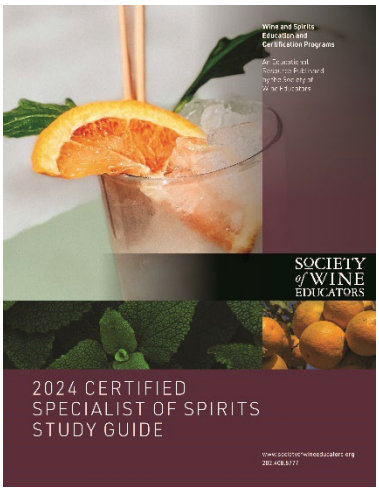
Addendum regarding: The 2024 Certified Specialist of Spirits Study Guide, as published by the Society of Wine Educators



Note: This document outlines the substantive changes to the 2024 Study Guide as compared to the 2023 version of the CSW Study Guide. All page numbers reference the 2023 version. Please note that in addition to the entries noted below, all tables concerning top-selling brands of individual Spirit types have been updated to reflect the most current information available.

Page 31—the introduction to vodka has been updated to include the following information: Despite its relatively recent entry into the United States, vodka is among largest-selling spirits (by volume) in the US spirits market. Along with the whiskey category—which has recently seen phenomenal growth and is often cited as having overtaken the vodka category in terms of revenue value—vodka is likely to maintain a position of strength in the foreseeable future.

Page 32—the definition of EU Vodka has been updated to include the following: It must be based on ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin—defined in the EU as a naturally-produced (non-synthetic) alcohol initially distilled to a minimum of 192° (96% abv)—derived from potatoes, cereals, and/or other agricultural raw materials.

Page 55—the section on absinthe has been expanded to include the following: Due to its long and colorful history, it should come as no surprise that absinthe is featured in a range of unique cocktails—both classic and contemporary. One such cocktail, traditionally served at brunch in New Orleans, is the Absinthe Suissesse—an aromatic mixture of absinthe, white crème de menthe, orgeat syrup, cream, orange flower water, and egg whites (served shaken and strained). Another example is Death in the Afternoon—a heady mixture of absinthe and champagne—said to have been created by Ernest Hemingway (author of the book of the same name). Other cocktails featuring absinthe include the Sazerac, Corpse Reviver #2, and the Absinthe Frappé.

Page 63—the section on "Malting" has been revised to read as follows: To begin the malting stage, barley (or other grain) is soaked (steeped) in water—typically in several repetitive baths of warm water—for several days. This causes the grain to germinate (sprout), which releases two enzymes—alpha amylase and beta amylase (often called "diastase" in the beverage industry). These enzymes will break down the complex carbohydrates in the grain into double or triple molecules, thereby producing maltose, a disaccharide. The maltose will eventually break down into fermentable single-molecule sugars (monosaccharides). After sufficient germination,

the malted barley is known as green malt. Once the green malt is dried (kilned), the germination will cease, and the grain will be ready for the next stage in production.

Page 63—the section on "Kilning" has been revised to read as follows: Drying/Kilning: The prepared grain may be transferred to a type of oven—often referred to as a kiln. At this stage, additional flavors may be introduced to the grain, depending on how the process is performed. For instance, in Scotland, peat—a type of carbon-rich, partially-decomposed vegetation/organic matter—is sometimes used as a fuel source. The time and temperature of the heating process may be specified in order to caramelize the sugars in the grain to the desired degree.

Page 63—the section on "Milling" has been revised to read as follows: The prepared grains are screened (to remove pieces of rock and other unwanted objects) and ground into grist. The mills typically consist of two rollers; the first will burst open the grain, while the second will grind the grain to its desired consistency. The texture of the grist may be described by the measurements of its three component parts: husks (coarse), the middle of the grain—sometimes referred to as "hearts" or "grits"—(medium), and flour (fine).

