

The Code of Practice of the British Wine Producers' Committee of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association

Laying down general rules on the definition, production, description and presentation of the category of 'made wines' known as British Wines

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Produced in Partnership with the WSTA's Primary Authority partners,
Salford City Council and The Vale of Glamorgan Council

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Foreword

Membership of the British Wine Producers' Committee, of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (hereafter called the 'Committee'), is open to all producers of British Wines who agree to conform to this Code of Practice, and who are members of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA).

Manufacturers of 'Made Wines' which do not meet the definition of 'British Wines' may be co-opted (without voting rights) to the 'Committee' if they are members of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association.

British Wines have been produced in the United Kingdom since the 17th century when raisins were first imported and fermented to produce wine.

Specially selected concentrated grape must is purchased, mostly from within the EU, and is fermented in technically advanced wineries to produce a wide variety of traditional British Wines.

Protection for the continued manufacturing processes for traditional British Wines and use of the term 'Wine', in a composite name for the products, was written into the Treaty of Accession when the UK joined the EEC in 1973. All subsequent relative Directives and Regulations reflect this position.

There is no specific European Union Community or UK domestic legislation defining British Wines or covering their production, description and presentation.

EU Regulation 1308/2013 (Annex VII Part II) provides for the manufacture, in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Poland, of products falling within heading No.2206 of the Common Customs Tariff, produced from grape juice or concentrated grape must. In the naming of such products, EU rules also permit Member States to use the term 'Wine' as part of a composite name or with a fruit name when not made from grapes. The EU's Common Customs Tariff and World Customs Organization reflect this position under the heading 2206 thereof.

In the absence of specific EU or UK rules, like all other foods and drink, British wines are subject to horizontal EU food safety legislation and EU rules on the provision of information to consumers (Regulation EU 1169/2011) which is explained in detail in section 4 of this Code of Practice.

The UK has permitted use of the term 'Wine' for traditional British Wine products for many years and a list of composite names, agreed with the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and subsequently with the Food Standards Agency, is given at appendix 1 of this code of practice.

In order to ensure that there is no confusion between Wine as defined by the EU wine regime and British Wines, and that the consumer is appropriately informed, it is important that general rules are established for the production and labelling of these products.

This Code of Practice lays down general rules on the production, definition, description and presentation of the British Wine sector of alcoholic beverages.

It sets standards of quality parameters for British Wines and lays down procedures for monitoring those standards.

The Code of Practice conforms with the requirements of both UK and EU legislation in as far as it applies to British Wines.

1. Definitions

1.1 'Made Wine' has the same meaning as that defined in the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979.

1.2 'British Wine' is:

A drink produced in the UK:

- obtained by the fermentation of:
- dried grapes and/or
- grape juice or grape must, concentrated or otherwise,

alone, together, or in combination with:

- sound fruit (or vegetable), fresh or otherwise, and/or
- other fruit juice, concentrated or otherwise, and/or
- honey

with or without the addition, during and/or after fermentation, of:

- sugars and/or potable water

and to which may be added alone, together or in combination:

- parts of plants and/or fruits, and/or
- 'permitted alcohol', and/or
- wine, and/or
- of flavourings, and/or
- 'permitted colours', and/or
- 'permitted preservatives', and/or
- carbon dioxide and/or nitrogen, and/or
- other permitted additives.

With the exception of Fruit Wines, which are defined in section 2.3, the fermented base wines from which all styles of British Wine are made, must contain the equivalent of not less than 52% by volume of single strength grape must and/or grape juice.

The density of single strength grape must or grape juice shall be taken to be 1.070g/cm³ at 20°C.

1.3 Grape juice, and concentrated grape juice are the products obtained from fresh grapes as defined in Annex II Part IV of EU Regulation 1308/2013.

1.4 Grape must, concentrated grape must and rectified concentrated grape must are products as defined by of Annex VII, Part II (10), (13) and (14), respectively, of EU Regulation 1308/2013.

1.5 'Honey' means honey of natural origin.

- 1.6** 'Sugars' is understood sucrose, dextrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, rectified concentrated grape must, honey or other natural substances consisting almost entirely of carbohydrates having a similar effect.
- 1.7** 'Permitted alcohol' means potable quality ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin and spirit drinks as defined in EU Regulation 110/2008 .
- 1.8** 'Permitted colours', 'Permitted preservatives' and other 'Permitted Additives' means those colours, preservatives and other additives permitted by EU Regulation 1333/2008 and Commission Regulation 1130/2011. Additives are distinguished from processing aids therein.
- 1.9** 'Fortified' means the addition of 'permitted alcohol' to British Wine. The quantity of 'permitted alcohol' and the final alcoholic strength of the resulting product is regulated by H. M. Revenue and Customs.
- 1.10** 'Declared alcoholic strength' means the alcoholic strength by volume at 20°C of the product, as indicated on the primary packaging in which it is contained

2. Oenological Practices and Processes

2.1 The oenological practices authorised by Commission Regulation EC 2019/934 may be applied in the production of British Wines.

