

Supplies:

- barware: coupe, collins, double-old fashioned, lewis bag, mallet
- spirits (williams): cognac, rittenhouse bonded, old overholt, grenadine, oregeat, gomme and simple syrup
- spirits (home): kirschwasser, poire eau de vie, calvados, maccu pisco, benedictine,
- citrus: lemons, limes
- sundries: ice chest, ice, two water pitchers, paring knife, cutting board, medicine dropper, mint

1 Brandy

Like other spirits, brandy came about as a way to preserve a perishable good. In this case, that good was fermented grapes. Of course, fermentation helps with preservation too, but you're just slowing down the train. Distillation puts on the brakes. In the 16th century the Dutch traveled to Cognac and applied their distillation technology to wine to produce brandwijn (burnt wine) and later, in the 17th century, added another round of distillation to produce brandy. [2] At this point, the brandy was unaged—this is typically called eau-de-vie—but “delays in loading the boats, resulted in the discovery that the spirit improved with age in oak casks made from wood from the neighboring Limousin forest and that it could be drunk straight.” [2]

Cognac

Brandy comes in all shapes and sizes, but its queen, is almost surely Cognac which is an appellation similar to Champagne.¹ The appellation controls the region, type of grape, aging period, and the oak type, among other things. The first Cognac house was Augier. It was established in 1643. Others include, Martell (1715), Remy Martin (1724), Delamain (1759) Hennessy (1765), Hine (1791), and Otard 1795). [2].

Here are some tips for reading a bottle of cognac (or, in general, brandy) [2]:

VS (Very Special) The youngest eau de vie is at least 2 years old.

VSOP (Very Superior Old Pale) The youngest eau-de-vie in the blend is at least 4 years old.

XO (Extra Old) The youngest eau-de-vie in the blend is at least 6 years old.

More often than not, the XO is where cognac houses start to distinguish themselves and the aging, in practice is much longer than 6 years.

Eau de Vie

Eau de Vie is a double distillate of fruit. These days, most people consider eau de vie to be a fruit brandy that is not a grape brandy. Most eaux de vie comes from Europe, but there are several US distillers (the most notable is Clear Creek) that produce fine brandies include pear (poire), kirsch (sour, morello cherries), pomme (apple) and apricot (marillen).

Calvados

Calvados is apple brandy from the Normandy region of France that has been aged in oak casks for at least two years. The appellation carries other requirements, similar to Cognac. A map of the appellation regions is in Figure 1.

¹I can only find the law in French (see <http://www.cognac.fr/cognac/pdf/vitivini/CE1102008.pdf>) although Google Translate provides a pretty good translation

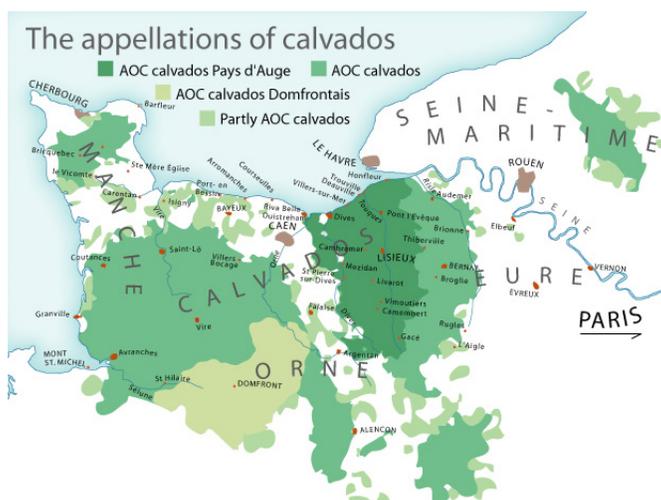


Figure 1: The appellation for Calvados by region (source: Henrik Mattson)

Applejack

Applejack is 100 proof apple brandy cut with a neutral grain spirit down to 35% apple brandy. It's name comes from the method used to distill hard apple cider into brandy. Hard cider was left outside to freeze. As bits of the cider became colder and froze, they were scraped away. This scraped bits were a dilute solution of alcohol in water (not just water) but the remaining liquid was richer in alcohol. The chemistry is actually pretty complicated. Anyway, this process is called *jacking* and it is how Applejack got its name.

