



# ULTIMATE SPIRITS CHALLENGE

KNOW THE SCORE

## 2013 Ultimate Spirits Challenge

### Great Values

Ultimate Spirits Challenge 2013 recognizes the following products as **Great Values**: products with a favorable relationship between their price and final score at USC. They are the finest spirits within their respective price points.



#### A note on the icons:



**Product Image:** to assist you with visual identification, we've included an image for each product evaluated. (Please note that age statements, vintages or label may vary slightly from the specific product evaluated but it represents a helpful portrayal of the brand.) *Click icon to view.*



**Purchase Now:** a selection of products that achieved high scores which can be ordered directly from **Astor Wines & Spirits**, a leading New York retailer. Clicking on the icon will take you directly to that product's page on Astor's web site, where you can place your order for delivery. *Click icon to view.*

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### Aperitif

Award	Score	
Finalist	90	<b>Aperol Aperitif Italy, 11% abv, \$22.00, 750 ml</b>  Bright pink orange hue. Zesty orange and ruby red grapefruit aromas. The palate resembles the bouquet, while offering sweet flavors and grapefruit peel. Bright and zippy. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	89	<b>Casoni '1814' Aperitif Italy, 15% abv, \$18.00, 750 ml</b> Red orange in color. The nose is herbacious and citrus driven. Sweet, candied oranges, dominate the palate, with a long, sweet finish and notes of pine and eucalyptus. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation</b>
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Vodka		
Unflavored Vodka		
Award	Score	

Chairman's Trophy	94	<b>Tahoe Blue Vodka United States, 40% abv, \$29.99, 750 ml</b>	
		Crystal clear. Offers a clean nose of minerals and apricot kernel, both following on the palate, along with a hint of Carr's water crackers and freshly pressed grape juice. Clean with subtle complexities. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>	
Finalist	93	<b>American Harvest Organic Spirit Vodka United States, 40% abv, \$23.99, 750 ml</b>	
		Lively aromas of green apples, pears and minerals. Flavors are of delicate flowers and Bosc pears with hints of sweetness here and there. Texture starts light and silky, mouth coating, and finishes starchy. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>	
Finalist	93	<b>Boru Vodka Ireland, 40% abv, \$18.00, 750 ml</b>	
		Immaculately clean. Very fresh on the nose with an astonishingly delicate floral bouquet with faint traces of cucumber. In the mouth it opens with a satisfying grainy sweetness followed by cucumber, minerals and, citrus pith before lingering on the palate. Finishes very smooth. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>	
Finalist	93	<b>Fuzzy's Ultra Premium Vodka United States, 40% abv, \$23.99, 750 ml</b>	
		Starting off with strong aromas of biscuit dough and a extremely subtle touch of sweet smoke, it moves into a well rounded body and faint lychee and coconut water flavors before a smooth, crisp finish. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>	
Finalist	93	<b>Khortytza Platinum Vodka Ukraine, 40% abv, \$13.99, 750 ml</b>	
		Incredibly clean and clear, subtle aromas of peach, apricot, sweetgrass and perhaps a hint of lychee rise from the glass. A very faint trace of blossom is interlaced on the nose as well. In the mouth it is full, rich and defined with flavors of stone fruits, a vegetal sweetness and grains. A crisp finish follows with lingering sweetness. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>	

Finalist	93	<b>Khortytza Ultimate Vodka Ukraine, 40% abv, \$13.99, 750 ml</b>
		Clear and clean with essences of spring water and a hint of toasted wheat. A faint trace of fruit stone comes into play as well. Once in the mouth it is mellow and balanced with a starchy sweetness and a deep mineral complex. Incredibly smooth finish. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	92	<b>EPIC Classic Vodka France, 40% abv, \$12.99, 750 ml</b>
		Clean and aromatic with a delicate nose with citrus pith opening up into orange blossom and cucumber. In the mouth, citrus reveals itself again and alludes to a grainy sweetness and sugarcane. The finish is light and perfumed with a lingering sweetness. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	92	<b>Luksusowa Vodka Poland, 40% abv, \$15.00, 750 ml</b>
		Appears spotless and clear. Waxy potato texture, with a long finish. There is a little heat from the alcohol but this merely adds to what is otherwise a very silky vodka. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	92	<b>UV Vodka United States, 40% abv, \$12.99, 750 ml</b>
		Wonderfully clean and clear with aromas of cucumber, leaf greens and blossoms filling your nose. Delicate aromas of starch are also present. Rich in the mouth but has a delicate grainy sweetness and very subtle flavors of orange peel, cucumber and grape. Cucumber endures onto the invigorating finish where grains are also present. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	91	<b>Cinco Five Star Vodka United States, 40% abv, \$22.99, 750 ml</b>
		Very light aromas of cucumbers and spring water. Rich texture, almost viscous in the mouth, smooth all the way through. Very round flavors of sweet ripe cucumbers with hints of Thai basil. Warming. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>

