



CHEERS

A HY-VEE NEWSLETTER



DID YOU KNOW?

The United States is one of the four most notable whiskey producing countries in the world. The other three are Scotland, Canada and Ireland.



FEATURE: THE ART OF SELLING WHISKEY

Ah, fall. The leaves (and my lawn) are turning brown and so is America's spirit of choice. As the temperature outside drops, that cold martini suddenly doesn't sound so appealing. The warming effects of a wee dram of whiskey (or whisky if referring to Scotch) are beckoning. Deciding which type to warm up with may be perplexing for some, fun for others.

Spreading one's passion for a product to a new customer is one of the high points of my profession. For customers who are new to the whiskey experience, educating them as to the history, differences and similarities of whiskeys can be fun for the merchant and customer alike.

For example, customers are amazed to learn that whiskey comes out of the still just like vodka, as clear grain alcohol. (It is the years spent in a barrel that gives whiskey its color and flavor.) Or that the predecessors to NASCAR race drivers were "moonrunners"—



drivers of souped-up cars racing moonshine across state lines during Prohibition. In fact, it's been reported that Al Capone, when he needed to escape the "heat" in Chicago, would visit Dubuque, Iowa, where he could get his favorite whiskey, Templeton Rye, from the Iowa town of the same name.

Spreading my passion and enthusiasm about bourbon, a historical and tasty part of this nation's history, is one of the things that drew me to this line of work. I love sharing tidbits of bourbon trivia. For example, did you know that to be called bourbon, it must be made in the United States aged in new, charred oak barrels and be made with at least 51 percent corn?

Talking with a true bourbon aficionado is just as nice. Seeing the gleam in the bourbon lover's eyes when he or she spots a long-lost favorite brand is always uplifting. So is seeing how excited a person gets when you recommend a good cigar to

go with the bourbon selection. This is my passion: making people happy through the common bond of bourbon-love, one customer at a time.

Scotch whisky is a category that has seen remarkable growth in the last decade. Introducing the world of Scotch to a customer can be very rewarding. A little education goes a long way toward igniting a new passion, such as explaining the differences between blended Scotch and single malt (single malt scotch must come from a single distillery in Scotland and be made of malted barley) or explaining the wide range of flavors, from the mild Scotches made in the Highlands to the smoky Scotches made on the island of Islay (pronounced eye-la) with malted barley that has been dried by the smoke of a peat fire.

Learning something from the customer is also a perk of the job. Speaking with a crusty old Scotch drinker can be eye opening. And don't judge a customer by its cover. I've had some pretty rough-looking chaps teach me a thing or two about Scotch. And due to the prohibitive cost of many single malts, learning something new about the malts from someone with a lot of experience can be priceless.

Irish whiskey is the fastest-growing segment of the whiskey category, if not all spirits. If you are just "looking for something different," I suggest an Irish whiskey. Irish whiskey is a good stepping stone for a bourbon drinker who has not tried scotch yet, as Irish whiskey can have a little of the spiciness that bourbon has and a little of the smokiness scotch has.

Vodka, gin and tequila have their place in this new cocktail craze. But whiskey holds a place in people's hearts. Whiskey drinkers share a common bond, like a brotherhood, if you will. And yes, I left out American-blended whiskey and Canadian whiskey. They are one and the same, and when was the last time you saw a cowboy saddle up to the bar and order a shot of Crown?

Written by Charles Gibson, Certified Wine Specialist, Milan Hy-Vee. Charles is an expert in home-brewed beer and wine and is a certified beer judge.



A GREAT FIND

Charles's picks:

I love Eagle Rare 10-year-old single barrel bourbon, especially with a nice cigar. Here is the tasting note by Paul Pacult of The Spirit Journal: "In the mouth, this oily, toasty beauty seduces the taste buds at palate entry with dry flavors of cereal grain and mild oak resin -- the mid-palate tastes explode on the tongue in unabashedly sweet and oily flavors of black raisins, grapefruit, charred oak and candied almonds; the finish is long, corny sweet, moderately fiery, and lasciviously oily..."

