

- How Scotch is made; how it differs from other whiskies
- Scotch terminology and variables
- Categories of Scotch
- Regions of Scotch production
- Trends in Scotch production

How Scotch is made

- Scotch = whisky made in Scotland
- Begin with a grain (barley, corn or wheat) that is fermented
- Distillation of fermented grain wash: alcoholic vapors separated from water and collected in a still
- Must be distilled at least twice; aged in used oak casks for at least three years
- Minimum 40% ABV

Making Malt

1. Soak barley in water to germinate
 - a. Amylase enzyme converts starch in grain to fermentable sugars maltose and dextrin
1. Heat grains to dry over a fire, which contributes flavor
 - a. Wood fire (common inland)
 - b. Peat fire (common on coasts and islands)

Scotch terminology and variables

- Phenols: contribute smoky aroma/flavor; result of smoke from drying malted barley
 - Measured in parts per million (very intensely smoky flavor = 25-50ppm)
 - New-make: distilled liquor prior to casking, typically 60-70% ABV
 - New-make is typically diluted with water before casking
 - Water source can affect character of whisky
 - Casks: aging vessel; commonly Sherry, Port or American whisky
 - Angel's share: spirit that evaporates from barrels
 - Chill-filtering: whisky is chilled, precipitating fatty esters that can then be filtered out
 - Non-chill-filtered whisky can turn cloudy when cooled
 - Cask strength: bottled without diluting
 - Most whiskies are diluted with water to balance them and reduce ABV to around 40-46% prior to bottling
- * Other whiskies differ in place of origin, grain type, cask type and aging duration *



Categories of Scotch

Established by the 2009 Scotch Whisky Regulations:

- Single Malt Scotch Whisky (most esteemed)
 - Malted barley; pot still; single distillery in Scotland
- Single Grain Scotch Whisky
 - Unmalted barley, wheat or corn; single distillery in Scotland
- Blended Malt Scotch Whisky
 - Blend of malt whiskies (from one or more distilleries in Scotland)
- Blended Grain Scotch Whisky
 - Blend of multiple grain whiskies
- Blended Scotch Whisky (most common)
 - Blend of grain and malt whiskies from multiple distilleries
 - Distillery often produces a portion single malt and sells off rest for this category

Regions of Scotch production

- Highlands
Very large, broad region; wide range of styles but typically well balanced
- Islay
a.k.a. Whisky Island; style is heavily peated, smoky
- Campbeltown
Formerly booming distillery area, now just 3 working; style is peaty and salty
- Speyside
Former subregion of Highlands; style is mild and fruity
- Lowlands
Only 3 working distilleries; style is delicate and grassy

Johnnie Walker Black Label - Scotland

- John Walker was born in 1805; developed as a businessman who also made and sold his own blended whiskies and eventually exported them
- John's son Alexander began the official Johnnie Walker label in 1877
- Johnnie Walker is currently the largest distributor of Scotch in the world
- Black Label is a Blended Scotch Whisky made of 40 whiskies from around Scotland; then blended by the "master blender"
- Minimum age of any whisky in Black Label is 12 years
- Johnnie Walker labels in order of quality (and price): Red, Black, Double Black, Green, Gold and Platinum, Blue



Oban 14 – Highlands, Scotland

- Oban is located on the mild if rainy town of Oban on Scotland's mainland west coast
- Founded in 1793 by Hugh and John Stevenson; distillery is small but now dominates the town
- Oban houses two small pot stills; spirit is condensed in wooden worm tubs outside on the roof prior to minimum 14 years' barrel aging
- Majority of Oban's Scotch is matured and bottled as single malt
- Oban style is full, soft and briny with a slight, smoky peatiness

Glenfiddich 15-Year-Old Solera – Speyside, Scotland

- Glenfiddich means "Valley of the Deer" and is aptly located in a forested valley
- Founded in 1886 by William Grant, who built the distillery by hand with his nine children
- On-site coppersmiths and cooperage
- Uses water from a single source, the Robbie Dhu spring, for all purposes
- Triangle-shaped bottle symbolizes the "trinity" between three ingredients: water, air and malted barley
- Solera system: combines batches from three types of casks (American bourbon, Sherry, new oak) in one large vat of Oregon pine; regularly topped up to maintain consistent style
- Glenfiddich style is sweet, fruity and spicy

Springbank 15 – Campbeltown, Scotland

- Campbeltown is at far southern tip of Scotland; nicknamed The Whisky Capital of the World as it once was home to over 35 distilleries... today there are just three
- Springbank is the oldest family-owned distillery in Scotland, founded in 1828
- 100% of production happens on-site: malting, distilling, maturing, bottling
- No chill-filtering and no coloring added
- Springbank uses worm tubs for condensation, thought to lend a more robust profile/texture; ages in Sherry casks
- Springbank makes three single malts: Longrow (heavy peat), Hazelburn (unpeated), Springbank (classic local style: light peat, briny, rich)



Ardbeg 10 – Islay, Scotland

- Ardbeg is located in a cove directly on the southern coast of Islay
- Islay known for extremely peaty style due to proximity of water, marshes and coves
- Ardbeg founded in 1815 (although it previously operated as an illegal distillery); closed down multiple times in last 30 years though purchased by Glenmorangie & Co. in 1997 and restored
- Non-chill-filtered
- Ardbeg style is heavily peaty, full and rich

Bruichladdich Rocks, the Rhinns of Islay: A Land Apart – Islay, Scotland

- Bruichladdich, a.k.a. the “Laddie,” founded by three Harvey brothers in 1881, focused on “progressive” distilling
- Bought by Jim Beam in 1990s and eventually shut down; finally revived by locals and today run entirely by them on Islay
- Bruichladdich style is fruity and mild, with many innovative offerings currently (e.g. cask finishing, super-peated)
- This Scotch is unpeated, non-filtered, with no coloring added
- Rhinns of Islay is a mountainous peninsula at northern end of Islay; water for this whisky is filtered up from 1.8-billion-year-old rocks there

Trends in Scotch production

Cask Strength: bottled directly from cask without dilution

Wood-finished: put in different type of cask for last years of aging to imbue it with unique characteristics (e.g. Sauternes barrel)

Super-peated: over 130ppm phenol barley

Young Scotch: challenging conventional wisdom that longer aging = better

Rare and limited edition: limited releases of special, sometimes experimental or super-aged small batches, particularly popular at auction

More blended Scotch, designed for cocktails: classics include the Rob Roy, Blood & Sand, Mamie Taylor

