

DISTILLED SPIRITS LABELING REGULATIONS

in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

Read more about the following consumer protection regulations online at www.ttb.gov:

Brand Name 27 CFR 5.34

Name and Address 27 CFR 5.36

Alcohol Content 27 CFR 5.37

Caloric and Carbohydrate Representations

27 CFR 5.42 and TTB Ruling 2004-1

Health Warning Statement

27 CFR Part 16

Country of Origin 27 CFR 5.36(e)

Class and Type 27 CFR 5.35

Presence of Neutral Spirits and Coloring, Flavoring and Blending Materials 27 CFR 5.39

Net Contents 27 CFR 5.38/5.47a

Prohibited Practices 27 CFR 5.42

Statements of Age and Percentage
27 CFR 5.40

Voluntary Disclosure of Major Food Allergens 27 CFR 5.32a



How TTB Protects the Public

American adults who enjoy an occasional alcohol beverage of their choice do so without fear that the product they are consuming might not be labeled properly. Why don't they need to worry? Because a small Government agency takes pride in assuring that the alcohol beverages sold in the United States are properly described on the container.

TTB takes tremendous pride in its strategic mission to "Protect the Public," which is designed to assure the integrity of alcohol beverages in the marketplace, verify and substantiate industry member compliance with laws and regulations, and to provide information to the public as a means of preventing consumer deception.

TTB reviews more than 100,000 alcohol labels, as well as advertisements, each year to verify that they provide adequate information to the consumer concerning the identity and quality of each alcohol beverage and to make certain that they do not mislead consumers.

TTB investigators conduct product integrity field investigations to check that industry members are following all Federal labeling and production standards for alcohol beverages. These investigations often include a comprehensive chemical analysis conducted at one of our two state-of-the-art laboratories.

This informational pamphlet is designed to educate the American public about how to read an alcohol beverage label. If you want to learn more, visit our web Web site at www.ttb.gov.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO TAX AND TRADE BUREAU

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

DISTILLED SPIRITS LABELS



TTB

A proud past....A focused future

WHAT A DISTILLED SPIRITS LABEL TELLS YOU

If you have ever taken a look behind a bar, you have seen rows upon rows of different bottles in a variety of heights, sizes, colors, and flavors. Usually the majority of these bottles are distilled spirits. Distilled spirits are generally produced by first combining various ingredients and fermenting them. The resulting fermented “mash,” which has a low alcohol content, is then heated in a still until the alcohol turns into a vapor, which is captured and then turned back into liquid alcohol. This process is called “distillation,” and is generally what distinguishes these products from wine and malt beverages. TTB regulations require that many types of distilled spirits, such as vodka, gin, rum, and tequila, must be bottled at no less than 40% alcohol by volume (80° proof). Other products, such as cordials, liqueurs, and specialties, may be bottled at a lower alcohol content. A careful review of the label will help you to understand the product in the bottle, and TTB designed this guide to help consumers make an informed choice when purchasing a distilled spirits product. TTB regulations can be quite detailed in regard to the production of distilled spirits and the information appearing on the bottle; not every possibility is presented here, but this guide will give you a good grasp of the fundamentals. For more detailed information please see the regulations listed on the back of this pamphlet.

BRAND NAME

The brand name is used to identify and market a distilled spirits product. A brand name may not mislead the consumer about the age, identity, origin, or other characteristics of the distilled spirit.

NAME AND ADDRESS

The name and address of the bottler or importer must appear on the container. However, the address of the bottler's principal place of business may be used instead of the actual location where the bottling took place. It is also permissible for a bottler/importer to use a duly authorized trade name in place of its usual operating name.

ALCOHOL CONTENT

A statement of alcohol content expressed in percent by volume must appear on the brand label. An additional alcohol content statement expressed in degrees of proof may be shown in addition to the required alcohol by volume statement.

HEALTH WARNING STATEMENT

By law, this statement is required on all alcohol beverages containing 0.5% or more alcohol by volume.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Pursuant to regulations issued by TTB, as well as requirements of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a Country of Origin statement is required on containers of imported distilled spirits. Acceptable statements include “Product of (*insert name of country*)” or “Produced in (*insert name of country*).”

T.L. Smith's



GIN

DISTILLED FROM GRAIN

BOTTLED BY XYZ DISTILLING CO., CITY, STATE

40% ALC./VOL. (80 PROOF)

750 ML

GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL, WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS. (2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY, AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

NET CONTENTS

The net contents of a distilled spirit container must be stated in metric units of measure. Distilled spirits must be bottled in sizes of 1.75 L, 1 L, 750 ml, 375 ml, 200 ml, 100 ml, or 50 ml. A can must be filled to 355 ml, 200 ml, 100 ml, or 50 ml.

CLASS/TYPE DESIGNATION

The brand label of a distilled spirit must contain a designation that accurately identifies the product in the bottle. The regulations are quite specific as to the ingredients and processes used to produce a product of a given class or type. For instance:

Gin must derive its main characteristic flavor from juniper berries. In addition, gin labels must also show the commodity from which the product was distilled (e.g., “Distilled from grain”).

Vodka is defined as neutral spirits (alcohol produced from any material at or above 190° proof) so distilled, or so treated after distillation, as to be without distinctive character, aroma, taste, or color. Like gin, vodka labels must also show the commodity from which the product was distilled.

Rum must be made from the fermented juice of sugar cane, sugar cane syrup, sugar cane molasses, or other sugar cane by-products.

Tequila must be derived principally from the Agave Tequilana Weber plant (“blue” variety). Tequila is a distinctive product of Mexico, manufactured in Mexico in compliance with the laws of Mexico.

Cordials and Liqueurs are produced from spirits in combination with fruits, flowers, plants, juices, or natural flavors and with the addition of at least 2.5% by weight of certain sugars.

A distilled spirits product may not fit into any of the classes or types of spirits found in the regulations, usually because of the addition of flavoring materials or because it was made with a non-standard blending or treating material. When this is the case, the product must be labeled with a truthful and adequate statement of composition such as “Rum with natural flavors.” These products will also bear a mandatory fanciful name, such as “Spiced Rum.”