Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) Level 2 Award in Spirits Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide

BY EXAMZIFY

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Questions

1. What type of filtration process is often used to clarify vodkas?

A. Cold filtration

B. Charcoal filtration

C. Steam filtration

D. Sediment filtration

2. What type of still is typically used for the distillation of Bourbon?

A. Pot still

B. Column still

C. Continuous still

D. Hybrid still

3. Which of the following is an example of a highball cocktail?

A. Martini

B. Old Fashioned

C. Cuba Libre

D. Negroni

4. What distinguishes Ancestral Mezcal from Artisanal Mezcal?

A. Use of mechanised mills for crushing

B. Allowed to use metal stills

C. Only roasting pits can be used

D. Higher fermentation temperatures

5. What are the two techniques used to convert starch into sugar in spirit production?

A. Fermentation and distillation

B. Malting and cooking

C. Filtration and aging

D. Pressing and boiling

6. What does the term 'overproof' denote on a bottle of rum?

A. Rum bottled with a high ABV

B. Rum that is aged longer than usual

C. Rum blended with spices

D. Rum mixed with fruit juices

7. What is the portion of the second distillation that is kept and sold known as?

A. Head

B. Body

C. Heart

D. Tails

8. What aromas are typically associated with rums made from sugar cane juice?

A. Spicy and herbaceous aromas

B. Floral and citrus aromas

C. Vegetal, grassy, and fruity aromas

D. Smoky and peaty aromas

9. Which of the following botanicals is NOT commonly used in the production of bitters?

A. Quinine

B. Artichoke

C. Peach

D. Bitter orange

10. What type of grape is typically the base for aromatised wines?

A. Neutral, high-acid, white grape variety

B. Full-bodied red grape variety

C. Sweet dessert grape variety

D. High-tannin, low-acid grape variety

Answers

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

Explanations

1. What type of filtration process is often used to clarify vodkas?

A. Cold filtration

B. Charcoal filtration

C. Steam filtration

D. Sediment filtration

The type of filtration process that is often used to clarify vodkas is charcoal filtration. This method involves passing the spirit through activated charcoal, which acts as a fine filter. The charcoal helps to remove impurities, flavors, and certain congeners that can affect the smoothness and clarity of the vodka. This process is crucial for achieving the high level of purity and neutral flavor profile that is characteristic of well-produced vodkas. Charcoal filtration can significantly improve the mouthfeel and overall quality of the vodka, making it more palatable and appealing to consumers. Its use is widespread in the vodka industry, particularly for brands that aim to emphasize a clean taste. Other filtration methods listed, like cold filtration, steam filtration, and sediment filtration, are less common or serve different purposes. Cold filtration can be used to remove unwanted fatty acids and other components that might cloud the spirit when chilled, while steam filtration is primarily used in other types of spirits. Sediment filtration may remove physical debris but does not enhance the purity or flavor profile to the same extent as charcoal filtration does.

2. What type of still is typically used for the distillation of Bourbon?

A. Pot still

B. Column still

C. Continuous still

D. Hybrid still

The column still, also known as a continuous still, is typically used for the distillation of Bourbon. This type of still allows for a continuous process of distillation, which is advantageous for producing large quantities of spirits like Bourbon. The design of the column still maximizes the efficiency of the distillation process, allowing for greater separation of alcohol from the wash due to its multiple distillation stages within a single apparatus. Bourbon production is regulated to specific guidelines, including a minimum requirement of 51% corn in the mash bill, and it must be distilled to no higher than 160 proof. The use of a column still helps producers meet these requirements efficiently while achieving the desired levels of purity and flavor. Column stills also facilitate the production of a high-proof spirit, which is essential for the subsequent aging process in charred new oak barrels. In contrast, pot stills are generally more associated with the distillation of single malt Scotch or artisanal spirits, while hybrid stills combine elements of both pot and column stills but are not the typical choice for Bourbon production. Continuous stills, which refer broadly to a type of column still, may produce other spirits, but exactly how Bourbon is made distinctly relies on the precise configuration that a column

