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Whisky – Use of analytical parameters and methods of analysis – Specification

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	II
Introduction	1
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Production process	2
5 Methods of analysis	2
5.1 General	2
5.2 Alcohol strength	2
5.3 Acidity	3
5.4 Higher alcohols	4
5.5 Esters	4
5.6 Aldehydes	4
5.7 Methanol	5
5.8 Furfural	5
5.9 Dry extract	5
5.10 Metals	6
5.11 NDMA (N-nitrosodimethylamine)	6
5.12 Ethyl carbamate	6
5.13 Maturation related congeners	6
6 Water/caramel quality	6
6.1 General	6
6.2 Water specification	6
<i>Table 1 — Criteria for microbiology</i>	7
6.3 Caramel specification	7
<i>Table 2 — Criteria for caramel</i>	7
7 Organoleptic characteristics	7
7.1 Sensory	7
<i>Figure 1 — Flavour wheel</i>	9
7.2 Testing the compliance of organoleptic characteristics	9
8 Chill haze	10
9 Calcium oxalate	11
10 Allergens, DNA and protein	11
11 Vegan/vegetarian status of whisky	11
12 Genetically modified organisms	12
Annex A (informative) Glossary	13
Annex B (informative) Geographical Indication status	14
Annex C (informative) Analytes of interest	14
<i>Table C.1 — Process analytes</i>	15
<i>Table C.2 — Process contaminants</i>	16
Annex D (informative) Generic and brand authenticity	16
<i>Table D.1 — Analytes and parameters</i>	16
Bibliography	19

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages I to IV, pages 1 to 19, an inside back cover and a back cover.

Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 30 September 2023. It was prepared by Technical Committee AW/13, *Whisky*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

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The provisions of this document are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “shall”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Requirements in this document are drafted in accordance with the *Rules for the structure and drafting of UK standards:2022*, subclause **G.1.1**, which states, “Requirements should be expressed using wording such as: ‘When tested as described in Annex A, the product shall ...’”. This means that only those products that are capable of passing the specified test will be deemed to conform to this document.

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Introduction

Traditional whiskies have formed consumers' expectations and understanding of what is meant by the term "whisky". It is these whiskies which have been traded internationally. Today, as a result, consumers in different markets expect whisky to be made from cereals, distilled in a certain way, aged for a minimum period in wooden casks, and sold at a strength not less than 40% alc. vol. This ensures whisky retains the colour, aroma and taste derived from its raw materials and production process.

This standard sets out the requirements which are consistent with that reputation. In particular, it provides a definition of the production process for whisky, the methods of analysis and the main categories of whisky traded globally.

1 Scope

This British Standard specifies the analytical parameters and methods of analysis used for whisky production.

NOTE The parameters and methods provided in this British Standard establish authenticity and consistency with the production process for whisky, the expected organoleptic characteristics, the typical ranges for analytes of interest and other technical matters.

This British Standard is applicable to UK distillers as well as new entrants to the industry and regulators.

This British Standard does not include operational methods/issues.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes provisions of this document¹⁾. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[BS ISO 6658](#), *Sensory analysis – Methodology – General guidance*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1 whisky

cereal-based matured spirit drink defined by its production process

NOTE 1 Whisky consists of a number of categories with their own, more specific, definitions (see the glossary in [Annex A](#)). See also [4.1](#), which specifies the production process.

NOTE 2 This British Standard covers whisky irrespective of the spelling (both whisky or whiskey can be considered).

¹⁾ Documents that are referred to solely in an informative manner are listed in the Bibliography.

4 Production process

- 4.1** Whisky is a spirit drink defined by its process; this process shall include all the following production operations:
- a) distillation of a mash made from malted cereals, with or without whole grains of unmalted cereals, which has been:
 - 1) saccharified by the diastase of the malt contained therein, with or without other natural enzymes;
 - 2) fermented by the action of yeast;and where each and every distillation is carried out at less than 94.8% volume, so that the distillate has an aroma and taste derived from the raw materials used;
 - b) maturation of the final distillate for at least three years in wooden casks not exceeding 700 litres capacity; and
 - c) bottling of the matured product, to which only water and plain caramel (for colouring) may be added.
- 4.2** The final product shall retain the colour, aroma and taste it derived from the production process in [4.1](#).
- 4.3** The minimum alcoholic strength by volume of whisky shall be 40%.
- 4.4** No addition of alcohol, diluted or not, shall take place.
- 4.5** Whisky shall not be sweetened, even for rounding off the taste, or flavoured, or contain any additives other than plain caramel (E150a) used for adjusting the colour.

NOTE 1 The colour of whisky derives primarily from the maturation cask. Colour can be adjusted by the addition of plain caramel colouring (E150a), but the resultant colour should not exceed the natural range (which ranges from pale yellow/gold to deep amber/mahogany) that can be derived from maturation in casks.

NOTE 2 Additional process requirements might be imposed by the whisky being produced within a particular UK geographic area. Information on the use of such geographical indications and the schemes used to verify them is provided in [Annex B](#).

5 Methods of analysis

5.1 General

The methods given in [5.2](#) to [5.13](#) shall be employed for the analysis of the alcohol strength, the whisky parameters and additional analytical parameters often used in whisky production quality control.

NOTE Recommended reference analysis methods that meet the method specifications and provide additional experimental detail are listed in the Bibliography, where available. More information on the analytes measured using these methods, including typical ranges, can be found in [Annex C](#). Additional methods that can be considered useful for demonstrating compliance with certain requirements of the whisky specification are presented in [Annex D](#).

5.2 Alcohol strength

COMMENTARY ON 5.2

Further information and guidance on the measurement of alcohol strength can be found in Annex, Chapter I of Regulation (EC) No. 2870/2000 [[1](#)] and in OIV-MA-BS-01, OIV-MA-BS-02, OIV-MA-BS-03,