

# The Best Cheap Alcohol of 2023, According to Bartenders

Bar industry pros share top picks that won't break the bank.

Written by Jonah Flicker | Updated 01/11/22

*We independently research, test, review, and recommend the best products—learn more about [our process](#). If you buy something through our links, we may earn a commission.*



There are plenty of ultra-premium bottles of liquor out there, but the truth is that you don't have to pay a lot for high-quality spirits these days. Don't take our word for it, listen to the advice of experts in the bar industry who often reach for bottles that cost less than \$30 to make a cocktail or just a simple neat pour. Here are the best bargains in booze that don't skimp on flavor.

## The Rundown

### **Best Bourbon:**

**Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon at Drizly (\$18)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

### **Best White Rum:**

**Bacardí Superior White Rum at Drizly (\$10)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

### **Best Vodka:**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Tequila:**

**Cimarron Cimarron Blanco Tequila at Drizly (See Price)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Amaro:**

**Meletti Meletti Amaro at Drizly (\$14)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Liqueur:**

**Rockey's Rockey's Liqueur at Drizly (\$20)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Single Barrel Whiskey:**

**Evan Williams Single Barrel Bourbon at Drizly (\$21)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Rye Whiskey:**

**Rittenhouse Straight Rye at Drizly (See Price)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Cachaça:**

**Novo Fogo Novo Fogo Silver Cachaça at Drizly (\$20)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

**Best Aged Rum:**

**El Dorado El Dorado 12 Year at Drizly (\$24)**

↓ [Jump to Review](#)

Best Bourbon: Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#) | \$18

[VIEW ON WINE.COM](#) | \$35


[VIEW ON FLAVIAR](#)

**Region:** Kentucky | **ABV:** 45% | **Tasting Notes:** Vanilla, Brown sugar, Toffee

“Buffalo Trace has minimal bite with caramel tasting notes,” says Catherine Simmerman of Pepe Le Moko in Portland, Oregon. This is the flagship bourbon from the Kentucky distillery of the same name, and is a fantastic, budget bottle that many bartenders reach for to make whiskey drinks, and one that you should consider keeping in your home bar as well.

**Related:** [The Best Bourbons](#)

## Best White Rum: Bacardí Superior White Rum

 bacardí superior

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#) | \$10

[VIEW ON RESERVEBAR](#) | \$21

[VIEW ON LIQUORAMA.NET](#)

**Region:** Puerto Rico | **ABV:** 40% | **Tasting Notes:** Almonds, Vanilla, Oak

Bacardi is one of the most popular rum brands in the world, with a variety of expressions available. However, the classic charcoal-filtered white rum is a bartender's favorite. "It's very good quality for the price and great name recognition," says Nestor Marchand, the director of food and beverage at [Plunge Beach Resort](#), who uses it in many cocktails on his menus.

**Related:** [The Best Cheap Rums](#)

**Best Vodka:** [St. George Spirits All Purpose Vodka](#)

## Purpose Vodka

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#)

[VIEW ON WINE.COM](#) | \$30

[VIEW ON TOTALWINE.COM](#)

**Region:** California | **ABV:** 40% | **Tasting Notes:** Floral, Vanilla, Cream, Almond

"California's St. George Spirits is one of my favorite domestic producers," says **Shannon Tebay**, the head bartender of the American Bar in the **Savoy London**. "Their All Purpose Vodka uses unaged pear brandy as its base and rectifies it to over 95% ABV." She adds, "While this may cause it to lose most of its pear character, what's left is a beautifully plump, juicy texture, making it something that's quite dynamic to work with in a category that tends to be more utilitarian."

**Related:** [The Best Vodkas](#)



Cimarron  
Tequila Blanco

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#)

[VIEW ON WINE.COM](#) | [\\$27](#)

[VIEW ON CASKERS](#)

**Region:** Mexico | **ABV:** 40% | **Tasting Notes:** Bright Agave, Pineapple, Papaya

"My pick for an under-\$30 tequila of late has been Cimarron Blanco," says **Matthew Belanger**, the head bartender at **Death & Co** in Los Angeles.

"Produced at the prolific Tequilena distillery in Jalisco, home to a ton of other premium tequila brands, it's peppery and agave-forward enough to enjoy on its own, with enough grassy, fruity character to mix well in a

**Related:** [The Best Tequilas](#)

## Best Amaro: Meletti Amaro



[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#) | \$14

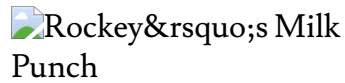
[VIEW ON WINE.COM](#) | \$24

[VIEW ON MINIBAR DELI...](#) | \$22

**Region:** Italy | **ABV:** 32% | **Tasting Notes:** Citrus, Spice, Cloves

"A less expensive bottle I always keep in my home bar is Meletti Amaro," says Mike Vacheresse, the owner of [Travel Bar](#) in Brooklyn, N.Y. "Meletti is such a versatile bottle to have on your bar. I enjoy this amaro neat after a meal, I

# Best Liqueur: Rockey's Liqueur



[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#) | \$20

[VIEW ON FLAVIAR](#)

[VIEW ON CASKERS](#)


**Region:** New York | **ABV:** 12% | **Tasting Notes:** Fruit, Citrus, Floral, Tart

"This punch is really versatile, and also you can drink it by itself," says David Libespere, the general manager of [67 Orange Street](#) in Harlem, N.Y.