2.2 In addition, the following oenological practices and processes are permitted:

2.2.1 For the purpose of acidification, the additional following substances are permitted quantum satis:

- Citric Acid
- Malic Acid
- Lactic Acid

2.2.2 For the purpose of de-acidification, the following additional substances, are permitted quantum satis:

- Sodium Bicarbonate
- Magnesium Bicarbonate

2.2.3 For the purpose of clarification, use of the following processing aids:

- Agar Agar
- Chitin
- Acid Protease
- An Enzymatic preparation of Beta-glucanase
- Polyvinylpyrrolidone, up to a maximum of 0.8 g / litre

2.2.4 For the purpose of processing, use of the following processing aids:

- Diatomaceous earth
- Cellulose
- Perlite
- Filtration contact media:
 - Nylon
 - Polypropylene
 - Polyester
 - Polyethylene
 - Glass fibre with polyester

2.2.5 Anti-foam

2.2.6 Amyloglucosidase

2.3 In the production of British Wines which use the name of a fruit, fruits or vegetable in a composite term including the word 'Wine', it is a requirement that the product is made from the named fruit, fruits or vegetable, in addition to, or in total or partial substitution for, grape must or grape juice (concentrated or otherwise).

The fermented base wine, from which all styles of Fruit Wines are made, must contain the equivalent of not less than 52% by volume of single strength fruit juice/grape must and/or grape juice.

The fruit, fruits or vegetable may be in the form of the whole fruit (or vegetable) whether macerated, 'pulped' or not, or, the fruit (or vegetable) juice whether concentrated or not.

Addition of the fruit, fruits or vegetable may be made at the time of, and/or during and/or after fermentation and may be augmented by the addition of natural extracts or flavours of the named fruit.

2.4 For the purpose of rendering British Wine sparkling:

The introduction of carbon dioxide gas either by secondary fermentation or injection to an over-pressure of not less than 3 bars at a temperature of 20°C in closed containers. For duty purposes, product which has been packaged in bottles with mushroom stoppers and ties is also deemed to be sparkling.

2.5 For the purpose of rendering British Wine semi-sparkling (or lightly sparkling):

The introduction of carbon dioxide gas either by secondary fermentation or injection, to an over-pressure of not less than 1 bar and not exceeding 3 bars at a temperature of 20°C in closed containers.

2.6 For the purpose of rendering British Wine 'aromatised':

The addition of aromatic herbs, and/or spices, and/or other permitted ingredients so as to impart characteristic flavour.

3. Characteristics of British Wines

British Wine is the collective name given to a group of products traditional to the UK. The specific names and their associated organoleptic characteristics are described in this section.

3.1 Fortified British Wine

British Wines:

- produced in a range of styles, for example, 'Cream'; 'Medium'; 'Pale Cream'; 'Dry',
- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 13% and not more than 22%,
- which are fortified,
- having a residual sugar level, colour and acidity level appropriate to the named style,
- having a 'clean' and vinous 'nose' with a 'rich', mellow palate.

3.2 Light British Wine

British Wines:

- produced in a variety of styles, for example, 'Red'; 'White'; 'Rosé'; 'Medium'; 'Dry',
- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 5% and not more than 12%,
- with colour, residual sugar and acidity appropriate to the named style,
- having 'clean', wine-like organoleptic characteristics.

In order to avoid potential confusion with rules governing nutrition claims, the term "Light British Wine" should not be used as a customary term for labelling purposes, the term "British wine" should be used instead.

3.3 Fruit (or Vegetable) Wines

British Wine/Made Wine:

- produced in wide variety of types and using the name of the fruit, combination of fruits or vegetable, which characterises the product, as part of the composite name including the word 'wine', for example, 'Cherry Wine'; 'Apricot Wine'; 'Passion Fruit Wine'; 'Parsnip Wine', having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 5% and not more than 22%,
- having a colour and organoleptic characteristics appropriate to the named fruit, fruits or vegetable.

3.4 Ginger Wine

British Wine:

- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 5% and not greater than 22%,
- the main flavour and character of which is obtained by the maceration of ginger root with British Wine or by the addition of natural flavours extracted from ginger root,
- to which may be added other fruits, spices or permitted natural flavours.

