

Protected spirit names

Single document for English Whisky

GI number: S0008

1. Name(s) to be registered

English Whisky, English Whiskey

2. Country or countries to which the demarcated area belongs

United Kingdom

3. Geographical Indication type

UK Geographical Indication

4. Category or categories of the spirit drink

Whisky/Whiskey (Category 2 in Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008)

5. Description of the characteristics of the spirit drink

English Whisky is summarised as a spirit:

- Made from Cereal Grain and English Water.
- Distilled in England from wort created in England.
- Distilled at an alcoholic strength of less than 94.8% by volume in such a way that the distillate has an aroma and taste derived from the materials used.
- Matured in England in Wooden Casks, such as oak (but not limited to), of no more than 700 litres for a minimum of 3 years.
- The final whisky to have a Min 40% abv.

Appearance:

English Whisky is a transparent liquid ranging in colour from pale yellow to dark amber/mahogany. The colour of English Whisky derives primarily from the maturation cask. Colour may be adjusted by the addition of plain caramel colouring (E150a), but the resultant colour should not exceed the natural range that can be derived from maturation casks (for example from new casks through to wine casks, sherry and port casks).

Water:

English Whisky must be produced using water from a supply local to the distillery for mashing and distilling. The naturally occurring mineral composition (hard or soft water) of the water, deriving from England's geological profile, imparts a particular flavour to English Whisky via interaction with the grain during the mashing and distilling processes. Water quality and quantity play an important role in the character and taste of English Whisky and drive the specific English Whisky characteristics associated with each English Distillery.

Adjustments to alcoholic strength prior to maturation are by the addition of water, which may be purified, for example by distillation, demineralisation, or reverse osmosis. The alcoholic strength of "cask strength" English Whisky must not be adjusted after maturation.

Aroma and flavour:

The aroma and flavour derive from the distillation of a fermented mash, followed by maturation in wooden casks stored in England's mild, maritime climate.

The common element of all whiskies is the distillation from cereals in such a way as to retain the aroma and flavour derived from the raw materials with the development of further complexity during years of maturation in wooden casks. However, whiskies produced in different distilleries have some different characteristics.

The characteristics of individual English whiskies are dependent on the type of grain/ mash bill, the specific distillery processes used (including type of still), the local water used for mashing and distilling and the subsequent maturation.

6. Definition of the geographical area

English Whisky is whisky distilled and matured in England, an individual country/region within the United Kingdom, which is off the North Western coastline of continental Europe. England is bordered by Scotland in the North, and Wales in the West. The Irish Sea lies to the North West and the Celtic Sea/ Atlantic lies to the West, to the South lies the English Channel and the North Sea Lies to the East.

England includes the Isles of Scilly (to the South-West of Cornwall) and Isle of Wight (South off the Hampshire Coast).

England's official Latitude and Longitude is 53.55 degrees North and 2.4333 degrees West.



7. Production method

Whisky (or Whiskey)

- a) Whisky (or whiskey) is a spirit drink produced exclusively by:
- i. distillation of a mash made from malted UK cereals with or without whole grains of other cereals, which has been:
 - . saccharified by the diastase of the malt contained therein, with or without other natural enzymes,
 - . fermented by the action of yeast;
 - . Fermentation of a mash/ production of wort must take place solely in England;
 - . Use water sourced from the locality (England);
 - . Distillation of a mash must take place solely in England
 - ii. distillations must be at less than 94,8 % ABV, so that the distillate has an aroma and taste derived from the raw materials used
 - iii. maturation of the final distillate for at least three years in wooden casks not exceeding 700 litres capacity.
 - . Maturation must occur solely in England

The final distillate, to which only water and plain caramel (for colouring) may be added, retains its colour, aroma and taste derived from the production process referred to in points (i), (ii) and (iii).

- b) The minimum alcoholic strength by volume of whisky or whiskey shall be 40 %.
- c) No addition of alcohol, diluted or not, shall take place.
- d) Whisky or whiskey shall not be sweetened or flavoured, nor contain any additives other than plain caramel (E150a) used for colouring.

8. Specific rules concerning packaging

Non-specific see labelling rules

9. Specific rules concerning labelling:

Spirit drinks must not be labelled, packaged, sold, advertised, or promoted in such a way to suggest they are English Whisky or any of the sub-categories unless they meet the relevant requirements set out in this document /the associated technical file.

In this GI “English Whisky” means a whisky produced in England. Only whisky that has been produced to this GI standard within the geographical boundaries of England can be labelled English Whisky or any geographical description which may evoke the English Whisky Names.

In English, the Geographical Indication allows for two spellings, “ENGLISH WHISKY” and “ENGLISH WHISKEY”; English Whisky without an “e” is the customary term. The customary term for the plural of English Whisky is “English Whiskies”.

Specific labelling rules and compulsory sales descriptions

The sub-category into which an English Whisky falls must be stated on:

- the front of a container of English Whisky; and
- any individual packaging used for the transportation of the container, or used for display purposes during the marketing of the whisky, unless, in both cases, the front of the container is clearly visible through that packaging or the packaging is non-product specific e.g. generic.

The sub-categories are:

- a) Malt English Whisky.
- b) Grain English Whisky.

Sub-category prefixes

- Single
- Blended

The term “Malt” by itself can only be applied to English Whisky where all the whisky in the product has been made using 100% Malted Barley (without the addition of any other cereals), yeast, saccharified by the diastase of the malt contained therein, water and matured in casks; where oak casks are not used, the type of wood must be specified on the front of the label, with a font and weight that give equal prominence to the sub-category information.

The spirit must be batch distilled in a copper pot still; Malt English Whisky must be distilled for a minimum of two times.

