



Whisky & Ember

A FREE COCKTAIL GUIDE

Five Classics, Rebuilt

Craft Without Pretension

Five recipes. The reasoning behind every pour.

whiskyandember.ca

Why this guide exists

The Paper Plane was my go-to drink. Equal parts bourbon, Aperol, Amaro Nonino and lemon. It was a recipe I could return to without making a project of it: four measures, a shaker, a chilled glass. The pleasure was in the balance, and in knowing why that balance worked, every time I made it.

Then, in March 2025, American bourbon came off Ontario's LCBO shelves. I was not looking to make a statement. I wanted to make my drink. That small interruption gave me a useful question: what was the bourbon actually doing, and could another whisky do that job without changing everything around it?

The search started with what made bourbon useful in that drink: its corn base, oak character and perceived sweetness. Bottling strength mattered, too. I looked for Canadian whiskies that could carry those qualities through the lemon and liqueurs. BEARFACE Triple Oak was my first good find. Other bottles worked less well. The country on the label was never enough.

A cocktail is a structure, not a shopping list. That does not make the ingredients interchangeable. It means each ingredient has a job, and a useful substitution begins with understanding that job. Changing the bottle is a decision about flavour, weight and balance. It is not a promise that every whisky, gin or liqueur will give you the same result.

This guide starts with the classic build, then makes room for those decisions. The ingredient list tells you what to measure. The method tells you how to bring it together. The notes explain where a change is worth trying, and where it risks moving the drink somewhere else. You should be able to make the recipe before you begin rebuilding it.

Canadian spirits are part of that conversation because they are part of my shelf. The classics themselves belong to a much wider world. The aim is to understand them well enough to make thoughtful choices wherever you live, with the bottles you can actually obtain. Availability can start the experiment. It does not have to define the identity of the drink.

The plate matters, too. A bright cocktail can give a rich bite a fresh edge. A shared aroma can connect the glass to the food. A pairing should have a reason you can taste, so each suggestion here explains the connection rather than simply naming something to eat alongside it.

Start by measuring carefully. Chill the glass. Give the ice time to do its work. Taste the drink before changing it, then change one thing and taste again. You do not need a crowded back bar to learn this. You need a clear starting point and enough attention to notice what moved. That is the kind of craft I want Whisky & Ember to share.

George Logue

Before the first pour

Five classics, five ways to understand what is happening in the glass. Start with the written recipe. The rebuild notes give you a reason to try another bottle, and a way to notice what changed.

READ THE STORY. MAKE THE DRINK.

Each drink has a story on the left and a practical build on the right. Measures are in millilitres. The ingredient list preserves the classic framework; house technique and service choices are identified on each recipe page.

A FEW USEFUL HABITS

Measure carefully, use fresh citrus, and chill the glass. Ice contributes water as well as cold. A stated shake or stir time is a starting point: the size and condition of your ice also affect the result. For simple syrup here, use equal weights of sugar and water.

REBUILD ONE THING AT A TIME

Country of origin does not make two bottles equivalent. Compare flavour, sweetness, oak, botanicals and bottling strength. Keep the other ingredients fixed for your first comparison. Canadian bottle suggestions are starting points to explore. Choose by the job the ingredient needs to do.

GIVE THE GLASS SOME COMPANY

The pairings suggest two small foods and explain the connection. Think about acidity against fat, a shared aroma, or a contrast in texture. They are invitations to explore, not rules for what you are allowed to serve.

ABOUT THE FLAVOUR NOTES

Flavour notes describe directions to explore; bottles will vary. My notes share the approach at this bar. Named candidates are suggestions to test, and linked sources support the history and bottle details.

Brands are named because they worked in these drinks. Whisky & Ember has no commercial relationship with any brand named in this guide and receives no payment for naming it.

Paper Plane

Four equal parts. One useful lesson.

Sam Ross is credited with the Paper Plane: equal parts bourbon, Aperol, Amaro Nonino and fresh lemon in the IBA build. Bourbon's identity includes a mash of at least 51% corn and storage in charred new oak. Those requirements gave my Canadian whisky search a direction.

For a bourbon-like rebuild, I look for corn-led flavour, oak character and sweetness that works through the lemon and liqueurs. Rye can make a drink I enjoy, with another character. Equal parts are a starting point, not a guarantee of balance.

