



Sip, Savor, Share: A Whiskey Tasting Host's Guide



There's something special about gathering friends around a table, sharing stories, and discovering the rich world of whiskey together. A tasting party isn't about drinking quickly — it's about slowing down, noticing the details, and enjoying the journey one sip at a time.

Each whiskey has its own story to tell: where it was made, how it was aged, and the flavors it carries. Hosting a tasting lets you explore those stories side by side, compare impressions, and learn from one another.

With this guide, you'll have everything you need: simple steps to follow, space to record your notes, and tips to make the evening memorable.

Whether you're introducing newcomers to their first bourbon or comparing fine single malts, the goal is the same — good company, good conversation, and a deeper appreciation for what's in the glass.

So pour lightly, taste slowly, and enjoy the experience. Cheers! 🍷

How to Taste Whiskey

Whiskey tasting is about slowing down and paying attention to details. Follow these steps to get the most from each pour:

Prep Your Space

Use a Glencairn or tulip glass if you have one. Keep water, a dropper, and plain crackers nearby. A neutral room (no strong scents) helps your senses focus.

Pour Lightly

Start with about ½ oz (15 ml). When tasting several whiskeys, move from lighter styles or lower proofs to bolder, higher proofs.

Let It Rest

Give the whiskey a minute or two to breathe. This lets aromas settle and develop.

Appearance

Hold the glass to the light. Notice the colour (pale gold, amber, mahogany), clarity (bright or hazy), and legs running down the glass (thin/fast vs. thick/slow).

Nose (First Impressions)

Without swirling, take short sniffs with your mouth slightly open. Note whether it's light, medium, or strong, and jot down any aromas that stand out.

Nose (After Swirl)

Gently swirl the glass, then take another sniff. Aromas often open up — look for hints of vanilla, spice, fruit, oak, or smoke.

First Sip

Take a tiny sip and let it coat your tongue. Focus on mouthfeel (light, creamy, oily, or dry) and the initial flavours that appear.

Second Sip

Now you can take a larger sip. “Chew” the whiskey gently for a few seconds. Notice how flavors evolve across your palate — sweet, spicy, smoky, or fruity.


Try with Water


Add 2–5 drops of water (especially to cask-strength). Swirl and repeat the nose/taste. You may discover new aromas and flavors.


Finish


After swallowing, notice how long the flavors linger — short, medium, or long. Pay attention to what stays behind: oak, spice, fruit, or sweetness.

Hosting Tips for a Great Whiskey Tasting


 **Group Size** – 4–8 people works best for lively conversation without crowding.


 **Number of Whiskeys** – Plan for 6–8 samples. This gives variety without overwhelming if pours are kept small.


 **Pour Size** – Keep it light: about ½ oz (15 ml) per sample. Guests can revisit favourites after the formal tasting.

 **Tasting Order** – Move from light to bold:

- Start with lower proof or delicate styles (Irish, light Scotch, softer bourbon).
- Progress to spicier ryes and richer bourbons.
- End with bold, high-proof, or smoky drams (cask strength, peated Scotch).

 **Snacks** – Offer plain crackers, bread, or mild cheeses to cleanse the palate. Avoid heavy or spicy foods that mask flavors.

 **Water** – Essential for both hydration and adding drops to explore new aromas.

 **Pacing** – Allow 10–15 minutes per whiskey, plus breaks. A relaxed 2–3 hours keeps everyone engaged without rushing.

Appearance

Start by **holding the glass** up to the light. Notice the colour, pale gold, rich amber, or deep mahogany, can hint at age or cask type.

Check the clarity: is it bright and clear, or slightly hazy?

Then tilt the glass and watch the legs (the streaks running down the side).

Thick, slow legs often suggest higher proof or richer body, while thin, quick ones may indicate a lighter spirit.

Together, these first impressions set the stage for what's to come.

Nose (Aroma)

Before sipping, gently swirl the glass and breathe in slowly. Note the intensity — is the aroma light, medium, or bold?

Try to pick out **key scents** such as vanilla, caramel, fruit, spice, smoke, or floral notes. Take your time, as aromas may change with each sniff.

Consider the balance: do the scents blend harmoniously or stand apart distinctly?

The nose can reveal both the spirit's character and complexity, offering clues about the cask type, age, and even what flavors you might expect on the palate.

Palate (Taste)

Take a small sip, letting the whiskey coat your tongue. Notice the **mouthfeel**: is it light, creamy, oily, or dry?

Focus on the **flavor notes** — sweetness (honey, caramel), spice (pepper, cinnamon), fruit (apple, cherry), wood (oak, smoke), or nuttiness.

Pay attention to how flavors develop as the whiskey lingers: do they **shift or deepen**? Think about the balance between sweet, spicy, smoky, and fruity elements.

The palate is where first impressions meet reality, showing how all the whiskey's components come together in harmony.

Finish

After swallowing, focus on the **lingering sensations**. How long do they last — a short, medium, or long finish?

Note the **dominant flavors** that remain: oak, spice, sweetness, smoke, or fruit. A smooth finish often feels rounded and satisfying, while a harsh one may burn or fade quickly.

The finish is like the final chapter, leaving you with the whiskey's lasting impression.

A **long, complex finish** is usually prized, but even shorter ones can be enjoyable, depending on the whiskey's style and personality.

Whiskey Tasting

Date _____



1

Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Whiskey Tasting

Date _____



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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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Name _____

Type _____

Age _____ Proof _____

Price _____ Purchased @ _____



Appearance

Nose

Taste

Color _____ Intensity _____ Body _____

Clarity _____ Notes _____ Flavors _____

Viscosity _____ Mouthfeel _____

Finish

Overall/Grade

Length _____ Grade /100 _____

Aftertaste _____ Buy it again? _____

Smoothness _____ Other Note _____

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