



Product Knowledge

Introduction

First of all, let me thank you for taking your own time to develop product knowledge. I hope that as you are reading it and learning more about the products you use, you will gain more confidence in your job as a bar tender or bar server. Obviously, no one can know everything there is to know about bar service as every day brings about new challenges. However, if you are willing to learn more about your job and how you can serve our guests beyond their expectations, then you will soon realize that this can be one of the most rewarding jobs around.

I strongly believe that working in bars is more than serving a drink with a smile. Onboard, we are encouraged to remember the name of the guests and their preferred drinks as this makes the guest feel welcome and it gives that extra personal touch. It's these personal touches and going beyond expectations that brings our guests back to our ship for more cruises. The guests may book their cruise purely because they enjoyed your service so much and they return just to see you and be served by you once again.

As you are all aware, up-selling is one thing we try to push. If someone asks for a vodka and coke, the first question is "Would you like to make that a double, Sir?" followed by "Do you have a preference with your vodka? We have Grey goose, Belvedere, Ketel One, etc. etc." Obviously, you say this in a way that doesn't make you look like you want the guest to spend all his money. Make sure you make it sound like you are encouraging the guests to try different types of vodka. The guest may then ask you why he should try Grey Goose instead of the house and if you say, "Because it's nicer," the guest may think you don't know your job as much as you should and will always end up choosing the house spirit.

If you can say to a guest what the difference is between the vodkas, the gins and so on, you will impress them and no doubt, you will see financial rewards in revenue for the company and tips for yourself.

Always remember though, that working in a bar should be fun as well as rewarding. If you are happy and work well as a team (which I know you all already do) then the guests

will see this and feel comfortable and relaxed in the atmosphere that you and your co-workers have created.

“Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and the only one listening is the bartender....”

Beer

The word ‘beer’ refers to all brewed and fermented beverages that are made from malted grains and hops. It is the third most popular drink in the world being beaten by only water and tea. Beer was brewed by the early Egyptians as long ago as 3000 B.C. although there are some who believe they have found stone tablets 9000 years old which have carved on them a recipe for beer. The good news is, it’s still going strong! Thank you Egypt!

The beers that you will be familiar with are: LAGER, ALE (called BITTER in UK), and, STOUT.

Lager

Bright, clear bodied and effervescent (fizzy). Most of the world’s beers are lagers. Corona, Heineken, Stella Artois and Fosters are all lagers from different countries around the world. As with most lagers, they are all sparkling gold in color with a clean, rich taste.

Ale (/bitter)

More aromatic than lager (its smell is smoother and more potent) and more full bodied. Usually, ales are not fizzy and as a result are smoother to the taste. Ales can differ in taste more than lagers can due to the more in-depth fermentation process. Boddingtons, Bass Ale and John Smiths are three bitters you may have heard of from the UK.

Stout

Guinness and Murphy’s are great examples of stout. Both of these come from a proud Irish tradition. Some say they are a three-course meal in a glass. This is due to their heavy, full-bodied consistency. They can be sweet but they always have a very strong taste given by the hops in the fermentation process.

The following is the list of beers we offer to our guests on board. Try to learn where they are from and as a bonus their alcohol content (ABV%) as you may get some guests asking for a beer that’s not too strong. You will always impress the guest if you can say where our beers are from and how strong they are.

	Country	ABV%	Type
Coors	USA	5.0	Lager
Coors Light	USA	4.5	Lager

Miller Genuine Draft	USA	4.8	Lager
Miller Light	USA	3.5	Lager
Budweiser	USA	5.0	Lager
Bud Light	USA	3.8	Lager
Amstel Light	Holland	3.5	Lager
Michelob Light	USA	3.5	Lager
Michelob Ultra	USA	3.0	Lager
Heineken	Holland	5.0	Lager
Red Stripe	Jamaica	5.0	Lager
Becks	Germany	5.0	Lager
Corona	Mexico	4.6	Lager
Fosters	Australia	4.3	Lager
O'Douls Non-Alcoholic	USA	0.5	Lager
Bass Ale	England	4.1	Ale
Boddingtons	England	4.7	Ale
Newcastle Brown	England	4.7	Ale
Guinness	Ireland	4.2	Stout

Obviously, guests may ask you about other beers from around the world that you may or may not have heard of, and vice versa. There are new beers being introduced all the time, such as Brahma (Brazil), Balitka (Russia) and Warsteiner (Germany). I'm sure that your home country brews their own special beer that you want to mention to the guests. Basically, if you use your knowledge about your products to WOW the guest, you are showing that you take pride in your job in learning what you can about the products you sell.

If you are interested, there are bar service guides that will go into a bit more detail about the brewing process and the difference between top-fermenting ales and bottom-fermenting lagers. Please come and see me if you wish to know more about this.

Spirits

As mentioned before, if a guest asks you for a drink like a vodka and coke or a gin and tonic, your first response should be, "Certainly Sir, and would that be a single or a double?" followed by "And do you have a preference for your vodka/gin?" If you are going to up-sell our premium spirits it makes sense for you to know why they are considered 'premium' when compared to the house pouring. In these booklets I'm going to focus mainly on vodka, gin, bourbon, Irish Whiskey and Scotch Whisky and Rum as these are the most common spirits you will be asked about.

Vodka

The word 'Vodka' means "little water" which comes from the Russian word for water, 'Voda'. The Polish and the Russians both claim that they invented vodka and both are very proud of this fact. You may know that a shot of chilled vodka is usually served with every course during meals of celebration in both Russia and Poland.

In America, by law, vodkas produced must be colorless, tasteless and odorless (no smell to them). These days, we have vodkas that contain certain flavors such as lemon (Absolut Citron), or Orange (Grey Goose l'Orange). So if all other vodkas have no smell and no defined taste, how do we decide what a good vodka is? What is it that makes us prefer one vodka to another?

