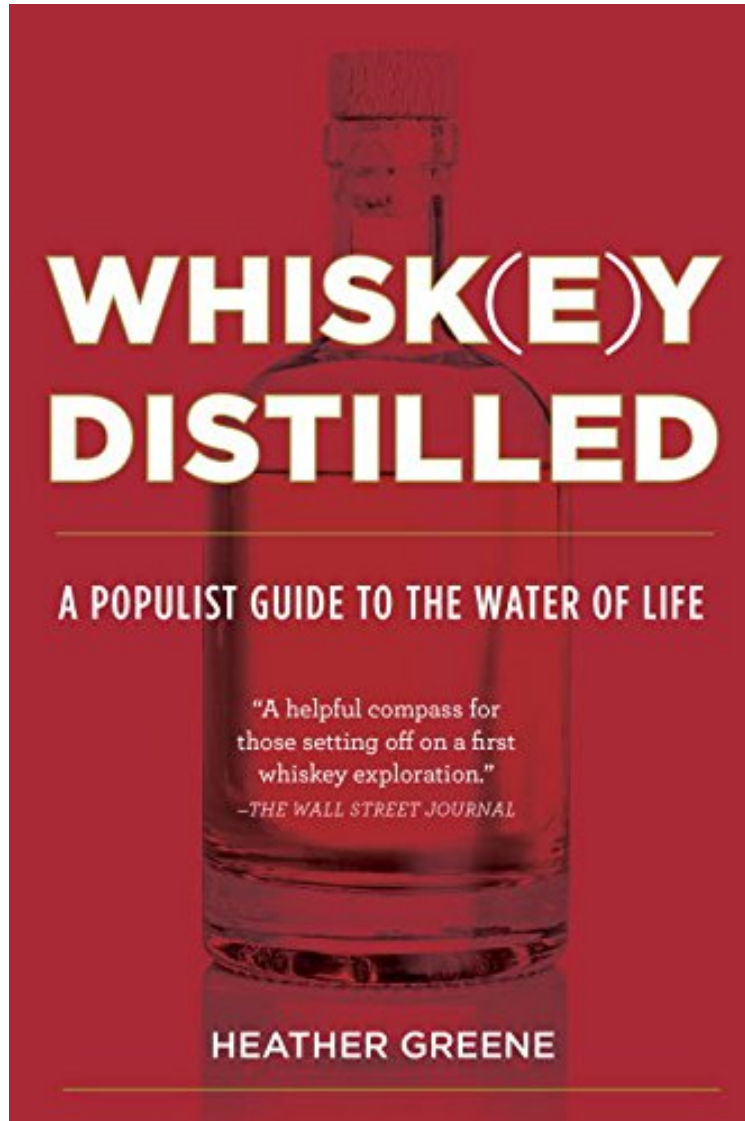


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Whiskey Distilled: A Populist Guide to the Water of Life

Heather Greene

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Heather Greene : Whiskey Distilled: A Populist Guide to the Water of Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Whiskey Distilled: A Populist Guide to the Water of Life:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. like taking a great course in whiskey appreciationBy G. RoukasI finished the book in a heartbeat and have been re-reading it to get more details. It really exposes the world of whiskey in a very simple and easily digestible way. Heather breaks down the flavor and scents of whiskey and compares them to things like the smell of grass or fresh paper. And if you're fortunate enough to find a place that has a wide selection

of whiskeys, you can sneak this book in and use it to help you order, as I have done several times...4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Heather Greene has created the whiskey book I have been looking for. By Kovar McClure Heather Greene has created the whiskey book I have been looking for. Taking me from zero to hero in a short time. I have always loved whiskey (bartending for years) and am starting my home whiskey collection just as this book happened to hit the shelves. Lucky me. I now have the entry point I needed to create the collection that fits my personality and also be knowledgeable about it. Mrs. Greene has organized the material in a way that is easily digested and accessible to the enthusiast like myself. Already I am going back over the passages I highlighted to remember to use and impress my friends as we taste different whiskeys in my home. Great read, and great info. Well done. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Solid primer for whiskey terminology and guidance for finding what you might like. By FunnyId Really enjoyable read. Plenty of lists and good descriptions to help you appreciate the nuances of whiskey. Docking the book one star because the tables in the book were really difficult to read in the Kindle format. Recommend this book to anyone who is interested in getting a solid understanding of the breadth of the market for whiskey.

