



PROOF &
PRINCIPLE

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE & SPIRITS EDUCATION FOR BARTENDERS & HOSPITALITY PROFESSIONALS

01/06

SCOTCH WHISKY



**A spirit shaped by grain,
copper, oak and place.**

A storytelling guide to how Scotch is made, why it tastes the way it does, and how to read its label with confidence.



FIRST, THE RULES



Scotch is defined by law before flavour.

To be called Scotch whisky, it must be made from cereals, water and yeast, then mashed, fermented, distilled and matured in Scotland.

- Matured in oak casks no larger than 700 litres for at least 3 years
- Distilled below 94.8% abv so it keeps the flavour of its raw materials
- Bottled at a minimum of 40% abv
- No flavouring or sweetening is allowed
- Only water and plain caramel colouring may be added



Interesting fact

The 94.8% rule stops Scotch from becoming neutral spirit. It must still smell and taste of grain and process.



FROM BARLEY TO WASH

Before there is whisky, there is a beer-like wash. The journey begins when barley is malted, mashed with hot water, and fermented with yeast.

Malting

Barley is soaked, germinated and dried. Some distilleries use peat smoke, which can add smoky flavour.

Mashing

The malt is milled into grist and mixed with hot water to create sugary wort.

Fermentation

Yeast turns those sugars into alcohol, producing a wash usually around 7–10% abv.



Worth noting

Peat is a flavour choice, not a rule. Many Scotch whiskies are completely unpeated.



THEN THE STILLS DECIDE THE STYLE

Single malt and grain whisky take different routes from here. The still shape and the distillation method strongly influence the final style.

■ Pot stills

Used for single malt Scotch whisky. Batch distillation helps build richness, weight and character.

■ Coffey still

Used mostly for grain whisky. Continuous distillation creates a lighter, cleaner spirit.

■ The heart cut

Distillers keep the clean middle portion of the run and discard the unwanted heads and tails.

By law, Scotch must be distilled below 94.8% abv so aroma and flavour remain.



CASKS TURN SPIRIT INTO WHISKY

New make spirit may be clear, but cask time is where Scotch gains colour, texture and many of its most familiar aromas.

Ex-bourbon casks

Often bring vanilla, honey, orchard fruit and gentle sweetness.

Ex-sherry casks

Often add dried fruit, nuts, spice and richness.

Refill casks

Give slower, gentler oak influence and let the distillery character shine.

Finishing

Some whiskies spend extra time in a second cask to add another layer.

Key point

An age statement refers to the youngest whisky in the bottle, not the oldest.



HOW TO READ THE LABEL

06/06



SINGLE MALT

100% malted barley

One distillery

Pot still distilled



SINGLE GRAIN

One distillery

May include other cereals

Usually lighter in style



BLENDED MALT

A blend of single malts

From different
distilleries



BLENDED GRAIN

A blend of
single grains

From different
distilleries



BLENDED SCOTCH

A blend of one
or more single malts
with one or more
single grains



Single means one distillery,
not one cask.



An age statement always refers
to the youngest whisky in the bottle.



Rabei Zaitouna

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