



**94 Amante 1530 Aperitivo Amaro (Italy; Amante 1530, New York, NY).** Look for an orange hue and juicy orange aroma tinged with vanilla. The palate echoes vanilla sweetness, mixing it with orange peel and a hint of grapefruit pith bitterness on the long finish. Sip or mix, easy drinking. Backed by investor team including Sting and Trudie Styler. Launched September 2023.  
**abv:** 15% **Price:** \$35/700 ml



**94 Butler Vodka (USA; Eight Settlers Distillery, Cottonwood Heights, UT).** This full-bodied vodka has a neutral aroma and mildly sweet and spiced palate. The long finish, lightly laced with anise, coriander and black-pepper heat almost reads like a gin. Distilled from grain.  
**abv:** 40% **Price:** \$29



**94 Origen Holistic Spirits Vodka (USA; McClintock Distilling Company, Frederick, MD).** Backed by actor Woody Harrelson, this flavored vodka has an amber hue and roasty, slightly honeyed aroma. The palate is light, soft and complex, with hints of sandalwood, honey and chamomile tea, rounding into a faintly bitter finish with a hint of orange peel. The blend includes artichoke, elderberry, green tea and muscadine grapes. It may remind some of a light whiskey or barrel-aged gin.  
**abv:** 37% **Price:** \$41



**93 SoVo Vo Vodka (USA; Sono 1420, Norwalk, CT).** Distilled from sugar cane and corn, this feather-light vodka is neutral and crisp, finishing with white pepper and cayenne prickle on the warming, even fiery finish. Label has a “peace & love” rainbow and flowers motif. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 40% **Price:** \$23



**91 Ambush Canyon Vodka (USA; Ambush Canyon Distilling, Houston, TX).** Distilled from corn, this vodka offers gentle hints of vanilla and coconut sweetness, leading into clove and cinnamon sparks on the lingering finish. Recommended for mixing into sweeter-style drinks. **Best Buy.**  
**abv:** 40% **Price:** \$16

# VERSATILE VODKA

New vodkas will please everyone in every price range.

**H**ere’s the headline: vodka isn’t going anywhere.

In part, that’s because of the spirit’s amazing versatility. It can be high end (see a luxe new \$150 limited-edition bottling from Belvedere) or a budget-priced party pour. It’s a neutral canvas for cocktails and marketing campaigns alike (a “holistic” earthy-flavored vodka backed by actor Woody Harrelson, a Simon Cowell-backed vehicle and a cryptocurrency-themed fundraiser for the ASPCA all figure into the lineup of vodka newcomers reviewed below).

And since it can be produced anywhere and distilled from pretty much any raw material, that gives additional leeway to shape vodka into myriad molds.

No wonder then that vodka continues to appeal to a broad cross section of consumers, giving it staying power even amid a challenging economic backdrop.

Like most spirits categories, vodka case sales have plateaued after several years of stellar growth. Yet, it’s still the key ingredient for a

wide range of popular cocktails, from the Cosmopolitan to the Espresso Martini to the Moscow Mule – and that’s helped keep vodka in the spotlight.

Among these mixed drinks, ready-to-drink [RTD] and ready-to-serve cocktails have seen particular growth. “Vodka is well placed to

capitalize on these trends, as the hard seltzer boom of a few years ago is replaced by spirit-based RTDs,” reports IWSR, a firm that analyses alcoholic beverage data. “In the U.S., vodka-based RTDs command the largest share and growth rate within the spirit-based RTD market.”

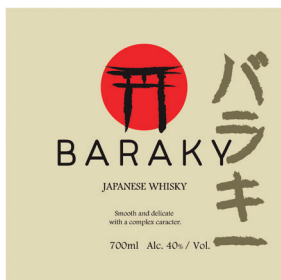
Supporting that theory, look no further than hard-seltzer juggernaut White Claw, which in 2023

expanded into spirits with its new vodka and flavored-vodka line, accompanied by a range of White Claw vodka + soda cans. After all, if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.

Whether mixed into martini glasses or canned highballs or served neat as a chilled shot, we’re ready to see where vodka lands next.

—Kara Newman

Vodka continues to appeal to a broad cross section of consumers, giving it staying power.



