

Irish Whiskey

Most experts agree that Irish whiskey was developed before Scotch whisky. It is believed to have been developed in the 1400's. Irish whiskey is made from a fermented mash of malted and unmalted barley, corn, rye, and lesser amounts of other cereal grains. Reportedly, Irish monks began making a potable distilled spirit from a mash of barley and water they dubbed "uisge beatha," which means "the water of life." The English later shortened the name to "whiskey."

As you may recall, Scotch whisky malt is dried in ovens over an open peat fire. As a result, it has a smoky flavor. Irish whiskey malt is dried in closed kilns (or ovens). As a result, it does not have the smoky flavor like Scotch. Currently, most of the Irish whiskies carried in North Carolina are blended. There are single malt whiskies available in the United States. Single malt refers to whiskey that is made by a single distillery.

All Irish whiskey is distilled three times in copper pot stills. Most Irish whiskies are aged between three and nine years. It is aged in oak barrels that have previously been used to age sherry, brandy, bourbon, or rum. Irish whiskey is a steadily growing category. However, it remains the smallest distilled spirit category in the United States. It accounts for less than 1% of all distilled spirit sales.

In 1608, King James I granted Sir Thomas Phillips the world's first licensed distillery. It is still operational and is called Old Bushmills. We carry this brand in Mecklenburg County ABC stores today.

Irish coffee is one of the most popular drinks incorporating Irish whiskey. It consists of:

- coffee
- brown sugar
- 1.5 ounces of Irish whiskey
- a topping of whipped cream

Irish cream liqueurs are a very popular subcategory of Irish whiskey products. Baileys Irish Cream was the first in this group. It was developed in 1979.