When you look at a bottle of Belvedere vodka, you may see that it says "Five times distilled", whereas on a bottle of regular Stolichnaya, it says "Three times distilled". This is our first clue and a good place to start

Vodka is usually made from grain. However, some producers use potatoes instead.

When we use the term 'distilled' what we mean is, the vodka is heated to boiling point to remove any impurities (bits of material that would affect the taste of the vodka if they weren't removed.). The vapor released is then passed through a tube where it turns from a gas to a liquid. This liquid is our vodka.

So, if Belvedere is distilled five times and Stolichnaya is distilled only three times, which do you think would be the better, purer vodka?

Exactly! Belvedere. The more times the product is distilled the purer it will be. You will also notice that it is a lot smoother as well. For example, if you drank a shot of house vodka, you may notice a 'bite' or 'kick' at the back of your throat. However, if you were to have more expensive vodka that is distilled four or five times, the sensation is completely different. Another reason to drink more expensive vodka is that you don't get a hangover the next morning. It is believed that these impurities that are still in the cheaper house vodkas are responsible for headaches the next day.

Most vodka, after being distilled, are poured very slowly over charcoal. Surprisingly, instead of giving the vodka flavor it serves to take away more impurities and so takes away the flavor.

Below are some of the vodkas that we use on board. Try to remember as much as you can about each one, as the more you know the better advice you can give to the guest in helping them make their choice.

Chopin

Named after the famous Polish composer, this is one of the best vodkas going. If you go into a Polish vodka bar and ask the bartender for their best bottle, they will probably pull out Chopin from their freezer. Unlike most vodka, Chopin is made using potatoes taken from the Poladsie region. The interesting point here is that the potatoes are grown in and amongst apple trees. With both crops sharing the same soil, some people believe that

Chopin has a slight hint of apple flavor. I have gone through a hell of a lot of bottles, and still can't detect the hint of apple... but I'll just have to keep on trying won't I?
This vodka is distilled either four or five times and is considered one of the best premium spirits around.

As a side note, if you are ever given two bottles of vodka and you are asked to find out which is purer. The easy way to do this (apart from drinking them and seeing which gives you the worst hangover) is to put them in a freezer. What you will notice is that the cheaper less pure vodka will form, little ice crystals inside. These are the impurities freezing. Purer vodka (such as Chopin) will, instead, have a syrupy quality to it.

Belvedere

This is another Polish vodka that is also distilled four or five times. Belvedere in Polish means 'Beautiful to See', it is also the name given to the Polish Parliament in Warsaw, (that is the picture you can see through the bottle). Belvedere and Chopin are actually bottled by the same company but Belvedere is made from pure grain neutral spirits distilled from fermented corn, rye or wheat.

Grey Goose

What you tend to notice is that each producer of alcohol claims to do something special with their product which makes it better than the rest. The Goose's claim to fame is that the water they use comes from the Gente Springs in the Champagne region of France. This natural fresh water spring gives very clean mineral water which they believe makes their vodka extremely smooth. As if that wasn't enough, they then go and pour their product over limestone, again taken from the Champagne region of France. As the vodka drains through the limestone, any impurities that are left are (almost) all taken away. So, not only were the French good wine makers, it's now clear that they aren't that bad at vodka either... what next?

Ketel 1.

This is Deutch (made in Holland) vodka that has been going since 1691. The Nolet family has been producing this vodka now for over ten generations. They have managed to keep part of their distillation process a secret for all that time. What we do know is that when they pour their vodka over the charcoal they do this for a lot longer than most other producers. They do this for a period of ten days and believe that this is what makes their vodka so pure. They also store their product in tiled tanks underground. They claim this adds to the smoothness of the finished product.

Stolichnaya

This Russian vodka has won many awards over the years and has every right to have done so. Many bars around the world use Stolichnaya as a house pouring brand as it is relatively cheap, but also a very good product. The usual is the white and red label, but Stolichnaya Gold and Crystal are also available. These are distilled four times and again, have won many awards (in Russia...) for their superior vodka.

Smirnoff

Started by Pierre Smirnoff in the late eighteenth century, this is possibly one of the most popular vodkas worldwide (along with Absolut). This is down to two reasons. Firstly, they have a very good marketing campaign, they spend millions advertising their product and it paid off. Secondly, in the James Bond films, whenever he orders a vodka martini (yes... shaken not stirred) he never specified which vodka he wanted... apart from one film. The rumor is that during the filming of Casino Royale, Smirnoff paid the producers to have Bond ask for their product when ordering his drink. After that film was released, Smirnoff was suddenly a worldwide product in high demand.

As well as Smirnoff Red, white, blue and black are also available with blue and black being the more expensive, premium brands.

Absolut

Again, as with Smirnoff, this too is an incredibly popular. It comes from the cold highlands of Sweden and has done so since the 16th Century. Some people believe that the Swedish invented Vodka before the Russians or Polish, although no one will ever know for sure. But there is an interesting story behind this vodka. Three years ago, a blind tasting was performed on around 50 vodkas from around the world. (A blind tasting means that the judges could not see the different vodkas they were tasting and giving a score out of 100). The vodkas were tested on their smoothness, after effect (bite at the back of the throat) and overall sensation.

Out of the fifty or so vodkas, Absolut came in the last 3. Given the fact that this is the quickest selling vodka in supermarkets around the world this came as quite a surprise. I suppose this only goes to show that people are happy drinking what they know. Now, whether you choose to tell that story to the guests or not (I personally wouldn't) it's up to you. But, that is where you guys come in and try to change their mind from something like Absolut to Belvedere or Grey Goose (which came number 1 in the tasting.)

Flavored Vodkas

Now that you know about the vodkas themselves and where they come from, I won't go into too much detail on the flavored ones. The important thing to note is how they give the flavor to the vodka. This is done in one of two ways. As we mentioned earlier, distillation means that the impure vodka is boiled and passed through a tube. Cheaper vodkas will boil the fruit (lemons or strawberries) with the vodka. The more expensive

brands choose to have the fruit in the glass tube. They believe the vapor (vodka in gas form) collects the flavor better this way.

