



# Aquavit: Raising the Nordic Spirit

Aquavit answers to a few names, like *fire water*, *boxing water*, and *Black Death*, for starters. It's a Scandinavian spirit also known as schnapps that gets its distinctive flavor primarily from caraway or dill. Both an apéritif and a digestif, its traditions are firmly planted at the Nordic table on major holidays, or any occasion that requires a proper swig.

Most aquavit punches in at around 40 percent ABV and is distilled from either grain or potatoes. Said to have medicinal properties, aquavit is flavored with a fragrant blend of herbs, spices, and oils which run the gamut from cardamom and cumin, to anise, fennel, and citrus. Its slow burn has been chasing fermented favorites like pickled herring, smoked salmon, and lutefisk down dedicated throats since the 1500s.

Danish, Swedish, Finnish, and Icelandic aquavit is typically light or clear in color. Norwegian brands tend to take on a darker color from time spent in oak casks of at least a year, or even up to 12 years. To bypass barrel aging, sometimes caramel coloring is added to give the drink its amber hue while the clear stuff is either unaged or aged in old casks that won't darken the spirit.

Norwegians take a Viking's approach to making aquavit by sending their barrels (and thirsty tourists) on the ultimate booze cruise to Australia and back so that they pass the equator twice. The motion of the ocean and the humidity are said to extract the most flavor from the casks and speed up the aging process. Norwegian aquavit is best served at room temperature to fully appreciate the flavor while aquavit of other origins tastes great when it and the shot glass (or bottle) are served ice cold.

To mix an aquavit drink, try this recipe I picked up from living abroad in Copenhagen called a Flyver (pronounced "flu-ver"), roughly meaning "to fly."

Simply mix a glass of aquavit with your choice of citrus tonic water or soda (depending on how "girly" you like your drinks). Add lemon peel or bitters for flavor, and to make it look like you've got some class. It's a fizzy, boozy rush that will fuel your next celebratory "cheers."

After a few shots, you'll be saying "skål," just like a local. 🍷