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91 **Finlandia Classic Vodka Finland, 40% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

A speckless appearance, with a nose that is clean and neutral. On the palate, the texture glides, while the taste is fresh, clean and pure with a hint of rocky minerals. Flawless. USC 2013.

**Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Platinka Original Vodka Belarus, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml**

Flawless in appearance. The nose is pristine, with a hint of cucumber and fresh spring water all follow through on the palate, along with a slick texture and a snappy clean finish.

USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Poland's Select Vodka Poland, 40% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

Clean and clear with fresh and delicate aromas of peach, cucumber and sweetgrass. A wonderful grainy sweetness fills the mouth followed by subtle traces of peach and minerals. A very smooth and crisp finish ensues. USC 2013. **Great Value.**

**Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Shpilka Vodka Russia, 35% abv, \$22.99, 750 ml**

Soft aromas of spring water and minerals. Light in the mouth with a starchy texture and silky body. Sweet and savory undertones of herbs and white pepper. Fresh vegetables like cucumber and jicama on the finish. Hearty and refreshing. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Grand Argent Vodka France, 40% abv, \$12.99, 750 ml**

Wonderfully crisp and clean, with hints of starch, mineral water and fruit stone on the nose. A soft and mellow sweetness is joined by fruit stone and a delectably subtle trace of sour cherry on the palate. The finish is perfectly succinct. USC 2013.

**Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Vesica Vodka Poland, 40% abv, \$12.99, 750 ml**

Very clean and fresh on the nose with exciting, yet subtle aromas of grape, tangerine and stone fruits. Stone fruits open up vividly in the mouth as well as a potato sweetness.

Subdued flavors of grape also come into play. Grape lasts well into the incredibly smooth finish. USC 2013. **Great Value.**

**Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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89 **Pearl Vodka Canada, 40% abv, \$12.99, 750 ml**

As clear as mineral water. Offers notes of calcium minerals in the perfume, while the palate has a cereal sweetness about it, reminiscent of oatmeal. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Vodka

Flavored Vodka

Award	Score	
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Chairman's Trophy	95	<b>HOPHEAD Pot Stilled Hop Flavored Vodka United States, 45% abv, \$29.99, 750 ml</b>
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Clean and clear. Distinct aromas of hops, copper and yeasty beer, almost sour and very piquant. Dry and opulent in the mouth with light and soft texture, like fresh mineral water with pleasantly subtle overtones of hops, perfectly balanced. Intriguing and refreshing. USC 2013. **Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation**

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89 **Finlandia Raspberry Flavored Vodka Finland, 37.5% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

Raspberries leap from the glass followed by much more restrained notes of pear and biscuit dough. In the mouth, confectionery raspberry is joined by the pear flavor and they lead into a very soft and perfumed finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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88 **Finlandia Grapefruit Flavored Vodka Finland, 37.5% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

Ripe grapefruit and honeysuckle come forth on the nose. Very light in the mouth, showing ripe grapefruit at the front and a touch of grape. Finish is perfumed and lingering. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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88 **Finlandia Tangerine Flavored Vodka Finland, 37.5% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

Smooth and lively aromas of tangerine, lemon and white flowers. Semisweet with a light and soft consistency. Flavors of mineral water and citrus fruits are mellow and pleasing. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Aquavit

