

Toward designer bourbon whiskeys with custom-tailored aromas

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Scientists in Germany are reporting discovery of key substances that give American bourbon whiskey its unique bouquet. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

In the latest chapter in a 40-year scientific quest to unravel the flavor and aroma secrets of the world's whiskeys, scientists in Germany are reporting discovery of key substances responsible for the distinctive bouquet of American bourbon whiskey. The study, which aims to help improve bourbon through a better understanding of its individual components, is scheduled for the July 23 issue of ACS' bi-weekly *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Peter Schieberle and Luigi Poisson point out that more than 300 compounds have been identified over the years in whiskey. However, only a few studies have focused on the key aroma compounds, which are most responsible for the fruity, smoky, vanilla and other harmonics of whiskey.

In the study, Schieberle and Poisson analyzed more than 40 of Bourbon's compounds — 13 of them newly discovered — that blend to create its rich profile, a signature mixture of scents, including fruity, earthy and cooked apple.

The new information could be useful in changing the recipe or manufacturing processes for bourbon in order to produce whiskey with distinctive flavors, they note.

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