Page 64—the section on "Washing" has been revised to read as follows: Once the sugar conversion is complete, the mixture of sugary liquid and grain particulates (often referred to as the *cook* or *mash*) resembles a thick slurry. In some cases, this mixture is kept intact and moved to the fermentation stage as is.

In other instances, the sugary liquid is separated ("washed") and drained away from the grain solids using a series of warm water rinses. Once complete, the remaining sugary liquid—ready for fermentation—is referred to as *wort.*

This washing process is often done in as many as four stages, with the term *sparging* used to refer to the final stage (or stages). The liquid from these final stages—the *sparge*—is sometimes retained for use in the next round of mashing rather than being passed on to the fermentation stage.

The ground grain left over after washing/sparging is complete is known as *draff* or *mash draff*. Draff may be useful in several ways; in some cases, it is dried and sold to local farmers as a highly nutritious food source for animals.

Page 70—the section on the use of barrels in the aging of Scotch Whiskey has been updated to include the following: These guidelines allow for a wide range of choices in the type and style of barrel used for the maturation of Scotch whisky. For instance, bourbon will have been matured in charred, new (typically American) oak barrels. Ex-sherry barrels that make their way to the whisky industry may be slightly used or well-used and are made using various types of oak, including American oak and European oak —typically from France, Spain, or Eastern Europe. (It should be noted that ex-sherry barrels used for the aging of spirits are not typically barrels that have been previously used for the long-term aging of sherry in a solera system; rather, there is an entire industry dedicated to the production and seasoning of barrels [with

sherry or similar products] for use in the spirits industry.) Some distillers will mature their whisky in one barrel for a specified time (which must span [at least] the three-year minimum) and then switch to another type of barrel. This practice, known as *wood finishing*, is an extension of the maturation process intended to differentiate specific products and/or enhance certain flavor characteristics.

Page 78—the section on bottled-in-bond spirits has been expanded to include the following information: A few years later, the US government passed the Bottled-in-Bond Act of 1897. The law—promoted by then-Secretary of the Treasury John G. Carlisle and Colonel Edmund Haynes (E. H.) Taylor (creator of Old Taylor bourbon)—was passed (in part) to ensure the authenticity of bourbon whiskey. The act mandated that to be considered bonded and labeled as such, the following conditions must be met: the whiskey had to have been matured in a locked (bonded) warehouse for a minimum of four years, it must be the product of one distillery and one distilling season, and it must be bottled at 100 proof. This law helped to provide the government with an ensured source of tax revenue in addition to a method by which to certify the authenticity of the whiskey.

Under current TTB regulations, bottled-in-bond spirits must be "unaltered from their original condition or character by the addition or subtraction of any substance." This means that colorings, flavorings, or sweeteners are not allowed. Bottled-in-bond products are allowed to be cut with water, filtered, and/or chill filtered, but otherwise may not be manipulated in any way. In addition, the product label must identify the distillery where it was distilled and the distillery where it was bottled (if different from the distilling location).

The term "bottled-in-bond" may only be applied to spirits produced in the United States. While the term is typically applied to bourbon and other types of American whiskey, it but may be applied to other American spirits as well.

Page 79—the section on Bourbon/the mash bill has been expanded to include the following information: While bourbon is required to be made from at least 51% corn, many high-quality bourbons may use as much as 70% corn (or even more) in the mash bill. Although the use of commercial enzymes is allowed, most mash bills contain at least a small percentage of malted barley in order to facilitate the conversion process. The balance may be any type of cereal grain (as defined by the US Food and Drug Administration/FDA) and many brands use a portion of rye, barley, or (less often) wheat.

While the term *high rye bourbon* is not legally recognized nor defined, it is often used to describe a particularly flavorful and spicy style of bourbon made with 20% rye or more. Likewise, the *term high wheat bourbon* (or *wheated bourbon*) is not official. However, it may refer to a soft, smooth-tasting bourbon containing a significant percentage—perhaps 15% or more—of wheat in the mash bill.

