

The Great American Bourbon Tasting

To build your whisky knowledge base, taste these popular benchmarks. These five bottles truly show the wide range of flavor profiles and styles that fall under the umbrella of bourbon.

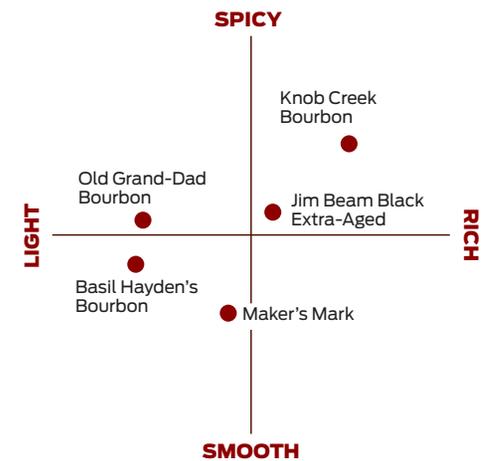
1
Basil Hayden's®
Bourbon

2
Old Grand-Dad®
Bourbon

3
Jim Beam® Black
Extra-Aged

4
Maker's Mark®

5
Knob Creek® Bourbon



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Use this page for your personal tasting notes.



1. Basil Hayden's® Bourbon

A wonderful introduction to bourbon with its very friendly flavor profile and proof, but connoisseurs love this artfully aged whiskey as well. A “highrye” mashbill balanced with notes of vanilla, caramel, and dried fruit, this light yet flavorful whiskey is sure to please any palate.

ABV: 40%

Nose _____

Palate _____

Finish _____

My Rating _____



2. Old Grand-Dad® Bourbon

Medium-bodied, OGD offers some sweet vanilla, but the high-rye bourbon gets cantankerous with its peppery spiciness, displayed by notes of cloves and cinnamon.

ABV: 40%

Nose _____

Palate _____

Finish _____

My Rating _____



3. Jim Beam® Black Extra-Aged

Longer maturation in new, charred white oak barrels means a fuller-bodied bourbon with smooth caramel and warm oak notes.

ABV: 43%

Nose _____

Palate _____

Finish _____

My Rating _____



4. Maker's Mark®

As smooth as bourbon can possibly be, thanks to the red winter wheat in its recipe, this whisky is sweet yet balanced, emphasizing caramel, vanilla, and fruity essences.

ABV: 45%

Nose _____

Palate _____

Finish _____

My Rating _____



5. Knob Creek® Bourbon

This full-flavored bourbon offers an incredible complexity and versatility. Oaky, spicy, and a bit leathery, a cinnamon zip on the finish makes this great for sipping on ice or building classic cocktails.

ABV: 50%

Nose _____

Palate _____

Finish _____

My Rating _____

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To build your whisky knowledge base, you'll need to first understand the benchmarks. These five bottles truly show the wide range of flavor profiles and styles that fall under the umbrella of bourbon.

Start with Basil Hayden's®, one of the original "Small Batch" bourbons. Then there's Old Grand-Dad®, with a similar high-rye mashbill to Basil Hayden's, though more aggressive in how it's expressed.

Jim Beam® Black Extra-Aged is likewise a great introduction to the category, smooth and full-bodied, with approachable caramel and vanilla notes. Conversely, there is Maker's Mark®, which uses unique red winter wheat as its flavoring grain. Finally, Knob Creek®, also among the original "Small Batch" bourbons, is robust at 100 proof, and can be enjoyed in any and all situations.

Tasting Tips for Club Members

Nosing:

Inhale with an open mouth so you don't put your nose to sleep.

Swirl Gently:

Just coat the bottom third of the glass. Not a big swirl, as with wine. The alcohol in whisky will evaporate just fine at its own pace.

Food and Water:

Snack before the tasting and drink water to keep yourself hydrated. Nothing too spicy; nothing too sweet.

Glasses:

Smaller tulip-shaped glasses are good for aroma and nosing. Tumblers, Highball and cocktail glasses serve their purpose also.

Keep Notes:

Appreciate what you're tasting and record it. Your impressions might change next time you taste.

Take Pictures:

Use your phone or device to remember your favorites.

Ice:

Let the flavor, texture and aromas evolve with some well chosen ice. Your glass of whisky becomes a journey.

Color:

Appreciate the color, which might tell you about the wood used to finish the whisky. Avoid added caramel, which could hide the truth.

Warming:

Feel free to hold the glass in your hand and warm it up a bit. You'll get more aroma and possibly boost the flavor.

Time:

Slow down. Many whiskies develop new flavors and complexity if you wait before the next sip: appreciate the finish.

See, Sip, Swirl:

Look at the color, then swirl and sniff the whisky to see what the aroma reveals.

Compare:

Having a variety of expressions is fun. Comparing notes with friends is even more fun.

Clean Glasses:

Rinse and dry between expressions. The previous whisky could interfere with the taste of the next. A wet glass could add too much water.

Sips:

Small sips, with the glass rim on the center of your tongue, to avoid the

alcohol heat. Swirl or "chew" the whisky and let it disappear.

Adding Water:

Add water to open the nose, but only after you've tasted neat; add only a drop or two at a time.

Flights:

Having several expressions around a theme can develop a greater appreciation of the varieties of whisky.

Progressive Order:

Makes a huge difference in your appreciation of each expression. Light to rich; least to most sweet; no smoke to smokiest.

Watch Glasses:

Help to hold in the aroma. Very handy if you're tasting multiple expressions over time and want to go back and compare.

Flavor Maps:

Flavor maps are a fun way to measure your comparative whisky tastings. As you taste through these expressions, see if you agree with how our experts have plotted them.