

TOP 100 SPIRITS OF 2019



WE HAVE YOU COVERED WITH THIS YEAR'S
TOP-REVIEWED POURS.

Called from an archive of all the spirits tasted throughout the year, this 100-bottle list represents top picks in their respective categories.

As is always the case, mind you, balance is key. So, by design, this year's edition encompasses a broad array of spirits categories as well as a wide range in prices. It's perfect for those who seek something new that's still wallet friendly and people looking for a special splurge.

There are plenty of crowd-pleasers to be found, from single-malt Scotches, Irish whiskies and a stunning 21-year-old sipping rum from Jamaica's Appleton Estate to a bartender favorite dry Curaçao that's sure to elevate your cocktail game.

There are also a few rule-breaker bottles that deserve attention, like the powerful, savory agave spirit that's not technically a mezcal but certainly drinks like one, or the Sherry cask-finished VSOP that until recently wouldn't have been permitted to use the Cognac designation. It just goes to show that spirit producers near and far are thinking outside the box to bring you the most interesting, exciting pours.

Whether you lean toward classic or creative, rest assured that all of these selections deserve a place on your bar.

AMERICAN WHISKEY

95 George Dickel Bottled in Bond (USA; George A. Dickel & Co., Tullahoma, TN). Look for deep, dark, haunting flavors in this 100-proof Tennessee whiskey, which evolves as water or ice is added to tame the alcohol heat. Burnt caramel and toffee telescope into espresso, black pepper, clove, unsweetened chocolate and a hint of black licorice. Overall, the effect is earthy, woody and complex. **Best Buy.** **abv:** 50% **Price:** \$36

93 Elijah Craig Barrel Proof (USA; Heaven Hill, Bardstown, KY). This 12-year-old cask-strength whiskey offers chocolate and vanilla aromas. The drying, numbingly hot palate opens with fiery cayenne and clove, yielding a Mexican chocolate-like effect. Balanced with water, the whiskey evolves into an oakier dark-chocolate profile, lightened by almond, ginger and white pepper. **abv:** 67.6% **Price:** \$59

93 WhistlePig PiggyBack (USA; Goamericago Beverages, Shoreham, VT). A honey hue and rich vanilla aroma mark this six-year-old rye whiskey. The palate nods to its 100% rye grain mash bill, opening with brisk cinnamon and allspice sparks that round into a mellower vanilla and caramel midpalate, finishing long and spiced. Adding water brings more vanilla to the fore and adds a toasted grain note to the finish. **abv:** 48.2% **Price:** \$50

92 Bare Knuckle Rye Whiskey (USA; KO Distilling, Manassas, VA). The aroma of this 100% Virginia rye is luscious and toasty. While this overproof spirit is predictably fiery, adding water lets bold mocha, burnt hazelnut and espresso bound forward, drying to clove and black pepper sizzle on the finish. Aged for at least two years. **abv:** 62.4% **Price:** \$66

92 Droptine 12 Point Bourbon Whiskey (USA; Droptine Spirits, Roscoe, NY). This Bourbon was transported to California to finish in brandy barrels. The end result is an orange-tinged hue and a drying, oaky palate that shows hints of creamy honey, coconut and almond butter. The finish boasts perky allspice and clove. **abv:** 46% **Price:** \$55

92 Heaven's Door Double Barrel Whiskey (USA; Heaven's Door Spirits, Columbia, TN). Look for a mild aroma that marries honey and oak. The palate leads with oak, then toasty vanilla and dried apricot, with a long, warming, peppery finish. Adding water brings out softer honey and chamomile notes. Music-lovers take note: This brand was developed in collaboration with Bob Dylan. **abv:** 50% **Price:** \$50



91 Ghost Hill Texas Bourbon Whiskey (USA; Treaty Oak Distilling, Dripping Springs, TX). This is billed as a “grain to glass Bourbon” made with Texas corn and wheat. Look for a brisk, spicy, woody aroma. The fiery palate is easily tamed with a few splashes of water, which brings together vanilla and luscious fudge with mouthwatering lemon acidity before leading into a baking spice finish. **abv:** 47.5% **Price:** \$50

91 Smoky Mountain King's Creek Tennessee Whiskey (USA; Distiller Sales Company, Minneapolis, MN). Mellow allspice and vanilla aromas lead the nose, coupled with a yeasty whiff. The palate opens with vanilla sweetness up front, drying to leather, espresso and clove on the finish. A splash of water unlocks a rounder, spicier flavor profile, finishing with the faintest hint of dried apricot on the exhale. Aged 9 years. **Best Buy.** **abv:** 45% **Price:** \$40

90 Nelson's First 108 Tennessee Whiskey Single Barrel (USA; Nelson's Green Brier Distillery, Nashville, TN). A notably dark, ruddy hue signals that this is going to be a robust sip. Aromas suggest deep toffee, dried cherry and oak. Add plenty of water to tame this overproof whiskey's intense heat, but know that gorgeous toffee dilutes to a mellower vanilla-honey profile. The bold, spicy finish echoes with cherry, cinnamon and clove. **abv:** 61.75% **Price:** \$60/375 ml

