



Age-Your-Own Whiskey: Week 1

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Woodinville Whiskey Co.'s Age-Your-Own Whiskey Kit

Whenever I tell people that I'm from Kentucky, the response is always, "Whiskey or horses?"—not altogether an unfair question. (It's horses, by the way.) Generally, American whiskey doesn't stray too far from the Kentucky-Tennessee border. That's why, when I opened a package from [Woodinville Whiskey Company](#), I was doubly mystified. Not only had they sent a Washington State whiskey, but a Washington State *age-your-own* whiskey kit, complete with two bottles of unaged whiskey, an adorable miniature barrel and a funnel. Curious, I decided to

give it a go and I'll be reporting on any changes over the next few weeks.

Whiskey can be made from various grains—corn, wheat, rye and barley. Blenders come up with their own personal recipes and whip up a grain cocktail, called the mash bill, that's distilled, resulting in a clear, high-proof spirit. This is then aged in charred wood barrels for a varying amount of time—typically eight years or more. The mini-barrel in Woodinville's kit, however, is said to speed-age whiskey—10 times faster than the great big barrels used in distilleries.

So after soaking the little barrel in water (per the instructions), last week I funneled the bottles of white whiskey into it. Over time, it should deepen in color and pick up lovely hints of vanilla, smoke and nuts. Allegedly, in just a few weeks, I should see significant changes in both the color and the flavor of the whiskey. I've set aside some of the original white whiskey as a control, so I can see just how quickly the barrel influences our little batch.

The clear, unaged whiskey in the kit is a mash of corn, wheat and malted barley—the traditional [bourbon](#) whiskey mash bill used in Kentucky. For now, all I have is this raw white whiskey (a.k.a. moonshine, white dog, white lightning, albino, whatever), which, in recent years, has become quite popular on its own. And I don't mean the old bathtub version. Three to try:

Woodinville Whiskey Company Unaged Whiskey (the one we're aging): Sweet butterscotch on the nose and powerful at 110 proof.

Death's Door White Whiskey: Wisconsin's Death's Door debuted one of the first white whiskeys on the market in 2008. Since then, their version has become extremely popular with mixologists. It has a grape-lollipop note that makes it perfectly fun for cocktails.

Bully Boy White Whiskey: Spearminty and twiggy, with notes of basil, this is a great palate-cleanser.

I should add that in the process of feeding our baby barrel the unaltered whiskey, I had a little accident that resulted in shattered glass, spilled whiskey and a crack down the center of *Food & Wine's* tasting table. Looks like I've got the devil's luck just in time for Halloween. Then again, I'm not convinced that the devil's luck is such a bad thing to have when you're in the business of aging whiskey.

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