Stave & Thief Society Certified Bourbon Steward Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide

Everything you need from our exam experts!

Questions

1. What is the historical significance of Bourbon County, Kentucky?

A. It is known for producing vodka

B. It is one of the origin areas for bourbon whiskey

C. It was the first county to outlaw alcohol

D. It is a major winery region

2. What is the name of the thick fermented mash used in bourbon production?

A. Wort

B. Beer

C. Mash Bill

D. Distillers Yeast

3. What is the maximum distilling strength of bourbon in degrees?

A. 150

B. 125

C. 160

D. 180

4. Which type of container must bourbon be produced in?

A. Old oak barrels

B. New, charred oak containers

C. Stainless steel tanks

D. Glass vessels

5. What does the charring process add to the bourbon?

A. Increased acidity

B. Sweet and woody characteristics

C. Higher alcohol content

D. Fermentation speed

6. Which law stipulates the proof of whiskey must not fall below certain standards?

A. Bottled in Bond Act

B. Whiskey Regulation Act

C. Alcohol Control Act

D. BevAct

7. What term is used to describe bourbon that comes from a single barrel?

A. Single Barrel

B. Batch Bourbon

C. Traditional Bourbon

D. Reserve Bourbon

8. What is the term for the portion of distillate absorbed into the wooden barrel during maturation?

A. Angel's Share

B. Devil's Cut

C. Cask Loss

D. Barrel Loss

9. Which whisky allows the addition of caramel color?

A. Single Grain Scotch Whisky

B. Single Malt Scotch Whisky

C. Tennessee Whiskey

D. Blended Malt Scotch Whisky

10. What is the effect of a cooler fermentation temperature?

A. It speeds up fermentation

B. It creates more intense flavors

C. It produces a balanced range of congeners

D. It yields higher alcohol content

Answers

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. A
7. A
8. B
9. A
10. C

Explanations

1. What is the historical significance of Bourbon County, Kentucky?

A. It is known for producing vodka

B. It is one of the origin areas for bourbon whiskey

C. It was the first county to outlaw alcohol

D. It is a major winery region

Bourbon County, Kentucky, holds immense historical significance as one of the earliest and most important regions associated with the production of bourbon whiskey. The county, founded in 1785, is located within a broader area known for its fertile land and ideal conditions for growing the grains used in bourbon production, such as corn. The term "bourbon" is believed to be derived from Bourbon County, although some theories suggest that it may also relate to Bourbon Street in New Orleans or the Bourbon family, known for their historical influence. However, what solidifies the county's importance is that it laid the groundwork for the bourbon industry we recognize today, becoming a focal point for distillation practices that adhere to the established standards of bourbon production, including the use of new charred oak barrels and the legal definition that a bourbon must be made in the United States. Recognizing the historical importance of Bourbon County is crucial for understanding the evolution and legacy of bourbon whiskey in American culture and its designation as a distinctive product, contributing to its rich tradition and global recognition.

2. What is the name of the thick fermented mash used in bourbon production?

A. Wort

B. Beer

C. Mash Bill

D. Distillers Yeast

The thick fermented mash used in bourbon production is known as "beer." In the distillation process for bourbon, after milling the grains and mixing them with water, the mash is cooked and then cooled. Yeast is added to this mash, which ferments the sugars produced during the cooking process, resulting in a thick liquid often referred to as "beer" before it undergoes distillation to become whiskey. In bourbon production, the term "beer" signifies the liquid that is produced after fermentation, which contains alcohol that will be distilled. It is an important step in the bourbon-making process, as the fermentation converts the sugars from the grain into alcohol. Other terms in the choices relate to different aspects of the bourbon-making process. The "wort" refers to a term more commonly associated with brewing beer and refers to the sugary liquid extracted from the malted grains, but it isn't specifically used in bourbon terminology in this way. The "mash bill" indicates the recipe of grains used in bourbon, defining the proportions of corn, rye, wheat, and barley; it does not refer to the thick fermented mash itself. "Distillers yeast" refers to the specific type of yeast employed in fermentation to convert sugars into alcohol but is not the name for