Chairman's Trophy Awarded to Linie Aquavit for Consistent Excellence

Award	Score	
Chairman's Trophy	96	<p><b>Linie Aquavit Norway, 41.5% abv, \$26.99, 750 ml</b></p> <p>Light amber color, very bright and clear. Subtle aromas of orange peel are deep and clean, with undertones of dried fruit. In the mouth it is dry and savory, suede in texture with with slight sweet spice, nutmeg, caraway, and dried orange peel. Exceptionally balanced and smooth. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation</b></p>
Gin		
Award	Score	
Chairman's Trophy	96	<p><b>Fords Gin United Kingdom, 45% abv, \$34.99, 1 L</b></p> <p>Crisp and clean. Forest like aromas of pine with sweet Thai basil fill the nose. In the mouth flavors are full of sweet herbs and a touch of black pepper. It is smooth and lively on the tongue. Ultimately refreshing. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation</b></p>
Finalist	95	<p><b>Door County Distillery Ridges Lighthouse Gin United States, 47% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml</b></p> <p>The nose is loaded with notes of anise, juniper, fennel and cardamom. The palate has a milky texture and very spicy palate reminiscent of an Indian spice cupboard. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation</b></p>
Finalist	95	<p><b>Tanqueray London Dry Gin United Kingdom, 47.3% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml</b></p> <p>Intensely perfumed and woody on the nose with juniper rushing forward followed by a delicate hint of coriander. The taste profile follows suit with more juniper, damson plum and an elegant, mineral driven sweetness. Also displays a fresh, citrus quality. Finishing lightly fruity, it boasts a warm, lingering sweetness. Wonderful. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation</b></p>
Finalist	94	<p><b>Beefeater London Dry Gin United Kingdom, 47% abv, \$20.00, 750 ml</b></p> <p>Fresh and mellow. Sweet citrus aromas mix with thyme and rosemary. The flavor is dense and concentrated in the mouth with a good bit of spice. It is dry with distant hints of sweet oranges. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b></p>

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89 **Greenall's London Dry Gin United Kingdom, 40% abv, \$14.99, 750 ml**

Starting off fresh and lean, plum and floral aromas follow. Very mellow in the mouth and offering hints of cedar and vanilla. This is all wrapped up in a smooth, dry and grainy finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Rum

Rum

**Award**

**Score**

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94 **Bacardi 8 Rum United States, 40% abv, \$22.99, 750 ml**

Aromas of candied apples play nicely with mild sweet spice and brown sugar. The flavor profile is dry with hints of sweetness here and there that deepen the flavor of dark brown sugar and spice. It is silky in the mouth, all the way through to the lightly smoky finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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94 **Diplomatico Reserva 8 Years Old Rum Venezuela, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml**

Reminiscent of sherry with aromas of vanilla, baked cherries, raisins, honeysuckle and orange blossom. In the mouth it has profound depth of flavor and brown sugar, vanilla, and dried apricot flavors are balanced by a sherry-like mineral complexity. Baked cherries and delicate hints of vanilla and honey make up the exquisite finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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93 **Vizcaya Cask 12 Dark Rum Dominican Rep., 40% abv, \$20.00, 750 ml**

Aromas of vanilla, shortbread and baked cherries fill the glass and also suggest a deeper floral character. Very rich mouthfeel, the vanilla is complemented by the baked cherries which last well into the finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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92 **Diplomatico Añejo 4 Years Old Rum Venezuela, 40% abv, \$13.99, 750 ml**

An exuberant nose filled with aromas of caramel and custard. Notes of sweet sherry are revealed on the palate, showing prune, cream, and creme brulee flavors. The finish is long and complex. A sumptuous spirit. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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92 **J. Wray & Nephew Overproof Rum Jamaica, 63% abv, \$22.00, 750 ml**

Powerful aromas of coconut water, lychee, passion fruit, lime zest and a hint of fresh aloe vera leap from the glass and fill your nose. In the mouth it is rich with flavors of lychee, toasted coconut, aloe and lime zest. The finish is fairly bold with delicious hints of lychee and lime lingering on the palate. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Bacardi 1873 Solera Rum United States, 40% abv, \$22.99, 750 ml**

