

## Addendum regarding: The 2025 Certified Specialist of Spirits Study Guide, as published by the Society of Wine Educators

Note: This document outlines the substantive changes to the 2025 Study Guide as compared to the 2024 version of the CSS Study Guide. All page numbers reference the 2025 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 18:** the definition of “level 3 barrel char” has been updated to read as follows:

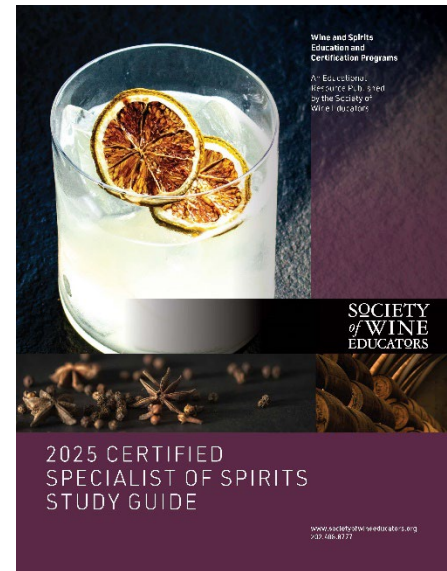
- Level 3 char: 35-to-45-second burn

**Page 61:** the United States definition of whiskey has been updated to include the following information: (as the fourth bullet point in the list of defining characteristics) Stored in oak barrels—with the exception of corn whiskey that does not require the use of oak. (Note: the term “oak barrels” replaced the term “oak containers” in the regulations concerning American whiskeys along with the implementation of TTB-176—The Modernization of the Labeling and Advertising Regulations for Distilled Spirits and Malt Beverages—as passed in 2022.) In several points in the remainder of the chapter, the term “containers” has been replaced by the term “barrels” in the context of the regulations regarding American whiskey.

**Page 72:** the following Scotch producers were added to the list of Scotch Distilleries by Region (table 5.2).

- Deerness (The Islands)
- Rosebank (The Lowlands)
- Port Ellen (Islay)

**Page 80:** the section on Bourbon Heritage has been updated to include the following information—Bourbon is currently being produced in California, Colorado, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia, among other states. However, a great majority of all bourbon is produced in Kentucky, and it has been estimated that there are currently almost five million barrels of bourbon aging in Kentucky—a number that exceeds the state’s human population.



**Page 80:** the section on Straight Bourbon has been updated to include the following information: Bourbon is one of the specific types of American whiskey that may be labeled as *straight*. (The others include rye, wheat, malt, rye malt, corn, and American single malt.)

**Page 82:** the following information was added concerning American Single Malt Whiskey: As of January 2025, the TTB approved a new category—and official definition—for American Single Malt Whiskey. Under these rules, American Single Malt Whiskey must be produced using 100% malted barley. The malting process (and all other subsequent production) must occur in the United States; however, there is no requirement that the grain itself be grown in the US.

American Single Malt Whiskey is not allowed to contain flavoring or blending materials. Caramel coloring is allowed, but it must be disclosed on the label (no other coloring agents are permitted).

Other requirements for American Single Malt Whiskey include the following:

- It must be distilled to no more than 160 proof
- Distillation must occur at a single distillery located in the United States
- It must be stored in the United States in oak barrels—composed of used oak, charred new oak, or uncharred new oak—with a maximum capacity of 700 liters

American Single Malt Whiskey that has been aged for at least two years in oak barrels (as defined above) may be labeled with the term *straight*.

**Page 83: the section under** the heading “American Straight Whiskeys: was updated to include the following information: To be considered a straight whiskey (as defined by the TTB), the spirit must be matured in oak barrels (of the type prescribed by the category definition) for a minimum of two years.

**Page 83:** the following bullet point was added to the list of mash bills required for use in American Straight Whiskeys:

- 100% malted barley for straight American single malt whiskey

**Page 118:** in the section under the heading “The History of Rum,” the first paragraph has been revised to include the following: Christopher Columbus brought sugarcane cuttings from the Canary Islands (off the coast of Africa) to the Caribbean Basin during his 1493 arrival in the West Indies.

**Page 118:** in the section under the heading “The History of Rum,” the third paragraph has been revised to include the following information: It is believed that the British island of Barbados and the French island of Martinique were the first communities to produce rum in the western world. (Note that there is, however, evidence of fermented beverages made from sugarcane juice in parts of ancient India and China.)