CHOOSING THE BASE | WHAT CHANGES IN THE GLASS

A corn-led whisky with vanilla, caramel and rounded oak notes can give the lemon and bitter orange a softer landing. That perceived sweetness is a flavour impression, not a reason to assume the whisky contains more sugar. Corn alone does not guarantee it: cask treatment and maturation help shape the result.

A rye-led bottle can bring peppery, grain and herbal notes forward, making the drink feel drier and more animated beside the amaro. Choose that direction when you want spice rather than a close bourbon-like rebuild. Rye can carry vanilla and toffee from oak, too; the two profiles overlap.

At the same measure, a higher ABV adds more alcohol before dilution and may give the base more presence. It can also make the finish hotter. Compare flavour and strength together, with the same ice and technique, before adjusting the equal parts.

MY NOTES

BEARFACE Triple Oak was my first good find. Its corn base and three oak treatments gave me a useful lead; in the Paper Plane, I liked its bourbon-like sweetness. My current favourite is SFR 3-Year Old. These are bottles I enjoyed in the drink, not interchangeable examples of Canadian whisky.

Barnburner is a perfectly good, affordable whisky. It was simply not the right fit for me in the Paper Plane, where it threw off the balance. A corn-and-oak description was only a starting point. Lot No. 40 is a different choice: I find it delicious and well balanced here, with more spice. I choose the character I want, then taste the result.

1 / Paper Plane recipe / IBA

3 / Triple Oak / BEARFACE

2 / Sam Ross / Larceny

4 / Bourbon definition / Virginia ABC

Paper Plane

Bright citrus, bittersweet depth, and a whisky base.



Boston shaker



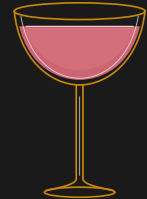
Jigger



Hawthorne strainer



Fine-mesh strainer



Coupe glass

INGREDIENTS

30 ml bourbon

30 ml Aperol

30 ml Amaro Nonino

30 ml fresh lemon juice

METHOD

- 01 Add all four ingredients to a shaker with ice.
- 02 Shake for 10 to 12 seconds.
- 03 Double strain into a chilled coupe.
- 04 Serve up. No garnish.

NOTES / TIPS

Use fresh lemon and a chilled glass. Measure the equal parts, then shake and double strain to keep ice shards out of the finished drink.

For a bourbon-like rebuild, compare corn-led flavour, oak and ABV. Start at 30 ml. BEARFACE Triple Oak was my first good find; SFR 3-Year Old is my current favourite. Lot No. 40 gives a spicier variation.

PAIR WITH

Goat cheese on crisp toast

Creamy cheese gives the lemon acidity something rich to meet. Crisp toast adds texture contrast without competing with the drink's bittersweet character.

Lightly grilled prawns with lemon

Lemon creates an aromatic bridge between glass and plate. Keep the char gentle and the seasoning restrained so the prawns remain the centre of the bite.

GLASSWARE

Chilled coupe

FLAVOUR PROFILE

Citrus / bittersweet / gently herbal

Ingredients follow the classic recipe. Shake time and double straining are our serving choices.

Whisky Sour

Whisky, lemon, sweetness. Then texture.

The Whisky Sour belongs to a family with a longer history than any tidy invention story. Jerry Thomas included sour recipes in his 1862 bar guide, but not a named Whisky Sour. The drink itself appears in a January 1870 Wisconsin newspaper, already familiar enough to need little explanation. That is evidence of an established drink, not proof of who first made it.

The lasting idea is simple: whisky supplies the foundation, lemon brings acidity, and sugar gives that acidity something to meet. Ice contributes water as well as cold. A sour that tastes sharp before shaking can become more integrated once those four parts have come together.

CHOOSING THE BASE | WHAT CHANGES IN THE GLASS

For a rounder Sour, look for a corn-led, oak-influenced whisky with vanilla or caramel notes. Those aromas can soften the impression of lemon and sit comfortably with the foam. A very gentle bottle, however, may disappear behind the citrus and syrup.

For a more spirited, savoury direction, a rye-led whisky can bring pepper, grain and herbal character through the lemon. It is a useful choice when you want the whisky to stay distinct and the finish to feel less confectionery. Rye does not automatically mean less sweetness: Lot No. 40 also has oak-derived vanilla and toffee notes.

Compare ABV as well as grain. A higher-strength bottle changes the alcohol balance at 45 ml; dry shaking or adding foam does not remove that difference. Keep the first build fixed, then adjust sweetness only after tasting the chilled, diluted drink.