3. Which of the following is an example of a highball cocktail?

A. Martini

B. Old Fashioned

C. Cuba Libre

D. Negroni

A highball cocktail is characterized by a simple blend of a spirit and a larger proportion of a non-alcoholic mixer, typically served over ice in a tall glass. The Cuba Libre is a quintessential example of a highball cocktail, as it consists of rum, cola, and lime, served over ice in a highball glass. In contrast, the Martini, which is primarily made with gin and vermouth, is a mixed drink served in a stemmed glass, typically without a significant non-alcoholic mixer. The Old Fashioned is a spirit-forward cocktail that includes whiskey, bitters, sugar, and often a twist of citrus, served in a short glass and not involving a highball composition. Similarly, the Negroni consists of equal parts gin, vermouth, and Campari, also served in a short glass and does not fit the highball mold. These distinctions highlight why the Cuba Libre is the appropriate example of a highball cocktail due to its composition and serving style.

4. What distinguishes Ancestral Mezcal from Artisanal Mezcal?

A. Use of mechanised mills for crushing

B. Allowed to use metal stills

C. Only roasting pits can be used

D. Higher fermentation temperatures

Ancestral Mezcal is distinguished from Artisanal Mezcal primarily by its traditional production methods. The requirement that only roasting pits can be used for cooking the agave is a critical feature of Ancestral Mezcal. This method enhances the natural flavors and characteristics of the agave, preserving the artisanal and traditional approach that is often celebrated in mezcal production. In Ancestral Mezcal production, the use of roasting pits is essential because it allows for the agave to be cooked in a way that maintains the integrity of its flavors, reflecting the specific terroir and handling of the agave. This emphasis on traditional practices is significant for authenticity and can result in a more complex flavor profile. Artisanal Mezcal, while still adherent to certain traditional methods, may incorporate more modern techniques and equipment, such as mechanical mills for crushing the agave or the use of metal stills, which are not permitted in Ancestral Mezcal production. The strict adherence to using only roasting pits in Ancestral Mezcal is what clearly distinguishes it from Artisanal Mezcal.

5. What are the two techniques used to convert starch into sugar in spirit production?

A. Fermentation and distillation

B. Malting and cooking

C. Filtration and aging

D. Pressing and boiling

The process of converting starch into sugar in spirit production involves malting and cooking. Malting involves soaking grains such as barley in water to allow them to germinate. During this germination process, enzymes are activated that break down the starches in the grain into simpler sugars, setting the stage for fermentation. Following malting, cooking further assists in breaking down the starches. When grains are heated (cooked) in water, it gelatinizes the starch, making it more accessible for enzymes to convert it into fermentable sugars. This step is essential for creating a sweet wort that can then be fermented by yeast to produce alcohol. Other techniques mentioned, such as fermentation and distillation, while crucial processes in spirit production, do not directly relate to the conversion of starch into sugar. Fermentation is the process where yeast converts sugars into alcohol, and distillation is used to separate alcohol from the fermented mixture. Filtration, aging, pressing, and boiling also serve different purposes in the overall production process but do not focus specifically on the starch-to-sugar conversion.

6. What does the term 'overproof' denote on a bottle of rum?

A. Rum bottled with a high ABV

B. Rum that is aged longer than usual

C. Rum blended with spices

D. Rum mixed with fruit juices

The term 'overproof' when used on a bottle of rum specifically denotes that the rum has a higher alcohol by volume (ABV) than standard offerings. Typically, regular rum might have an ABV around 40%, whereas overproof rum can exceed 50% or even go up to 75% ABV. This higher alcohol content is often sought after for cocktails or certain traditional drinks, providing a more intense flavor and potency. In contrast, aging longer than usual pertains to the maturation process and does not necessarily indicate the alcohol content. Blending with spices refers to flavored rums, which do not inherently relate to the proof. Mixing with fruit juices describes cocktails or mixed drinks, which also do not imply the proof level of the rum itself. Thus, 'overproof' is fundamentally about the elevated alcohol content in the rum.