Other Vodkas and where they are made.

Ultimat – this is very expensive but awesome. Uses both grain and potatoes.

Zubrowka - Also known as Bison grass vodka as a blade of grass taken from a field where Bison feed is placed into the bottle.

Wybrowa – Polish. Also comes in flavors including Rose flavor.

Krolewska – Polish.

Luksusova – Polish. Means luxury... and it is.

Kutskova – Russian

Pearl – Canadian

Ciroc – French. Uses frozen grapes in part of the distillation process. Also known as snap frost vodka.

Three Olives – American

Level – American

Skyy – American.

Tanqueray Sterling – English.

Gin

Although most of the gins you use come from England, this spirit was actually invented by a Dutch chemist about three hundred years ago. He believed that with the right amount of herbs and spices, this liquor carried with it a certain medicinal quality. The English agreed; it did make people feel better... a lot better, and then awful again later on.

The English took the Dutchman's idea and started drinking it liberally. It gained the nickname "Mother's Ruin" quickly after and was looked down on by the rich as it was the drink of the drunken poor. However, with the birth of the dry martini, gin martinis became the drink of choice for the rich and famous and so came about the distilleries to compete for the best gin

The idea was to blend herbs and spices with a neutral grain spirit (almost identical to vodka) to reach a smooth tasting and aromatic drink. Unfortunately, it took them a long time to reach this. At first, they used to add a lot of sugar to their products in order to take away the rawness. Eventually though, pioneering distillers managed to work out how to get the right balance and the now famous London Dry Gins were born.

When you hear or read about the making of gin, you will often hear the word BOTANICALS. This is a term used to describe the different herbs and spices used in the making of the gin. For example, if you look on either side of the Bombay Sapphire

bottle, you will see listed the ten different botanicals this particular distiller uses. Even if you can't remember all of them, a good thing to remember that the key botanicals in any gin are Juniper berries, Angelica, and Oranges (or orange peel). Each distiller will use a different proportion of these botanicals to reach their preferred result. To some the differences are minimal, but if you are a dry martini drinker, you will notice these changes as you discover which is your favorite gin.

So, how is it made? In short, the distillers start off with a liquid that is very similar to vodka – a grain based neutral spirit. Next, they boil the liquid and allow the vapor to pass through a copper cylinder (this cylinder is nicknamed “Old Tom” after one of the first gins made.) Inside this copper pot are the botanicals. The vapor is kept in the cylinder to so it can collect the flavors the botanicals give off. It is the proportion of these botanicals that give the desired flavor.

Now, this is how the more expensive distillers would produce their gin. The cheaper companies just boil their botanicals in with the liquid and do not use the copper tube. Unfortunately, all this does is give you a gin that is incredibly sharp in taste and no where near as smooth as the premium brands. Thankfully, all the gins that we use are made the first way so we don't have to worry about serving our guests bad liquor.

Below are the gins we use on board and how they differ, even if it's only slightly.

Gordon's London Dry

This is usually seen in bars as the house pouring gin. Despite this, it is still the most popular gin worldwide. Alexander Gordon created his distillery in London in 1769 and is considered one of the main pioneers in creating the “London Dry Gin.” The botanicals used in this are of more or less equal proportions and, as a result, no one flavor stands out. Perfect for a gin and tonic but considered a bit too sharp for a dry martini.

Beefeater

Named after the guards of Buckingham Palace (home of the Queen of England) this is one of the most aromatic gins around. Since 1800, this distillery has obtained it's Juniper from Tuscany, their Angelica from Saxony and the Oranges from Seville. If you pour some Beefeater into a glass and lift it to your nose, the first thing you will notice is the strong aroma of oranges. Also if you drink it, you'll notice that the after taste also has a strong citrus quality. The reason for this is, Beefeater use the whole orange as a botanical in the copper pot. Other distillers may only use the orange peel (or skin). This is a perfect gin for a martini for those who are trying it for the first time as it is incredibly smooth.

Bombay Sapphire

As mentioned before, this gin famously uses ten botanicals. No other gin uses as many. As you will see, they not only use the main three, but also travel the world to get their coriander, the cubeb berries, oris roots, seeds of paradise and so on. Bombay distillery is also very picky about which part of the botanicals they use. For example, they will only use the leaves of the coriander (not the stems), and only the roots of the oris plant. With all these herbs and spices blending together, you have a completely unique flavor. Not as smooth as Beefeater or Tanqueray, it is still the most popular premium gin brand in the world.

Tanqueray

As with most premium brands, this gin gets its juniper berries from Tuscany, oranges from Seville and Angelica from Saxony. However, this gin is incredibly strict on the botanicals they use. For example, the Juniper berries are picked between September and March every year. Out of every five hundred samples sent back to England, they only accept 20 of them. So, they throw away 480 samples out of every 500. And that's just one example. They make sure that they use the botanicals only once per batch; other even premium brands use their botanicals more than once and so the flavor can alter slightly from one batch to the next.

With tanqueray, the balance of botanicals they use gives good qualities for a dry martini.

Tanqueray 10

Called '10' for two reasons: it's made in small batches of ten and is also made in Vat number 10 in their distillery. Once again the choice of botanicals is very specific. The only difference between Tanq. And Tanq 10 is that tanq.10 uses more grapefruit and lime in the copper cylinder which the distilled vapor passes through. As a result, it's a little bit sharper than the regular tanqueray, but still a very pleasing drink.

Hendrix – relatively unknown but excellent quality and good selling points. They believe their Gin is superior as they infuse cucumber, coriander and rose into the gin giving it a very refreshing quality. This is a great gin to recommend for the ladies or gentlemen that typically would not drink gin due to its potent flavors. This gin should be served with a slice of fresh cucumber.