In the populist tradition of Andrea Immer, New York City's first female whiskey sommelier translates today's hottest spirit for a new generation of imbibers. Whiskey is in the midst of a huge renaissance. Ten years ago, the United States housed sixty-nine craft distillers; today, there are more than four hundred. Exports of Scotch whisky grew 12 percent just last year. Sales are skyrocketing, and specialty bars are popping up around the country, from New York City to Chicago to Houston. Yet whiskey drinkers—especially novices—are more confused than ever. Over the past decade, whiskey expert Heather Greene has been bombarded with thousands of questions, including Can I have ice in my whiskey? Why is it sometimes spelled 'whisky'? What makes bourbon different? As New York City's first female whiskey sommelier, Greene introduces audiences to the spirit's charms and challenges the boys' club sensibilities that have made whiskey seem inaccessible, with surprising new research that shows the crucial importance of 'nosin' whiskey. Through lively tastings, speaking engagements, and classes such as the popular 'Whiskey as an Aphrodisiac,' Greene has been demystifying whiskey the way Andrea Immer did wine a decade ago. In this lively and authoritative guide, Greene uses bright visuals, an easy-to-read format, and the familiar vocabulary of wine to teach readers about whiskey and encourage them to make their own evaluations. Peppared with wry anecdotes drawn from her unusual life—and including recipes for delicious cocktails by some of today's most celebrated mixologists—Whiskey Distilled will be enthusiastically greeted by the whiskey curious as well as by journeymen whiskey drinkers thirsty to learn more about their beloved tittle.

'A helpful compass for those setting off on a first whiskey exploration.'—The Wall Street Journal 'With every passing day, the peril of sounding like an idiot when talking about—or even referring to—whiskey grows. Don't let it happen to you. You should know this stuff. With Whiskey Distilled, Heather Greene makes it easy for you. She makes it deeply enjoyable. And her comprehensive, essential guide to what you need to know about whiskey will make you want to start drinking whiskey immediately.'—Anthony Bourdain 'Heather Greene surveys the ever-changing whiskey landscape, and all the nitty-gritty details, effortlessly in chapters that read like a night out with a friend at a bar. Her humble, practical approach makes this a must read for those who'd like a spirited guide along the whiskey trail.'—Jim Meehan, author of The PDT Cocktail Book 'Heather Greene distills whiskey down to its basic elements without losing any of the complexity of the spirit. Tasting notes: notes of strong experience, spicy storytelling, and bold wit.'—Eric Ripert, chef/co-owner, Le Bernardin 'If ignorance is bliss, then I must sincerely resent Heather Greene's excellent volume for decidedly diminishing my ignorance on the subject of whisk(e)y.'—Nick Offerman, author of Paddle Your Own Canoe About the Author Heather Greene is the director of the Whiskey School at the Flatiron Room in Manhattan, which offers courses on tasting and history that sell out every time. She lives in New York City. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. VIKING STUDIO Published by the Penguin Group Penguin Group (USA) LLC 375 Hudson Street New York, New York 10014 USA | Canada | UK | Ireland | Australia | New Zealand | India | South Africa | China penguin.com A Penguin Random House Company First published by Viking Studio, a member of Penguin Group (USA) LLC, 2014 Copyright copy; 2014 by Heather Greene Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin to continue to publish books for every reader. Photographs copy; Steve Giralt Drawings by John Burgoyne LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA Greene, Heather. Whiskey distilled : a populist guide to the water of life / Heather Greene. pages cm Includes index. ISBN 978-0-698-16985-21. Whiskey. I. Title. TP605.G76 2014663'.52—dc23 2014022310 To Ms. Kathleen Mary Orr (aka mom) Whose's always up for travel,

