



Washington State
Liquor Control Board

Canadian and American Blended Whiskey



5 Things You Need To Know

Origin

Canadian whisky is made in Canada; by law it must be aged there at least three years (though many on LCB shelves are six years in age) in wooden barrels. Most Canadian whiskies are blended, multi-grain whiskies (corn, barley and rye) and are known for their light and smooth quality. Along with the grains used, blended whiskies are also combined with grain neutral spirits ("Neutral Spirits" are distilled spirits at or above 190 proof) before bottling to achieve overall consistency and flavor. Often referred to as Rye, especially in Canada, the use of Rye as a component in distilling is not dictated by Canadian law.

Canadian whisky featured prominently in illegal imports into the U.S. during prohibition in the 1920's since Canada was under no such restrictions during this period in time (although there was prohibition in Canada in 1916-1917).

American Blends similar to their Canadian counterparts are an assembly blending of straight whiskies and neutral spirits containing at least 20 percent straight whiskey and bottled at not less than 80 proof.

What does it taste like?

Canadians are a lighter tasting whiskey and that lighter quality and their aging contributes to their reputation of smoothness. Not quite a Bourbon, Canadians are distinctive and typically a quality whiskey with a slight toffee sweetness and sometimes described as fruity or spicy. American Blends are similar in taste, but since rye is used in less quantity or not at all, its sweetness and character may not be apparent. The American Blend taste is usually described as light with possibly a hint of flavored imparted from the oak casks in which it was aged.

Canadian Blends in WSLCB Stores: By the numbers

- There are 28 different Canadian Whiskies and 9 American Blend choices in the 750 ml size on WSLCB shelves.
- In 1979, by comparison, there were 24 Canadian and 33 American Blends (making American Blends one of the few categories to have shrunk in size).
- The current prices for Canadians range from \$9.75 to \$59.95 and for American Blends from \$9 to \$14.
- As a category, Canadian Whiskies contribute just over 13 percent of liquor profits returned to the State and American Blends nearly 2 percent.
- Canadian Whiskey as a category is trending up at 3 percent in the past 12 months and American Blends, flat or in a small decline.

Category Leaders

In Washington the leading premium brands are:

1. Crown Royal
2. Seagram's VO
3. Canadian Club
4. Pendleton

The leading value brands are:

1. Black Velvet
2. MacNaughtons
3. Rich and Rare (R&R)

The leading economy brands are:

1. Monarch
2. Western Canadian
3. Potters

American Blends are driven primarily by Seagram's Seven.

Note: Signpost brands (brands that are easily identifiable to the consumer and lead the category in Washington) are MacNaughtons, Black Velvet and R&R.

How it is used and what the future holds

Both Canadian and American Blends lend themselves to a variety of drinks due to their smoothness. The Classics – 7 Up and Seagram's 7 and Manhattan (whiskey, sweet vermouth and angostura bitters) continue to be popular. Crown Royal (or other Canadian) on the rocks is a known favorite and the Washington Green Apple (using Crown Royal, green apple schnapps and grenadine) is a new contender for a mixed drink use.