

What is Scotch Whisky?

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Scotch whisky is whisky made in Scotland. Originally known as “Aqua vitae” or “water of life” for its healing properties, the first recorded reference to the substance is found in the Scottish Exchequer Rolls of 1494. This distilled beverage was used as a treatment for all kinds of ailments, with many of its users noticing the warm, calming sensation upon “treatment” [1].

There are two major categories, single and blended. *Single* means that all of the product is from a single distillery, while *Blended* means that the product is composed of whiskies from two or more distilleries. Traditional practices define five types:

- Single malt whisky
- Single grain whisky
- Blended malt whisky
- Blended grain whisky
- Blended Scotch whisky

The production process of Scotch whisky is surprisingly simple. It involves malting, mashing, fermentation, distillation and maturation.

Malting - the process of turning barley into malt, Barley is soaked or “steeped” in water, drained, then spread out on the malting floor to germinate.

Mashing - the dried malt is then ground into a coarse flour with the consistency of oatmeal, called “grist.” The grist is then mixed with hot water and pumped into a mash tun. In the mash tun, the water and ground malt is mixed. This sugary liquid is called “wort.”

Fermentation – the wort is combined with yeast and allowed to ferment. The length of fermentation generally takes about two days. The resulting liquid is anywhere from 5-8% alcohol by volume and is called “wash.”

Distillation – the wash is distilled by separating the water from the alcohol by boiling the wash, collecting the evaporated alcohol which condenses at the top and collecting it in a condenser. The resulting liquid is called “low wine” and is approximately 20% alcohol by volume.

Maturation – The unfinished scotch is then placed in oak barrels. Throughout the maturation the whisky becomes much smoother, increases in flavor and begins to retain the golden color of the barrels inside which it rests. In order to be considered “scotch” is must be aged in Scotland for at least three years [2].

The drinking of Scotch whisky should be enjoyable, not intimidating. Many scotch experts recommend using a tulip-shaped glass which allows the whisky to be swirled without spilling and concentrates the aromas at the neck of the glass.

In conclusion we would like to mention that whisky is good for our health. This has been endorsed in a report by the British Medical Association which states that up to 30 grams of alcohol a can help protect against heart disease. Alcohol can also help relieve stress and promote appetite and sleep, especially among the elderly. At the same time the Scotch Whisky industry recognises that misuse of alcohol can not only damage health in a number of ways, but may cause domestic and financial problems [3].

Bibliography:

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- 2.<http://artofmanliness.com/2009/04/05/the-art-of-manliness-guide-to-scotch-whisky> Charles McLean, Scotch Whisky: A Liquid History, Scotland, 2003, p. 56-68.
3. Charles McLean, Scotch Whisky: A Liquid History, Scotland, 2003, p. 56-68.