shenanigans, and drinking whiskey with me

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Introduction: What's a Spirits Sommelier?
THIS IS A BOOK about whiskey, so I will begin it by describing my own first taste one summer between eighth and ninth grades. It happened on a Saturday afternoon behind Kenny Bash's house. Kenny was the neighborhood troublemaker. As I sat on the hard plastic board of his rusted-out, squeaky swing set, dragging my bare feet back and forth on a patch of dirt, he handed me a plastic liter container of bright orange soda and commanded, "Take a sip." After a quick swig, I gagged, and his cruel bray of adolescent laughter followed. "Take more," he said. "It's Jack." This was dangerous territory and I knew it. In a panic, I hurried back home, terrified that my parents would find out about the Jack. I shoved a fistful of grass into my mouth—I'd heard that grass hides the smell of alcohol. When my parents didn't notice, I thanked my lucky stars and promised myself that I'd never drink whiskey again. I've spent the past ten years breaking that promise. Today I am the Director of Whiskey Education at The Flatiron Room Whiskey School in Manhattan and I teach whiskey classes there every week. I'm also the restaurant's sommelier, which is a word that comes from nineteenth-century French and essentially means butler. I didn't sit whiskey tests to become one (there aren't any) nor do I mean to turn anyone off with a word that can sound pretentious. Truth is, what I do is very butlerlike: I roam the floor, serve guests, and pluck a few personal details out of them to help them find the whiskey they will love. "What wine or cocktail do you normally drink?" I might ask, or, "What do you like to eat?" Then I'll hunt down the perfect whiskey—out of the thousand or so The Flatiron Room stocks—to suit their palate. On days I'm not at The Flatiron Room, I write about whiskey for a couple of magazines. And when I'm not doing that, I'm often out on the town with a friend or my husband, checking out a new cocktail bar or restaurant that serves my favorite spirit. I guess you could say I've essentially built a career on drinking Jack. In a move my colleagues and a few friends found odd, in 2012 I left my "sweet-ass" job as a "whiskey ambassador" to join The Flatiron Room and write. As an ambassador to Glenfiddich, "world's number one selling single malt Scotch," I enjoyed dazzling perks like international travel and a corporate card that allowed me to buy a nice steak dinner for dozens at high-end strip joints and country clubs, if you're into that sort of thing. I can rattle off some of the best places in the United States to find hedonistic entertainment, and I've played golf (badly) on famous courses like those at Turnberry in Scotland. I even climbed Kilimanjaro in Tanzania for charity during a blizzard wearing Glenfiddich-branded gear, and slept in it too, perched on the side of a cliff in a quivering tent. At each dinner, corporate function, golf tournament, charity gala, magazine interview, TV spot, fashion show, private yacht trip, private plane trip, car show, and even rodeo, my role was the same: to make my audience fall in love with whiskey. Oh, and to use Glenfiddich while doing it. Someone asked every other night whether I "really liked Glenfiddich" or if there was some other whiskey I secretly drank in private. While I never admitted that I had secret lovers, I'd be true in my answer: I chose to work as an ambassador for Glenfiddich because I liked it in the first place, not the other way around. It's also a brand that aficionados love for its collectibility and taste—I stood next to a bidder at the base of the Statue of Liberty during a Glenfiddich charity auction and watched in awe as he won the bottle for close to a hundred thousand dollars. It was a good gig. But relationships evolve. I started to feel a nagging love for bourbon, rye, Japanese whiskies, Irish whiskeys, and a bevy of other exciting spirits, and soon I needed to spend more time with them, too. So Glenfiddich and I split. Whiskey monogamy just isn't my thing. By the end of this book, it won't be yours, either. The most important thing I've learned by hosting events—whether they're for a hundred corporate executives on behalf of a big whiskey company or for two guests at The Flatiron Room—is how to talk about it. And, while speaking to thousands (yes, that's right, thousands) of whiskey drinkers, my goal is to demystify whiskey and answer questions like: How do you taste whiskey? What are you supposed to smell? Do you swirl whiskey like wine? Can you put ice in a whiskey? Water? What does "small batch" mean? Why is Johnnie Walker Blue so expensive? What is moonshine? Why does this bottle say "non-chill filtered"? How do you store it? Can you make money by investing in it? Can women drink it? Today, American whiskey sales alone top \$1 billion, up from \$376 million about a decade ago. Its popularity is growing faster than the good information available on the topic. And some of the advice out there is just plain off the mark. I've read blogs written by brutish whiskey fans that say certain (critically acclaimed) brands aren't even good enough to use as a toilet cleaner, and that to drink them means you have no taste. But taste is subjective. I've heard brand ambassadors explain that whiskey won't make you drunk, but tequila will. Nonsense. I read nosing notes on Web sites and in books that go on for as many pages as Moby Dick. But the truth is, most experts can realistically identify five distinct aromas. I listened to a tourist guide for a famous American whiskey distillery explain to thirty of us that all Scotch tastes like smoke. Not true. My role here, then, is to sift through all the junky information out there, and give you a