Enough of the clear spirits for now, let's take a look at the whiskies, the brandies and the cognacs. Depending on what bar you're working in, these liquors can be very popular so it's always good to know about what you're pouring. As a bartender and bar server, I found that many common assumptions were made by people when it came to these spirits. For example, more than a few times, I had guests asking, "What kind of American Scotch do you have?" Another classic example is people thinking Jack Daniels is bourbon. Guests have looked at me stupidly saying, "Of course it's bourbon, what are you talking about!!" I then give them the bottle and say nicely, please point out where on

the label it says 'bourbon.' After two minutes of staring at the bottle, they become quietly confused. But now you have to explain why it's not bourbon. Although it's similar there is one huge difference when comparing the production processes of bourbon and other American whiskies.

As you look through your bottles, you'll see two different spellings: Whiskey and Whisky. Do you know where these spellings come from? Is it just the Americans and the Irish being awkward? This booklet will hopefully answer these questions as well as a few more.

Brandies again are very popular depending on where you work. You may not get someone ordering Louis XIII by the pool, but in somewhere like the cigar bar, this is something you should always try and push and knowing a little more about it will help this. So, classic questions... what's the difference between a brandy and a cognac? What makes Hennessy XO better than your Hennessy VSOP? Brandy and cognacs are very select drinks. By this, I mean that not many people drink them, but those who do tend to have some knowledge about their preferred choice... it's your job to know more.

So, take your time reading through this. Whether you take it to work with you and use it as a reference or use it for some nice, relaxing bedtime reading with you hot cocoa, I hope you gain something from it at the end. Thank you once again, and keep up the great work.

Simon

Whiskey and Whisky

The word 'whisky' comes from the Gaelic term "Uisce beatha" meaning 'water of life'. It is believed that the Irish were the first producers and that Irish missionaries introduced the spirit into Europe in the fifth or sixth century. It is now made in many parts of the world including America, France, Canada and Japan, but the most popular is Scottish whisky (Scotch).

Whisky is distilled from a fermented mash of grain (usually corn, rye, wheat, or barley) and then aged in oak barrels. Before it goes into these barrels, it is actually a clear liquid. It is during the aging process that whiskey obtains its color, flavor and aroma. As an aside, whilst aging in the barrels, between 2% and 5% of the product evaporates through the wood. This has always been known as "The Angel's Share" and is true of other spirits including brandy.

So, to clarify, Whisky, spelt without the 'e' comes from Scotland and Canada. Irish and American spell their whiskey with the 'e'. Rumor has it the Scottish was so proud of their single malt whisky that they insisted that any other product which fails to match

their quality should not be spelt the same. This would separate the American and Irish products from the “real thing”.

Scotch

There are three types of Scotch whisky: malt, blended and vatted. Malt Scotch is made from water, yeast and barley. The barley is soaked and germinated (allowed to develop) then it is slowly dried over a peat fire (peat being a special type of soil mixed with other elements which give the whisky it's particular aroma and taste). Finally, it is diluted (made weaker with water), then fermented and distilled twice in a pot still. As with vodka and gin, this distillation is carried out to take away any particles that they don't want in the finished product. Three areas in Scotland produce the malt varieties, the Highlands, West Highlands (particularly the islands of Islay and Skye) and the Lowlands. If unblended malt from one particular distillery is bottled, the product is defined as “Single malt”; and each distillery claims to have its own distinct flavor. So how and why do the flavors differ? If you pick up a bottle of Glenlivet or Glen Fiddich and compare the aroma (smell), you will notice that the Glenlivet has a more powerful smell to it. Some people describe this as “Earthy or peaty”. This comes from the peat fire they use to dry the barley. Some distilleries allow a bit of the ‘blue’ smoke to be absorbed by the barley. This adds to the peaty quality.

One of the peatiest whiskies you'll find is Laphroaig 10 yr old (pronounced Laf-royg). Some say it's that potent it gives you heart burn as you drink it.

Other distillers believe that a different quality is superior. With these, we say that the whisky is ‘oaky’ or has a ‘wooden’ quality. As mentioned before, the whiskies are aged in oak casks. These are usually sherry oak casks from France (by this we mean that the barrels were used to age Sherry at one point.) The longer you age the liquor, the more oaky the final taste will be. For these distillers, the peat fire will only be allowed to alter that taste a fraction, that is if they allow it at all.

The type of Sherry that the barrels stored before hand will also effect the taste and so the distillers will be very picky. They may want the barrels that have only stored sweet sherry, medium or dry sherry. Each will give its own quality to the final taste of the whisky. Distillers such as Glenmorangie now produce 18 and 21 year old whisky that has been stored in barrels which previously aged Port wine. This gives the product an extremely smooth taste... I highly recommend it if you're lucky enough to find it as only select whisky bars will sell it.

One way to tell how smooth a whisky is just to read the label. The older the whisky, the longer it has been ‘mellowing’ in the oak casks. Try it for yourself, smell and take a small sip of house whisky and then do the same with a 12, 15, 18, 21 or 25 yr old single malt and you will notice that the house is a lot sharper. I said before, that the color of whisky also comes from the barrel when it's ageing. House pours such as Bells, Famous Grouse and Dewar's are hardly aged at all so where do you think they get the color from? Yep... they add the coloring artificially!

The blended malts came about in 1830 with the development of the Coffey Still, named after its inventor Aeneas Coffey. This was a machine used in the **distillery** process that allowed producers to blend their whiskies with neutral and other grain spirits. The Coffey Still also allowed them to produce in far greater quantities. This led to the exportation of Scotch that soon became very popular worldwide.

A vatted malt whisky is a blend using secret recipes for blending different single malt whiskies that can come from anywhere in Scotland (although Scotch can be bottled anywhere, it must all be distilled in Scotland and aged in oak barrels for a minimum of three years.)

Ok, so the following is a table with the whiskies we have on board, where they are from and the differences between them. I will talk about bourbon and sour mash whisky a bit later on.