Cider was abundant in the late 17th century because settlers in America were weary of water—they brought apple seeds with them and were happy to drink apple cider but cider went bad (which is why they turned it into hard cider) but it also eventually went bad which is where the brandy came from.

Apple brandy is the oldest distilled American spirit.

In 1698, Williams Laird created his own apple brandy and started serving it to his friends. In 1760, Robert Laird, William's grandson, was a revolutionary war soldier and served under George Washington. Records indicate that Laird's supplied apple brandy to the troops and that George Washington himself wrote to Laird's asking for the recipe. The first recorded sale of Applejack was 1780. In 1849, the apple jack distillery in Colts Neck, NJ burned down and in 1851 a new facility was built in Scobeyville, NJ. It still operates today under Larrie Laird. The Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandson of William.

During Prohibition, Laird's produced sweet cider and applesauce. In 1933, the federal government granted Laird and Company a license to produce apple brandy for medicinal purposes which allowed them to keep a store of apple brandy so that when the Volstead act was repealed in late 1933 they could hit the ground running.

Today Laird's produces a bonded apple brandy, a 7.5 year apple brandy, and a rare 12 year apple brandy. It takes 20 pounds of apples to produce the bonded version and 6 points of apples to produce applejack.

Pisco

Pisco is a pot-distilled grape brandy from Peru. Eight different varieties of grape are allowed [1] and there are several styles produced which involve the aromaticity and pureness of the grape. Pisco is rested for 3 months and bottled at proof.

2 Juleps

Originally medicine, Juleps are now a staple of the Kentucky Derby. The

3 Recipes

The following recipes highlight brandy of all sorts.

Brandy Julep (Original Mint Julep)

- 3 oz Brandy
- 1 Tblsp superfine sugar + 2.5 Tblsp water (sub 1 Tblsp gomme syrup)
- 8-10 mint leaves

Muddle mint with gomme syrup in a double old fashioned, julep, or pint glass and fill glass 3/4 full of crushed ice. Pour in brandy, swizzle, and top glass with more ice. Garnish with mint sprig. To make this a traditional mint julep, simply substitute high proof bourbon for the brandy. Kentucky Derby juleps often have additional fruit garnishes (these are in the tradition of Jerry Thomas).

The Lizzie Asher (Ryan Lotz)

- 2 oz Macchu Pisco
- 1 oz Lemon Juice
- 1/2 oz Apricot Liqueur
- 1/2 oz Creme Yvette (substitute Rothman and Winter Creme de Violette)
- 1 Egg White

Shake once without ice and shake again with ice. Strain into a highball glass and top with 2 oz of ginger beer. Twist an orange peel over the top and add a straw.

Perfect Pear (Marco Dionysos)

- 2 oz Pear Brandy
- 3/4 oz Lemon Juice
- 1/2 oz Orange Juice
- 1/2 oz Simple Syrup

Japanese Cocktail

- 2 oz Cognac
- 1/2 oz Orgeat
- 2 dashes Angostura Bitters

Stir with ice and strain into a chilled coupe. Garnish with a lemon twist.

Jack Rose

- 2 oz. Applejack (Laird's bonded is preferred, but blended will do)
- 3/4 oz. lemon juice
- 3/4 oz. housemade grenadine

No garnish (a lemon or lime wedge is historical, but modern makings eliminate it).

Vieux Carre

- 1 oz Cognac
- 1 oz Rye
- 1 oz Sweet Vermouth
- 1 barspoon Benedictine
- 1-2 dashes Peychauds
- 1-2 dashes Angostura

Stir with ice and strain into a double old-fashioned with a single block (sphere) of ice. Garnish with a flamed orange,

References

- [1] J. Meehan and C. Gall. *The PDT Cocktail Book*. Sterling Epicure, 2011.
- [2] N. B. of Cognac Professionals. The cognac encyclopedia. <http://www.pediacognac.com/>.