

Why American whiskey sales are soaring worldwide

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Hipsters, millennials drive demand for more robust, authentic spirits



American spirits exports are on an upward trajectory, climbing 10.6% to a total of \$698.5m in the first half of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, the national trade association representing leading producers and marketers of distilled spirits, attributes this growth to maturing tastes and a growing awareness of the robust complexity, history and distillers' art behind American spirits.

Last year, sales of bourbon, American rye and Tennessee whiskey rocketed to over \$3.1bn in the US alone and exports passed the \$1bn mark. In the first half of this year, exports of American whiskeys, including bourbon, Tennessee whiskey and rye whiskey, topped \$464.6m, followed by brandy (\$43.45m), vodka (\$33.6m) and rum (\$18.55m).

The steep growth in sales of American whiskeys is led by adult millennials' interest in the spirit, said David Ozgo, chief economist at the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

Tennessee whiskey, rye whiskey and bourbon conjure up images of oak barrels, daring prohibition-era whiskey runs and New Orleans jazz bars. Steeped as they are in history, American whiskeys are now surging in popularity as more sophisticated adult consumers around the world are turning to more authentic tastes. Strong growth markets include UK, Japan, Germany and France; but adult consumers around the world are increasingly seeking out American spirits because of their diversity of flavours and styles, mixability and authentic heritage.

Around the world, Tennessee whiskey, produced from a corn-based mash, filtered through a layer of maple charcoal and aged in new oak barrels, is proving a complex and robust base for a huge range of cocktails, supporting the fast-growing cocktail movement. Bourbon, slightly sweeter and aged in charred oak barrels to bring out notes of caramel and a distinctive deep, golden colour, is gaining fresh credibility as a sophisticated drink to take neat or serve as the base for

next-generation cocktails. Meanwhile, American rye whiskey is making a comeback among hipsters and seekers of artisanal flavours, as craft distillers and even major distilleries revisit the centuries-old craft of ageing rye mash in charred new oak barrels, bringing out spicy, almost fruity notes.

As demand surges, a renaissance is taking place among American distillers. Major distillers are expanding their portfolios and new craft distilleries are springing up. As of August 2016, there are over 1,300 craft distillers active in the US.

Dave Pickerell, a Master Distiller also known as America's "Mr Whiskey", believes there are several good reasons why the world is turning to the authentic, robust flavours of American whiskies now: palates are maturing, preferences are moving from sweet to savoury, and people are calling for real taste to their drinks.

"Few spirits can compare with American whiskeys for rich, full-bodied taste and flavour complexity. American whiskeys also have a long history to add to their allure," he says.

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www.distilledspiritsusa.co.za, <https://www.facebook.com/USwhiskeyZA/> and [@USwhiskeyZA](https://twitter.com/USwhiskeyZA)

Authentic American whiskeys, including Tennessee whiskey, rye whiskey and bourbon, are available at all good liquor stores.

Drink your whiskey responsibly. For more information: www.drinkinmoderation.org.

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