**90 Baraky Japanese Whisky (Japan; Tri-Vin Imports, New Rochelle, NY).** This is a blend of whiskies made with barley and rye, aged on average two to three years. The result is a honey hue and slightly nutty aroma. The palate opens with hints of coconut and sandalwood, winding into a drying, lively finish with toasted almond, cigar wrapper and a faint waft of cigar smoke. *Best Buy.*  
**abv: 40% Price: \$35/700 ml**

**96 Belvedere 10 Vodka (Poland; Moët Hennessy USA, New York, NY).** The latest and most luxe addition to the Belvedere line is distilled from organic rye and presented in a tall, angular white tower. The liquid within is light, soft and mostly neutral, with a faint sweetness that hints at lychee or rosewater. Pink peppercorn sparks on the crisp finish. Would be stellar in a martini variation or a Vesper.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$150**

**94 Butler Vodka (USA; Eight Settlers Distillery, Cottonwood Heights, UT).** For full review see page 148.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$29**

**94 Katla Icelandic Vodka (Iceland; Brennivin America, Wilson, WY).** The mildly spiced palate shows savory echoes of black pepper, coriander and caraway, while the brisk finish warms all the way down. Named after Katla, “the mother of all Icelandic volcanoes.”  
**abv: 40% Price: \$45**

**93 Harry Blu’s Vodka (USA; Craft Spirits, Miami, FL).** Competition show impresario and tastemaker Simon Cowell is now a partner in this Miami-based brand. A mild, slightly minty aroma introduces the grain-based vodka, which echoes on the palate as a faint vanilla-mint sweetness framed by white-pepper sparks on the bracing exit.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$30**

**93 SoVo Vo Vodka (USA; Sono 1420, Norwalk, CT).** For full review see page 148. *Best Buy.*  
**abv: 40% Price: \$23**

**92 Bistro Vodka (France; Heavenly Spirits, Lakeville, MA).** Hints of toasted coconut and charcoal frame this light, wheat-based vodka. A faint vanilla sugar note leads into white pepper and

ginger heat on the exhale. The elegant blue-tinted, fluted-glass bottle is one to display on a bar cart.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$32**

**91 Ambush Canyon Vodka (USA; Ambush Canyon Distilling, Houston, TX).** For full review see page 148. *Best Buy.*  
**abv: 40% Price: \$16**

**91 Doge Vodka (USA; Satellite Spirits, Grass Valley, CA).** Expected a light, generally neutral palate tinged with vanilla and charcoal, leading to a brisk, warming fade. This is a limited edition to benefit the ASPCA; \$10 per bottle benefits the animal-protection organization. Crypto fans will recognize the dogecoin image on the label, modeled after the Shiba Inu dog breed.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$35**

**91 South Fork Vodka (USA; Satellite Spirits, Grass Valley, CA).** Distilled from corn, this vodka has a mild coconut scent. The light palate shows distinct vanilla sweetness, framed with a hint of charcoal and a crisp, tingly black-pepper finish. *Best Buy.*  
**abv: 40% Price: \$21**

**91 Tommyrotter Small Batch Vodka (USA; Tommyrotter Distillery, Buffalo, NY).** This is a corn-based vodka filtered through charcoal, sand and gravel. Expect a mostly neutral aroma, with a mild coconut whiff. The palate is soft and slightly sweet. A fleeting almond note leads to cinnamon; white pepper tingles on the finish. Mix into sweet or creamy drinks.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$34**

**90 Andy’s Farm-Crafted Vodka (USA; Browne Family Spirits, Spokane, WA).** Made with organic Washington state wheat, this vodka is mostly neutral on the nose and palate, though it teases with hints of vanilla and roasted nuts. The finish is brisk and somewhat fiery.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$35**

**90 Bored Vodka (USA; Satellite Spirits, Grass Valley, CA).** Overall neutral on the nose and palate, this vodka includes a faint minty tingle and mentholated exhale, plus white-pepper sparks on the finish. The label may feature one of more than 30 digital art pieces familiar to NFT aficionados; our bottle depicted the “Bored Ape” meme. *Best Buy.*  
**abv: 40% Price: \$23**

**90 Farm House Vodka (USA; Anytime Spirits, Los Angeles, CA).** Look for subtle herbaceous tones in this vodka distilled from organic warhog wheat, grown and harvested in New York. Hints of tarragon and spearmint linger in the aroma and into the brisk finish.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$39**

**90 Tetya Kapa Vodka (USA; Napa Valley Distillery, Napa, CA).** The backstory: Named

for the producer’s Tetya (aunt) Kapa, this vodka is distilled from Napa Sauvignon Blanc grapes as well as “ancient winter grains” to honor the producer’s roots in Ukraine. The result is a faintly fruity aroma and bright, slightly sweet vodka with a brisk, tingly mentholated exhale. Limited bottling.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$40**

**90 Wigle Smallman St. Vodka (USA; Wigle Whiskey, Pittsburgh, PA).** Named for distillery’s address on Smallman Street in Pittsburgh’s historic Strip District, this vodka has a neutral aroma tinged with citrus and charcoal. The soft, slightly slick palate offers a lush hint of vanilla, plus black pepper on the brisk, mouthwatering finish.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$29**

**89 Florena Curve Vodka (USA; Armen’s Barrels, Washington, PA).** Distilled from organic corn, this vodka is generally neutral, warmed with nuanced almond and vanilla sweetness. White- and black-pepper sparks show up on the tingly finish. Consider mixing into a sweeter-style drink.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$40**

