

Esquire

The 2023 Esquire Spirit Awards

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From the latest, great affordable bourbon to a new cognac that will make you love cognac, here are all of the newest bottles you'll want to seek out and savor.

2023 was another big year for spirits releases. Tequila didn't stop exploding in popularity, and it seemed like a few new brands launched every month. Some were celebrity-backed money grabs, while others were made with traditional methods and additive-free, something that consumers are becoming more aware of. In American whiskey, Maker's Mark released its oldest bourbon to date, and both large and craft distilleries continued to experiment with cask finishes (although there's at least one barrel type that should be left alone). Irish whiskey, single malt and blended scotch, rum, cognac all welcomed exciting new expressions, and there was even an American-made rye whiskey amaro and a barrel-aged limoncello that hit the market.

We've put together a list of the best spirits of 2023 in a variety of categories, from whiskey to cognac to mezcal. We selected these spirits based first and foremost on flavor, but took into consideration their availability and pricing as well. That being said, if an expensive limited-edition whiskey stood out, it made the list; and if a bottom-shelf budget bottle blew us away, it secured a spot as well. Try a few of these (or all of them), and raise a glass to another banner year of good spirits.

Amaro



Nonino Amaro Riserva

Nonino Amaro is an Italian liqueur that is a key component of the Paper Plane cocktail, as mentioned earlier. The brand launched this barrel-aged version earlier this year, aging the amaro in barriques and small casks for 24 months in the distillery's cellar. It retains the sweetness and herbaceousness of the original, with a creamy mouthfeel and sweet vanilla notes that transform this into a true sipping spirit.