Beautiful amber color. Ripe mango, sweet spice, vanilla and toasted coconut aromas with a hint of baked apricot. In the mouth its all about toasted coconut and ripe mango but also alludes to vanilla. These flavors shine through on the smooth finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Cruzan Aged Dark Rum USVI, 40% abv, \$13.00, 750 ml**

The nose is evocative of orange peel, cinnamon and other baking spices, in particular, nutmeg. The palate is viscous and shows balanced oak and orange peel with good acidity and a long finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Blue Chair Bay White Label Rum Barbados, 40% abv, \$18.99, 750 ml**

A beautiful and delicate bouquet of orange blossom, ripe apricot, sugarcane, almond and vanilla bean. Once in the mouth, vanilla, almond and dried apricots take the stage followed by a touch of citrus zest. The finish is soft and smooth. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Tanduay Asian Silver Rum Philippines, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml**

Clean and crisp aromas of Asian pear, minerals and mountain spring. It is dry in the mouth with a smooth consistency and some vegetal sweetness like cucumbers and ripe summer green beans. Smacks of freshness. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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89 **Bacardi Gold Rum United States, 40% abv, \$14.99, 750 ml**

Dried cherries, orange blossom and subtle hints of vanilla on the nose. Vanilla charges into the mouth and opens up into baked peach and a slight hint of almond. Dried cherries return on the palate accompanied by lasting vanilla flavors. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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89 **Cruzan Aged Light Rum USVI, 40% abv, \$14.00, 750 ml**

This rum exudes caramel and vanilla aromas. Palate shows spicy flavors of pink and black peppercorns, interlaced with sugar water sweetness. Utterly charming. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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89 **Don Q Añejo Rum Puerto Rico, 40% abv, \$15.99, 750 ml**

Pound cake aromas on the nose, with hints of caramel and toffee. The mid palate is sweet and sumptuous, while the finish is salty and brandy like. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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88 **Aguardiente Cristal Sugar Free Rum Colombia, 30% abv, \$10.99, 750 ml**

The nose yields strong aromas of anise and beeswax with a touch of ginger. The anise translates onto the palate where it is joined by a hint of lychee. The finish is very soft. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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88 **Ron Virgin Heavy Bodied Rum West Indies, 40% abv, \$10.99, 750 ml**

Displaying wonderfully brooding aromas of toasted oak, dark cherries, cinnamon bark and vanilla. On the palate vanilla takes charge along with a deep molasses like complex which is balanced by a lifted fresh cherry filled finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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87 **Plantation Rum Original Dark Rum Trinidad & Tobago, 40% abv, \$14.99, 750 ml**

Aromas of fresh apples and molasses. The flavor profile is dry with hints of dry fruit and candied spice. It is soft and round in the mouth with a bit of tingling spice on the finish, leading into long and mellow sweet wood flavors. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Rum

Spiced Rum

Award	Score
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90	<b>Bacardi Oakheart Spiced Rum United States, 40% abv, \$22.99, 750 ml</b>
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Layered aromas of vanilla, sweet spice, and light toffee are decidedly sweet. In the mouth it is just off dry with sweet vanilla and caramel supported by spicy wood flavors. The texture is silky smooth with a slightly smoked finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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Tequila

Blanco, 100% Agave Tequila

Award	Score
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Chairman's Trophy	95	<b>Milagro Silver, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$29.99, 750 ml</b>
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Mellow and round. The nose is melon like with hints of flowers. The palate is clean with earthy flavors reminiscent of fresh green pastures. Light and airy in the mouth. A supporting backbone of salinity gives way to subtle spice on the finish. Delightful. USC 2013. **Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation**

