



Washington State Liquor Control Board

Bourbon



5 Things You Need To Know

Origin

Bourbon is the most American of spirits; there are strict laws to how and from what it is made. For example, Bourbon must be distilled from at least 51 percent corn and be aged for a minimum of two years in new charred, white oak barrels.

And although Bourbon can technically be made anywhere, only the great state of Kentucky is allowed to place its name on the bottle. One adage often used when speaking about Bourbon is, “All Bourbon is whiskey, but not all whiskey is Bourbon.”

What does it taste like?

Bourbon is a whiskey that can be smooth and refined or very pronounced and flavorful. The grains used are apparent and become very much a part of the taste, if you can imagine the taste as a roasted (or toasted) flavor.

The new oak used in aging is also very apparent in Bourbon's taste. Sweetness on the finish is also often referred to among Bourbon drinkers. And let's not forget strength: a bourbon can be very high proof and therefore its taste can be perceived as 'hot' or highly alcoholic.

- With aromas of maple sugar and toasted nuts, Bourbon has a distinctly sweet, round and rich palate with slightly floral or vanilla oak flavors.
- The finish is long and rich.

Bourbon in WSLCB stores: By the numbers

- There are currently 28 different Bourbons available in the 750 ml size on WSLCB shelves.
- In 1979, by comparison, nearly 70 brands of Bourbon were listed.
- The current price ranges as of 12/07 are between \$12 and \$53. A majority of brands (17) are between \$17 to \$35.
- As a category, Bourbon contributes approximately 4.5 percent of liquor profits returned to the State.
- Bourbon as a category is trending up at 7 percent.

Category leaders

In Washington, the leaders in the premium category are:

1. Jack Daniels (technically a Tennessee Whiskey)
2. Maker's Mark
3. Jim Beam
4. Wild Turkey
5. Evan Williams

Note: Signpost brands (brands that are easily identifiable to the consumer and lead the category in Washington) are Jack Daniels and Jim Beam.

How it's used and what the future holds

Bourbon's popularity is on the rise, especially in the "small batch" sub category. Over 100 small batch Bourbons are marketed to the discriminating Bourbon drinker. With varying styles and price ranges, the category of small batch as well as standard Bourbons is becoming a niche market.

Bourbon is typically drunk neat or on the rocks, but the popularity of Bourbon and Coke never ceases. Other traditional cocktails with Bourbon as the main ingredient include Mint Juleps (popular in the South and nationwide at Kentucky Derby time) and Old Fashion (a classic cocktail made with bitters, lemon and sugar).