90 Three Chord Blended Bourbon Whiskey (USA; Steel Bending Spirits, Ann Arbor, MI). The name refers to tonal vibrations that are used to finish this small-batch Bourbon blend. Overall, this is a relatively light sipper, melding warm nuttiness on the nose and palate with maple, cedar and spice. **abv:** 40.5% **Price:** \$40

COGNAC

95 Courvoisier Limited Edition Cognac (France; Beam Suntory, Chicago, IL). Until recently, cask finishes were not part of the Cognac-maker's toolbox; that's slowly changing, and to delicious effect. According to the producer, this bottling is “VSOP quality” but doesn't meet the industry's strict laws to have VSOP put on the label. It's still worth seeking out and this bottling, from batch 006, is a particularly fruit-forward expression with plenty of dried fig, date and plum on nose and palate, finishing long with hints of cocoa and spice. The initial blend of liquid is aged two to eight years, then finished in Sherry casks for at least four months. **abv:** 40% **Price:** \$40

94 Hardy Organic VSOP Cognac (France; LeVecke Corp., Mira Loma, CA). This Cognac offers rich aromas and flavors, yet still remains light and easygoing. Concentrated tones of milky caramel and hazelnut on nose and palate are offset by lemon peel acidity and an espresso tinge, yielding a versatile spirit to sip or mix. **abv:** 40% **Price:** \$50

94 Paulet VSOP Cognac (France; Saranty Imports, Stamford, CT). Look for a bright topaz hue and lively aromas of caramel and orange peel in this brandy from the Fine Champagne region. The silky palate echoes that orange peel note, layering it with gingerbread, molasses, dried apricot and spice. Candied orange peel and ginger wrap up the finish. **abv:** 40% **Price:** \$40

93 Normandin Mercier VSOP Cognac (France; Heavenly Spirits, Lakeville, MA). Golden and light in the glass, this Cognac from the Petite Champagne region and aged a minimum seven years offers rich, powerful aromas of caramel, *dulce de leche* and ripe banana. The buttery palate opens with vanilla cookie and tropical fruit, finishing with sprinkles of cayenne and cocoa. **abv:** 40% **Price:** \$67



93 Park Borderies Mizunara Japanese Oak Cask Finish Cognac (France; Black Sea Imports, Brooklyn, NY). This VSOP Cognac is aged for four years in oak barrels, followed by six months in Mizunara, a particularly fine-grained type of Japanese

oak. The end result is mild oak and a hint of red fruit on the nose, coupled with a drying, delicately oaky palate accented by vanilla and lemon peel, finishing fairly spicy with cinnamon and clove.

abv: 43.5%

Price: \$60

91 D'Ussé VSOP Cognac (France; Bacardi Limited, Coral Gables, FL). This Cognac offers a deep copper-penny hue and rich aromas of caramel and dried fig. The silky palate echoes the dried fig note, alongside a Port-like hint of red fruit. It finishes notably long on notes of cocoa, cinnamon and cayenne.

abv: 40%

Price: \$50

90 Camus VSOP Cognac (France; Camus Cognac, Fort Lauderdale, FL). Oak is the main feature of this VSOP, creating a Cognac that has an almost whiskey-like profile. The liquid in the glass reflects amber with orange highlights, and has a soft vanilla aroma. The palate leads with caramel, cinnamon and oak, with a drying feel and plenty of clove and cinnamon tingle. Each sip warms all the way down.

abv: 40%

Price: \$50

GENEVER

94 de Borgen Malt Genever Cask Finished (Holland; Hooghoudt Distillers Import, Bridgeport, PA). Aging in oloroso Sherry casks has imparted a deep amber hue with hints of cocoa and sarsaparilla in the mild aroma. The complex palate suggests cocoa-dusted orange peel, anise and espresso, finishing with caraway and sweet coconut on the exhale. Mix into an Old Fashioned or similar cocktail, or sip alongside dessert.

abv: 40%

Price: \$45/1L

93 Old Duff Genever Single Malt (Holland; Disruptive Craft Spirits, Manhasset, NY). Clear in the glass, a malty, warm aroma hints at anise. The palate echoes that anise tone more boldly, finishing with racy, mouthwatering white and pink peppercorn, juniper and a citrusy note around the edges.

abv: 45%

Price: \$50

91 de Borgen Old-Style Genever (Holland; Proof and Wood Ventures, New Canaan, CT). Give this pale gold spirit a couple of minutes to open in the glass. The reward is a gentle almond aroma and mild vanilla sweetness on the palate, rounding to dusty, earthy coriander and a ginger-spiked finish. Made with a portion of genever aged in oak up to 17 years.

abv: 40%

Price: \$45

90 Bols Genever (Holland; Lucas Bols, Manhasset, NY). Still made with the original recipe from 1820, including 22 botanicals, this genever is clear in the glass with a warm, sweet vanilla-tinged aroma. The malty palate is grainy and slightly viscous, finishing long with vanilla and cinnamon heat.

abv: 42%

Price: \$30

GIN

94 Fords Gin Officers' Reserve No. 01 (England; 86 Company, Ukiah, CA). A limited-edition offering, at heart this is an overproof version of the original Fords Gin finished in amontillado Sherry barrels. The cask finishing adds a pale straw tinge and mild almond notes on nose and palate. Bold flavors of dried fruit and vanilla are layered over subtle baking spice, with juniper emerging on the finish. Dilution transforms the gin into a softer, warming, more gently spiced sip.