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Finalist	93	<b>Pueblo Viejo Blanco, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml</b>
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Sweet aromas of vanilla and spice jump out of the glass. The palate is decidedly earthy and dry with salty mineral flavors. Minimal spice on the finish with echoes of the sweet aromas. Vibrant and tasty. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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Finalist	92	<b>Olmecca Altos Plata, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$24.00, 750 ml</b>
		Smooth and clean. Aromas of fresh green grass are light and airy, supported by minerals and lime. In the mouth the flavor is dry and silky, with flavors of green apple skin, minerals and young green herbs. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	91	<b>Lunazul Blanco, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml</b>
		Very delicate and clean on the nose. Grass, citrus pith and rosewater all showing quite prominently. In the mouth it is intensely grainy yet, again, delicate and also alludes to a slight smokiness. The finish is crisp and floral and offers a lingering citrus character. Exceptional. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
Tequila		
Reposado, 100% Agave Tequila		
<b>Award</b>	<b>Score</b>	
Finalist	93	<b>Lunazul Reposado, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml</b>
		Fresh and grassy. Aromas are layered with fresh green grass, tart citrus and salty minerals. Darker in the mouth, flavor profile is dry and rich with deep roasted earth flavors. Smooth from beginning to end. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
Finalist	91	<b>Olmecca Altos Reposado, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$24.00, 750 ml</b>
		Smooth and mellow. Aromas are of lightly roasted sweet potatoes and squash. It is light in the mouth with a silky texture. Salty at first, the flavors develop nicely into rich spices, roasted vegetables with a touch of sweetness at the end. Wonderful. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>

Finalist	91	<b>Piedra Azul Reposado, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml</b>
<p>Aromas of fresh limes and flowers are clean and bright. Remarkably smooth and plush texture in the mouth. The flavor profile is mostly dry with limes, minerals and light herbs on the long finish. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b></p>		
	90	<b>Sauza Blue Reposado, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$18.99, 750 ml</b>
<p>A dusty and earthy nose with hints of caramel, which all follow through on the palate. The finish is almost sweet, luscious and full bodied. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b></p>		

## Tequila

### Añejo, 100% Agave Tequila

Award	Score	
Finalist	94	<b>Lunazul Añejo, 100% Agave Tequila Mexico, 40% abv, \$21.99, 750 ml</b>
<p>Butterscotch, vanilla, almond toffee and a slight hint of white chocolate, cinnamon and clove comprise this fabulous bouquet. Once in the mouth, vanilla takes over with undertones of smoked sea salt, butterscotch and lime zest. A semisweet finish with traces of toffee ensues. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b></p>		

## Whiskey

### Bourbon

Award	Score	
Finalist	95	<b>Jim Beam Devil's Cut Bourbon United States, 45% abv, \$23.99, 750 ml</b>
<p>Distinct aromas of dark cherry, vanilla, toasted oak and blossom develop into a flavor profile of brown sugar, citrus, dried apricot and a delicate hint of smoke. The smokiness lingers into the finish and is accompanied by a touch of honey and orange zest. Very smooth. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation</b></p>		

Finalist	95	<b>Jim Beam Black Bourbon United States, 43% abv, \$21.99, 750 ml</b>
		Delightful aromas of confectioners cherry, vanilla and cinnamon on the nose accompanied by a slight hint of smoke and almond. Slightly honeyed in the mouth, a very rich texture, with underlying tones of confectioners cherry and vanilla. These same flavors translate into a long, mellow and semisweet finish. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation</b>
Finalist	94	<b>Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 45% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml</b>
		Delicate and smoky on the nose displaying notes of citrus, cedar, maraschino and a touch of blossom. Very mellow in the mouth and alludes to honey, citrus and maple. Dried fruits play a role as well. The citrus motif carries on into the finish which also prominently features a maple like sweetness. Outstanding. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
Finalist	94	<b>Zackariah Harris Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$11.99, 750 ml</b>
		Aromas of banana creme pie and baked cherries followed by a subtle hint of toasted oak, and vanilla. Also offering a touch of honeysuckle. Round, mellow and slightly sweet on the palate while showing subtle flavors of vanilla and toffee. The mellow quality endures through the finish ad baked cherries show once more. Incredibly smooth. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	93	<b>Evan Williams 1783 Small Batch, Extra Aged Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 43% abv, \$14.99, 750 ml</b>
		A gorgeous nose of prunes and violets exude from the glass. The palate is big, bold and lush, with notes of dried fruit, freshly cracked pepper and toasted oak. The finish is long and haunting. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>

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92 **Benchmark Old No. 8 Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$11.99, 750 ml**