3. What is the maximum distilling strength of bourbon in degrees?

A. 150

B. 125

C. 160

D. 180

The maximum distilling strength of bourbon is 160 proof, which translates to 80% alcohol by volume (ABV). This regulation is significant because it ensures that while the spirit is distilled at a high strength, it must still be diluted to a specific proof to be marketed as bourbon. The requirement that bourbon must be distilled no higher than 160 proof allows for the retention of the grain character and flavors that are essential to its identity. This limit helps maintain the balance and complexity of the spirit, influencing its taste, aroma, and overall quality. Understanding this threshold is crucial for bourbon enthusiasts and professionals, as it underscores the importance of traditional production methods and the spirit's adherence to specific legal definitions.

4. Which type of container must bourbon be produced in?

A. Old oak barrels

B. New, charred oak containers

C. Stainless steel tanks

D. Glass vessels

Bourbon must be produced in new, charred oak containers. This requirement is essential in defining the character of bourbon and significantly influences its flavor profile. The process of charring the interior of the oak barrels caramelizes the natural sugars in the wood, which enhances the sweetness and adds depth to the bourbon with flavors like vanilla, caramel, and spice. Additionally, the use of new barrels is crucial because they have not been previously used for aging other spirits, ensuring that bourbon draws the maximum flavor and color from the fresh wood. Other types of containers, such as old oak barrels, stainless steel tanks, and glass vessels, do not meet the legal requirements set for bourbon production. Old oak barrels may contribute residual flavors from previous spirits, while stainless steel and glass do not impart any characteristics that are essential to bourbon. Therefore, the specificity of using new, charred oak containers is what makes them integral to the bourbon-making process, ensuring that the spirit maintains its unique identity and quality.

5. What does the charring process add to the bourbon?

A. Increased acidity

B. Sweet and woody characteristics

C. Higher alcohol content

D. Fermentation speed

The charring process of the barrels used in bourbon production significantly influences the flavor profile of the bourbon by contributing sweet and woody characteristics. During charring, the inner surface of the wooden barrels is exposed to flames, which caramelizes the natural sugars in the wood and creates a layer of charcoal. This layer not only helps to filter impurities in the spirit but also imparts various flavors. The sweet notes come from the caramelization of sugars, which results in flavors reminiscent of vanilla, caramel, and toffee. The wood itself adds deeper, earthy, and spiced notes as it interacts with the bourbon during aging. Over time, the bourbon extracts these flavors from the barrel, leading to a rich and complex profile that is highly sought after in a quality bourbon. In summary, the charring process plays a crucial role in developing the desired sweet and woody characteristics in bourbon, making it a fundamental aspect of bourbon production.

6. Which law stipulates the proof of whiskey must not fall below certain standards?

A. Bottled in Bond Act

B. Whiskey Regulation Act

C. Alcohol Control Act

D. BevAct

The Bottled in Bond Act is significant in American whiskey legislation, established in 1897. This law specifically mandates that to be labeled as "bottled in bond," a spirit must meet particular criteria, including being produced during a single distillation season by one distiller at one distillery, aged for at least four years in a federally bonded warehouse, and bottled at exactly 100 proof (50% alcohol by volume). This ensures a consistent standard of quality and safety for consumers. The law was a response to concerns over authenticity and quality in the whiskey market during a time when many illicit and poorly made spirits were prevalent. By establishing a minimum proof requirement, the Bottled in Bond Act serves to protect consumers and provides a benchmark for quality that whiskey drinkers can rely on. This standard is particularly important for enthusiasts and connoisseurs who seek assurance about the product they are purchasing.