abv: 54.5%

Price: \$35

93 Bimini Gin (USA; Round Turn Distilling, Biddeford, ME). Bright, bold and bracing, this opens with flavors of juniper, mint and fennel. Lemon verbena and grapefruit zest add interest to the midpalate and extend into a long, palate-coating finish that sizzles with white peppercorn heat.

abv: 47%

Price: \$32

93 McQueen and the Violet Fog Gin (Brazil; Sovereign Brands, New York, NY). This gin is clear, with a distinctly sweet candied-lemon-peel fragrance. The soft palate finishes with mild violet jazzed up by white pepper and a hint of coriander. Tailor-made for an Aviation to flank crème de violette liqueur.

abv: 40%

Price: \$37

92 Copley London Dry Gin (The Netherlands; Copley Spirits, Boston, MA). The soft, nuanced aroma layers juniper and licorice, while the minty palate is bright, finishing with a tingly mentholated note, white pepper and lemon-lime peel. Well suited for a Gimlet. *Best Buy.*

abv: 42%

Price: \$17/1L

92 Dry Fly Barrel Reserve Gin (USA; Dry Fly Distilling, Spokane, WA). Made from a base that includes Fuji apples and then aged for a year in a used wheat whiskey barrel, this bold, interesting gin has a golden hue and a bright, distinctly fresh-cut apple aroma. The soft palate delivers on the promise of that apple note, plus a brush of honey, finishing with cinnamon and clove heat. Mix with ginger ale or sparkling cider in a highball.

abv: 40%

Price: \$40



92 New Amsterdam Stratusphere London Dry Gin (USA; New Amsterdam Spirits, Modesto, CA). Spicy and bracing, this gin bursts open with coriander and juniper, backed by citrus. Each sip fades into almond-tinged sweetness, ending with a welcome blast of juniper and ginger heat. *Best Buy.*

abv: 47.3%

Price: \$15

92 Sourland Mountain Gin Reserve Batch #3 (USA; Disch & Sons Distillers, Hopewell, NJ). This full-bodied gin, finished in American oak barrels, drinks like a light, bouncy whiskey. Burnished gold and bright in the glass, the sweet aroma suggests vanilla bean and sarsaparilla, which carry through to the palate, accompanied by cinnamon and espresso notes. The finish balances alcohol heat against soothing honey notes.

abv: 45%

Price: \$29/375 ml



91 Loch & Union American Dry Gin (USA; Loch & Union Distilling, American Canyon, CA). This is an earthy, spicy, savory gin. A hint of salinity makes the mouth water, accompanied by warming hints of coriander, cumin, cayenne and black pepper. A lingering, rounded richness finishes with a dark chocolate streak that evokes mole.

abv: 47.2%

Price: \$40

91 Rieger's Midwestern Dry Gin (USA; J. Rieger & Co., Kansas City, MO). Mild juniper and menthol lead the nose. The palate unpacks bright lemon and grapefruit peel, underpinned by mild, marshmallow-like sweetness. It finishes clean, with

lemon-pepper and a gingery flicker of heat. Mix up gin and tonics.

abv: 46.1% Price: \$30

91 Sceptic Vacuum Distilled Gin (USA; Sceptic Distillery Co., Melrose Park, IL). The bright spearmint scent gives a hint of what's to come: a refreshing, tingly sip with plenty of lemon peel, juniper and minty zing, with just a tinge of sweetness on the exhale. This is distilled from corn, with botanicals that include hibiscus, gooseberry, mango and cardamom, although the soft palate doesn't read as particularly floral or fruity.

abv: 45% Price: \$32

IRISH WHISKEY

96 Bushmills Distillery Exclusive Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Proximo Spirits, Jersey City, NJ). This big, bold whiskey will appeal to those who usually gravitate toward Scotch. It layers tones of wood, smoke and cinnamon spice. A cube of ice tames the alcohol heat and unfurls hints of orange and lemon peel. It was matured in charred Bourbon barrels and toasted Sherry casks, then finished in acacia wood.

abv: 47% Price: \$85

95 Glendalough Double Barrel Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Mark Anthony Crafted Spirits, Chicago, IL). This honey-hued whiskey is aged in Bourbon barrels, then finished in oloroso Sherry casks. The overall effect is bold and mouthwatering, and yields flavors of almond, vanilla and pecan accented by clove and black pepper. *Best Buy.*

abv: 42% Price: \$33

95 The Quiet Man Traditional Irish Whiskey Blend (Ireland; Luxco, St Louis, MO). Look for a burnished gold hue and mild scent that hints at vanilla. The silky palate opens with fresh fruit sprinkled with cinnamon, fading into an exceedingly long, rich vanilla finish. Finished in ex-Bourbon casks. *Best Buy.*

abv: 40% Price: \$33

94 Tipperary Watershed Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Impex, San Francisco, CA). Bright and bracing, this straw-tinted whiskey is light on its feet. Green apple slices and honeysuckle perfume the nose, while the palate reflects green apple tartness, brisk lemony acidity, white flowers and ginger. A wisp of smoke marks the elegant fade.