The term “Grain” can be applied to English Whisky where the whisky in the product has been made using cereal grain other than 100% Malted Barley and the whisky includes non-malted grain.

Where 100% Malted Grain is used but mash includes varieties of malt other than malted barley the term “Malted Grain English Whisky” can be used (or if 100% one type of grain the grain can be named instead).

The term “Single” can only be applied to English Whisky where all the whisky in the product is distilled at a single distillery (site). The whisky can be distilled in one or more batches at the single distillery, Note: This is consistent with the definition of single malt set out in UK legislation 110/2008, i.e. “The legal name of ‘whisky’ or ‘whiskey’ may be supplemented by the term ‘single malt’ only if it has been distilled exclusively from malted barley at a single distillery.”

The term “Blended” can be applied to English Whisky where the whisky in the product has been made using whisky made from more than one distillery site. Blended Malt English Whisky” means a blend of two or more Single Malt English Whiskies distilled at more than one distillery. The term “Vatted” can be used in place of “Blended” when using Malt whisky from more than one distillery site.

The name of the sub-category must be:

- (a) printed in a conspicuous place in such a way as to be easily visible and legible to the naked eye and indelible so that it is clear that it is the sales description of the whisky.
- (b) printed in a way that gives equal prominence to each word making up the name of the category; and
- (c) as prominent as any other description of the whisky on the container or packaging, except for:
 - . any separate use of the description “English Whisky”;
 - . any statement relating to the year in which the whisky was distilled, the year in which it was bottled, the period for which it was matured or the age of the whisky and
 - . any descriptive word or words forming part of the brand name.

But the preceding paragraph does not apply in circumstances specified in ANNEX 1.

The name of the category/ sub-category must not be overlaid or interrupted by other written or pictorial matter; or used in conjunction with any other words. However, a locality or region can be appended to the name of the category/sub-category of the whisky to indicate where the English Whisky was distilled if it appears immediately before the name of the category/ sub-category and the whisky was distilled in the named locality or region.

The label/ name “Pure Malt” is a prohibited description to prevent consumer confusion.

English Whisky must not be labelled, packaged, advertised or promoted in any way that, creates a likelihood that the public may think that it has been distilled at any distillery or place

other than the distillery or place at which it was actually distilled.

A whisky or whisky-based drink must not be labelled, packaged, advertised or promoted in a way that includes any reference to a name that is similar to the name of the protected region if, having regard to the presentation of the product as a whole, the reference may create a likelihood of confusion on the part of the public as to where the whisky or whisky-based drink was distilled.

But the preceding paragraph does not apply in circumstances specified in ANNEX 1.

Maturation, age and distillation statements

The maturation period or age may only be specified in the description, presentation or labelling of English Whisky where it refers to the youngest alcoholic component in the drink. In addition, a person must not label, package, sell, advertise or promote any English Whisky in a way that includes a reference to its maturation period or age unless the maturation period or age is expressed in years.

A person must not label, package, sell, advertise or promote any English Whisky in a way that includes a reference relating to when it was distilled unless:

- (a) the reference relates to a single calendar year.
- (b) all of the whisky in the drink was distilled in that year.
- (c) the presentation of the whisky also includes a reference to
 - I. the year of bottling of the whisky; or
 - II. the maturation period of the whisky; or
 - III. the age of the whisky; and
- (d) the reference to the year of bottling, the maturation period, or age of the whisky appears in the same field of vision as the reference to the year of distillation.

A person must not label, package, sell, advertise or promote any English Whisky in a way that includes a reference to any number (however expressed) if the reference to that number may create a likelihood of confusion on the part of the public as to whether the number relates to the maturation period of the whisky, its age or when it was distilled.

Labelling can make references to the production process or part(s) of it, including reference to the type of cask used for maturation or partial maturation (“finishing” – final period of maturation) of the English Whisky.

Liqueurs made using 100% English Whisky (i.e. no other whisky) can be referred to as English Whisky Liqueurs. The “English Whisky” component of an English Whisky Liqueur must be the sole alcoholic ingredient unless explicitly specified on the label with the same weight as English Whisky.

10. Description of the link between the spirit drink and its geographical origin

England has a long history of distilling reaching back to before 1636 (in this year The Worshipful Company of Distillers were granted a Charter in England). By the early 1800s England was recognised as a whisky producing area (there are records confirming production as early as 1825), in 1887 there were several English Whisky distilleries were operating from Bristol to Liverpool to London. However, in the late 19th century the English whisky industry faced difficulties due in the main to increased taxation and competition from outside England.

England's last whisky distillery was in the Lea valley and converted to Gin production before burning down in 1905. Like most industries at the time – the producers tended to operate near each other as the ancillary skills sets (coopering, logistics) etc needed for that industry also flourished in an industry specific area.

With changes in consumer tastes current modern English whisky production re-started in the early 21st Century (2003) with some 14 distilleries by 2016. Over the following years as the reputation of English Whisky has grown the number of distilleries has steady risen. By the end of 2023 there were at least 46 distilleries laying down an English Whisky, 25 of which are already selling English Whiskies. In 2022 the formation of the English Whisky Guild brought together much of the industry to discuss and agree common processes etc.

England's varied and temperate climate is ideal for growing barley and other crops such as wheat and contributes to a different ageing profile, which in turn characterises the whisky.

The focus on young whisky (3-5 years old), batch and limited-edition releases rather than age statements is a distinctive feature of English Whisky. Typically, English Whisky Distilleries are small distilleries making products in batches with a particular emphasis on using local ingredients to create a product with a strong English provenance.

Product specification

ENDS

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