3.5 Mead Wine

British Wine:

- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 5% and not greater than 15%,
- of which not less than 10% of the total equivalent single strength fruit basis shall consist of honey,
- the main flavour and characteristic of which is honey.

3.6 Tonic Wine

British Wine/Made Wine

- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 8.5% and not greater than 22%,
- produced by the addition of ingredients permitted by UK law. While current labelling rules do not require full ingredient declaration for alcoholic drinks above 1.2% abv, the presence of certain permitted traditional ingredients may be shown on the label.

3.7 Blends of British Wine and Spirituous Beverages

British Wine:

- which has been fortified by the addition of a spirituous beverage
- having a declared alcoholic strength of not less than 12% and not greater than 22%,
- bearing a description of the spirituous beverage from which the main characteristic is derived, in the form:
- 'A blend of British Wine and (name of spirituous beverage)'.

3.8 Other British Wines

3.8.1 British Wine bearing the style descriptor 'sparkling':

- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 4% and not greater than 12%.

The word 'sparkling' must not form part of the composite name of the product. Ideally, this should also appear in a different font to that of the composite name.

3.8.2 British Wine bearing the style descriptor 'semi-sparkling' or 'lightly sparkling':

- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 4% and not greater than 12%.

The words 'semi-sparkling' or 'lightly sparkling' must not form part of the composite name of the product. Ideally, this should also appear in a different font to that of the composite name.

3.8.3 British Wine bearing the style descriptor 'aromatised':

- having a declared alcoholic strength by volume of not less than 5% and not greater than 22%.

The word 'aromatised' must not form part of the composite name of the product. Ideally, this should also appear in a different font to that of the composite name.

3.8.4 British Wine to which spices such as cinnamon and ginger, or the natural extracts or flavours thereof, have been added and bearing the name Mulled Wine:

- having a declared strength of not less than 5% and not more than 15%

Other types of British Wine may be added if they conform to the legal requirements of the United Kingdom and the general requirements of this Code of Practice.

4. Presentation, Control and Protection of British Wine

4.1 General rules on the provision of food information

EU-wide rules on food labelling are contained within EU Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC). The FIC goes beyond establishing labelling rules by extending the scope to regulate the provision of food information - defined as information available to the final consumer by means of a label, other accompanying material or other means including modern technology tools or verbal communication. It therefore covers not only labelling but information on websites, e-selling platforms, distance sales and any marketing or promotional material.

At its core, Regulation 1169/2011 specifies that food shall not be misleading as to the characteristics of the food and, in particular, as to its nature, identity, properties, composition, quantity, durability, country of origin or place of provenance, method of manufacture or production.

All British wines must conform with the relevant provisions of the FIC.

For products destined for export, British wines must conform with the compositional or labelling requirements of the third country to which products are destined.

4.2 Labelling rules under EU Regulation 1169/2011

Products falling within the scope of this code must include the following information on their product labels:

4.2.1 Name of the food

Article 9(1) of the Food Information to Consumers Regulations (1169/2011) requires products to be labelled with the legal name of the food, or in the absence of such a name its customary name. Given the long history of use of the term, British wine should be considered a customary name for products listed in this Code and therefore all British Wines shall bear on the label the customary name British Wine or, alternatively, one of the alternative descriptions set out in Section 3.

No products shall be offered for sale using the customary name British Wine or under the headings of Article 3 unless they conform with this Code of Practice.

Brand or fancy names or other indications used, shall not be misleading in respect of the nature or composition of the product or of its origin.

While the use of the description 'British Wine' by itself on labels of products described under sections 3.1 and 3.2 is permitted, members should indicate the nature of these products more clearly than the law requires. On the labels of such products and in the same field of vision as the term 'British Wine', the phrase "made from imported grape juice" shall be included. This phrase may be replaced, as necessary, by an equivalent phrase more appropriate to the production processes used.

This phrase can be included on the front label, back label or repeated on both.

4.2.2 Allergens

Any substances or products causing allergies or intolerances, as listed in Annex II of FIC, must be indicated on the product label via a 'Contains' statement.

4.2.3 Origin

Products falling within scope of this Code should indicate that they have been produced in the United Kingdom.

4.2.4 Nominal Volume

The nominal volume should be indicated on the label.

4.2.5 Alcohol content

The alcohol content should be indicated on the label. This should be indicated on one of the following ways:

- X% vol.
- Alcohol X% vol.
- Alc X% vol.