Exquisite and delicate aromas of baked cherries, ripe stone fruits, orange blossom accompanied by suggestions of vanilla and brioche. In the mouth, the brioche and vanilla take the reigns followed by heavy notes of brown sugar and honey. The finish is long, composed and smooth maintaining the flavors found on the palate. Fantastic. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Big House Straight Bourbon United States, 45% abv, \$20.00, 750 ml**

Starting off with vanilla and toasted oak, it leads into almond, maraschino cherry and a hint of smoke. Round, structured and honeyed in the mouth, it has a powerful, smoky finish and suggests vanilla again. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Early Times 354 Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$15.99, 750 ml**

A delightful nose of caramel and baked apple pie. The palate is intense and bold, with vanilla and burnt sugar flavors and a viscous and oily texture. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Four Roses Yellow Label Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml**

The nose is reminiscent of pureed cooked corn, which follows on the palate. There are elements of spice such as cracked white pepper and the finish is sweet and unctuous. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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91 **Old Forester Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 43% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml**

Honey amber colored, with notes of honey, floral and cooked corn on the nose. The palate is viscous and sweet with an attack of sweet baking spices, tobacco and a hint of licorice. The finish lingers long in the mouth. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Jim Beam Red Stag Spiced Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

Cinnamon, clove, vanilla and cherry aromas jump from the glass. Brown sugar, more cinnamon and vanilla on the palate along with an incredibly subtle touch of campfire smoke. Cinnamon lingers on the finish. Outstanding. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Kentucky Tavern Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$10.69, 750 ml**

A delectable bouquet of citrus fruits at the beginning give way to toasted oak and vanilla as well as a slight trace of honeysuckle. A grainy sweetness ensues followed by cherries, more vanilla and a touch of honey. Boasts a developed finish that continues the vanilla theme and also citrus. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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89 **Jim Beam Red Stag Black Cherry Flavored Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$17.99, 750 ml**

Honey amber colored, with a nose that smells of maraschino cherry and honey. Palate is sweet with a ton of dried and preserved cherry character. Medium bodied with a long, lingering finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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89 **Rebel Yell Kentucky Straight Bourbon United States, 40% abv, \$11.99, 750 ml**

Deep gold color. Notes of oak and boiled corn come through on the nose, while the palate is lean, spicy and linear tasting with hints of pepper. Will appeal to those that prefer a drier style of American whiskey. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Whiskey

Tennessee Whiskey

**Award**

**Score**

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Chairman's Trophy

95

**George Dickel No. 12 Tennessee Whiskey United States, 45% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml**

Beautiful amber color with pronounced vanilla, apricot and campfire smoke aromas on the nose. Incredibly smooth in the mouth with flavors of vanilla, orange peel, honey and brown sugar. Baked cherry notes begin developing before finishing effortlessly with subtle tones of vanilla and brown sugar. Outstanding. USC 2013. **Great Value. Extraordinary, Ultimate Recommendation**

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Whiskey

Blended Irish Whiskey

**Award**

**Score**

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91

**Bushmills Original Blended Irish Whiskey Ireland, 40% abv, \$22.99, 750 ml**

A golden hued dram with notes of milk chocolate on the nose. The palate follows through with dark caramel notes and a taste of creme brulee. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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Whisky

Canadian Whisky

**Award**

**Score**

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87

**Canadian Club 1858 5 Years Old Canadian Whisky Canada, 40% abv, \$11.99, 750 ml**

Honeysuckle, vanilla and toffee on the nose. Delightful grainy notes in the mouth open up into honey and orange peel. Very mellow finish with honey shining through. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Whisky

Blended Scotch Whisky

**Award**

**Score**

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Finalist

92

**The Black Grouse Blended Scotch Whisky Scotland, 40% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml**

Dark gold, verging on amber, hue. Sherry and peat aromas mingle on the nose. The palate starts with a savory peaty smokey aspect and leads to lush butterscotch and vanilla flavors. Has a smokey, honeyed finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Dewar's White Label Blended Scotch Whisky Scotland, 40% abv, \$21.99, 750 ml**