7. What is the portion of the second distillation that is kept and sold known as?

A. Head

B. Body

C. Heart

D. Tails

The portion of the second distillation that is kept and sold is known as the heart. During the distillation process, the spirit is separated into different fractions: the heads, hearts, and tails. The hearts are the middle fraction, which contains the desirable compounds that contribute to the flavor and quality of the spirit. This is the portion that distillers aim to collect and is typically what is bottled and sold. The heads, which are collected first, often contain volatile substances that can impart undesirable flavors, while the tails, collected last, contain heavier compounds that are typically not suitable for drinking. Thus, the heart is the ideal part of the distillation process and is emphasized in distilling practices because it is where the best flavors and aromatic compounds reside.

8. What aromas are typically associated with rums made from sugar cane juice?

A. Spicy and herbaceous aromas

B. Floral and citrus aromas

C. Vegetal, grassy, and fruity aromas

D. Smoky and peaty aromas

Rums made from sugar cane juice, particularly those produced in the style of traditional rhum agricole from regions like Martinique, often display a unique profile of aromas. The choice emphasizing vegetal, grassy, and fruity aromas captures the essence of these rums, which are typically distilled from fresh sugar cane juice rather than molasses. The vegetal and grassy notes stem from the fresh sugar cane used in the production process, retaining the plant's essence and conveying a sense of the agricultural origins of the spirit. Additionally, these rums often exhibit a fruity character, reflecting the natural sugars and flavors found in the cane juice. This combination of characteristics helps distinguish these rums from those made from molasses, which generally have richer, heavier profiles. Other choices suggest different profiles of aromas that do not align with the typical characteristics of sugar cane juice rums. For instance, spicy and herbaceous notes may be more associated with aged rums or certain spiced variations. Floral and citrus aromas can appear in some spirits, but they are not as prominent as the grassy and fruity elements in sugar cane juice rums. Lastly, smoky and peaty aromas are generally not associated with rum; these are more characteristic of certain whiskies. Thus, the selection highlighting vegetal, grassy

9. Which of the following botanicals is NOT commonly used in the production of bitters?

A. Quinine

B. Artichoke

C. Peach

D. Bitter orange

The production of bitters typically involves various botanicals that impart distinct flavors and aromas to the final product. Among the choices provided, peach is not commonly used in the production of bitters. While peaches can be used in liqueurs and other spirits, they do not possess the intense bittering properties or complex flavor profiles that are characteristic of traditional bitters. In contrast, quinine is often used in bitters, particularly in formulations intended for tonic water, due to its notable bitter taste. Artichoke extracts are also found in some types of bitters, offering a unique vegetal and slightly nutty character. Bitter orange is a common ingredient, providing natural bitterness and enhancing aromatic profiles with its zest. Each of these botanicals plays a vital role in creating the complex and balanced flavors found in bitters, while peach does not align with the traditional use in this context.

10. What type of grape is typically the base for aromatised wines?

A. Neutral, high-acid, white grape variety

B. Full-bodied red grape variety

C. Sweet dessert grape variety

D. High-tannin, low-acid grape variety

The base for aromatised wines is typically a neutral, high-acid, white grape variety. This choice is correct because white grape varieties with high acidity provide the freshness and balance necessary for aromatised wines, which often have added flavors from herbs, spices, or other botanicals. The neutrality of the base grape allows the added aromatics to shine through without being overwhelmed by the grape's own flavors. Neutral grapes ensure that the final product maintains clarity and allows for the complexity of the aromatisation process to be appreciated. The acidity in the wine also acts as a natural preservative, which is beneficial for the longevity of the product. This balance of flavors is critical in crafting successful aromatised wines, making high-acid white grapes the preferred choice in the industry.