Hills Rd, Barab
800 716 9463
[w] roundbarwinery.com
[f] facebook.com/roundbarwinery
[t] twitter.com/roundbarwinery

21 Round Barn Distillery
9185 Union Pier Rd, Union Pier
269 469 6885
[w] roundbarwinery.com
[f] facebook.com/roundbarwinery
[t] twitter.com/roundbarwinery

22 Round Barn Distillery - Free Run Cellars
10062 Bungeone Rd, Berrien Springs
269 471 1737
[w] roundbarwinery.com
[f] facebook.com/roundbarwinery
[t] twitter.com/roundbarwinery

23 Sanctuary Spirits
902 E Spaulding Hwy, Grand Ledge
517 925 1930
[w] sanctuaryspirits.com
[f] facebook.com/sanctuaryspirits
[t] twitter.com/sanctuaryspirits

Distilleries In Planning

- 30 Gray Skies Distillery, Grand Rapids**
31 Jayda Gale Distillery, Wayland
32 Revival Distilling Co., Kalamazoo

St. Julian Winery

24 St. Julian Wine Co.
716 S Kalamazoo St, Paw Paw
269 657 5568
[w] stjulian.com
[f] facebook.com/stjulianwinery
[t] twitter.com/stjulianwinery

25 St. Julian Wine Co.
9145 Union Pier Rd, Union Pier
269 469 3150
[w] stjulian.com
[f] facebook.com/stjulianwinery
[t] twitter.com/stjulianwinery

26 St. Julian Wine Co.
700 Freedom Ct, Dundee
764 529 3700
[w] stjulian.com
[f] facebook.com/stjulianwinery
[t] twitter.com/stjulianwinery

27 St. Julian Wine Co.
127 S Main St, Frankenmuth
989 652 3281
[w] stjulian.com
[f] facebook.com/stjulianwinery
[t] twitter.com/stjulianwinery

28 Two James Spirits
2445 Michigan Ave, Detroit
313 964 4800
[w] twojames.com
[f] facebook.com/twojamesspirits
[t] twitter.com/twojamesspirits

Valentine Distilling
161 Vester St, Ferndale
248 629 9951
[w] valentinedistilling.com
[f] facebook.com/valentinedistilling
[t] twitter.com/valdistill

According to the [Michigan Craft Distillers Association](http://MichiganCraftDistillers.com), not only are there quite a few active distilleries, but more are in the works!

Before we get drinking...

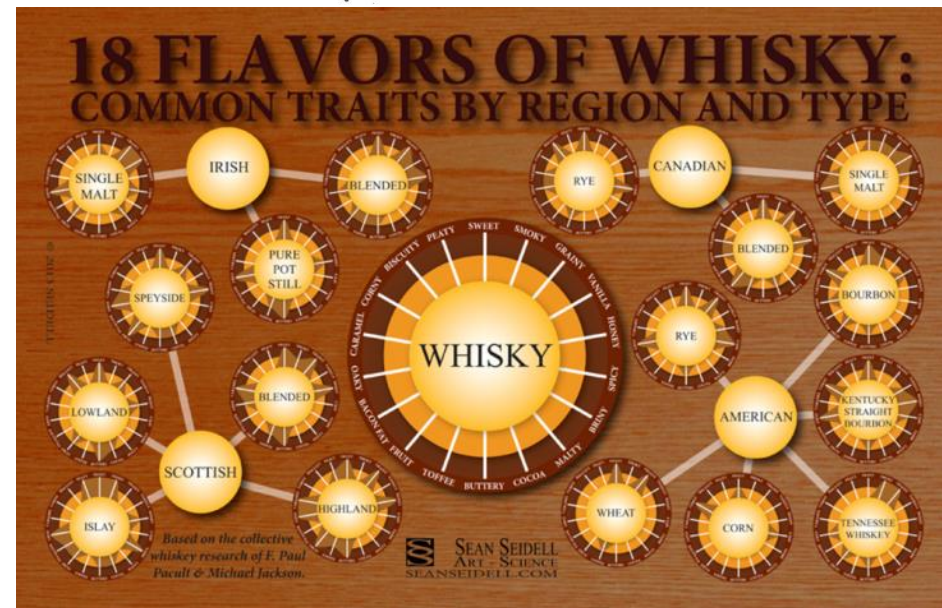
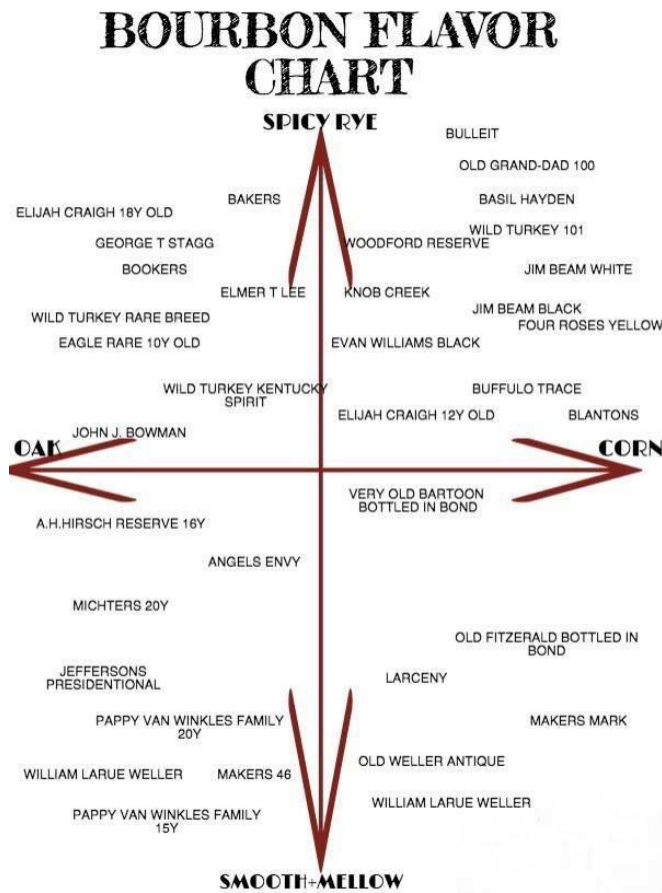
**First and foremost – always drink responsibly.
Please don't ever let alcohol endanger you, or others.**