real primer of whiskeys, so that you'll be able to identify bunk like a champ and become an expert yourself. You'll taste along the way and have fun, too. And the Number One Question Is...? "How did someone like you [a chick] get into whiskey?" It's a question asked a dozen times per day and sometimes I just don't feel like explaining myself—I prefer to get right into nosing and tasting. But someone like me needs to "establish credibility," according to one CEO who attended my tasting. I resisted that advice for years, but he was right. Now I always explain my background. The result? First, guests cease fact-checking things I say with their iPhones tucked under the table, and second, I don't have to answer "Do you really drink this stuff?" after I've taught a ninety-minute class.

How I Got into Whiskey

Before whiskey, there was music. As a professional solo musician for close to ten years, I poured my heart and soul into the creation of song, the rigor of touring, the passion of singing, and the pure joy of playing keyboard. I had recorded two albums, which received wildly wonderful reviews in New York City, and I was performing in front of rapidly growing audiences. From the outside, my music career appeared wonderfully on track, but my bank account told a different story. After I had one sold-out concert in New York City, an appearance on WFUV in New York, and even a European Rolling Stone review in anticipation of an upcoming tour, a friend (who had also just completed a European tour with a world-famous musician) asked me for twenty bucks because "cash flow was tough." We were on the corner of Broadway and 4th Street, right next to a boarded-up Virgin Records store. I went to get money, and instead of hearing the comforting electronic patter of bills being sorted inside the ATM machine, the dreaded Funds Not Available sign flashed on the screen. We walked back to the club where we had just performed and shamelessly asked our bass-player friend to get us both—two "professional" musicians—home in his truck. The advent of new technology and iTunes had officially tossed the music world upside down, and none of us were making money anymore. What should have started looking like a lucrative (finally!) career became a barrage of confusion, record-label fights, and overall heartbreak for just about every musician I knew, including myself. Around this same time, my husband was accepted to graduate school in Edinburgh, Scotland. We packed our stuff and left Manhattan during the fall of 2005. I very quickly went from a "struggling musician with promise" to a struggling musician, period. The high of an Italian performance in Rome was followed by the lows of phone calls I made begging the label to pay me what they owed. My life became an emotional roller coaster, and I was terribly homesick for the fast-paced New York life I'd left, with my community of musicians, weekly gigs, and the easy access to recording studios. During one of my lavish pity parties, my husband turned to me and said that I really needed to do something. So I went out drinking. I was hired on my first day out "looking for something to do" by a gentleman called Douglas McFarlane, who spoke with a chowder-thick Scottish accent and managed the Scotch Malt Whisky Society (SMWS), a private membership bar for Scotch whisky lovers. I learned about the job by reading a Help Wanted ad in a local paper and it seemed like a fun way to meet some cool people and be Scottish-y. In my experience, working in restaurants and bars immerses one quickly into a local scene and its cast of characters. That it was a whisky venue was a total bonus. I discovered that I liked whiskey when I was working as a waiter at the Union Square Cafe in Manhattan. The beverage director there had conducted a few whiskey tastings to help the staff better sell the stuff and I realized that there was more to whiskey than taking a shot or mixing it with Coke. The SMWS lives in a corner of a Harry Potter-esque seventeenth-century green and wet stone building. Two large fireplaces flank one side of an oak-lined room. One of the employees would later show me how to wrap my fingers around panels, moldings, door frames, and windowsills to scale the periphery of the room without touching the floor, like a rock climber. That's what British schoolboys sometimes do, I learned. To the left of the front entrance of the room, there is an exquisite collection of whiskey, representing almost every distillery that has ever operated in Scotland. Bottles line shelves in neat rows and bartenders serve whisky from a small, shiny wooden bar. Members take their "dram" to one of a few long library tables and enjoy it alongside the daily paper and a tuna sandwich. When I worked there, guests at SMWS included a smattering of locals who chatted about how to salmon fish or grow brambles, and a few passing American Scotch-drinking enthusiasts on their way to play golf at places like St. Andrews. I spent my first day at the SMWS with Doug, tasting cask-strength whisky (whisky straight out of the cask at a higher proof), playing with a miniature whisky-making model, and testing my sensory skills with a nosing kit that always sat on the bar for guests to test their sense of smell. The kit held little samples of lavender, herbs, spices, and vanilla tucked into little glass jars. Douglas's passion for whisky echoed my own for writing songs and performing; he talked about flavor and smell with the same fervor I talked about keyboard riffs. I was hooked—creativity and sensuality lived in whisky making and appreciation, too. From that point on, my life would be a balancing act between two great loves. Within a few months of my working at SMWS, Doug invited me to sit with a bunch of whisky experts to do cask tastings and discuss whether the whiskies we tried were delicious enough to bottle and sell under the SMWS label. In a strange twist of fate, one of the regular panelists backed out for a singing gig, so I took his spot. I was very nervous. I was still a student, I felt, not yet someone worthy enough to be on a judging panel. Tasting whiskey and writing notes about it, it turns out, is a good time. I approached the task the same way I'd sit down to write a song: without self-ridicule and with eagerness. And because I had worked in so many Manhattan restaurants with killer wine lists, I figured some of the same notes I used to describe wine to guests could