	Country	Type
Glenlivet – 12 yr Old	Scotland	Single Malt
Glenfiddich – 12 yr Old	Scotland	Single Malt
Chivas Regal – 12 yr old	Scotland	Single Malt
Chivas, Royal Salute – 21 yr Old	Scotland	Single Malt
Dewar’s White Label	Scotland	Blend
J. Walker Black Label	Scotland	Blend
J. Walker Red Label	Scotland	Blend
Crown Royal	Canada	Rye
Seagram’s 7	America	Rye
Seagram’s VO	Canadian	Rye
Canadian Club	Canada	Rye
Jameson	Ireland	Blend

So, with this in mind you can now understand why there is no such thing as a Canadian or American Scotch. Scotch can only come from Scotland. I get equally amused when people ask me for Italian Champagne or Californian Champagne. It is a similar error. There are people who assume that a bottle that ‘pops’ open and has fizzy stuff inside is Champagne. This is incorrect. Champagne can only come from the Champagne region in France. The rest is all Sparkling wine.

Ok, so every whisky has its claim to fame and all claim to be the superior brand. Some have stories behind them. For example, Crown Royal was made to celebrate the first visit of King George VI of England and his wife Queen Mary to Canada in 1939. Chivas Regal Royal Salute was produced to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. It is a special blend of malts that are no younger than 21 years old. Johnnie Walker’s blends are all of various ages. The order goes from Red, to black, to green (15yr) to gold (select blend) to blue label which uses blended malts that are no younger than 25 yrs old.

Whisky should be served at room temperature and all distillers will tell you that a small drop of water dropped into their glass will help release the flavors. If you serve it chilled, you are not getting the full affect of the product that has aged in some cases more than 25 years. How can I put it nicely? It doesn't want to be mixed with coke, frozen or poured over a mountain of ice! However, we are here to serve our guests wishes and needs, but if they ask for any recommendations, now you'll know what to say.

Once again, it can be quite difficult to remember every single detail, but try to remember which whiskies have the smoother, oaky flavors, and which are peatier. As I've said before though, the more you know, the more you sell, and it is really that simple.

American Whiskey and Bourbon

The first American Whiskey was made from rye, after colonists found that the grain yielded a spicy and flavorful spirit. This was the predecessor of bourbon.

Bourbon was 'born' over 200 years ago in Kentucky where it still makes its home. It is America's only native spirit (by that we mean it's the only spirit they've invented). Now, as a general rule, bourbon has to come from Kentucky. There are some exceptions though. For example, you may find the odd bourbon from Pennsylvania and Virginia in the United States, but this is because they were producing way back before the laws were passed in 1781 and 1786. As they were producing before this time, those that survived were allowed to continue under the name of 'bourbon'.

The rules state that bourbon is made from a fermented mash containing at least 51% corn. It must be produced at no more than 160-proof (80%-blow-your-socks-off-ABV) and aged in new, charred oak barrels for at least 2 years.

There are quite a few terms you will hear with reference to bourbon and the one that confuses many people is 'single barrel.' This means basically how it sounds. Whereas most mass-produced bourbon is aged in individual barrels and then blended together as a whole for bottling, single barrel is aged and bottled from one single barrel giving each bottling it's own distinct colors, tones and tastes.

Another term is 'sour mash', (example: Jack Daniel's is a sour mash whiskey). This is a process developed by Dr. James C. Crow in 1835 to provide 'uniformity' in whiskey production... by this we mean that a portion of the previous day's mash is added to the new mash to make sure it's of the same quality and character.

Basil Hayden's

This is part of the "Small Batch Bourbon" line done by the Jim Beam Distillery; a line of premium bourbon's which includes this, Knob Creek, Baker's and Bookers'. The small batch collection bourbons are, most notably, aged longer than your everyday bourbon

such as Jim Beam white label (4 years) and are also of a higher proof. Basil Hayden's however is just 80 –proof, which keeps the whiskey from seeming too heavy on the palate.

Blanton's Single Barrel

This is the winner of 5 Gold medals in International spirits competition in the last 5 years.... so it's not bad then!? So, we know it's a single barrel with its own color, tones and flavor. This bourbon is incredibly smooth with hints of vanilla, caramel and honey with an after taste of soft peppers to spice things up a bit. Highly recommended to anyone who likes bourbon and is willing to try new things... chances are they probably won't go back.

Booker's Bourbon

A completely uncut and unfiltered bourbon; by this we mean, it goes straight from the barrel into the bottle. In other words, it will put a few hairs on your chest. It is 126-proof, (about 63% ABV) so don't try lighting a cigarette if you're drinking it! It is not surprising then, that this would be classed as one of the 'heavier' bourbons when compared to something like Makers Mark. But once again, you have to try everything once don't you?!

Knob Creek

As you can tell from the big number on the front, this product is aged for 9 years. Some people argue this is too long for this small batch whiskey as it can have quite a sharp after taste. Others believe it is this quality which sets it as the best... it all depends on what you prefer. Knob Creek is rich, dark and dense and is very different when compared to another small batch whiskey such as Baker's which can be flowery and sweet.

So, the big question, why is Jack Daniel's not bourbon? The answer is simple. Jack is made in Tennessee in pretty much the same way bourbon is. However, before bottling, their whiskey is filtered over sugar-seasoned maple timbers (in other words sugar coated, slightly burnt wood). This gives the product a sweeter taste than bourbon and is the reason why it is put in a different category. For those of you who don't know, Lynchburg, Tennessee, where Jack Daniels is made, is still a "Dry County". By this, we mean that it is still forbidden to serve alcohol in bars or restaurants. If you go to the distillery, you are given a sample but you are not supposed to drink it until you pass the county lines.

Irish Whiskey

Irish whiskey is made from malted barley (or a combination of malted and unmalted barley) and other cereal grains such as wheat, rye and oats. Unlike Scotch, however, the malt is dried in a kiln which has a solid floor, therefore it doesn't allow any smoke from whatever fuel is used to come into contact with the grain (recall how some Single Malts allowed the 'blue' smoke from the peat to be absorbed by the malt). This eliminated the 'smoky' taste you will find in Scotch and allows Irish whiskey to be smoother but perhaps a whisky that is less distinct. Irish should appear to both scotch and bourbon

drinker alike although it's popularity in the states is very limited... in fact, it's used in Irish Coffees and St. Patrick's Day.... And that's about it.

