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THE BLOG

## Irish Whiskey: Now's the Time to Try Something New!

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Saint Patrick's Day is upon us once again For a few it is a day to celebrate the life of Saint Patrick on the day of his death. For some it is a day to celebrate being Irish and Irish pride. And for others, and probably the majority, it is a "holiday" celebrated for no other reason than an excuse to consume large quantities of green beer, turn rivers green — talking to you Chicago — and enjoy the nectar of the Irish god's... Irish Whiskey.

Now we have no issue with green beer (we have consumed more than we will ever admit to) and it is quite the sight to see Chicago's river turn green (from something other than pollution) but little has changed with those traditions in the last few decades. Irish Whiskey on the other hand has seen quite the epic resurgence as of late—the [Distilled Spirits Council recently announced](#) that Irish Whiskey sales are up almost 600% for super premium brands since 2002.

So in honor of St. Patrick's Day, the Irish, those who wish to celebrate as if they were Irish and those who just want to celebrate, we present you with 7 Irish Whiskeys to consider for your St. Patrick's Day celebration and to also (hopefully) introduce you to the significantly expanded (yet still relatively unknown) world of Irish Whiskey.

Why 7 you ask? 'Cause, like the Irish, 7 is lucky!



## Jameson Caskmates

What do you get when Jameson's head distiller sits down with the head brewer of Cork's Franciscan Well over a few pints at the local watering hole? [Jameson Caskmates](#). The master brewer decided to use some of Jameson's casks to age his prized Irish Stout, which rumor has it turned out to be exceptionally tasty. Once the brewer finished with the casks he sent them back to Jameson where the master distiller decided to use the casks to age some of his Irish Whiskey (for how long still remains a mystery) and years later (we assume anyway) Jameson Caskmates was born.

Similar to Jameson in appearance, maybe slightly darker, this whiskey has a sharper almost fruity aroma. The front taste seems to only be slightly influenced by the stout barrel aging but the big surprise is the stout-esq smooth finish with just slight hints of milk chocolate and coffee. Of all the whiskeys presented today this is hand's down the budget winner. With prices hovering right around \$30 it is the cheapest of the lot but the price belies a truly high quality and unique Irish Whiskey perfect neat or on the rocks.



### **Redbreast 12 Year Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey**

Double gold winner at the 2005 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, [Redbreast's 12 year aged whiskey](#) dates back to the early 1900s and is one of the oldest on our list. Distilled using the traditional single pot still process, a form that appears to be making a comeback with today's distillers, it is one of only a handful that use 100% pure pot still whiskey (though most Irish Whiskeys are comprised of some portion of pot still whiskey).

Redbreast tastes beyond it's price, that is to say it tastes into the triple digit price range, not at it's \$59.99 MSRP. Spicy, smooth, full flavor and a long lingering finish describe this Irish whiskey. Perfect for a cold rainy evening spent in your favorite lounge (keep the bottle close though, you'll want seconds, or thirds as we learned.)



### **Glendalough Double Barrel Irish Whiskey**

Glendalough Distillery was founded by five close friends in the Glendalough Valley of Ireland with one mission in mind, to prove that independent Irish Whiskey could make a comeback. From that mission Glendalough Double Barrel Irish Whiskey was born. Breathing new life into an old tradition—think pre-prohibition era Irish Whiskey—Ireland's first craft distillery has staked its claim in the international Irish Whiskey community.

Aged in virgin American oak bourbon barrels and then moved into first fill Spanish Oloroso barrels, the whiskey has an almost warming aroma and a flavor that is light and airy on the front end with a finish that is spicy with a hint of woodiness to it. This is a great sipping Irish Whiskey for those looking for something with a little spice to it or mixed up to make their signature Double Barrel Smash.



## **Yellow Spot**

Yellow Spot is the second 100% pot still whiskey on our list. But where the other, Redbreast, is aged in two types of barrels, Yellow Spot is aged in three types, including Spanish Malaga. In addition to it being a 100% pot still whiskey it is also one of Ireland's few surviving "bonded" Irish Whiskeys, along with its Green Spot brother.

With the addition of the third fortified wine barrel in the aging process, Yellow Spot takes on a much sweeter tune than its Redbreast brother. Sweet, fruity and vanilla aromas give way to sweet and velvety flavor which finishes long, sweet and woody. This is a perfect choice for those that prefer a sweeter velvety whiskey.



### **Power's John's Lane Release**

Power's is a well known Irish Whiskey in line in popularity with the likes of Jameson and Bushmills. But that well known whiskey you're probably thinking about is Power's Gold Label, a rough around the edges blend—today we are going to check out Power's John's Lane Release.

Power's John's Lane Release is a throwback to the origin of Power's founding. Distilled using the classic single pot still method and aged mainly in American bourbon casks, it is a spicy and rich rendition. This Power's incarnation is perfect for those drinkers looking for that rich and full bodied Irish Whiskey. The nose is earthy with hints of cinnamon, and it kind of reminded us of leather. The taste is full, complex and surprisingly light on the spice and the finish lingers with a wood-like touch. In the end it kind of reminded us of a high end scotch or bourbon.



## The Quiet Man

For our final two Irish Whiskeys we are bringing in the double punch of the recently released [The Quiet Man](#)—not to be confused with the classic John Wayne movie—in its 8-year old Single Malt and blended variants and which has the honor of being the first whiskey distilled in Derry Ireland in almost 100 years. The name actually was created to honor the father Ciaran Mulgrew—creator of the Quiet Man—who spent over 50 years as a bartender.

First up we gave the The Quiet Man Blend a try and were in no way disappointed. The nose is light and floral with just a touch of smokiness. The front is light and mellow with hints of honey and vanilla. The finish is smooth and actually lacked that typical burn you find with Irish Whiskeys which could make it a hit among newer whiskey drinkers or those who dislike a burning finish.

Next up we gave the single malt a try and were once again pleasantly surprised. The aroma was similar in the sweetness to the blend but crisper with a touch of vanilla and honey. On the front we picked up spicy oak with a hint of honey and a touch of vanilla. The finish had the burn we normally look for in an Irish Whiskey and a very nice one at that. Additionally we picked up just a little citrus-like kick at the end, unusual but actually pretty good.

The Quiet Man provides outstanding examples of both a blended and single malt whiskey priced at a very competitive \$39.99 and \$49.99 respectively. Similar to many of the others on our list, they taste above their price points.

So this Saint Patrick's Day step outside the normal green beer, green river and Jameson/Power's/Bushmills routine and step into the the vastly expanded and improved world of Irish Whiskey. After trying some of the above examples it is apparent to us—and it will be to you as well—that Irish Whiskey isn't too far behind some of the premium Scotches in taste, and though its popularity is rising, it still has a ways to go to catch up to Scotch. This is a good thing if you're looking for value! Give these a try before high end Irish Whiskey prices start to look like high end Scotch prices. We're sure you'll be pleasantly surprised!

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