abv: 47% Price: \$65

93 Lambay Whiskey Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; CIL US Wines & Spirits, Ft. Lauderdale, FL). The story behind this whiskey reflects a tale of two islands: First, the spirit is aged on Lambay Island, off the coast of Dublin. The whiskey is then finished in Cognac casks from Île de Ré, off the coast of France. While the finished result doesn't exactly sing of the salty sea, it's a pleasing sipper nonetheless, with a dark honey hue, bold, fruity aroma

and drying palate mixing cedar with big, red apple bite and a long, robust vanilla-and-clove exit.

abv: 40% Price: \$70

92 Ballyhoo Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Millstone Spirits Group, Philadelphia, PA). This easy-drinking whiskey finished in Port casks has a straw hue, mild vanilla aroma and feather-light feel on the palate. Smooth layers of vanilla and lemon cream are braced by black pepper and the faintest whiff of smoke.

abv: 43% Price: \$30

92 Kirkland Signature Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Misa Imports, Dallas, TX). Look for a honey hue and gentle white-floral scent. The palate is fresh and bright, echoing the floral aromas and finishing with pleasing tinges of smoke and vanilla. Sip or mix this four-year-old pour. *Best Buy.*

abv: 40% Price: \$28/1.75 L



91 Sons of Erin Single Malt Aged 15 Years Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Restless Spirits, North Kansas City, MO). Bouncy, grassy and fresh, this golden Irish whiskey offers a citrusy aroma and mouth-watering palate. The racy acidity of green apple and lemon peel yields to a slick of honey on the exit, laced with ginger and cinnamon sparks.

abv: 46% Price: \$110

LIQUEUR

95 La Grande Josiane Orange Liqueur (France; Biagio Cru Wines and Spirits, New Hyde Park, NY). Armagnac plus orange liqueur equals a delightful sipper. The rich aroma bursts with orange oil and comforting vanilla. On the palate, nuanced cocoa and coffee wind into a cinnamon-warmed finish, plus just enough alcohol to cut the sweetness.

abv: 36% Price: \$50

95 Pierre Ferrand Dry Curaçao (France; Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits, Stamford, CT). Less sweet and more sprightly than most orange liqueurs, the aroma explodes with orange peel and marmalade. The palate echoes those notes, finishing brisk and slightly bitter, tinged with ginger sparks. Sip or mix.

abv: 40% Price: \$30



93 Topper's Rhum Mocha Mama (St. Maarten; Topper's Rhum, Irmo, SC). Luscious and pleasantly bittersweet, like a truffle dusted with bitter chocolate, this rum-based liqueur has a deep brown hue and mocha scent. The bold palate leads with espresso and only a hint of cocoa, plus a kiss of vanilla on the exit. Use in place of any coffee liqueur.

abv: 21% Price: \$18



92 Bauchant Cognac Orange Liqueur (France; Palm Bay International, Port Washington, NY). Consider this full-flavored, relatively sweet liqueur for the dessert table. The golden liquid with orange highlights is scented with a mix of vanilla and candied orange peel. The viscous palate shows lots of vanilla and maple, exiting with orange peel and cinnamon heat. *Best Buy.*

abv: 40% Price: \$25



92 Magdala Orange Liqueur (Spain; Torres Brandy, Armonk, NY). This honey-hued liqueur invites with a warm aroma that suggests orange peel and brandy. The palate is rich and viscous, with most of the flavor on the exhale. It's not overtly "orange" but finishes with a subtle orange-oil note and welcome flurry of spice. **Best Buy.**
abv: 39% **Price:** \$25

92 Roulaison Amer (USA; Roulaison Distilling Company, New Orleans, LA). Described by the producer as an "Herbal Rum Liqueur," made with a base of New Orleans rum steeped with nearly two dozen herbs, peels, roots and spices, this spirit is built like a spiced rum but drinks like an herbaceous amaro. Expect a bright tawny hue and fruity aroma that channels juicy lemon and caramelized pineapple. The complex, lightly bitter palate shows chamomile, honey, intense bursts of lemongrass and menthol, and finishes with a rush of citrusy acidity.
abv: 41.6% **Price:** \$43

92 The Original Righteous Seven Liqueur (USA; Righteous Road, St. Louis, MO). This luscious liqueur is inspired by a passage from the Kabbalah. It has a ruby hue and warm dried-fruit aroma. The palate is slightly tart, showing dried cherry, raisins and lots of dried figs and dates, finishing spiced. Key ingredients include grapes, pomegranate, figs, dates, and, most unusual, olives.
abv: 30% **Price:** \$30

90 Fruitlab Organic Orange Liqueur (USA; Greenbar Distillery, Los Angeles, CA). Look for a honey hue and bright, mild orange aroma. The palate is light and easy-sipping, with hints of brown sugar and honey, while nuances of orange flesh and ginger unfold on the finish. The producer says its differentiator is that it's made with zest from fresh California oranges, not just dried peels.
abv: 20% **Price:** \$30

MEZCAL

97 Del Que Toma el Cardinal Espadín (Mexico; Bowler Imports, New York, NY). Considered to be an "unregistered mezcal"—it's a mezcal in everything but paperwork—this is an intriguing stunner. A powerful, savory agave spirit, it evokes roasted meat, dark chocolate and sun-dried tomato, finishing with hints of orange peel and earthy spice.
abv: 50% **Price:** \$48