So Irish whiskies you may have heard of include: Jameson 15 and 12 yr old, Bushmills malt 21, 16 and 10 yr old as well as Black Bush. There are other smaller distilleries that you will only find if you go to Ireland but these are the ones you'll see around.

Canadian Whisky

Someone once told me that Canadian whisky is only popular because of its cost. He was American so, obviously he was only slightly biased, but there is some truth in what he says. Since all Canadian Whiskies are blended, meaning they are taking from barrels and combined with other barrels before bottling, they usually don't cost you an arm and a leg. Even the premium Canadian whiskies such as Crown Royal Special Reserve does not cost anywhere near as much as premium bourbons and are not a patch on the cost of scotch Crown Royal, for example, is very popular. The difference in taste is very apparent when comparing Canadian to any other whisky; it is a lot lighter with a softer after taste. This is due to one main reason. The Canadian government allows the distillers to add new whisky to the already aged product. They do this to compensate for the evaporation that takes place over aging (recall, I mentioned the 'Angels Share' which is between 2% and 5% of the barrel which evaporates over time). Now, when they do this, they are diluting any potent taste that may have been acquired over time. Scotland, Ireland and the States do not allow this to happen in their distilleries, resulting in their products having a more distinct, powerful taste.

Brandy and Cognac.

The term brandy comes from the Dutch "Brandewijn" meaning 'burnt wine'. The story behind it is as follows:

In the 16th century, there was a large amount of trade in wine between France and Holland. Because of the limited ship space but high demand, the costs were sky high. So, according to the legend, a Dutch shipmaster who wanted to cut down on cost, got the idea of concentrating the wine (removing the water) and transporting it in this form to Holland, where the water could be put back. When he arrived in Holland, however, his Dutch friends tasted the concentrated wine and liked it just as it was and insisted he not put the water back in. The term 'burnt brandy' came about because sometimes they use burnt barrels to transport it as this gave a smooth and mellow quality to it.

Long enjoyed as an after-dinner drink, brandy is also widely used in mixed drinks and cooking. It is produced all over, including Germany, the States, Greece and South Africa, but the most popular ones are from France.

So, what's the difference between Cognac and Brandy? Cognac is a fine brandy known for its smoothness and heavy scent. It is produced only in the Cognac region of France, therefore, all cognac is brandy but not all brandy is cognac. The age of cognac is guaranteed by authorities only up to six years. Beyond that, there is no official standard so you may find a range of designations. To help consumers differentiate among the various cognacs, a special descriptor system was created:

VS – Very Special

VSOP – Very Special Old Pale

XO – Extra Old

VS cognac means that the product is a blend from brandies that have aged for a minimum of 2 years. VSOP refers to blends that are no less than four years old and XO means that the product is very old (but there is no set standard.) Terms such as Napoleon, Vielle, Reserve and Vieux mean the same thing.

So, how is brandy made? The wine is put into a distilling apparatus which consists of a simple boiler with a metal hood that collects the vapors as they pass through the condenser and convert them back to liquid where the brandy is colorless and almost 70%ABV (140-proof). It is then aged in wood casks ("limosine oak" if it's cognac) for a number of years which gives it its distinct, dark amber color. When it's in the barrel, alcohol evaporates quicker than water allowing the alcohol content to lower as time goes on. After the set number of years of aging, the brandy is removed and adjusted to shipping strength (40-43%) with the addition of distilled water.

So, good brandies that you may have heard of are: Asbach Uralt (Germany), Don Pedro (Mexico), Don Carlos (Spain) and Clear Creek (USA). These are what would be considered top shelf brandies from around the world; cheaper ones would be Jacques Cardin (France) and Metaxa 5-star (Greece).

Each brand has its own special name for its superior product. As we all know, Remy Martin's pride is Louis XIII.

Remy Martin

This company made a name for themselves almost three centuries ago and it's pride and joy these days is Louis XIII de Remy Martin. This is one of the highest cognacs on the market today and has been carefully tendered by three generations of cellar masters. If you look in the box the bottle comes in, you will find a booklet containing the seven secrets of Louis XIII. The cellar master who produces his batch, will never get to taste what he has produced and barreled. His grandson on the other hand will.

This brand uses only grapes that come from the Grande Champagne region which guarantees it's unique, exclusive quality. It is blended from eaux de vie (water of life), some more than a century in age, then it is aged in 'tiercons' barrels that are several hundred years old.

This stuff is so incredibly smooth, that even if you don't like brandy, you'll love it. I have seen someone mix it with coke and they should have been shot... twice.

It does vary in price from one place to another. Here we serve it for far less than the competitive market so although it may be expensive; it's a great selling point! Also, it is tradition that whoever buys the last shot (or few shots) gets to keep the Baccarat Crystal bottle, which is worth about \$500 on its own.

Hennessy

Hennessy was born when Richard Hennessy from Ireland, who had been a mercenary for the French King, was given land in the town of Cognac in 1765 and started a trading business, initially sending liquor back to his friends and family in Ireland. His son, James Hennessy expanded the business into the brandy production and the company was renamed James Hennessy and Co. As with most of the Cognac distilleries, Hennessy sits on the banks of the River Charante, where it gets all its water from to use in the distillation process. Hennessy currently sells about three million cases of cognac each year and they have now merged with Moët et Chandon as well as the fashion house Louis Vuitton to create what is now the world's largest luxury goods business: LVMH.

Courvoisier

The origin of Courvoisier goes back to the beginning of the 19th century with Emmanuel Courvoisier and his wine and spirit merchant company in Bercy. In 1811, Napoleon visited his warehouse and took several barrels with him to St. Helena and his officers. From this point on, Courvoisier was named the "Cognac of Napoleon" and quickly gained fame across the country and the rest of Europe. The Josephine bottle, which is now recognized worldwide was created in 1950 by the English Simon family who took over the business in 1909. Courvoisier is now owned by Allied Domecq, one of the biggest spirit companies in the world.