**Page 123:** the information on the Jamaica Rum GI has been updated to read as follows:

In 2016, Jamaica passed a set of regulations establishing the Jamaica Rum Geographical Indication. These laws were updated and revised in 2024. Under these regulations, Jamaica Rum GI must be fermented and distilled in a defined area limited to those portions of the island located within the limestone aquifer water basins (which limits the allowed area to about 50% of the island). The laws allow for Jamaica Rum GI to be produced using sugarcane juice, sugarcane syrup, molasses, or cane sugar from any source; Jamaica-grown sugar is not required. The types of yeast allowed are limited to *Saccharomyces*, *Schizosaccharomyces*, and naturally occurring wild yeasts; genetically modified yeasts are not allowed. There are no specifications as to methods of fermentation or distillation.

Jamaica Rum GI may be bottled unaged, and the use of caramel coloring is not allowed. With the 2024 updates, it was determined that if aged, Jamaica Rum GI must be aged in Jamaica and aging must take place in food-grade wooden barrels no larger than 250 liters in size.

In addition, according to the country’s excise duty tax laws—other additives and sweeteners are also disallowed without prior approval from a commissioner. Finally, all rum bearing the label term “Certified Geographical Indication” and “Jamaica Rum” must be tested and approved by the technical committee of the Jamaica Rum and Spirits Traders Association (JRASTA).

**Page 124:** the information under the heading “Guadeloupe” has been revised to include the following: Guadeloupe—a French overseas department and a producer of rhum agricole as well as molasses-based rum—has geographical indication (GI) status for its agricultural rum, officially termed *Rhum de Guadeloupe*.

**Page 124:** the information under the heading “Guadeloupe” has been revised to include the following: GI-indicated rum produced on Marie-Galante may be bottled with the term Rhum de Guadeloupe—Marie-Galante.

**Page 126 to 127:** the information on Brazilian Rum (Cachaça) has been updated to read as follows:

Cachaça is a Brazilian rum produced from sugarcane juice. It is by far the most popular distilled spirit among the 180 million citizens of Brazil, making it one of the most widely consumed spirits on the planet. Outside Brazil, cachaça is mainly known as the key ingredient in certain popular tropical drinks, namely the Caipirinha—a refreshing cocktail made with muddled limes, finely granulated sugar, and cachaça served over ice.

As of April 11, 2013, the United States Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) recognized cachaça as a type of rum and a distinctive product of Brazil. While the Brazilian standard allows cachaça to have as low as 38% alcohol by volume, any product imported into the United States will conform to the US minimum bottling standard of 40% by volume.

Brazilian standards also allow for a percentage of corn or corn syrup in the fermentation process; however, as the US definition of rum does not allow for the use of corn products, only those products made from 100% sugarcane-based ferment may be labeled as “rum” or “cachaça” in the United States. (Note: According to the TTB, in the United States the term may be spelled either with or without the diacritic mark, as in cachaça or cachaca.)

Cachaça—while made in many styles, from fiery, unaged spirits to smooth, aged sippers—can be divided into two broad styles, based mainly on production techniques. The majority of the production (up to 70%, according to CBRC [Centro Brasileiro de Referência da Cachaça]) is industrially made and distilled to a high initial proof using column stills. Those versions that are produced using pot stills may be classified as *Artisanal Cachaça, or Cachaça de Alambique*—a style that was officially recognized by Brazil’s Ministry of Agriculture in the spring of 2023.

**Page 143:** the following information has been added as a new section/new information on tequila labeling terms:

In addition to the official categories and aging designations defined for tequila, certain terms may be used on the labels of bottled tequila. These are optional and—as of December 2024— not officially recognized classifications for tequila.

**Cristalino:** The label term *Cristalino* may be applied to aged tequila—reposado, añejo, or extra-añejo— that has been oak aged (according to the required guidelines) and subsequently filtered to remove any traces of color. In effect, this leaves the tequila with a crystal-clear appearance (as is typical of blanco tequila). The result—in the best-case scenario—is a product with a crystal-clear appearance that still retains the aromas and flavors derived from barrel aging.

**Rosa:** This term—along with *rosado*—may be applied to tequila that has been aged in barrels that formerly held red wine (such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, or even Port). This aging technique lends a light pinkish tint and—according to some—fruity and floral aromas to the finished tequila.

**Page 217:** the glossary entry for “whiskey” has been updated to read as follows:  
**Whiskey** – A grain-based spirit that is variously defined throughout the world but is typically required to be distilled from a grain product to less than 190 proof, matured in an oak container, and bottled at no less than 80 proof; sometimes spelled *whisky*