Light gold in color. The nose carries toffee, caramel, honey and malt aromas, while the palate is rich and sweet, with a hint of vanilla, caramel and peat. The finish is long, smoky and spicy. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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90 **Johnnie Walker Red Label Blended Scotch Whisky Scotland, 40% abv, \$23.00, 750 ml**

A delicate nose of toffee, vanilla, smoke, cedar and orange blossom aromas fill the glass. A faint trace of toasted oat is also detectable. Light and honeyed in the mouth, it displays generous flavors of vanilla, orange zest, baked cherries while offering more subtle smokiness. The finish is mellow and lingers on the palate. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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## Whisky

### Blended Malt Scotch Whisky

Award	Score
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Chairman's Trophy	94	<b>Haig Supreme 1627 Blended Malt Scotch Whisky Scotland, 40% abv, \$30.00, 750 ml</b>
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Golden amber and bright in color. Aromas are grainy, layered with forest underbrush and smoke. Decidedly dry and savory in the mouth, leathery and smoky with flavors of tobacco, cedar and mace. The finish is dusty with char. Outstanding. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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## Brandy

### American Brandy

Award	Score
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Chairman's Trophy	93	<b>E &amp; J XO American Brandy United States, 40% abv, \$14.99, 750 ml</b>
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Dusty, earthy aromas on the nose, with hints of candied red berries. The palate is sweet with an initial rush of red cherries and a hint of banana in the midpalate. A fairly light bodied brandy that finishes with a honeyed note. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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89 **E & J VS American Brandy United States, 40% abv, \$10.99, 750 ml**

Starting off with aromas of ripe melon and dried apricot, it opens up into subtle hints of cinnamon and muscat. Very smooth in the mouth and maintains a more fruit forward and sweet spice taste profile. Ripe melon endures on the finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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88 **E & J VSOP American Brandy United States, 40% abv, \$12.99, 750 ml**

Distinct apple, ripe pear and traces of peach and orange blossom aromas. Rich mouthfeel with enticing baked apple, coffee and roasted almond flavors leading into a honeyed, slightly fruity finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Brandy

French Brandy

Award	Score
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Finalist	91	<b>St-Rémy XO French Brandy France, 40% abv, \$13.50, 750 ml</b>
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Delicate aromas of vanilla interlaced with honeysuckle, blossom, orange marmalade and dried cranberry. Once in the mouth, the orange marmalade adds a lifted energy to deep flavors of brown sugar, raisin, dried apricot and fig. Brown sugar and raisin carry through onto a soft finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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89 **St-Rémy VSOP French Brandy France, 40% abv, \$11.22, 750 ml**

Bold toasted oak, baked cherry and citrus zest aromas pop from the glass. In the mouth it is rich and soft with vanilla, toasted coconut and a subtle hint of maple syrup. The finish is equally rich and displays warm vanilla overtones. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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Brandy

Pisco

Award	Score
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90 **Pisco Capel Alto del Carmen Grand Reserve Elqui Pisco Chile, 40% abv, \$18.99, 750 ml**

Golden hue. Floral and grape aromas, along with other fresh fruit driven notes reminiscent of honeydew melon. The palate is fresh and bright with some whisky like character. USC 2013.

**Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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87 **Pisco Capel Elqui Pisco Chile, 40% abv, \$16.99, 750 ml**

A super fruity perfume wafts from the glass while the palate is fairly dry and peppery, ending with notes of tropical and grapy fruits. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong**

**Recommendation**

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## Liqueur

All liqueurs were judged in category flights of like with like (e.g., flights of dairy liqueurs, flights of herbal liqueurs, etc.). The Chairman's Trophy - Liqueur was awarded based on the highest scoring liqueur across all the liqueur categories.