95 Los Nahuales Espadín (Mexico; T. Edward Wines & Spirits, New York, NY). The nose and palate on this 100% *espadín* mezcal reveal orange, mango and papaya dusted with cayenne and cinnamon, tempered with just a hint of vanilla sweetness on the mouthwatering exit.
abv: 47% **Price:** \$59

93 Bozal Tobalá Reserva (Mexico; 3 Badge Beverage, Sonoma, CA). The savory aroma suggests tomato water and lemon, with a faint hint of fresh basil. The palate skews less savory and more toward a mellow, almond flavor profile. It's pleasing nonetheless, with a drying finish that delivers a lemon-pepper tang and a hint of saline.
abv: 46.2% **Price:** \$129



93 Luminar Mezcal Añejo (Mexico; DWLL, Los Angeles, CA). A rare barrel-aged mezcal, this dessert-worthy *añejo* is rested in oak for one year, adding a light gold hue and bold marzipan aroma. The palate is soft and slightly sweet, showing almond and vanilla layered with cinnamon. Repeated sips become increasingly fiery, adding cayenne to the mix.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$50

93 Mezcal Local Destilado con Pechuga (Mexico; RLD Imports, Houston, TX). A mild raspberry aroma leads the nose. The first sips show mild sweetness accented by brisk spearmint and salt-

water, leading into a rugged exhale showing menthol and rubbery notes.

abv: 42% **Price:** \$50

92 Erstwhile Mezcal (Mexico; Erstwhile Mezcal, Brooklyn, NY). The distinctly vegetal aroma teases with bell pepper, fresh basil and fresh jalapeño. It's green and bright on the palate too, opening with a racy streak of zesty bell pepper and dried oregano, finishing fiery with lots of black pepper and cayenne heat, as befits a nearly 100-proof spirit.
abv: 49% **Price:** \$64

92 Se Busca Mezcal (Mexico; Stoli Group USA, New York, NY). Look for a mild melon aroma. The palate mixes sweet and spice: Almond and vanilla mingle with cinnamon and cayenne, finishing with a rich, rounded note that suggests dried dates and figs.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$40



91 Akul Joven (Mexico; MHW Ltd., Manhasset, NY). Lime peel creates an enticing aroma, while sweet spices lead the palate, suggesting cinnamon, black pepper and cardamom, giving over to a citrusy midpalate. The finish is fiery and slightly numbing with cayenne heat and the faintest mesquite twang. Sip or mix this 100% *espadín* mezcal; consider for an adventurous take on a spiced gimlet or daiquiri.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$40

91 Montelobos Espadín Joven (Mexico; William Grant & Sons, New York, NY). A brisk aroma mixes dried oregano, bell pepper, juicy lemon and a hint of rubber. The palate leads with rubber and graphite notes, followed by lemon and then pepper. A vegetal midpalate emerges in tones of bell pepper. Mouthwatering, bracing and brisk with a slight sweetness, while the peppery fade shows a hint of juniper, too. **Best Buy.**
abv: 43.2% **Price:** \$34

90 **Mezcal El Silencio (Mexico; Park Street Imports, Miami, FL).** Citrusy aromas lead in this *espadín* mezcal, suggesting lemon peel and lemon verbena, plus a mineral hint. The palate surprises with a puff of smoke, beneath which graphite and mouthwatering citrus hover, leading into a peppery fade. **Best Buy.**
abv: 43% **Price:** \$37

RUM

97 **Appleton Estate 21 Years Old Rum (Jamaica; Campari America, New York, NY).** Deep amber in the glass, this sipping rum offers tones of fudge and hazelnut on the nose. The suppersoft palate brings flavors of brown sugar and toffee accented with orange peel and clove, winding into an extraordinarily long exhale tinged with espresso, dusty cocoa and allspice. Aged for a minimum of 21 years.
abv: 43% **Price:** \$140

97 **Plantation Xaymaca Special Dry Rum (Jamaica; W.J. Deutsch & Sons, Stamford, CT).** Lively and complex, this carries aromas of honey, cedar, Mandarin orange, cooked pineapple and brown sugar. The plush, slightly viscous palate echoes those flavors, layering on bright flickers of cedar and lemon peel, plus a hint of funk reminiscent of agricole rum. It finishes with a warming clove tingle on the tip of the tongue. Made with 100% pot still Jamaican rum, aged first in Jamaica and then in ex-Cognac casks at the Ferrand estate. **Best Buy.**
abv: 43% **Price:** \$25



96 **The Real McCoy Aged 14 Years Limited Edition Rum (Barbados; The Real McCoy Spirits, Canandaigua, NY).** This limited edition opens with the guns a-blazing: It's spicy and brisk, loaded with cinnamon and clove. The drying midpalate shifts to oak and walnut, then fades away on gentle, dreamy layers of brown sugar, caramel, orange peel and a hint of dried apricot. Blended from some of the oldest rums produced by Foursquare Distillery.
abv: 46% **Price:** \$70

94 **Cockspur Old Gold Rum (Barbados; Cockspur USA, Manhasset, NY).** Tawny and bright in the glass, the brown sugar aroma takes some coaxing to open up. The palate shows vanilla, allspice and a hint of cola, tapering off to tones of maple, almond and toasted coconut. It finishes on accents coffee and clove. **Best Buy.**
abv: 40% **Price:** \$22