And of course for the advanced bourbon aficionado, Templeton Rye is always a great adventure for the senses. Due to its small production, Templeton Rye is only available in Iowa and Illinois. If you are traveling through these two states, be sure to pick up some. Templeton Rye is in high demand and makes great holiday gifts.

For new scotch drinkers, try Glenmorangie. The style is subtle and not too smoky, very approachable.

Among all scotches, though, my favorite is the Glenlivet Nadurra. Here is the tasting note by Dave Broom, Wine International: "My whisky of the year...delicate, yet complex and bursting with notes of wild flowers, cooked apples, coconut and spice. It's the bottle I keep going back to."



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ARE YOU KEEPING SCORES?

Most everyone who has shopped for wine has seen reviews and a point score posted on the shelf. The reviews are from several different trade publications. But what kind of score should you look for and which reviewer can be trusted?

The 100-point grading scale for wine was first used by Robert Parker Jr. in his publication, The Wine Advocate. He decided to grade wines with a number scale similar to the one used in school. The scoring is as follows:

- 100-95 is a great wine;
- 95-90 is a wine of outstanding character and style;
- 89-85 is a wine with special qualities;
- 84-80 is a solid, well-made wine;
- 79-75 is a drinkable wine that may have minor flaws;
- 74-50 is not recommended.

The score for the wine is accompanied by a brief description of the aromas and flavors of the wine. Parker says that he believes that the description is often more important than the point score even if most people perceive the opposite.

The three main U.S. publications that review wine are the Wine Advocate, the Wine Spectator and the Wine Enthusiast. Steven Tanzer's International Wine Cellar is a smaller publication that is well-respected in the wine industry. Each of the publications employs multiple editors who review wines from specific regions that they are assigned to.

Sometimes different reviewers can have very different views on a wine, even differing by ten or more points on the scores. Large differences in a point score could be because a bad bottle was sent to the reviewer. About one in ten wines with a cork present some form of off-flavor. For that reason, many wineries are turning to screw caps. Small differences in scores can be due to the fact that wine reviews are subjective. Just like people's tastes for food differ, so too do their tastes for wine.

Don't assume that if a wine is not rated, it's not worth buying. Many wineries are not rated because

their production is too small or they choose not to send samples to the reviewers. There seems to be a growing trend among family-owned wineries to forgo submitting samples to reviewers. This is due to a simple philosophy: Live by the sword, die by the sword. A good review can put a winery on the map, so to speak; a bad review can ruin a winery's sales. A person who only buys wines with ratings will miss out on many other wines that are often fabulous.



It is always beneficial to develop a relationship with your local wine retailer so that he or she knows what style of wines to recommend. The process of a customer getting to know the retailer and the retailer getting to know the customer can take a little time, but can be extremely beneficial to both parties. The retailer can buy wine with his customer base in mind, and the customer will get the inside scoop on new wines that are in the store.

Of course, the best way to find wines you like is by attending wine-tasting events at your local store. I attend as many of these events as possible throughout the year. They are a great way to explore the world of wine. I am always looking for something new and exciting.

For your holiday gatherings and gift-giving, please keep in mind that reviews and scores are a good guideline. A knowledgeable staff at your local retail store can be extremely helpful as well.

*Written by Luke Jasper, CSW
Assistant Wine/Spirits Manager
Iowa City Hy-Vee Drugstore*



MEET OUR SPECIALISTS



Denise Fouts (Cedar Rapids, IA)



Heidi Danielsen (Davenport, IA)



Steve Wallace (Dubuque, IA)



Tom Heirigs (Altoona, IA)



Bryan Herald (Grand Island, NE)



Ryan Thompson (Keokuk, IA)



Brandon Allen (Davenport, IA)



Brad Kent (Clinton, IA)



OUR DEDICATION

Hy-Vee is dedicated to professional service in wine and spirits. There are 315 certified wine specialists company-wide as of August, 2009. The number continues to grow weekly. To be a certified specialist, the trainees have to take 60 hours worth of classes and pass numerous exams.