Award	Score	
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Finalist	94	<b>Merlet Crème de Cassis, Blackcurrant Liqueur France, 20% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml</b>
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Deep purple ruby hue with lots of blackcurrant aromas. Offers fantastic structure in the form of tannins and acidity, with a generous amount of sweetness and an honest blackcurrant taste. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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Finalist	93	<b>BOLS Amaretto Netherlands, 28% abv, \$10.99, 1 L</b>
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The nose is a telling bouquet of almond butter, orange peel, baked cherries and shortbread which gives way to baked cherries, almond and toasted coconut with a very subtle hint of cinnamon. The orange peel reintroduces itself on the finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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Finalist	93	<b>Merlet Crème de Fraise, Strawberry Liqueur France, 18% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml</b>
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Strawberry jam, confectioners sugar and an incredibly subtle herbaceous note on the nose. Once in the mouth, powerful strawberry flavors overlay extremely delicate hints of cinnamon and clove. The finish is rich and shows prominent confectioners strawberry. Delicious. USC 2013. **Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended**

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Finalist	92	<b>Luxardo Sangue Morlacco Cherry Liqueur Italy, 30% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml</b>
		Aromas of fresh and cooked dark cherry are sweet and rich. The flavor is sweet and dark, medium rich in texture with a hint of spice on the finish. Layers of flavor combine fresh bing cherries and sultanas. Perfectly balanced. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
Finalist	92	<b>Merlet Crème de Peche, Peach Liqueur France, 18% abv, \$24.99, 750 ml</b>
		Wonderful bouquet of peaches, cloves, fresh cinnamon and a very faint hint of fresh cream. Very delicate on the palate and displaying a rich fresh peach and apricot character. A refreshing, peach-filled finish lingers on the palate. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	90	<b>Big House Tupelo Honey Whisky Liqueur United States, 35% abv, \$20.00, 750 ml</b>
		Delicate and floral bouquet of honeysuckle, orange blossom and candied tangerine with a deeper layer of vanilla and coconut meat. Once in the mouth, it is soft and honeyed with subtle notes of brown sugar, vanilla and tangerine zest. The finish is very honeyed and lingers. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	90	<b>Frangelico Liqueur Italy, 24% abv, \$19.99, 750 ml</b>
		Toasted hazelnut, vanilla and a deliciously delicate coffee complex fill the nose. Pronounced hazelnut flavors fill the mouth along with a touch of brown sugar, vanilla and toffee. The finish is rich and deep featuring hazelnut prominently. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Excellent, Highly Recommended</b>
	89	<b>BOLS Ginger Brandy Liqueur Netherlands, 35% abv, \$10.99, 1 L</b>
		Intense aromas of ginger, lemon zest, and a slight hint of pineapple leap from the glass. In the mouth, ginger and honey play a major role with ginger lingering onto a very smooth finish. USC 2013. <b>Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation</b>

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87 **BOLS Peach Schnapps Liqueur Netherlands, 21% abv, \$10.99, 1 L**

Lightly scented with aromas of peach gummy candies and undertones of cardamom. The flavor is juicy with a candy like sweetness balanced by tart yellow peach. Rich in the mouth without being heavy. Mouthwatering. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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87 **Metaxa Ouzo Liqueur Greece, 40% abv, \$14.99, 750 ml**

Sweet and heavy aromas of black licorice and anise. Semisweet on the palate with intense anise flavor throughout the silky texture. Clean in the finish, the flavor lasts and lasts. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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87 **The Irishman Superior Irish Cream Liqueur Ireland, 17% abv, \$15.00, 750 ml**

Light and comforting aromas of custard, butterscotch and toffee. Rich in the mouth with cloud like mouthfeel. The flavors move from lightly sweet butterscotch to deep coffee, leaving a pleasant creaminess. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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86 **BOLS Blackberry Brandy Liqueur Netherlands, 35% abv, \$10.99, 1 L**

The nose is reminiscent of blackcurrant syrup. This is a medium bodied liqueur, with dark berries and spice on the palate, and a very sweet attack. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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86 **BOLS Lychee Liqueur Netherlands, 35% abv, \$10.99, 1 L**

Compelling aromas of lychee, coconut meat, strawberries and a hint of lime make up the nose. It is light in the mouth and allows lychee to shine through accompanied by fresh strawberries. Very perfumed finish. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

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86 **Hiram Walker Peppermint Schnapps United States, 30% abv, \$10.00, 750 ml**

Sweet peppermint aromas are smooth and strong. The flavor profile is semisweet with lots of piquant mint. Strong peppermint flavor throughout. Refreshing and balanced. USC 2013. **Great Value. Very Good, Strong Recommendation**