Page 79—the section on bourbon/sour mashing has been expanded to read as follows: Sour mashing involves using the leftover yeast (or yeast residue) from a previous fermentation or distillation run to invigorate a new batch of fermented mash. The term refers to a widely used (albeit optional) step in the production process, and not to the sour taste of a finished whiskey.

Sour mashing can be accomplished in several different ways. In some cases, the residue from a primary distillation run (backset) is placed in the mash cooker or fermenter of a new batch of mash. In other cases, a portion of a previous batch of fermented wash is added to the next in a ratio of 1:3 or 1:4 (for example). Such additions are highly acidic and affect the fermentation process by providing a rich source of yeast nutrients, counterbalancing the local water (which often has a high alkaline content and could otherwise interfere with yeast activity), and helping to lower the risk of bacterial contamination. In theory, sour mashing improves the consistency of a distillery's products by ensuring that every batch is fermented using the same family and strain of yeast.

The earliest known written evidence of the use of sour mashing in the production of American whiskey can be traced to a recipe used by Catherine Spears Frye Carpenter (of Kentucky's Catherine Carpenter Distillery) and dated 1818. Dr. James C. Crow—who created the Old Crow brand of bourbon in the 1830s—is known to have used his scientific training to refine and promote the process, leading to its wide-spread use and popularity.

In the context of American whiskey, starting a new batch of fermentation without the use of sour mash is often referred to as *sweet mashing*. Made increasingly viable due to modern improvements in sanitation, sweet mashing involves using a new batch of yeast for every fermentation run. Proponents of sweet mashing believe that it allows for ease in the production of multiple mash bills (allowing for innovations in whiskey style) while promoting clean, natural grain flavors in the finished product.

Page 79—the section on bourbon/distillation has been revised to include the following: The specific type of distillation is not dictated by law and as such, bourbon may be produced via double (or triple) distillation in a pot still, via column distillation, via hybrid still distillation, or via some combination thereof. According to US standards, bourbon may be distilled to a maximum of 160°

Typically, the first distillation takes place in a pot still or single column still composed of copper or stainless steel. The distillation may involve the use of a *doubler* or a *thumper.* Theoretically, a doubler is a type of pot still—or an addition to a pot still (similar in concept to a retort, as sometimes used in the distillation of Caribbean rum). The doubler receives the condensed low wines from the first distillation and drives it to a chamber containing heated liquid, causing an interaction that both concentrates the alcohol and refines unwanted congeners. The term doubler refers to the concept that using a doubler attached to a pot still is similar to double distillation.

A thumper is a type of doubler that receives the vapors from the first distillation run before they have been cooled and condensed. As the vapors enter the thumper, they are driven into a layer of hot liquid located in the base of the thumper. The liquid is kept at a temperature above the boiling point of ethanol, but below that of water, so the ethanol vapor continues on through the water for condensation as high wine or new-make spirit. In this process, heavier alcohols (the tails) are captured by the liquid and are drained off at the end of a run. The thumper is named as such because the bubbling of the vapors into the still causes a thumping sound.

Page 81—the second paragraph in the section on American Rye Whiskey was updated to read as follows: One brand of rye whiskey—Old Overholt—survived Prohibition as a medicinal whiskey and is one of America's oldest continually-maintained brands of whiskey. The brand was originally produced—beginning in 1810—by the family of Henry Oberholtzer in West Overton, Pennsylvania. The Oberholtzer family had immigrated from an area of Germany that specialized in the distillation of rye spirits, and their newly established distillery expanded rapidly to point where it was producing hundreds of gallons of whiskey per day. Over the years, the family name anglicized to *Overholt* and the distillery became known as *A. Overholt & Company*. In 1888, their flagship rye whiskey was named "Old Overholt" in honor of the founder's son—Abraham Overholt—who had passed away a few years earlier, and whose picture still graces the label.

