

Standards for Labeling Japanese Whisky

Established February 12, 2021
Japan Spirits & Liqueurs Makers Association

Translation Disclaimer:

The translation of these Labeling Standards into the English language is intended solely as a convenience and is not legally binding. The Japan Spirits & Liqueurs Makers Association has attempted to provide an accurate translation of the original material in Japanese, but due to the nuances of translation slight differences may exist.

Article 1 Purpose

The purpose of these standards for labeling Japanese whisky (hereinafter referred to as the "***Labeling Standards***") is to stipulate matters with respect to the specific labeling of whisky in order to contribute to the appropriate selection of whisky products by consumers in Japan and abroad, and to thereby protect the interests of consumers, ensure fair competition and improve quality.

Article 2 Definitions of Terms

Except as otherwise provided herein, the terms in the Labeling Standards have the meanings ascribed to them in the Liquor Tax Act (Act No. 6 of 1953) (hereinafter the "***Liquor Tax Act***"), the Act on the Preservation of Liquor Tax and Liquor Industry Association (Act No. 7 of 1953) (hereinafter referred to as the "***Liquor Association Act***"), the Fair Competition Code on the Labeling of Whisky (Japan Fair Trade Commission Public Notice No. 22, dated August 7, 1980) and the Enforcement Regulations of the Fair Competition Code on the Labeling of Whisky (as approved and enacted by the Japan Fair Trade Commission on July 30, 1980).

Article 3 Scope of Application

The Labeling Standards apply to whisky sold in Japan or sold from Japan for overseas use by business operators.¹

Article 4 Labeling in Accordance with Applicable Laws and Regulations

In addition to complying with the Labeling Standards, business operators shall, to the extent applicable, appropriately label whisky products in accordance with the requirements for labeling whisky under the Liquor Industry Association Act and the Food Labeling Act (Act No. 7 of 2013).

Article 5 Standards of Use of Specified Term for Whisky

¹ For the purpose of the Labeling Standards, "business operator" means any person who produces and sells whisky or any person who bottles and sells whisky in Japan.

1. The specified term for whisky listed in the left column of the following table may be used to label a whisky product only when such whisky satisfies the production method quality requirements set forth in the right column.

Term	Production Method Quality Requirements		
"Japanese whisky" (or "Japanese whiskey")	Raw ingredients	Raw ingredients must be limited to malted grains, other cereal grains, and water extracted in Japan. Malted grains must always be used.	
	Production method	Production	Saccharification, fermentation, and distillation must be carried out at a distillery in Japan. Alcohol content at the time of distillation must be less than 95%.
		Aging	The distilled product must be poured into wooden casks not exceeding a capacity of 700 liters and matured in Japan for a period of at least 3 years thereafter.
		Bottling	Bottling must take place only in Japan, with alcoholic strength of at least 40% as of such time.
		Other	Plain caramel coloring can be used.

2. The specified term set forth in paragraph 1 shall include the words “Japanese” and “whisky” (or "whiskey") in a unified and integrated manner without inserting additional words between them.
3. For whisky that meets the production method quality requirements set forth in paragraph 1, the type of whisky may be indicated together with the specified term if based on the permissible labeling of types of whisky under the Fair Competition Code².

Article 6 Prohibition of Misleading Labeling

1. The specified terms set forth in Article 5 may not be used in labeling products unless the production method quality requirements set forth in Article 5 are satisfied, even if such terms are expressed through or with (i) words that have the same meanings as those terms (e.g., "Nihon whisky" or "Japan whisky"), (ii) translations into Japanese or a foreign language or (iii) terms such as "type" or "style".
2. Business operators shall not use labeling that includes any of the items below for products that do not satisfy the production method quality requirements set forth in Article 5, unless measures are taken to clarify that the product being labeled does not meet such requirements:
 - (i) Names of people that evoke Japan
 - (ii) Names of Japanese cities, regions, famous places, mountains and rivers
 - (iii) The Japanese flag or a Japanese era name
 - (iv) Any other labeling that makes it likely that the product being labeled is mistaken for a product that satisfies the production method quality requirements set forth in Article 5.
3. Business operators shall not use labeling that makes it likely that alcohol products that do not meet the definition of "whisky" under the Liquor Tax Act are mistaken for whisky, and shall not supply, or cooperate in supplying, alcohol products to vendors that use such labeling.

² It is currently understood that the types of whisky permitted to be labeled under the Fair Competition Code include the following: "Malt Whisky", "Grain Whisky", "Blended Whisky", "Straight Whisky", "Single Whisky" and "Pure Whisky".

Article 7 Administration of Labeling Standards

The Labeling Standards shall be administered by the Japan Spirits & Liqueurs Makers Association, and any uncertainty in their interpretation or use of specific terms shall be deliberated by a committee entrusted by its board of directors.

Supplementary Provisions

Article 1 Effective Date

The Labeling Standards shall be effective April 1, 2021.

Article 2 Transitional Provision

Where a business operator has used the specified terms set forth in Article 5 (including the expressions specified in Article 6.1) or the items set forth in Article 6.2 in selling whisky products on or prior to March 31, 2021, such business operator may continue using such labeling only for such products until March 31, 2024.