

Chapter 11

Irish Whiskey

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering where Irish whiskey's distinctive flavor comes from
- ▶ Checking out some Irish whiskey brands
- ▶ Preserving Irish whiskey's flavor

The Irish have been distilling whiskey for at least 600 years, if not longer. Though it's safe to say that Irish whiskey has a distinct character, it's also equally true that each brand of Irish whiskey is a unique product.

What Makes Irish Whiskey Taste So Yummy?

Irish whiskey is triple-distilled from barley and other grains in pot stills and aged between five and ten years. One major difference between Scotch and Irish whiskey is that when drying the barley malt from which the whiskey is distilled, the Irish use coal rather than peat, which prevents the smoky flavor found in Scotch whisky.

What's more, Irish whiskey also gains a great deal of flavor from the casks in which it's aged. Depending on the brand, Irish whiskey is aged in casks that have held sherry, rum, or bourbon.



For centuries, the Irish produced an illegal distilled spirit called *potcheen* (po-cheen), a colorless, unaged spirit that's high in alcohol content and similar to white lightning or moonshine in the southern United States. But as of March 17, 1997, it's legal and being produced and sold in Ireland and the rest of the world.

Popular Brands

You may be surprised at the variety of flavors among the brands of Irish whiskey:

- ✔ **2 Gingers** is a blended Irish whiskey, distilled twice and aged four years in the mild climate at the Cooley Distillery.
- ✔ **Bushmills** produces Bushmills Premium, Black Bush Special, Bushmills Single Malt (10 years old), Bushmills Rare Single Irish Malt (16 years old), and a 21 year old Single Malt Irish Whiskey.
- ✔ **Connemara** makes Pot Still Peated Single Malt Irish Whiskey, a unique product because it's the only peated single malt on the market.
- ✔ **Danny Boy** is a 15 year old Irish malt whiskey matured in the finest American white oak casks.
- ✔ **Jameson Irish Whiskey** is the world's largest-selling Irish whiskey. It's aged for 12 years and made from pure Irish water and a combination of malted and unmalted Irish barley. Jameson Gold is a blend of rare Irish whiskeys, which range in age from 8 to 20 years.
- ✔ **Kilbeggan** is Gaelic for "little church." What's now an idyllic village in the center of Ireland was for many years an active religious community built around a monastery. The first licensed whiskey distillery in the world was established in Kilbeggan in 1757.
- ✔ **Knappogue Castle Irish Single Malt Whiskey** is pot-stilled using only malted barley and bottled on a vintage basis. Knappogue also has a single malt whiskey.
- ✔ **Michael Collins** is double-distilled in pot stills. The final blend is aged from 4 to 12 years in oak casks.
- ✔ **Midleton** produces its Very Rare Irish Whiskey, a blend of triple-distilled whiskeys ranging from 12 to 21 years old. It's matured exclusively in special, individually selected, bourbon-seasoned American oak casks. Midleton is a credit to the old sod.
- ✔ **Paddy** is named for Paddy Flaherty, a salesman for the Cork Distilleries Company in the 1920s.

- ✔ **Powers** was the first to introduce bottling in Ireland.
- ✔ **Redbreast Irish Whiskey** is a single, unblended whiskey, triple-distilled in oak casks for no less than 12 years.
- ✔ **Tullamore Dew** is famous for the slogan “Give every man his Dew.”
- ✔ **The Tyrconnell Single Malt Irish Whiskey** is made from a mash of pure malted barley produced at a single distillery. (In contrast, other whiskeys blend a variety of malt and grain products from several distilleries.)
- ✔ **The Wild Geese Irish Soldiers & Heroes** is produced using a special extended double distillation process to remove impurities and to achieve optimal alcohol content for maturation.

Bushmills also produces a honey-infused Irish whiskey. It's as sweet as the honey that is in it. With the trend in flavoring traditional liquors, other distillers are sure to follow suit.

Storing and Serving Suggestions

The storage of Irish whiskey is very simple. An unopened bottle will last indefinitely because Irish whiskey doesn't mature after it's bottled. After a bottle is opened, it has a shelf life of about two years.

