



Washington State Liquor Control Board

Brandy



5 Things You Need To Know

Origin

Brandy is liquor primarily made from grapes. You will also see Plum and Apple Brandy among others on WSLCB shelves, but true Brandy is made from grapes. Brandy is produced in many countries including Italy, Germany, Spain, Mexico and France. The Brandy produced in the Cognac region of France is by far the most well-known, admired and luxurious in the world. American Brandy has become more respected and popular in recent years with the vast majority produced in the state of California. American Brandy varieties also have a set of rules governing their production, though they are not quite as strict as the French procedures. Brandy has been an extremely popular drink for hundreds of years and is most often enjoyed as an after dinner drink. It is often suggested that Brandy should be warmed before drinking to enhance its flavor.

What about those letters? Sure to confound the consumer and new sales person are the category letters used in Cognac and now American production. What they signify follows.

VS or Very Special – usually indicates the youngest Cognac made by a producer – may not be less than 4½ years old.

VSOP or Very Special Old Pale – aged between 4½ years and 6½ years.

XO or Extra Old – aged at least 6½ years, but most often the Cognac is well above the minimum age requirement.

You may see other lettering used on labels but the above are the most often used.

What does it taste like?

The taste and bouquet are delicate but still pronounced. Hints of pepper or spice, mostly clove, is sometimes referred to.

Taste aside, nothing else warms the body from the inside out quite like Brandy and is why many consumers are drawn to it.

Brandy in WSLCB Stores: By the numbers

- There are currently nine American Brandies, 13 Cognacs and 23 import or fruit Brandies available in the 750 ml size in WSLCB stores.
- In 1979, by comparison, the category featured 15 domestic Brandies, six Cognacs and 26 imports and flavored.
- Prices for American Brandy range from \$12.00 to \$20.00.
- Prices for Cognacs range from \$21 to \$1,721- a majority of Cognacs (eight) are between \$30 and \$45. It should be noted that the price range in Cognacs varies greatly, and considering Cognacs reputation as a luxury item, it is not unusual for the consumer to spend well over \$100 on a bottle.
- American Brandy, Cognac, imported Brandy and flavored contribute 4.2 percent of liquor profits returned to the State.
- Overall the Brandy category is growing at nearly 6 percent annually.

Category Leaders

In Washington the leading premium brands are:

Cognac:

1. Hennessy VS
2. Remy VSOP
3. Courvoisier VS

Brandy:

1. Christian Brothers
2. E & J

Note: Signpost brands (brands that are easily identifiable to the consumer and lead the category in Washington) are E & J, Christian Brothers and Paul Masson. Cognac is primarily driven in sales (nearly three to one) by Hennessy VS.

How it is used and what the future holds

Brandy growth is moderate and should be stable for the near future. Cognac is trending up even at a higher rate and is enjoying national advertising as an item to treat oneself to. Enjoyed neat (room temperature without ice) in a brandy snifter and as previously mentioned, often served heated in a snifter. Brandy also has its place in classic American cocktails as the main ingredient in the Stinger (with crème de menthe) and the Brandy Alexander (with crème de cacao).