MY NOTES

For a fun optional variation, I enjoy adding amaretto for sweetness and almond character. My whisky-forward version uses two parts whisky, one part amaretto and one part citrus, with an egg white and no extra syrup. I dry shake, then shake with ice, and finish with Angostura bitters and a good maraschino cherry.

Jeffrey Morgenthaler's Amaretto Sour inspired this direction; his published recipe puts amaretto ahead of cask-proof bourbon. Mine keeps whisky at the centre. I prefer some or all lime in the citrus measure: it tastes rounder and less tart to me.

Sour history / Difford's Guide
Lot No. 40 / producer
Oak flavour notes / BEARFACE

Recipe / IBA
Rye flavour notes / LCBO
Amaretto Sour / Jeffrey Morgenthaler

Whisky Sour

Fresh lemon, rounded whisky, and an optional soft foam.



Boston shaker



Jigger



Hawthorne strainer



Fine-mesh strainer



Rocks glass

INGREDIENTS

45 ml rye or bourbon

25 ml fresh lemon juice

20 ml simple syrup (1:1)

1 egg white (optional)

2 dashes Angostura bitters

METHOD

- 01 Add whisky, lemon, syrup and optional egg white. Dry shake if using egg.
- 02 Add ice. Shake for 12 to 15 seconds.
- 03 Double strain over fresh ice in a rocks glass.
- 04 Finish with 2 dashes of Angostura.

NOTES / TIPS

Make syrup with equal weights of sugar and water. Cool before use. With no egg white, skip the dry shake and shake with ice directly.

For my amaretto-and-lime variation, see My notes on the facing page. Amaretto adds sweetness and almond character, so I leave out the extra syrup in that version.

PAIR WITH

Grilled chicken with lemon and thyme

Lemon connects glass and plate. The acidity refreshes a rich bite, while thyme gives the whisky and citrus a savoury companion.

Aged cheddar on crisp toast

Cheese supplies fat and salt; the lemon brings contrast. Toast adds crunch beside the softer texture of the optional foam.

GLASSWARE

Rocks glass / fresh ice

FLAVOUR PROFILE

Bright citrus / oak / rounded sweetness

Classic whisky, lemon and syrup measures, with our egg-white option, bitters and rocks service.

Boulevardier

A slower drink, with room for the whisky.

The Boulevardier appears in Harry MacElhone's 1927 *Barflies and Cocktails*, in Arthur Moss's account of drinks around Paris. Moss associates it with Erskine Gwynne and records equal parts bourbon, Campari and Italian vermouth. Gwynne was also involved in a Paris magazine called *Boulevardier*. The name belongs to that social world of writers, bars and boulevard evenings.

The family resemblance to a Negroni is easy to see: spirit, bitter aperitif and sweet vermouth. Whisky changes the centre of gravity. Oak and grain sit against Campari's bitterness, while vermouth supplies sweetness and its own herbal character. Each bottle matters because there is no citrus juice to reorganize the balance.

CHOOSING THE BASE | WHAT CHANGES IN THE GLASS

A rye-led whisky can be especially useful when you want spice and grain to stand clearly beside Campari and sweet vermouth. Peppery or herbal notes can connect with the vermouth and give the orange bitterness a more savoury frame. This is a reason to choose rye deliberately, rather than treating it as a fallback.

A corn-led whisky with rounded vanilla, caramel and oak notes can make the same recipe feel fuller and more dessert-like. That can be lovely when you want a softer impression of bitterness. A heavily tannic or strongly charred bottle may instead make the bitter finish feel more drying.

Neither grain guarantees the result, and rye also develops sweet-seeming oak flavours. Check the actual bottle and ABV. A more forceful whisky may hold its place against Campari, but proper stirring still matters: flavour intensity is not a substitute for dilution.

MY NOTES

I would change the whisky first and hold Campari and vermouth steady. Vermouth is a wine-based ingredient with its own fruit, herbs and sweetness; changing it at the same time makes the comparison harder to read.

This is a drink I would let settle into the evening. Stir it properly before serving, then notice how the cube changes it as you talk. A few well-chosen bites are enough. There is no need to make a good drink into a formal occasion.

1927 account / Difford's Guide
Lot No. 40 / producer
Oak flavour notes / BEARFACE

Recipe / IBA
Rye flavour notes / LCBO

Boulevardier

Oak, bitter orange, and sweet vermouth, stirred over ice.



