

The 10 Best Irish Whiskeys for St. Patrick's Day and Beyond

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Don't even think about picking up that green beer. Because you know what? You're better than that. Instead, head over to your favorite liquor store (or bar) and invest in quality Irish whiskeys. They're certainly more respectable than vomit-hued brews. Also, I'm going to assume you're over 21 years of age—and that means it's time to drink the best you can afford. Something of value. Something that doesn't involve food coloring or spirulina. Something that has depth, intensity, and character.

But don't just take my word for it. Instead, listen to Julia Momose—who is the genius cocktail creative behind [Michelin-starred Oriole in Chicago](#) and a partner in the soon-to-open [Kumiko](#). (NB: In 2016, Momose was named one of Eater's "Young Guns," an esteemed collection of young and talented rising stars.)

"I have so much appreciation for all the varieties of Irish whiskeys, whether they may be blended, a single grain, a single malt, or a single pot still whiskey. I am also a fickle

drinker," Momose says. "By this, I mean that some days I crave the light drinkability of a blended Irish whiskey or single grain whiskey. Other days I prefer something chewier—with rich notes of stewed fruit and complex wood character such as what you may enjoy in a single pot still Irish whiskey. Every now and then I want something warming with peat. Then there are times when I would rather enjoy my Irish whiskey in cocktail form, and suddenly mixability is key."

So how did Momose come up with this 10-strong list?

"Versatility, flavor profile, and uniqueness are all factors considered when developing this list," Momose, who is known for her originality and inventiveness, explains. "More than anything, I wanted to share a list of delicious Irish whiskeys that have something to suit any mood. A particular favorite trait in many of these Irish whiskeys that I chose are the barrel-finisings featuring casks that once held Madeira, or Cabernet Sauvignon, or even Bordeaux wines. Irish whiskey is pretty incredible in that there is such a wide range of whiskeys for us to enjoy."

Read on below for Momose's top ten Irish whiskeys. And yes, I highly recommend that you buy *at least* one bottle. (Personally, the Teeling expressions are my favorites.)

Photo: Sammy Faze

Julia Momose is the creative cocktail genius behind [+] [-] Chicago's Michelin-starred Oriole. And she's quite keen on Irish whiskeys too.

BLENDED WHISKEY

Slane Irish Whiskey (\$31)

“As a bartender, I am excited by all the possibilities this Irish whiskey presents,” Momose says. “The triple cask maturation is a great success, each element of virgin oak, bourbon barrel, and oxidative fortified wine casks presenting well from start to finish. On the nose, the immediate influence of Oloroso sherry casks is evident, and this slowly opens up to sweet grain and smooth malt. Prune, caramel, vanilla, baking spices, these are some delights that linger and dance through this dram.”

Midleton Very Rare (\$170 for the 2017 Edition)

“Each year the master distiller of Midleton releases a limited number of this special blend. In the mix, triple distilled grain whiskeys and single pot still whiskeys ranging from 12 to 25 years old,” Momose explains. “The Midleton Very Rare tradition started in 1984, with the first release being in 1985. At this time, they did not have the choice of casks which they do now, and there is a noticeable difference from year to year, but along with that, a recognizable quality from carefully selected casks showcasing a prominent single pot still character of balance with hints of toasty vanilla, honey, and apples.”

Photo: Slane Irish Whiskey

Teeling Small Batch (\$42)

“A blend of grain and malt whiskeys that have been aged between four and seven years, this small batch gets some special time (four to six months) in Flor de Caña rum casks. The grain whiskey takes a predominant stance in this whiskey, morphing into a sugarcane-laced basket in which hints of malty banana nut bread, dried fruit, and vanilla rest. It can be a bit hot in moments, but this makes for a great highball. Perhaps try it in a whiskey ginger.”

GRAIN WHISKEY

Teeling Single Grain (\$55)

“How exciting to find an Irish Whiskey that has been matured in Californian Cabernet Sauvignon wine casks! The fruit character is not overwhelming, more along the lines of tart and bright stewed raspberries over sweet banana bread,” Momose says. “There is 95% corn in the mashbill, and while the whiskey you find in the bottle is only 5 years old, it tastes deliciously of sweet corn, vanilla, and caramel. I enjoy this neat—or sometimes with a splash of soda.”