Other cognacs you may have heard of are Martell Cordon Bleu and V.S.O.P, Meukow X.O., and Monarch. These range from top shelf to bottom shelf but as they are from the right region, they come under the label, Cognac.

Armagnac

Seeing as we serve it on board, I thought I might as well mention a few words about Armagnac.

In the southwestern corner of France, produce from Gascony vineyards is made into one of the world's most prestigious spirits. The first known distillation occurred in 1411 and it has kept its superior brand and quality since then in this region only. Traditionally,

Armagnac is distilled only once in a still that is called an 'alembic'. No sugar is added and the barrels that are used to age the liquid for anything from 12-20 years (or more) are made from black oak that grows in the Gascony region. Some Armagnac you may have heard of includes Sempe and Jean-Claude Gauch which are aged, in some cases, for more than 100 years.

Rum

The origin of the word 'Rum' is debatable. Some believe that it is the shortened form of *rumbullion* an English slang word for 'uproar'. Others say that it stems from the Latin *saccharum* (sugar). Whatever the case may be, the fact is that Rum enjoys worldwide popularity despite its rather disreputable beginnings.

Though rum is commonly associated with the Caribbean, cane sugar is not native to this region. It was introduced by the Spanish during the 16th Century. Some people claim that Christopher Columbus planted sugar cane on Hispaniola and Cuba during his voyage in 1493. Over the next two centuries, the sugar plantations became key in the development of global business. Molasses and rum exported from the Caribbean made fortunes for the plantation owners in Europe and financed the exports of many manufactured goods.

The Caribbean is still the centre of the industry and rum is still very big business. Silver or clear are the lightest and most popular for mixing in cocktail. Rums can also range from amber to dark brown. So, let's see how it's made and how the different techniques alter the end result.

Rum is made from sugar cane which is boiled down to a rich residue called molasses. The molasses are then fermented and distilled. Both light and dark rums are produced to be around 80 proof.

Light rums are traditionally produced in Southern Caribbean islands like Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Barbados. They do not require extensive aging; with six months in oak casks often being long enough, although a year's aging is more common.

Dark rum results from aging the spirit for a period of three to twelve years (and longer), and in some cases, from the addition of caramel. It is very aromatic and has a heavier, richer flavor than light rum. Dark rum is traditionally produced in the tropics: Jamaica, Haiti or Martinique. While supplying the 'punch' in Planter's Punch and the rich flavor in a variety of tropical and hot drinks, the best dark rums can also be savored like a fine brandy. 151-rums (for example Appleton 151 and Bacardi 151) are excellent for drinks and deserts that require flaming. They are called 151 as they are 151 proof (or 75.5% ABV).

So what rums do we have on board?

Let's start with my favorite one on board, Captain Morgan. The man behind the legend was Captain Henry Morgan, one of the 17th Century's most daring and successful buccaneers, admired throughout the Caribbean, a legend in his own lifetime. Born in Wales in 1635, he sought thrills and fortune in the "New World". Throughout the Caribbean, from Curacao to Panama City to Jamaica and beyond. In 1764, a grateful King Charles III rewarded Captain Morgan for his devoted service with a Knighthood, and Sir Henry Morgan served as Governor of Jamaica in 1680.

His passion for fun and adventure was legendary. The Captain pioneered the rum rations on his ship decades before it became the official drink of the Royal Navy. The Original Captain Morgan rum would have been produced on traditional pot stills by swashbuckling buccaneers and other characters of adventurous temperament. They were usually drank straight or with lime juice. This tradition has survived through Captain Morgan black label rum.

In the early 1950s, the brand responded to changing consumer tastes and the popularity of Cuba Libre by introducing a White Rum version – the first line production.

Over the years, Captain Morgan rums have sold very well in the UK, South Africa and over 30 countries but before 1984, the Captain Morgan brand known very little in the US. When the Captain launched his Original Spiced Rum it took off in America by storm and the world of rum has never been the same.

The Morgan Spiced that we have on board gets its distinct richness and amber color from blending aged dark rum into the formula. Its smooth character comes from aging the rum in white oak barrels.

Bacardi rum is stated by some people to be the world's first and most popular refined white rum. It was established by Facundo Bacardi in 1862. The extended Bacardi family, descendants of Don Facundo Bacardi y Maso, the inventor of rum. In the last decade Bacardi Rums represented the number one selling distilled spirits brands in the US.

Bacardi 151 is not for the faint hearted. It contains the craft and the authentic credentials of great Bacardi rum, but it's one that lives on the wild side. It is always recommended that you mix Bacardi 151 with cola or fruit juices, or if you want to begin a career in "fire breathing" use this for fuel.

Bacardi Coco (Spanish for coconut by the way... big surprise) combines rich coconut flavor with pure Bacardi rum. To obtain this one-of-a-kind taste, the coconut is steeped (pressed) to release the flavor. The spirit is then filtered. The release is a clean, dry spirit with a rich coconut aroma and authentic taste.

Bacardi gold rum, with its orange glow is moderately light-bodied. It has a hint of sweetness with flavors of apple, lemon and pecan. It has a relatively light finish when compared to other gold rums.

Bacardi Limon is the original modern icon from Bacardi. It's chic, innovative and desirable. Bacardi crafted Limon in honor of the long-tasting tradition of drinking Bacardi on the rocks with lime.

Bacardi Razz only uses the best berries – including the dark and sweet Marion berry – which are picked at their peak. They are steeped and balanced with the slightly tart taste of the red raspberry before being added to premium Bacardi rum.

Bacardi Anejo and 8 Yr Old really speak from themselves. They get their unique aroma and flavor from the time they spend in the barrels. With a hint of caramel, these are great both mixed and on the rocks.