Mixing glass



Bar spoon



Jigger



Hawthorne strainer



Rocks glass

INGREDIENTS

45 ml bourbon or rye

30 ml Campari

30 ml sweet red vermouth

Orange peel, to finish

METHOD

- 01 Add the three liquids to a mixing glass with ice.
- 02 Stir for 20 to 30 seconds.
- 03 Strain over one large cube in a rocks glass.
- 04 Express orange peel over the drink, then add it.

NOTES / TIPS

Stir to chill and dilute before serving. A large cube slows further dilution; it does not replace the water added during stirring. Refrigerate opened vermouth.

For a Canadian rebuild, compare a corn-led whisky with Lot No. 40. Keep Campari and vermouth fixed so you can taste what the whisky changes.

PAIR WITH

Seared mushrooms on toast

Browned mushrooms bring savoury depth beside oak and herbs. A little butter rounds the bitter edge; crisp toast keeps the bite lively.

Aged Gouda and toasted walnuts

Nutty cheese and walnuts echo oak-derived flavours. Keep the walnuts lightly toasted: heavy char can pile bitterness onto bitterness.

GLASSWARE

Rocks glass / one large cube

FLAVOUR PROFILE

Bittersweet / orange / oak and spice

Classic ingredient measures. We serve this version over a large cube rather than in a stemmed glass.

Corpse Reviver No. 2

Equal parts, with one small accent.

Corpse Reviver was a name used for more than one drink long before the familiar No. 2. Harry Craddock's 1930 Savoy Cocktail Book helped attach the name to two specific recipes. The gin-based second version is the one here. Publication gives us a reliable landmark; it does not establish Craddock as the inventor of every drink carrying the name.

Four equal measures make the structure memorable: gin, orange liqueur, an aromatized wine aperitif and lemon. Absinthe is the small fifth ingredient. Its anise character should be an accent that becomes noticeable as the glass approaches, rather than the only thing left to taste.

CHOOSING THE BASE | WHAT CHANGES IN THE GLASS

Start with a dry gin whose juniper remains clear. A juniper-led London Dry can supply piney, resinous structure against the lemon, orange liqueur and wine aperitif. A citrus-led dry gin can echo those ingredients, though the result may feel more uniformly citrusy.

A floral or cucumber-accented gin can move the drink toward a softer, garden-like aroma. Beside absinthe, those botanicals may become especially noticeable or compete for attention. London Dry is a production designation, not a single tasting profile; read the bottle's botanical notes rather than relying on the name alone.

Old Tom often brings a sweeter, rounder profile, so it is a deliberate variation in a drink already sweetened by liqueur and aperitif. Barrel-aged gin introduces oak; higher-strength gin changes the alcohol balance. Test one change at the written 30 ml before altering the other measures.

MY NOTES

Dillon's Dry Gin 7 is a Canadian candidate to test in the written build. Dillon's also makes absinthe. I would start with the single dash, use the same dispenser for comparisons, and resist changing gin and aperitif in the same round.

At the table, I would keep the first bite light enough for the citrus and botanicals to remain clear. A small toast or a piece of fish gives the drink company. The aim is a welcoming start.

History / Oxford Companion
Dry Gin 7 / Dillon's
Juniper / citrus / Beefeater
Old Tom / Hayman's

Recipe / IBA
Absinthe / Dillon's
Rose / cucumber / Hendrick's

Corpse Reviver No. 2

Bright citrus, dry gin, and a restrained touch of anise.



Boston shaker



Jigger



Hawthorne strainer



Fine-mesh strainer



Coupe glass

INGREDIENTS

30 ml gin
30 ml Cointreau
30 ml Lillet Blanc
30 ml fresh lemon juice
1 dash absinthe

METHOD

- 01 Add all five ingredients to a shaker with ice.
- 02 Shake for 10 to 12 seconds.
- 03 Double strain into a chilled coupe.
- 04 Serve up. No garnish for this house build.

NOTES / TIPS

Use one dash of absinthe, not an unmeasured splash. Dash size varies by dispenser. Keep the same bottle and dispenser when comparing builds.

Dillon's Dry Gin 7 and absinthe are Canadian candidates to test. Change one at a time. Cocchi Americano changes the aperitif's character; taste it as a variation.

