

# Canadian Whisky

Canadian whisky gained popularity in the United States during two historical periods in which the production of distilled spirits was greatly limited in this country: The Civil War and Prohibition. During the Civil War, the production of distilled spirits was limited by the economic and political constraints of the war. Although the intent of Prohibition was to eliminate the consumption of distilled spirits in the United States, consumption of bootleg liquor continued. Some experts estimate that over two-thirds of the liquor consumed in the United States during Prohibition was Canadian whisky.

Canadian whisky is distilled from a fermented mash of wheat, corn, rye, and/or barley. Each ingredient accounts for less than 50% of the whisky's formula. It is a common misconception that all Canadian whisky is straight rye whisky. Almost all Canadian whiskies are blended. While Canadian whiskies are made from a combination of grains, more corn is usually used than any of the other grains. Each distiller has their own secret recipe, varying the proportions of grain used in the production of their whisky.

Most Canadian whiskies are produced in continuous stills. Most Canadian whiskies are light-bodied, slightly pale, and mellow. They have traditionally been very popular because they are easy to mix with other ingredients in mixed drinks. Most Canadian whiskies are bottled at eighty proof.

The Canadian government places very little restriction on the production of Canadian whisky. Canadian law says that Canadian whisky must be produced from a cereal grain. The Canadian government does not place regulations on the grain mixture, proof level for distillation, or length of aging. The United States government, however, places more restrictions on liquor represented as Canadian whisky. According to U.S. regulations, Canadian whisky must be produced in Canada, must be aged at least three years in oak barrels, and must be a blend.

After aging, the product is dumped into large blending vats. Here, distillers blend a combination of whiskies of different batches and ages with grain spirits. (Twenty or more whiskies may be blended together to produce a Canadian whisky.) By blending different ages of whiskies, the distiller produces a consistent taste from batch to batch. After blending, the product is usually returned to the barrel to allow the mixture to fully combine. As you may recall, a blended whisky's age is determined by the age of the youngest whisky in the blend.

Some Canadian whiskies are bottled in Canada and then shipped to the U.S. These whiskies tend to be more expensive. (In most cases, they are also aged four years or more.) Over half of the Canadian whiskies consumed in the U.S. are shipped here in bulk (in barrels) and then bottled here. (Most of the US-bottled Canadian whisky brands carried in North Carolina are aged either three or four years.)