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 to see it!

Tasting #1 – Grand River

Located in Jackson, Michigan. Also a brew pub, and a fantastic bar and restaurant!



GRAND RIVER WHISKEY



Triple Distilled from Corn, our Bourbon Whiskey is first aged in brand new Tennessee Oak barrels which lends oaky vanilla tones to sooth the pallet.

Spirits Style

Traditional Bourbon whiskey finished in oak barrels

Proof

80

Base/Wash

Neutral Corn Bourbon base sourced at 190 proof

Bottle

750 ML bottles, cases

Techniques

Triple Distilled bourbon is finished in in New Tennessee White Oak Barrels with a Heavy Toast. Filtered through a particulate filter and bottled at 80 proof.

Tasting #2 – New Holland

Made a name for themselves as a brewer, now kicking ass in Whiskey as well.

Located in (Shocker) Holland, MI. Also has a pub, “I’ve never been there, they tell me it’s nice..”



Tasting #3 - Journeyman

Located in an old buggy whip factory in Three Oaks, MI, has an impressive array of expressions. Tiny tasting room/pub but hold several events on the grounds each year in the Summer.



Tasting #4 - TBD

But it will be whiskey from Michigan. OR WILL IT?



Go to the tasting rooms!

Why does Greg sometimes buy his Michigan Whiskey in Chicago?

[This article](#) from Mlive.com breaks it down pretty well:

“Because Michigan is a "control" state, the government sets the minimum retail price of liquor sold through the state's partially-privatized distribution system. By comparison, the price of beer and wine is determined by the market.

In Michigan, warehouses called Authorized Distribution Agents (ADAs) handle the mechanics of distribution while the state buys the booze, authorizes distribution, and collects taxes — including a 65 percent markup of the wholesale price.

The complicated process traces its roots to post-Prohibition and the three-tiered system developed by John D. Rockefeller in the 1930s. It represents significant tax revenues for control states like Michigan, but is a heavy burden on producers.

At Grand Traverse Distillery, a 750-milliliter bottle, which retails for \$29.99, is sold to the state for \$15.97. The state takes \$14.02 out of the shelf price, giving between 12 and 14 percent of that to the retailer. Out of his \$15.97, Grand Traverse pays more than \$2 per bottle in federal tax, plus other distribution fees and commissions. Operation and production costs further crimp profits”

I highly encourage you to visit the distilleries in person, try samples, and meet the crafters!

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/>
- Mitten map and awards info – MI Craft Distillers Assn - <https://micraftspirits.wordpress.com/>
- 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>
- Michigan liquor tax info - http://www.mlive.com/business/west-michigan/index.ssf/2014/11/michigan_distilleries_look_to.html
- 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
- Grand River Brewery - <http://grandriverbrewery.com/drinks/distillery>
- New Holland <http://newhollandbrew.com/>
- Journeyman <http://www.journeymandistillery.com/>
- This is a great way to try a shit ton of whiskey in one place - <http://whiskyadvocate.com/events/>