There are some who believe that there is no point aging rum for more than 9 yrs. According to them, by 9 yrs, the rum has completed taking in all the qualities it requires and after that, it will not change. However, with distilleries such as Havana Club making their 21 yr old and others with their 15 yr olds, this argument definitely has two sides. Some distilleries don't want to add caramel to their product as they believe the rum already has a sweet enough flavor, but others believe that just a drop in the barrel along with a refined aging process helps give a smooth finish to the end result.

Liqueurs

What puts the fuzz in a Fuzzy Navel? What turns a Grasshopper green? What makes a Pink Squirrel nutty? And what is the wall in the Wallbanger? Give up? It's liqueurs. But why am I asking these stupid questions? You know that already. So let's talk a little about some of the liqueurs on board that people ask about, example: What's in the funny shaped bottle? What is Blue Curacao actually made from? These are just some of the questions that we get asked all the time and once again, opportunities like this are something we grab with both hands to prove to the guest that we are the most professional bar team anywhere as we can answer any question they have, and then pour them a drink in the knowledge that you know exactly what you're pouring them and why. Knowledge and confidence in a bartender and bar server are, in my opinion, one of the best attributes you can have. And I'm sure you'll see the results yourselves

In European countries, liqueurs have long been savored as after-dinner drinks, bringing a delightful end to a wonderful culinary event. Across the pond though, the Americans tend to enjoy their liqueurs mixed with other ingredients. It appears that lingering over a liqueur straight up without a mountain of ice to water it down is something that they haven't mastered yet. And this is evident with cocktails such as the Grasshopper and White Russian.

Americans inevitably put their own spin on things and are quick to launch or latch on to trends. Schnapps, derived from the German word meaning 'gulp' or 'mouthful' took the country by storm in the mid-1980s and was produced in every flavor you could think of – and some that you really wouldn't want to think of. The Fuzzy navel, born during the Schnapps phenomenon, is still very popular to this day.

One popular question that you may have been asked is: What is the difference between a cordial and a liqueur? Most people use these terms interchangeably. Though both describe liquors made by combining or redistilling spirits with one or more aromatic flavorings and are usually highly sweetened, there are subtle differences. Liqueurs are flavored with flowers, herbs, seeds, roots, plants or barks, or any number of species, while cordials are generally prepared with fruit pulp or juices.

Regardless of what you call them, liqueurs date back centuries and were originally formulated as medicinal 'elixirs' to cure a variety of ills. Made in every country in the world, nearly all liqueurs are quite sweet, with a highly concentrated desert-like flavor. Several, made from closely guarded secret recipes and processes are known throughout the world by their proprietary brand names.

Benedictine

Twenty-seven herbs are used to make this liqueur. The recipe came from monks 2 centuries ago and it is still made in exactly the same way.

That's one thing you may notice by the way. A few of the liqueurs that we sell were invented by monks. In fact, quite a lot of the liqueurs we sell are from monks.

Chambord

This sweet liqueur is made by infusing raspberries with cognac. Then they add various spices and herbs with acacia honey. Dubbed France's Royal Liqueur, it is sold in its own distinctive bottle.

Cointreau

Made from the fruits of France's Angers region, and sweet and bitter orange peels, Cointreau is a delicious liqueur produced according to a secret recipe since 1849. Drank in many ways; straight up, on the rocks, frappe, it is also added to many cocktails. Many people prefer to use this instead of triple sec when making Cosmopolitans, for example. The sweeter orange taste often provides a good substitute.

Curacao

Flavored with orange, Curacao comes in a variety of colors, from blue to orange to clear.

Drambuie

A sweet liqueur made from Scotch whisky, honey and herbs.

Frangelico

It is said that a hermit invented this liqueur. (A hermit is a monk who lives a part of his life in isolation, away from his monastery in the outdoors). It is flavored with hazelnuts, herbs and berries. The shape of the bottle resembles that of a hermit's clothing.

Goldschlager

Produced in Switzerland, this cinnamon schnapps is infused with tiny flakes of 23-carat gold.

Grand Marnier

Grand Marnier is a French Liqueur made from Cognac and bitter orange. It is a key ingredient in many cocktails as well as Crepe Suzette.

Jagermeister

A German liqueur that is made with 56 different herbs as well as fruit. Should always be served ice cold.

Kahlua

Produced in Mexico, this is slightly heavier and sweeter than its substitute, Tia Maria. Out of the two, always choose this one to mix in cocktails as it gives the drink more texture and character.

Midori

This is the most popular brand of melon-based liqueurs. It is produced in Mexico using the honey dew melon.

Sambucca

This clear Italian liqueur is made from the witch elder tree and liquorice. It is available in white and black, the black having a hint of coffee. Sambucca is usually served with three coffee beans which represent luck in wealth, health and happiness. You should always serve with an odd number of beans, i.e. 1, 3, 5, etc. It is considered very bad luck to give an even number; i.e. 2, 4, 6, etc.

Sloe Gin

This is flavored with a wild European plum from the fruit of the blackthorn bush. Traditionally, sloes are pricked by the thorns they grow with, then 'steeped' (pressed) to produce a very sweet liqueur.

Southern Comfort

This is a bourbon-based liqueur and has come to be an American classic used in many cocktails. It is flavored with vanilla, orange, citrus, herbs and cinnamon.

Tia Maria

This liqueur is made according to a secret recipe of Tia Maria, a servant of a prominent Spanish family, who was rescued during the British invasion of Jamaica in 1655. By tradition, the recipe was handed down upon the engagement of the family's eldest daughter. The only known ingredient is essence of Blue Mountain coffee beans; the rest remains a secret.

This guide clearly does not detail all of the liquors served in our bars but should certainly give you a better understanding to the diverse world of Beverage. Knowledge is power and will help you increase sales and of course make more money. You are encouraged to continue learning the basics and recommend further reading of Beverage books. Remember this is just the beginning and you will not learn everything in one day, or even one year. The world of wine is just as vast so take your time, enjoy the experience and prepare to WOW your guests.