93 **Denizen Merchant's Reserve 8 Years Old Rum (Jamaica/Martinique; Hotaling & Co., San Francisco, CA).** The producer describes this blend of two particularly aromatic, intense rums as “unapologetically funky.” That’s an accurate description for this amber-hued rum, which opens with bright tropical-fruit aromas and a drying cedar-and-maple palate. Overall, the effect is that of ripe banana drizzled with maple and sprinkled with nutmeg and cayenne.
abv: 43% **Price:** \$35



93 **Mount Gay XO The Peat Smoke Expression Master Blender Collection Rum (Barbados; Remy Cointreau, New York, NY).** This unique bottling starts with pot-stilled rums aged eight to 15 years in American oak barrels, then matured for an additional six months in casks that previously held peated Islay whisky. Look for a rich maple scent and a palate with caramel and vanilla flavors, with the peat emerging on the finish. Add water or ice to tame the fiery alcohol in this overproof rum.
abv: 57% **Price:** \$250

91 **Whistling Andy White Rum (USA; Whistling Andy, Bigfork, MT).** The aroma is slightly funky, with a hint of banana. The velvety, robust palate echoes that banana note, finishing brisk and clean with hints of almond and cinnamon heat. A respectable choice for a daiquiri. **Best Buy.**
abv: 40% **Price:** \$27

SCOTCH

95 **Macallan Estate Single Malt Scotch (Scotland; Edrington Americas, New York, NY).** Delectable notes of oloroso Sherry, dried date, dried fig, caramel and toffee lead the nose. The palate opens with a roar of flavor—leather, dried date, cocoa powder and toffee. The finish is long and gentle, with hints of honey, gingerbread and dried cherry, plus a cinnamon and cayenne tickle. A delicious and complex sipper.
abv: 43% **Price:** \$250

95 **The GlenDronach 15 Year Single Malt Scotch (Scotland; Brown-Forman, Louisville, KY).** The nose on this copper-hued single malt shows caramel and a hint of smoke. The expansive, rounded flavors seem to gain intensity with every sip—dark toffee, espresso, cocoa and oak meld with peat smoke, leading into a warming cinnamon finish.
abv: 46% **Price:** \$84

94 **Ardbeg Drum Special Committee Edition (Scotland; Moët-Hennessy, New York, NY).** This special limited-edition single malt was released for Ardbeg Day 2019. Expect a light gold hue and aromas of peat smoke and iodine. The palate is silky and slick, opening with a cloud of smoke punctuated by clove and black pepper. The luxuriously long finish exhales peat, espresso, vanilla and peppery spice, refreshed by a hint of citrusy astringency.
abv: 52% **Price:** \$120

94 **Compass Box The Peat Monster Summer 2019 Scotch (Scotland; Compass Box, MHW Inc., Manhasset, NY).** A new year-round bottling, this is a blended Scotch that showcases several Islay distilleries, with an eye toward “depth and elegance.” Look for a pale gold hue and a floral, grassy, salt-breeze aroma that reflects a delicate hint of peat smoke. The palate is more robust; think shovelfuls of peat, though it pulls back just short of the overwhelm point, allowing hints of vanilla sweetness and grassy freshness to peek through.
abv: 46% **Price:** \$65

94 **Glenfiddich 15 Unique Solera Reserve Single Malt Scotch (Scotland; William Grant & Sons, New York, NY).** Scented with honey and baked apple, this single malt is big and rich, opening with fruit and just a puff of smoke, adding a distinct mouthwatering sea-salt note to the midpalate, then stretching on into a long, butterscotch finish. It marries whiskies matured in Sherry, Bourbon and new oak casks in a solera vat, which has been periodically topped up with new whiskey since 1998.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$60

93 Glencadam 21 Single Malt Scotch (Scotland; Camus CIL US Wines & Spirits, Fort Lauderdale, FL). This golden single malt offers aromas of ripe pear and vanilla. The palate opens with a burst of black pepper, moving into creamy honey, vanilla and baked pear flavors, finishing with peppery tingle. A dose of water pulls it all together, creating a vanilla cream-pie effect.
abv: 46% **Price:** \$200

93 The Glenlivet 14 Cognac Cask Selection Single Malt Scotch (Scotland; Pernod Ricard, New York, NY). Bright copper in the glass, the sweet aromas suggest maple and allspice. The light, drying palate echoes that maple hint alongside grapefruit peel tones, finishing with flurries of baking spice and mouthwatering lemon peel. A drop of water coaxes a gentle waft of smoke. Overall a delicate, ethereal sipper.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$53

92 Robert Burns Single Malt Scotch Whisky (Scotland; Castle Brands, New York, NY). Made by Isle of Arran Distillers and named for the national poet of Scotland, this light gold whisky offers a fresh apple scent mixed with a puff of peat smoke. The palate is brisk, drying and astringent. Oak, vanilla and subtle smoke gives way to a lingering finish laced with lemon peel and sweet spices.
Best Buy.
abv: 43% **Price:** \$40

TEQUILA



97 Prospero Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Conecuh Spirits, Garden City, NY). This is complex and pleasing, with an intriguing savory-sweet profile. Look for a deep burnished-gold hue and aromas of jalapeño and dried oregano melding with coconut, vanilla and lemon peel. The palate opens with dried herbs and mild jalapeño heat, fading into a long coconut and vanilla cream finish, braced by sparks of baking spices.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$43

