

# Whiskey District

AT WASHINGTON, D.C. WATERING HOLE IRISH WHISKEY PUBLIC HOUSE, FANS OF IRELAND'S SMOOTH, EASY-DRINKING SPIRITS SAY "SLÁINTE"

by Kelly A. Magyarics / photo by Greg Powers



**Carrie Dzwil behind the bar at D.C.'s atmospheric Irish Whiskey Public House.**

Irish whiskey enthusiasts in the District flock to this downtown tavern, which carries 56 different types of brown spirits from the Emerald Isle. Guests can enjoy everything from a \$6 pour of Irish Manor, to \$130 for a glass of 1951 Knappogue Castle—one of the oldest and rarest Irish whiskeys, triple-distilled in 1951 and aged in sherry casks for 36 years. Descriptive notes by each selection help guests find their aroma and flavor niche. Red Breast 15 Year (\$18), for example, is described as having “hints of nougat and fruit, gingerbread and cardamom with a vanilla and gooseberry finish.”

Not surprisingly, many of the establishment's 12 house cocktails incorporate Irish whiskey. “Our cocktail program focuses mainly on bringing Irish whiskey to people who may be apprehensive about trying it,” explains Carrie Dzwil, Restaurant Manager and Product Specialist. “By using some carefully selected ingredients, we came up with a menu that is accessible to not only enthusiasts, but to guests who would typically prefer to order a standard vodka or rum cocktail.” Their version of the Julep eschews bourbon for Jameson; Big Fellas mingles Michael Collins with lemon, ginger ale and orange bitters; and Irish Eyes mixes Jameson with Lillet Blanc, St-Germain and fresh orange juice.

But other Irish spirits also find their way in signature libations. The Orange Line (named for a D.C. Metro line) combines Segura Viudas Aria Brut Cava with Celtic Crossing, orange juice and grenadine; refreshing Celtic Lemonade mixes lemonade with Boru Irish Vodka and Celtic Crossing. All cocktails are priced at \$10, except their Powers Whiskey-based Irish Coffee, which is \$8.

Guests who opt to enjoy their Irish Whiskey solo can also order one of six flights, priced \$17 to \$36; each includes four one-ounce pours served on a wooden paddle. Fans of Jameson, Bushmills and Tullamore Dew can explore how aging affects the spirit; those who crave blends, single malts or peated spirits are able to compare and contrast this style among various producers.

Free membership in an Irish Whiskey Club allows patrons to sip their way to various perks. Twenty stamps renders a complimentary tasting of the Whiskey of the Month; lucky guests who make it all the way to 40 whiskeys get their name engraved on a whiskey barrel and receive a free bottle of the spirit. Members who complete their whiskey passport are also eligible to win one of the free trips to Ireland awarded every six months.

Despite the bar's name, staff doesn't overlook Scotch and American whisk(e)y fans, who have 20 options from which to choose. Sixty bottled beers are offered, as well as 14 on draft, used in classic hop-tails like the Half and Half (Guinness and Harp), as well as irreverent ones like the Dirty Hoe (Guinness and Hoegaarden Belgian White.)

Dzwil says that the goal for Irish Whiskey Public House is to appeal to a slightly older crowd than the post-college professionals that the neighborhood typically sees. “We like to offer a more laid-back setting for people to come for happy hour, or hold private events.” Exposed brick, hardwood floors, rustic wooden tables and comfy couches certainly lend a relaxed, convivial vibe. ■■