also describe whiskey characteristics. I was right. Whiskey, wine, and even music share a common language or, pun intended, notes. Here are a few examples that come to mind: "vanilla" (Barry Manilow), "honeyed" (Ella Fitzgerald), "complex" (Bob Dylan), "rich" (Adele), "fresh and thin" (Taylor Swift), "bold" (Eminem), and "smoky" (Peggy Lee). So there you have it. I honed my whiskey chops by both channeling my passion for music into it and capitalizing on a wine vocabulary amassed from years of restaurant work.

A Note for You Wine Lovers I make comparisons between whiskey and wine throughout the book because I know many of you come to whiskey with a working knowledge of the wine world. I see this in my classes and in the type of questions I get, like "What vintage is particularly good for whiskey?" Pascaline Lepeltier, a skilled sommelier who runs what The New York Times called the best wine program in New York City at Rouge Tomate, has given me some additional insight about whiskey from the wine perspective. We once hosted a class together called Whiskey for the Wine Lover, and I admired her ability to help narrow whiskey choices based on wine so much that I'm including her recommendations in this book. I'm also excited about our quick-look whiskey versus wine chart. You'll find both of these charts in the appendix at the end of the book.

Make Cocktails, Too Hemant Pathak and Alex Valencia, two bartenders I work with at The Flatiron Room, will provide you with ingredients and techniques for how to make a fabulous whiskey cocktail in chapter 5. The three of us spent countless hours experimenting with different whiskeys, each with varying flavor profiles, to come up with a few fun cocktails for you to try at home. We've included both simple concoctions and ones that challenge the skillful chef. I don't know many bartenders who are skilled at making such mind-blowing whiskey drinks as these men are, but what really impresses me about both Alex and Hemant is their elegance and humility behind the bar, as well as the cultural element they bring to their cocktail making. Hemant, who was born and raised in India, will cultivate your whiskey love by combining the spirit with ingredients like cardamom and Darjeeling while Alex's playful use of smoke and fruit are a nod to mescal and the vibrant colors that surrounded him as a boy in Mexico.

But first, the fundamentals. In the next few chapters, we'll dive headfirst into the basics: whiskey appreciation, how to discover your palate, whiskey regions, and whiskey making 101. And the best part? I'll guide you through tastings in each chapter. And, I'll cultivate your whiskey love by introducing you to distillers, writers, master blenders, scientists, chefs, restaurant owners, and even whiskey-loving presidents. So drink up! We've got a whole world of whiskey to explore.

Whiskey Fundamentals Appreciation 101 and Finding Your Palate
What Is Whiskey?