"Rockey's has been on the market for some time now, but the possibilities with it are limitless, from an [Old Fashioned](#) to a tiki drink." He notes, "What



# Best Single Barrel Whiskey: Evan Williams Single Barrel Bourbon Whiskey

 evan-williams-  
single-barrel-  
bourbon

Courtesy of Drizly

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#)  \$21

[VIEW ON FLAVIAR](#)

[VIEW ON CASKERS](#)

**Region:** Kentucky | **ABV:** 43.4% | **Tasting Notes:** Honey, Oak, Vanilla

The unique thing about single barrel whiskey is that each barrel will have different characteristics. But Pablo Guerrero, F&B manager for [Azabu Miami Beach Plan Do See America, Inc.](#), says Evan Williams Single Barrel

its price and its smoothness.”

## Best Rye Whiskey: Rittenhouse Straight Rye



Courtesy of Total Wine

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#)

[VIEW ON FLAVIAR](#)

[VIEW ON CASKERS](#)

**Region:** Kentucky | **ABV:** 50% | **Tasting Notes:** Vanilla, Caramel, Rye

"An inexpensive bottle that I always have around is 4-year-old bottled-in-bond Rittenhouse Rye from the Heaven Hill Distillery," says Vacheresse.

**Related:** [The Best Rye Whiskeys](#)

## Best Cachaça: Novo Fogo Silver Cachaça



Courtesy of Total Wine

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#) | \$20

[VIEW ON THEWHISKYEXCHANG...](#)

[VIEW ON TOTALWINE.COM](#)

**Region:** Brazil | **ABV:** 40% | **Tasting Notes:** Banana, Lemon, Vanilla

If you are a fan of rum, you need to give cachaca a try as well, the Brazilian cousin that is distilled from sugarcane juice. “Novo Fogo Cachaca is earthy and light,” says Simmerman. This is the obvious choice for a [Caipirinha](#)

# Best Aged Rum: El Dorado 12 Year



Courtesy of Drizly.com

[VIEW ON DRIZLY](#) | \$24

[VIEW ON WINE.COM](#) | \$37

[VIEW ON MASTEROFMALT.COM](#)

**Region:** Guyana | **ABV:** 40% | **Tasting Notes:** Molasses, Vanilla, Brown sugar

For rum value, you can not beat El Dorado 12 year Guyana rum,” says Vacheresse. “It’s great enjoyed on its own, and at the price it will elevate a cocktail too.” This is a blend of rums all aged for at least 12 years from a

# What to Look For

## Flavor

When shopping for inexpensive booze, you have to keep in mind that you don't want to sacrifice flavor just because the price is low. The good news is that often cheap bottles are extremely good, so you don't have to spend a lot.

## Proof

Cheaper bottles tend to hover around the 40% ABV mark. This is fine, but try looking for a bottled-in-bond whiskey or a higher-proof spirit to give you a little extra flavor and kick in your cocktails.

## FAQs

### Is cheaper alcohol made differently?

Cheaper alcohol is essentially made the same as expensive alcohol. The difference might be that it's not aged as long if it's a brown spirit, it's a lower proof, or it might be a blend of many more barrels. But all that is not an indicator of quality—it comes down to the taste.

Alcohol is alcohol - drink responsibly, because regardless of the price it will have the same effect on you.


### Can you drink it on its own?

You should definitely try sipping any of these bottles neat, you will be pleasantly surprised. But the good thing is that the low prices mean you can use them in mixed drinks as well and not be afraid of wasting your money.

## Why Trust [Liquor.com](https://www.liquor.com)?

**Jonah Flicker** is an experienced writer who has been covering spirits and traveling the world visiting distilleries for many years. His work has


but he is partial to tequila, rum, gin, cognac and all things distilled.



Bloody Mary with vodka bottle

**VODKA** 11/09/22


The 10 Best Vodkas for Bloody Marys to Drink in 2023



cheap bourbons

**BOURBON** 04/18/22

The 8 Best Cheap Bourbons in 2023




Rum and brandy bottles and whiskey glasses on raw wood bar counter.



The 15 Best Whiskeys to Drink in 2022

Drink in 2023

2023

 Two glasses of whiskey with ice on a wooden table


**BOURBON** 04/28/22

The 14 Best Bourbons for  
Beginners in 2023

 The 12 Best Bourbons to Drink in 2022

**BOURBON** 07/19/22


The 12 Best Bourbons to Drink  
in 2023

 peaty scotches

 The 10 Best Tequilas for Margaritas to Drink in  
2022

## Campfire in a Glass

## Margaritas to Drink in 2023

 8 american rums


 The 12 Best Sipping Tequilas to Drink of 2022


**RUM** 08/10/22

The 11 Best American Rums You Should Drink Now

**TEQUILA & MEZCAL** 06/23/22

The 12 Best Sipping Tequilas to Drink of 2023

 flavored vodka image

 Graphic of bourbon bottle, goblet and glass on blue background

**VODKA** 09/01/22


**BOURBON** 12/12/22



 [The 12 Best Canadian Whiskies to Drink in 2022](#)

**OTHER WHISKEY** 06/07/22

[The 13 Best Canadian Whiskies to Drink in 2023](#)


 [Best Rums to Drink](#)

**RUM** 04/28/22

[The 16 Best Rums to Drink in 2023](#)

 [The 12 Best White Rums to Drink in 2020](#)

**RUM** 04/28/22

 [Best Rye Whiskeys to Drink](#)

**RYE WHISKEY** 04/28/22



Get our best cocktail recipes, tips, and more when you sign up for our newsletter.

Enter your email



SIGN UP



[Recipes](#)

[Spirits](#)

[Beer & Wine](#)

[The Basics](#)

[Behind The Bar](#)

[News](#)

[Shop](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Careers](#)

[Editorial Guidelines](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Contact](#)

[Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)



Liquor.com is part of the [Dotdash Meredith](#) publishing family.