Page 82—the section on American Corn Whiskey was updated to read as follows: American corn whiskey is made from a mash of at least 80% corn. The high proportion of corn in the mash bill lends a smooth mouthfeel and a slightly sweet corn note to the flavor of the finished product. Corn whiskey adheres to the typical production standards for American whiskey, except that it is not required to be stored in oak containers. Therefore, it is sometimes packaged as a clear, unaged spirit. While oak aging is allowed, there are legal limitations to the use of new or charred oak—and if an American corn whiskey is oak aged, the barrels must be used and/or uncharred.

American corn whiskey is a niche product with relatively few producers and limited supply. However, the category is enjoying a quiet resurgence, especially among craft distillers. Some better-known examples include Mellow Corn Kentucky Straight Corn Whiskey (made by Heaven Hill Distillery), Platte Valley 100% Straight Corn Whiskey, and MB Roland Kentucky Straight Corn Whiskey.

Some modern versions of American corn whiskey are marketed based on the connection between corn mash and the tradition of illegal distillation—the product of which was often known as moonshine. Corn was—along with sugar—often used as the base material for such illicit spirit production. One such product—packaged in a mason jar and known as Shine on Georgia Moon—is produced by the Johnson Distilling Company of Kentucky and legally classified as corn whiskey.

According to the US government, there is no legal definition of moonshine. However, it may be used on product labels and in marketing as a fanciful term, defined as "a term used in addition

to the brand name for the purposes of further identifying a product." (It should be noted that some products using moonshine as a fanciful marketing term may be classified as flavored spirits, specialty spirits, or liqueurs.)

Page 99—the section on the distillation of Cognac was updated to include the following information: The heart—which makes up about 40% of the total run—is typically removed from the still at a strength measuring between 58% and 70% alcohol by volume. The maximum allowed by law is now 73.7% abv; prior to a regulatory change in 2023, the limit was 72.4%.

Page 104—the section on the Aging and Maturation of Brandy de Jerez was updated to read as follows: Brandy de Jerez is aged and blended using the solera system, as are many of the famous wines of Jerez. The barrels must be oak casks (with a capacity of less than 1,000 liters) that have previously been used to hold Sherry. These barrels will impart a range of aromas and flavors to the brandy based on factors such as the age of the barrels, the origin of the oak, and the type of sherry that was previously held in the barrels (such as *fino* or *oloroso*). Minimum aging periods are prescribed and correspond with regulated labeling terms. The use of the solera method, which promotes oxidation, coupled with the warm climate in which the barrels are matured adds to the complexity of these brandies.

Page 107—the section on Bolivia was updated to read as follows: Bolivia—located to the east of Chile and Peru and directly north of Argentina—produces a distinctive brandy known as *singani*. Singani has been legally defined since 1992, when the Bolivian government established a set of regulations regarding the spirit's production as well as a protected denomination of origin for singani. Foremost among these standards is the requirement that it be produced using grapes grown within the defined growing region—described as those areas within the departments of Chuquisaca, Tarija, Potosi, and La Paz at a minimum altitude of 1,600 meters/5,250 feet above sea level. Singani must also be prepared, distilled, and bottled within the defined growing region. Under the Bolivian code, several different categories of singani are defined, including "High-Altitude Singani" which must be produced exclusively from Muscat of Alexandria grapes, and "Singani Second Selection" which may include grape pomace. Aging is allowed (but not required), and singani is typically bottled as a clear spirit following a short period of time (typically six months) in stainless steel. In early 2023, the United States (via the TTB) recognized singani as a specifically defined type of brandy and a distinctive product of Bolivia.