7. What term is used to describe bourbon that comes from a single barrel?

A. Single Barrel

B. Batch Bourbon

C. Traditional Bourbon

D. Reserve Bourbon

The term used to describe bourbon that comes from a single barrel is "Single Barrel." This designation indicates that the whiskey has been drawn from one specific barrel, ensuring that the unique characteristics and flavor profile of that particular barrel are preserved. Each single barrel bottling can vary significantly from others, even within the same brand, due to factors like the specific grains used, the aging process, and the conditions of the barrel itself. This results in a distinctive tasting experience that reflects the individual nuances of that barrel. In contrast, batch bourbon refers to whiskey that is blended from multiple barrels to achieve a consistent flavor profile, while traditional bourbon encompasses any bourbon that meets the legal requirements, which could include combinations from different barrels. Reserve bourbon usually signifies a premium or higher-quality selection, which may or may not come from a single barrel. This highlights the uniqueness and craftsmanship associated with single barrel offerings, making it a special category within the bourbon world.

8. What is the term for the portion of distillate absorbed into the wooden barrel during maturation?

A. Angel's Share

B. Devil's Cut

C. Cask Loss

D. Barrel Loss

The term that describes the portion of distillate absorbed into the wooden barrel during maturation is commonly referred to as "Devil's Cut." This terminology reflects the idea that some of the whiskey or distillate permeates the wood and is essentially lost to the maker—a loss that can lead to a unique flavor profile as the whiskey interacts with the wood over time. The absorption of liquid into the wood is an essential part of the maturation process, allowing the whiskey to acquire flavors from the charred interior of the barrel and to develop its character. This concept contrasts with the "Angel's Share," which refers to the portion of alcohol that evaporates from the barrel—often considered a loss to the angels. "Devil's Cut" specifically acknowledges the liquid that remains trapped within the wood fibers and emphasizes the complexity of the aging process, contributing significantly to the final flavor profile of the bourbon. Understanding this concept helps clarify the interactions between whiskey and wood, which are crucial for appreciating the nuances of bourbon production.

9. Which whisky allows the addition of caramel color?

A. Single Grain Scotch Whisky

B. Single Malt Scotch Whisky

C. Tennessee Whiskey

D. Blended Malt Scotch Whisky

The option indicating Single Grain Scotch Whisky is the one that allows for the addition of caramel color. This practice is allowed in the production of Single Grain Scotch to achieve consistency in appearance and to meet consumer preferences for a certain color profile. In the broader context of whisky production, various types of whiskies have specific regulations about additives. For instance, Single Malt Scotch Whisky and Blended Malt Scotch Whisky cannot have any additives, including caramel coloring, to ensure purity and clarity in production. Tennessee Whiskey has its own regulations and is typically known for its charcoal filtering process, but it also doesn't allow additives that would interfere with the characteristic flavor profile. By allowing caramel coloring in Single Grain Scotch Whisky, producers can maintain a consistent look across different batches, thereby meeting market demands while adhering to the regulations set forth for this category.

10. What is the effect of a cooler fermentation temperature?

A. It speeds up fermentation

B. It creates more intense flavors

C. It produces a balanced range of congeners

D. It yields higher alcohol content

A cooler fermentation temperature primarily influences the development of congeners, which are the chemical compounds that contribute to the aroma and flavor profile of the bourbon. When fermentation occurs at lower temperatures, yeast activity slows down. This slower activity results in a more gradual fermentation process, allowing for the production of a complex range of congeners. These congeners can include both desirable and undesirable compounds, but under cooler conditions, the resulting profile is often more balanced and nuanced. This balance is critical in producing high-quality bourbon, as it affects everything from the sweetness and fruitiness to the overall aromatic complexity. Warmer fermentation temperatures may lead to a rapid production of alcohol, but they can also produce more esters and fusel oils, which can negatively impact flavor and aroma. Therefore, the cooler fermentation temperature is essential for yielding drinks with a well-rounded and sophisticated congener profile, which directly influences the quality of the final spirit.