4.2.6 Durability Indication

A best before date is needed on all alcoholic beverages with an abv of 10% or less. Refer to Annex X of Regulation 1169/2011 for the correct format.

4.2.7 Special Storage Conditions

Any special storage conditions and/or conditions of use should be indicated on the label e.g., store in a refrigerator after opening.

4.2.8 Food Business Operator details

The name or business name and address of the food business operator should appear on the product label. The food business operator is usually the business under whose name or business name the food is marketed or, if that business is not established in the UK, the importer into the UK.

4.2.9 Field of vision

The customary name 'British Wine' must appear within the same field of vision as the nominal volume and the alcohol content. The statement "made from imported grape juice" must also comply appear within the same field of vision as the name. This information can be on the front or back label or appear on both.

All the information above must be at least 1.2mm high. It must be available to the final consumer before purchase, including when products are made available through distance sales and in any marketing or advertising material aimed at consumers.

4.3 Labelling Rules under The Food (Lot Marking) Regulations 1996

A lot mark should be added on the bottle or on the label. This should be preceded by the letter 'L' to clearly distinguish this from the other food information. In some cases, producers will use the best before date as a lot mark, however if your product is above 10% abv then a best before date is not required and so a separate lot mark should be included.

5. Monitoring of the Code of Practice

5.1 In the event of a suspected breach of this Code of Practice, the 'Committee' will consult as appropriate, on a confidential basis, to seek a remedy and will advise the Company in question accordingly.

5.2 If the breach is confirmed and continues, after giving the Company in question a reasonable time to rectify matters, the issue will be referred to the Executive Committee of the WSTA with a view to carrying out sanctions.

Such sanctions may include suspension or expulsion from the WSTA and, if appropriate, referral to legal regulators and/or other interested trade bodies.

5.3 Members of the Committee are automatically included in the Primary Authority partnerships that the WSTA has with Salford City Council Trading Standards and with Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Trading Standards. This Code has been produced in partnership with these Primary Authority partners and Committee members should produce, describe and present their British Wines and Made Wines in accordance with this.

As per the WSTA complaints referral policy, if complaints are received about Committee members products not being produced, described or presented in accordance with this Code, that Committee member will be contacted directly by the WSTA who will provide advice to help resolve any issues. If complaints are received about non-Committee members products not being produced, described or presented in accordance with this Code, and it is believed that their product is misleading, that business will be contacted by the WSTA and a copy of the complaint will be referred to the relevant Primary Authority Partner, depending on where the business is based.

5.4 Compliance with this Code of Practice does not limit the responsibilities of individual Companies to fulfil the requirements of current Food Safety and Consumer Protection Legislation.

5.5 On an annual basis, at the start of each year, the 'Committee' requires each member Company to certify to the Secretary of the 'Committee', that all relevant products which they sell, comply with the requirements of this Code of Practice.

In order to monitor compliance with this code of practice, the 'Committee' is empowered to procure the independent purchase and analysis of British Wines from retail outlets.

(Revised April 1981)

(Revised May 1982)

(Revised December 1985)

(Revised February 1988)

(Revised July 1988)

(Revised January 1989)

(Revised March 1997)

(Revised June 2005)

(Revised October 2009)

(Revised September 2011)

(Revised September 2013)

(Revised August 2020)

(Revised February 2021)

Composite names including the word 'wine' for beverages not made from fresh grapes

- 1 Apple wine
Pear wine
Apricot wine
Blackberry wine
Blackcurrant wine
Cherry wine
Dandelion wine
Damson wine
Elderberry wine
Orange wine
Peach wine
Pineapple wine
Raisin wine
Strawberry wine
Birch wine
Coffee wine
Cowslip wine
Parsnip wine
Ginger wine

- 2 Communion wine
Mead Wine
Mulled Wine
Sacramental wine
Tonic Wine
Fortified British Wine

This list was agreed in March 1979 and has been added to so that any named fruit, flower or vegetable name can be used in the composite name as long as it appropriately describes the product.

Provided that they are made to the standards set by this Code of Practice, the names of these products may be accompanied by the sales denomination 'British Wine'.

Although it is not permitted to split the above composite terms by intervening words, the phrases themselves can be accompanied by other suitable words incorporating the term 'British Wine, e.g. 'Dessert British Wine', 'special/rich/ruby/white/cream, Fortified British Wine'.

The composite name 'Mead Wine' is permitted to describe a traditional British Wine fermented and/or flavoured with honey and the composite name 'Mulled Wine' is permitted to describe a traditional British Wine to which has been added appropriate herbs and spices or the natural flavours thereof.



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