96 Corazón Expresiones Sazerac Rye Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Sazerac, Louisville, KY). This is a single-estate Tequila aged for 24 months in Sazerac rye barrels from the Buffalo Trace distillery. It's nuanced, with a light gold tint and mild vanilla aroma. The palate is spicy and drying from the outset, bursting with nutmeg, cardamom and allspice, layered with almond-like sweetness and an unusual hint of strawberry. Enjoy with a cube of ice.
abv: 45% **Price:** \$80



95 Grand Mayan Ultra Aged Tequila (Mexico; M.S. Walker, Norwood, MA). The hand-painted ceramic bottle is gorgeous, but so is what's in the bottle: a blend of three- four- and five-year-old Tequilas. Look for a deep amber hue and complex aromas that unfold jalapeño, brown sugar and cocoa. The palate-coating, slightly viscous palate opens with clove and coriander, warming to cocoa, browned butter and sarsaparilla, and finishes on black pepper and cinnamon. The overall effect almost reads like a Tequila-based amaro.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$90

95 Hiatus Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Hiatus Spirits, Manhasset, NY). This newcomer has a honey hue and distinctly savory aroma that suggests sundried tomato, fresh thyme and agave nectar. The soft, slick palate echoes those savory notes, layering in hints of fresh herbs, unsweetened chocolate, black olive and bell pepper.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$54

93 Ayate Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Savage & Cooke, Napa, CA). Brought in by a Napa-based importer, this Tequila has another wine country connection: After 12 months in new American oak and four months in used French oak, this Tequila is finished for six months in Chardonnay barrels from winemaker Dave Phinney. The end result is a deep burnished-gold hue and complex, faintly fruity aroma. The rich, bold palate opens with vanilla and allspice, fading to honey and brown butter and a spicy finish laced with cinnamon and clove sizzle. The heavy, square doorstopper of a bottle is a little awkward to handle and pour.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$95

93 Bombas Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Branded Spirits, San Francisco, CA). A rich, sweet butterscotch aroma leads the nose. The palate echoes that sweetness, though it's a bit lighter and more herbaceous than the concentrated aroma suggests, showing espresso, jalapeño, dried herbs and spearmint. Aged in ex-Bourbon barrels for 24 months, it finishes long in honey and vanilla tones.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$45

93 Sheela Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Clay Horse Products, Little Elm, TX). Soft and clean, this organic Tequila offers a pure agave scent and toasty vanilla, cocoa and sweet spices on the palate, finishing smooth and slightly drying. Aged two years in American oak, it's a versatile Tequila to sip or mix.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$50

93 Tapatio Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Charbay Distillery, Ukiah, CA). Aged for 18 months in used Jim Beam barrels, this straw-hued añejo has a lively, zingy, peppery aroma. The palate is similarly light, with a floral hint and gentle vanilla fade braced up with drying black-pepper heat. Overall, silky and complex.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$50 / 1L

92 Azuñia Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Intersect Beverage, Glendora, CA). Aged for 18 months, this boasts a rose-gold tinge and aromas that hint at buttered toast, vanilla and savory dried herbs. The palate surprises with an almost amaro-like quality, melding cinnamon bark, spearmint, coffee bean and cocoa, fading to a more agave-like note spiked with cinnamon red-hot candy and ginger heat. Aged 18 months.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$45



92 Chamucos Añejo Tequila (Mexico; Palm Bay International, Boca Raton, FL). The aroma is fresh, bright and welcoming in pineapple and pear. The palate echoes those aromas, and surprises with a waft of smokiness too. All together, this fruity-smoky profile suggests charred pineapple, plus a vanilla and clove finish.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$60

VERMOUTH/ FORTIFIED WINES

- 95 Lacuesta Vermouth Reserva (Spain; Fasel Shenstone, San Diego, CA).** Drinking like a cross between sweet vermouth and Sherry, this is a red vermouth that's aged for seven months in acacia barrels. The end result is a nut-brown hue and distinctly nutty palate that bounces between walnut dryness and pecan richness, finishing with a soft brush of cocoa and a dried-herb exhale. Pair with cured meats, potato chips and other savory bites.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$30
- 94 Cocchi Americano Rosa (Italy; Haus Alpenz, Edina, MN).** Berry-hued and bright, this is a champ for cocktail mixing and pleasing to sip straight. Red fruit leads the nose and palate, suggesting juicy raspberry and ripe cherry, enlivened by a hint of rosewater and finishing slightly drying and mildly bitter. Think of this as a refreshing alternative to sweet vermouth. *Best Buy.*
abv: 16.5% **Price:** \$19
- 94 L.N. Mattei Cap Corse Blanc Quinquina (France; Haus Alpenz, Edina, MN).** Made with a base of Corsican white wine (Vermentino and other varietals), this sunny-hued *aperitivo* mixes fruity and floral notes for an ideal warm-weather sipper. Crisp apple and white blossoms entice the nose, while the palate offers breezy hints of melon and honeysuckle sweetness, finishing slightly drying with mild grapefruit pith bitterness. Cinchona bark (quinine) adds depth.
abv: 17% **Price:** \$21
- 94 Trincheri Vermouth Rosso (USA; Trincheri Family Estates, St Helena, CA).** A particularly fruit-forward sweet vermouth, look for a rich, plummy hue and bold black-cherry and blackberry aromas. The palate is light at first, but the finish resounds with the promise of dark, ripe fruit, plus an appropriate hint of bitterness. A good companion for whiskey-based cocktails.
abv: 17.5% **Price:** \$25
- 93 Lillet Rosé Aperitif Wine (France; Pernod Ricard USA, Purchase, NY).** Juicy peach nectar and wild strawberry meet vibrant acidity and a floral flicker on the exit. Even the rosy hue is just calling out for mixing with bubbles or gin. Sip or mix.
abv: 17% **Price:** \$22
- 92 Lise Baccara La Troussepinete Rouge (France; Heavenly Spirits, Lakeville, MA).** This "red dessert wine" from the Cognac region offers rich, compote-like aromas and a bold, fruity palate that shows raspberry jam, juicy cherry-pie filling and a hint of vanilla. It finishes with a mouthwatering plum skin pucker.
abv: 17% **Price:** \$21