**88 North Grove Vodka (USA; Hinterhaus Distilling, Arnold, CA).** Distilled exclusively from California grapes, this vodka has a distinctly fruity character that reads a little like grappa. Rounded, bold and slightly funky, this shows assertive fruit from start to finish, a reminder that vodka doesn’t have to be strictly neutral.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$31**

**86 High Desert Cactus Vodka (USA; Alamo Distilling, San Antonio, TX).** Distilled from succulents harvested the north-central state of San Luis Potosí in Mexico, this vodka will remind some of mezcal. That translates as a slightly medicinal tinge on nose and palate, plus hints of rubber and lychee flavors. Cayenne tingle marks the sharp, fiery finish.  
**abv: 40% Price: \$60**

## FLAVORED VODKAS

**94 Origen Holistic Spirits Vodka (USA; McClintock Distilling Company, Frederick, MD).** For full review see page 148.  
**abv: 37% Price: \$43**

**93 SoVo Lemon Vodka (USA; Sono 1420, Norwalk, CT).** Bright lemon peel on the nose and palate introduces this lemon-flavored vodka. No sugar is added, resulting in a bone-dry, light-bodied palate. The lingering citrus note is accompanied by mouthwatering white pepper and ginger sparks. Seems right for Lemon Drops and long, effervescent drinks. Distilled from corn, infused with lemon peel. *Best Buy.*  
**abv: 40% Price: \$23**

**90 Spirit of Hven Coffey Coffee Flavored Vodka (Sweden; Preiss Imports, Ramona, CA).** Get

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a head start on espresso martinis with this coffee- and spice- flavored vodka. Expect an amber hue and dark aromas suggesting honey, cola and allspice. The palate opens with honey and woody spice, leading into a distinct roasted coffee exhale accented with tingly clove, cinnamon bark, black pepper and cayenne.

**abv:** 41.8%

**Price:** \$48

**88 Spirit of Hven Maja's Raspberry Vodka (Sweden; Preiss Imports, Ramona, CA).** A pale rosy pink hue and somewhat ersatz berry scent introduce this vodka. The palate echoes that berry note, alongside a faint bubblegum note and bitter tinge. Slight acidity makes the mouth water and each sip finishes with a floral exhale.

**abv:** 41.8%

**Price:** \$48

## RED BITTERS/APERITIVO

**94 Amante 1530 Aperitivo Amaro (Italy; Amante 1530, New York, NY).** For full review see page 148.

**abv:** 15%

**Price:** \$35/700 ml

**93 Casoni Amaro Liqueur (Italy; Banville Wine Merchants, New York, NY).** Very much located on the bitter side of the bittersweet spectrum, a rusty orange hue and bracing minty aroma introduce this amaro. The viscous palate mixes chamomile, roots and bitter herbs, bitter orange peel and a hint of cocoa nibs. A distinct spearmint exhale refreshes the dry and relatively bitter exit.

**Best Buy.**

**abv:** 26%

**Price:** \$29

**93 Atōst Bloom Aperitivo (USA; Pressman Wines, Moorpark, CA).** This grappa-based aperitivo has a ruddy hue and a berry-jam aroma mixed with a floral hint. The sweet-tart palate shows up as berry compote and cherry-pie filling, braced up with a hint of grapefruit peel on the finish. Would be nice lengthened into a spritz.

**abv:** 18%

**Price:** \$30

**91 Casoni 1814 Aperitivo (Italy; Banville Wine Merchants, New York, NY).** Ready for Negronis and Boulevardiers, this aperitivo has a bright orange-red hue and candied-citrus aroma. The bittersweet palate opens on the sweeter side, with sugared citrus rinds and a vanilla hint, but dries to show grapefruit and bitter orange on the fade. **Best Buy.**

**abv:** 15%

**Price:** \$27 for 1 liter

## JAPANESE WHISKY

**90 Baraky Japanese Whisky (Japan; Tri-Vin Imports, New Rochelle, NY).** For full review see page 148. **Best Buy.**

**abv:** 40%

**Price:** \$35/700 ml

**89 Hakata Whisky Aged 16 Years Sherry Cask (Japan; ImpEx Beverages, San Francisco, CA).** Look for a deep mahogany hue and rich,

plummy aroma including dried fig and a hint of cocoa. The palate is pure sherry, showing raisin-y, plummy, thick fruitcake and molasses tones, with a surprising, slight effervescent feel and drying oak finish. Adding water lightens the flavors to tart plum skin and dried cherry.

**abv:** 42%

**Price:** \$150/700 ml

**88 Hakata Whisky Aged 18 Years Sherry Cask (Japan; ImpEx Beverages, San Francisco, CA).** The sherry influence is apparent from first glance to last sip. The deep nut-brown hue and rich dried-fig and dried-date aromas lead into a bold palate that resounds with molasses-like tones framed with cranberry tartness and pucker. Fruity tones linger into the elongated finish, alongside nutmeg, clove and grippy oak tannins.

**abv:** 42%

**Price:** \$190/700 ml