Page 130—the section on Rum Categories Based on Historical Associations was updated to read as follows:

Rum is often discussed in the context of the historical colonization—mainly by Britain, France, and Spain—of portions of the Caribbean Basin (as well as parts of Central and South America). This period of history—during which European powers controlled the regulations, policies, and trade of the many of rum-producing regions of the world—created a lasting impact on rum culture. As such—while the correlations have dwindled with time and must be taken as generalities at best—it is still common to hear rum described as *British style*, *French style*, or *Spanish style*, as discussed below:

- **British style:** The British colonies of Jamaica and Barbados had early success with rum production; rum was made on both islands as early as the mid-1600s. Initially, these rums (produced well before the introduction of column distillation) were batch distilled in rustic pot stills and based on molasses (augmented at times with cane juice). The resulting products were characteristically dark, rich, and pungent in style; and this remains the unofficial definition of the historic *British style* of rum. The success of these products meant that there was little pressure to introduce column still distillation once it became available. Of course, with time, column distillation arrived and these days rum from the former British colonies is made in a range of styles including blends that include pot still spirits and column still spirits. Nevertheless, the rums of Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Lucia are often described as being made in the *British style.*
- **French style:** The earliest rum products produced in the French colonies were modeled on traditional, pot-distilled French brandies. However, by the mid-1800s, column stills modeled on the Armagnac still (a modified column still) were in widespread use in the French colonies. What is now considered to the most significant feature of *French style* rum—the use of raw sugarcane juice instead of molasses as a base ingredient—came about between 1810 and 1815. During this time, Napoleon I (then the *Emperor of the French*) encouraged the planting of sugar beets in Europe as an alternative to Caribbean sugarcane. As a result, approximately 79,000 acres/32,000 ha of sugar beets were planted in Europe and more than 300 sugar factories were built in France. Correspondingly, some CaribbeanIislands were unable to sell their sugar at a profit and many sugar plantations began to produce rum directly from raw sugarcane juice. The resulting *French style* of rum is characterized by grassy, fruity, and floral notes. Guadeloupe, Haiti, Martinique, and Grenada are known for producing French-style rums.
- **Spanish style:** Prior to 1796, the Spanish Crown discouraged (or even disallowed) its colonies to produce alcohol, including distilled spirits. As such, legal distillation in the Spanish colonies has a shorter history than the colonies of other European powers, and the efficiency of the column still was well-known by the time rum production began in earnest in Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and other Spanish colonies. By the mid-1800s, the large Cuban rum companies (including those established by the Bacardí and Arechabala families) were making molasses-based rum using column distillation, cask aging, and charcoal filtration. The resulting style of rum (often referred to as the *Spanish style*) is light and clean, often showing delicate, floral aromas. This type of rum quickly became widely distributed and very popular (and it remains so today). Regional producers of *Spanish style* rum include Cuba, Puerto Rico, St. Croix, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela.

Page 159—the following entry was added: Sloe Gin: The sloe berry (sloe plum) is the fruit of the Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) plant. The blackthorn plant is typically a thorny bush (small tree or shrub) that is widely grown throughout British Isles as well as other parts of Europe, Asia, and northern Africa. The berries (plums) are dark purple and sweet yet highly astringent. They are not typically eaten raw, but are used to make jams, jellies, syrups, baked goods, and flavored

beverages. Sweetened spirits flavored with sloe berries are traditional to England, where Blackthorn plants often grow wild. Many households would produce a batch of “homemade” sloe gin for use in holiday celebrations by macerating sloe berries with sugar and gin. As such, the term *sloe gin* has persisted for this type of liqueur, and these days many English distilleries produce commercial versions of sloe gin. In the United States, sloe gin is defined as “a cordial or liqueur with the main characteristic flavor derived from sloe berries” and therefore, American-made sloe gin is likely to be produced with neutral spirits as its base. However, in the EU, Sloe gin must contain gin as a base ingredient. The EU defines sloe gin as a gin-based liqueur flavored with sloe berries (with the possible addition of sloe juice); bottled at a minimum of 25% abv.

