

BARTENDER ADVISORY GROUP

LIQUOR VS LIQUEUR

It should be noted... that this can be as confusing as hell... but have patience... it is a good start.

Liquors are distilled spirits, meaning that a liquor is any alcoholic beverage that has been distilled. This includes the six base distilled spirits (vodka, whiskey, brandy, gin, tequila and rum) as well as sweetened liqueurs. If it has gone through a still and comes out with a high alcohol content, it is a liquor.

Liqueurs are sweetened distilled spirits. It is a subcategory of liquors, and this is where many drinks get their signature flavors. Liqueurs begin with a base liquor. It can be anything from neutral grain alcohol to brandy, whiskey, or rum. Sugar is often added along with a mix of herbs, fruits, spices, and other ingredients to obtain the desired flavor. Several liqueurs use artificial flavors and colors; this is particularly true among the cheaper brands. The exact process of adding flavor depends on the style of liqueur and each producer's specific method. In general, all of the ingredients are blended according to their specific recipe. The amount of sugar added varies as well, and some are cloying while others are off-dry. "Crème" liqueurs have a lot of sugar but are not creamy.

Liquor

Has a higher alcohol content.

Liqueur

Has a lower alcohol content.

Liquor

Liquor is an alcoholic beverage made with grains or other plant-based products and fermented into alcohol.

Liqueur

Is a distilled product sweetened with different flavors, extracts and oils.

Liquor

The six main liquors include Vodka, Gin, Whiskey (bourbon, scotch and rye), Tequila, Rum and Brandy.

Liqueur

A few well-known liqueurs include Amaretto, flavorful Schnapps, Cointreau, Benedictine & Brandy (B&B), Chambord and Crème de Cassis.

Liquor

Has a strong flavor profile.

Liqueur

Has a sweet flavor profile.

Now the confusing part: liqueurs are liquors, but not all liquors are liqueurs.

- The definition of a liquor is a distilled alcoholic beverage. That means the word *liquor* includes all of the "base spirits" (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey, etc.) as well as all liqueurs.

- The word *liqueur* is typically reserved for the sweetened and/or lower-proof distilled spirits.
- The spelling of the two words is the real issue, particularly if you read or write it quickly.

Some distilled spirits get classified as a liqueur, but they don't technically qualify. Absinthe, an anise flavor, is a great example: It may appear with anise liqueurs in bars and liquor stores, but it is not sweet, so it's a liquor and not a liqueur. This tends to happen with vermouth as well; it is wine fortified with a distilled spirit, but neither a liquor nor a liqueur.

A *Cordial* and liqueur are often used interchangeably and used to describe sweet-distilled spirits. However, cordial has a few other meanings in the drink world:

- Cordial is often used for the sweetest distilled spirits that are very dessert-like. You might see "cordial" on labels for chocolate or cream spirits, for instance.
- Cordial can also describe a nonalcoholic, syrupy drink such as a lime cordial or elderflower cordial. It's used more often in the United Kingdom.
- Historically, cordial described a sweet medicinal tonic that was rather pleasant to take.

Liqueurs are just as vital to a well-stocked bar as the base spirits. These are the distilled spirits that give drinks flavor. Liqueurs come in almost every flavor imaginable, from sweetened fruits to snappy spices and proprietary blends that are truly unique.

Crème vs. Cream Liqueurs: As you explore liqueurs, you will come across many that use the word "crème." These are not creamy liqueurs even though *crème* does translate from French to mean *cream*.

- Liqueurs like crème de cassis (black currant) and crème de fraises (strawberry) are typically made with more sugar than the average liqueur. They have more syrup, but they are *not* creamy.
- Quite often, crème liqueurs use the French word for the flavor. For example, crème-de-banana.
- Cream liqueurs, on the other hand, are those like Irish cream and Rum Chata that have a dairy base. These are *actually* creamy.

Bartender