Photo: Teeling

SINGLE MALT

Connemara 12 Year Old Peated Single Malt (\$95)

“It stands to reason that there would be peat bogs in Ireland, being so close to Scotland, but Connemara is the one distillery to embrace the peat and introduce it to their malt during the drying process,” Momose explains. “The result, is a malty whiskey, showcasing hints of

orchard fruit drizzled with floral clover honey, finishing with a burst of full-bodied peat. Not quite as intense as some well-known peated Scotches, this Irish single malt is particularly nice as a way to get to ease into the peated malt whisk(e)y category. The 12 Year Old is amazing, but also be on the lookout for the bottle without an age statement, featuring whiskeys 12 years and under—this too is quite delightful if you are in the mood for something that is charmingly smoky.”

Tyrconnell 10 Year Old Madeira Cask Finish Single Malt (\$91)

“This is a single malt that has been matured for nine years in ex-bourbon barrels, then rested for about three months in Madeira casks, and then returned back to bourbon barrels for finishing. The nose is floral like jasmine, with hints of bitter myrtle oranges, and hay. Peachy fruit and apricots are a welcome fruity sweetness, along with maple and caramel. There is also a round and pleasantly bitter sweetness reminiscent of cafe con leche that lingers on the palate. Delicious!”

SINGLE POT STILL

Green Spot Château Léoville Barton (\$134)

Photo: Tyrconnell

“This may be a bit tricky to locate, but if you are able to find a bar with a bottle, definitely have a dram. Another red-wine-cask-finished Irish whiskey for this list, but this is a single pot still Irish whiskey, which is first aged for eight to nine years in ex-bourbon and ex-Sherry barrels, and then finished for another 12 to 24 months in ex-Château Léoville Barton Bordeaux wine casks,” Momose says. “The result, a whiskey that will dance and linger for a long finish, like a red silk scarf dancing in the wind. Crab apples, red roses, currants, and nutmeg are amongst the fruit, bright, and spiced notes you may enjoy from this single pot still Irish whiskey.”

Redbreast 12 Year Cask Strength Edition (\$90)

“Please remember to drink responsibly and be aware of the alcohol content of the spirits you are enjoying. That said, the Red Breast 12 Year Cask Strength whiskey is too delicious to be kept on the shelf! Give it a try, un-cut and undiluted at first to get to know the buttery sweet toffee, the bananas flambé, and marzipan. Then, if you’d like, add a touch of water. This doesn’t water the whiskey down, it just brings the proof down a touch so that you may dive even further into the balanced, supple, caramel dipped whiskey that is Red Breast 12 Year Cask Strength.”

Redbreast 21 Year (\$264)

“Having fallen instantly in love with Red Breast 12 Year Cask Strength, I was completely taken with Red Breast 21 Year,” Momose says. “I could sit and smell this whiskey for hours—or perhaps I will give in and take a sip.

Photo: Redbreast

This sip reveals all of the fruity and spiced Christmas cake aromas that were promised on the nose, along with hints of dried tropical fruit, almonds, and malt. The first-fill Oloroso Sherry casks truly show their influence in this whiskey—and the balance of sweet, spice, and malt is sublime.”

Powers John’s Lane (\$71)

“This triple-distilled single pot still Irish whiskey is named after the original Powers Distillery, which used to have an address on a road called John’s Lane in Dublin, from 1791 to 1976,” Momose says. “That’s a long time. And in honor of this time, this whiskey is made with extra care. After distillation, the malted and un-malted barley distillate is portioned to be aged in ex-bourbon casks and the rest in ex-Oloroso Sherry butts for twelve years. The result, a leathery and sweet whiskey that you can almost chew on. It has hints of clove-spiked orange wheels with apricots, prunes, and dark chocolate. A lovely whiskey for sipping.”

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