PAIR WITH

Smoked trout on a small toast

Citrus gives the oily fish a fresh counterpoint. Keep the smoke gentle so it leaves room for the gin and the light anise accent.

Fennel and orange salad

Fennel echoes the absinthe's anise aroma; orange connects with the liqueur. Use a restrained dressing so the plate does not overwhelm the drink's acidity.

GLASSWARE

Chilled coupe / served up

FLAVOUR PROFILE

Citrus / botanical / light anise

Classic ingredient measures. We double strain into a coupe and leave off the orange-zest garnish.

Aviation

A little violet goes a long way.

The Aviation appears in Hugo Ensslin's 1916 Recipes for Mixed Drinks, with gin, lemon, maraschino and crème de violette. Ensslin is widely credited with its creation, but a surviving printed recipe is firmer evidence than an uncontested invention claim. It places the drink in the early twentieth-century cocktail repertoire.

Harry Craddock's 1930 Savoy Cocktail Book printed a version without the violet liqueur. That difference matters: violet is more than a colour treatment. It changes the aroma and adds sweetness. A three-ingredient version can still be a good drink, but it will not deliver the same floral accent as the build in this guide.

CHOOSING THE BASE | WHAT CHANGES IN THE GLASS

A juniper-led dry gin gives the lemon, maraschino and violet a clear framework. Its piney character can keep the floral accent distinct. A citrus-led dry gin can bring lemon peel forward and make the drink feel brighter, even though the amount of lemon juice has not changed.

A strongly floral gin can amplify the violet and make the result more perfume-like; a cucumber-accented gin can add a fresh, green note that changes the classic impression. Neither is wrong, but each is a flavour decision. London Dry bottles also vary in their balance of juniper, citrus and spice.

Old Tom's sweeter, rounder character can add weight beside the two liqueurs. Barrel-aged gin adds oak and colour; a higher ABV can increase both presence and alcohol heat. Start with a dry, unaged gin, then compare one bottle at a time before adding more violet.

MY NOTES

Dillon's Dry Gin 7 is a Canadian candidate to explore. I would hold the lemon and liqueurs steady for the first comparison, and measure the violet carefully. More colour also means more flavour and sweetness.

The cherry is optional. I would use a good cocktail cherry when I want that finish, and leave it out when I do not. A garnish should make the drink more enjoyable for the person holding it.

1916 / 1930 recipes / Difford's Guide
Dry Gin 7 / Dillon's
Rose / cucumber / Hendrick's

Recipe / IBA
Juniper / citrus / Beefeater
Old Tom / Hayman's

Aviation

Dry gin, lemon, maraschino, and a quiet floral accent.



Boston shaker



Jigger



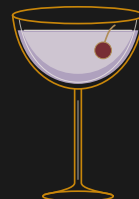
Bar spoon



Hawthorne strainer



Fine-mesh strainer



Coupe glass

INGREDIENTS

45 ml gin

15 ml maraschino liqueur

15 ml fresh lemon juice

1 bar spoon crème de violette

Cocktail cherry (optional)

METHOD

- 01 Add the four liquids to a shaker with ice.
- 02 Shake until well chilled.
- 03 Double strain into a chilled coupe.
- 04 Serve up. Add a cocktail cherry if desired.

NOTES / TIPS

Use maraschino liqueur, not cherry syrup. Measure the violet with the same bar spoon each time; spoon sizes differ. A pale tint is enough.

Try Dillon's Dry Gin 7 as a Canadian gin variation. Hold the lemon and liqueurs steady first. A different violet liqueur can alter both sweetness and colour.

PAIR WITH

Soft goat cheese and pear

Creamy cheese meets the lemon's acidity. Pear supplies a gentle fruit bridge without requiring the drink's floral note to compete with heavy seasoning.

A small almond shortbread

Almond echoes the nutty impression of maraschino. Keep the portion modest and the biscuit lightly sweet so the cocktail does not seem thin or sharply sour.

GLASSWARE

Chilled coupe / served up

FLAVOUR PROFILE

Citrus / floral / cherry and botanicals

Classic ingredient measures. We double strain into a coupe; the cocktail cherry is optional.



That is five.

Every classic is a structure. Learn the structure
and the bottle becomes a choice. More builds, with
the reasoning behind them, are at
whiskyandember.ca/cocktails.

WHISKY & EMBER

A cocktail is a structure, not a shopping list.

whiskyandember.ca

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Must be of legal drinking age in your province to consume alcohol.