Page 159—the following entry was added: Mirto: Mirto (*liquore di mirto*)—a myrtle berry-flavored liqueur—is produced throughout the Mediterranean basin, with particular importance to the culture of Sardinia and Corsica. Several different styles are produced; however, the most prevalent version is *mirto rosso*—a sweet liqueur (typically based on neutral spirits) flavored with red myrtle berries. The leaves of the myrtle plant and white myrtle berries are used to produce a white style—*mirto bianco*. Myrtle berries are the fruit of the myrtle plant (Myrtus communis), an evergreen shrub found throughout the Mediterranean islands (in the wild as well as in commercial cultivation). Myrtle is appreciated as a decorative plant as well as for its uses in cookery and traditional medicine. Mirto—typically served chilled—may be enjoyed as an aperitif and/or digestive, as an ingredient in cocktails, and as a culinary ingredient/flavoring (particularly In pastries). It is produced in a range of sweetness levels with a typically bitter, fruity, and herbaceous character. *Mirto di Sardegna* (Mirto of Sardinia) has protected geographical indication (GI) status in the EU.

Page 164—the following entry was added: Yukon Jack: Yukon Jack is a Canadian whisky-based liqueur flavored with honey. The origin of the liqueur is uncertain, but history tells us that it was popularized as early as the 1950s, and widely advertised by the 1970s. In addition to the original version, Yukon Jack is made in several flavors, including rye, barrel proof (125°), and fire (cinnamon). Yukon Jack is often enjoyed neat, over ice, or in cocktails such as the Snakebite (combining a shot of Yukon Jack Original over ice with a squeeze of lime). Yukon Jack is named in honor of Leroy "Jack" McQuesten (1836–1909). McQuesten was a successful gold rush era prospector in Alaska and the Yukon who became known by several nicknames, including "Golden Rule McQuesten" and "Yukon Jack."

Page 181—the following entry was added: Amaro Bràulio: Amaro Bràulio is produced in the mountain town of Bormio, located in Lombardy’s Valtellina Valley. First concocted in 1825 by Francesco Peloni, a local pharmacist, Bràulio was crafted to reflect the area’s mountainous terroir and includes locally foraged alpine herbs, roots, and botanicals. While the formula remains a secret, the company does acknowledge that it includes between 12 and 15 ingredients, including gentian root, wormwood, yarrow, and juniper. Commercial production of Bràulio, named for Mount Bràulio (located nearby), began in 1875. Bràulio’s production begins by infusing the botanicals in a solution of water and spirits for several weeks; once infusion is complete the solution is filtered, sweetened, and cut with water to achieve the desired proof. It is then aged for up to 15 months in large Slavonian oak barrels placed into a maze of tunnels

located underground. Bràulio's flavor is bittersweet and menthol-forward with notes of cola, spice, and resin. It may be served neat, chilled, over ice or in a cocktail; those enjoying Bràulio in the Alpine winter may prefer it mixed with a shot of hot water.

Appendix A—The following glossary entries were revised or added:

- **Doubler** – A type of modified pot still traditionally used in the production of American whiskey.
- **Sour Mash** – A type of mash fermented using the highly acidic leftovers from the fermentation or distillation of a previous batch; typically used in the production of bourbon and Tennessee whiskey.
- **Thumper** – A type of modified pot still traditionally used in the production of American whiskey.

Appendix B—The following cocktail/drink recipes were revised or added:

- **Corpse Reviver #1:** 1 ounce Calvados; 1 ounce Cognac; ½ ounce sweet vermouth
- **Corpse Reviver #2:** 1 ounce London Dry Gin; 1 ounce Lillet Blanc (may substitute dry white vermouth or white Cocchi Americano); 1 ounce Cointreau; 1 ounce lemon juice; rinse glass with absinthe (shake and strain the remaining ingredients into the rinsed glass)
- **Absinthe Suissesse:** 1½ ounces absinthe; ½ ounce white crème de menthe, ½ ounce orgeat; 1 ounce heavy cream, 1 dash orange flower water; 1 egg white (optional)
- **Death in the Afternoon:** 1 ounce absinthe; 5 ounces Champagne