

There seems to come a time in any person's life that certain things in this world develop and mature. As young adults drinking any form of alcohol is exciting and fun, sometimes it can even be wild or adventurous. For me personally it was always about the social event, for others it may be the feeling you get after having a few drinks, but the atmosphere you surround yourself with usually dictates the outcome. Being at a wild party may result in lots of excitement but usually ends with being on your knees praying to the porcelain. While drinking at home or with a few close friends may result in a relaxed evening with lots of laughs. Either way the excitement of the physical act of drinking eventually wears off and either one of two paths take place. The first is a numbness to the excitement and drinking just to drink and not truly enjoying what you are doing. The second path is one of maturity, with a curiosity and longing for deeper understanding of what it is you are drinking and tasting.

So you're finding yourself on path number 2 and you're asking yourself, so where do I start? Doing a quick google search will result in a wide variety of websites and most of which will lead you to buying something. So to help ease the overwhelming sense of getting started here is a few items that may help you along your journey.

My suggestion is to start with the whiskey you already enjoy drinking, since you already like what you're tasting it takes the risk of going out and buying something you may not even like to begin with. If your just starting out with whiskey and don't have a "go to" already then I would suggest starting with something classic and common. If you're going Bourbon then Jim Beam is great to start, if going Scotch then go with Johnnie Walker Black or Red label. The following are four items that will help aid you in tasting.

The first is a pretty interesting concept called the flavor wheel. A flavor wheel is basically what it sounds like, it is a graphic that lists the very basic categories. In the center of the wheel are the basic flavors among whiskies such as, peat, wood, fruit, cereal, and spicy. As you move out towards the edge the categories and flavors get more and more specific. I discovered this neat tool while glancing through a book at the bookstore. Needless to say I bought the book and it is currently on my bar. You could probably find flavor wheels online either for purchase or for free as well. Which leads me to the next tool, books! There are many different authors that books on various topics relating to whiskey. Books tend to dive deeper into whiskey and where it is from how it is made and the different distinctions based on region or country. This allows you to "become one" with your whiskey.

The third tool for tasting is online reviews of the specific whiskey you are tasting. Almost every whiskey has had someone taste and critique the whiskey and put their opinions about it online. A simple search of the whiskey name and you will find multiple websites on that particular bottle or expression. These reviews are great tools to use to help identify tastes and aromas and to get familiar with the lingo in saying what it is you are experiencing. However do realize that these reviews are done by other people who may have a different palate than yours. So there may be subtle or severe differences between what they taste and what you taste. Realize that this is okay because everyone has different palates and are drawn to different flavors. But these reviews are a great place to start. Fourth is what is called the aroma kit. This tool is for either the aspiring whiskey critic or the very meticulous. These kits are pretty much what they sound like, it is a set of various items that you are able to smell to help identify the same smells in your whiskey. They can range anywhere from \$50 to \$300 depending on how in depth you want to go in detailing specific aromas and flavors. These are great tools for really getting an idea of what the specific smell is and then trying to find that same smell or taste in the whiskey.

These are just a few of many tools available to use to help pinpoint what is in your whiskey. One last suggestion is to keep a whiskey journal to keep track of what you have tasted and identify what you enjoy. So what are you waiting for? Get out there and start tasting your whiskey instead of shooting it down. Decide which, if any, of these tools you may want to use and have fun! But always remember to drink responsibly.