VODKA

- 93 Absolut Grapefruit (Sweden; Absolut Spirits, New York, NY).** This flavored vodka is clear in the glass, with a grapefruit aroma that really seems to channel the essence of the fruit and pith. The palate is a pale echo of the aroma, bitter with just a hint of citrusy flavor, finishing brisk and bracing. Mix into Paloma-style variations and other drinks. *Best Buy.*
abv: 40% **Price:** \$20
- 93 Battlefield Vodka (USA; Old Republic Distilling, York, PA).** This citrusy vodka has a neutral aroma and invigorating palate that hints at candied lemon peel and almond, winding into a zingy lemon-pepper finish. Try it in Lemon Drops and vodka Martinis accented with lemon peel.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$33
- 92 Carbonadi Vodka (Italy; Cue Spirits, Los Angeles, CA).** This spirit is distilled from Italian wheat and filtered through *carbonado* (a.k.a. black diamond), which explains the opaque black bottle. Overall, this is a relatively neutral vodka, with mild coconut sweetness and pleasing weight on the palate. Drink chilled, paired with aged cheeses or other savory bites.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$75/1 L
- 92 Dixie Citrus Flavored Vodka (USA; Grain & Barrel Spirits, N. Charleston, SC).** This corn-based vodka is made with three types of citrus—lime, lemon and tangerine—yielding a complex sipper. Bright lemon peel leads the nose and palate, while the tangerine lends subtle sweetness, winding into a tart, mouthwatering finish laced with ginger sparks. Chill it and mix into Lemon Drops, Cosmos and other cocktails. *Best Buy.*
abv: 40% **Price:** \$18
- 92 Frankly Organic Apple Flavored Vodka (USA; Be In Good Spirits, Austin, TX).** Juicy, bold and relatively sweet, this corn-based vodka is made with apples, ginger root, cayenne and a touch of maple syrup. The result is a hazy golden hue and fruity sweet heat, reading almost like mulled cider or a light apple liqueur.
abv: 30% **Price:** \$22
- 92 Goldlok Supreme Vodka (USA; Goldlok Enterprises, Los Angeles, CA).** A versatile vodka, this is a neutral sipper that displays hints of coconut and charcoal on the light palate, finishing brisk and clean on hints of citrus peel and black pepper. It's distilled from Brazilian sugarcane and packaged in a gaudy gold-plated bottle.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$33/1 L
- 92 Kanpeki Vodka (USA; Milk Street Distillery, Branchville, NJ).** Made from polished white rice, look for a delicate cherry scent in this vodka. This is echoed on the palate, reading as a fleeting cherry blossom note. It is distinctly light and soft, with an elegant fade.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$36
- 92 Saltworks Property Himalayan Pink Salt Vodka (USA; Boston Brands of Maine, Lewiston, ME).** Clear in the glass, this vodka is slightly viscous and leads with distinct, mouthwatering salinity. Delicate hints of rosewater and pink peppercorn tingle on the finish. Try in a Martini for an interesting variation.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$25
- 92 The Street Pumas Vodka (Poland; PM Spirits, Brooklyn, NY).** Distilled in Poland and brought to proof in Jerez, Spain, this vodka is neutral on the nose and palate, with faint almond sweetness and a mouthwatering finish. It is clean, versatile and should mix like a dream.
abv: 40.7% **Price:** \$31
- 92 Vly Creek Vodka (USA; Union Grove Distillery, Arkville, NY).** This is an unusually complex vodka, with a mild vanilla-accented cherry-pit aroma and a smooth palate that shows a fleeting dark cherry note that finishes on a hint of clove. Distilled from apples and wheat, mix this with sweet vermouth or a plummy aperitif wine.
abv: 40% **Price:** \$30
- 91 Gunnar's Vodka American Farm Potato Edition (USA; Gunnar's Distilling Company, Palm Coast, FL).** Distilled from Idaho potatoes, this vodka is neutral on the nose and palate. It is pleasingly weighty, showing just a lingering hint of almond sweetness. *Best Buy.*
abv: 40% **Price:** \$21
- 91 Till American Wheat Vodka (USA; MGP Ingredients, Atchison, KS).** Made with Kansas wheat, this vodka is neutral on the nose and palate. Hints of almond and white pepper show on the smooth, elegant finish. *Best Buy.*
abv: 40% **Price:** \$25