

Frequently Asked Questions

As you begin to make your own spirits you will have questions. Here are the answers to some of the most common questions we are asked.

Is the spirit making process natural?

Yes. People have been making spirits for centuries.

The essencia System is the production of alcohol from a known mix of natural ingredients, being sugar, water, yeast and nutrients (the 'wash').

The alcohol is then extracted from the wash using a highly efficient distillation process.

The high strength alcohol produced is diluted to the desired strength, typically 38-40% ABV, then treated with activated carbon to remove unwanted flavors and byproducts.

This produces a very pure and smooth tasting spirit.

Is it safe to make my own spirits?

Distilling alcohol for making spirits is not dissimilar to fermenting wine or home brewing beer. Following the instructions will result in pure clean alcohol that in most cases has less by-products and impurities than alcohol produced from commercial sources.

Is it legal to make my own spirits?

It isn't hard to make great spirits and liqueurs at home, but you do have to play by the rules.

In many countries it is legal to own a purifier (still) for making such things as distilled water, essential oils, bio-fuel and alcohol.

However, often the use of a purifier (still) to produce alcohol is subject to government regulations and usually licenses are required.

essencia strongly recommends that you check the legal status of amateur distillation in your area.

If you are in an area where amateur distillation is not permitted, you can still produce your own great spirits and liqueurs – without distillation. For full details, see 'The essencia System Booklet'.

How long will it take me to make each batch of spirits?

Using the essencia System from fermentation to flavouring, you can be drinking your own premium quality, homemade spirits & liqueurs within 10 days.

Which is better and more productive - a Reflux Still or a Pot Still?

Both types of Still will remove the alcohol from a wash or mash, therefore the productivity is basically the same.

A Reflux Still refines the distillate to a high degree, producing a distillate of very high alcohol content with very little of the 'character' of the wash or mash coming through. A Reflux Still is a must for producing neutral spirit or Vodka.

A Pot Still produces a distillate with much lower alcohol content but with a correspondingly increased level of the 'character' coming through. This is important for distilleries producing Spirits such as Whisky, Tequila and Rum etc. where the character of the base ingredients is required in the final product.

If I add more sugar to my 'wash' will I get more alcohol?

No, you will just get more unfermented sugar remaining in the wash.

It's important that you don't add more sugar than the recipe or the manufacturer recommends, as yeast varieties are made and selected for different properties.

If too much sugar is added, the whole process from that point on will be out of balance, and is highly unlikely to give the expected results specified by the manufacturer. The wash will be bad, the distillation won't run as expected and you are likely to have the wash foam through the condenser from the boiler.

What are the five things that most influence the quality I can achieve?

In order of importance:

1. Time. The more time you can allow between starting to produce the alcohol and enjoying the final product, the better it will be.

A longer fermentation run at a lower temperature will produce better results.

When filtering and carbon treating the alcohol, the alcohol must be in contact with the carbon for the correct amount of time and can't be rushed.

Aged alcohol is much smoother than freshly made. Ideally alcohol should be aged in sealed glass containers for as long as you can stand it.

High quality flavourings designed for flavouring alcohol need around a week to properly infuse with the alcohol. These flavourings will improve with age.

2. Flavouring. A premium quality flavouring can make average quality alcohol taste good. Lower quality flavourings, which are not specifically designed to flavor alcohol, can make great alcohol taste bad.

The essencia range of flavourings is designed specifically for the flavouring of alcohol. They will actually improve with age as opposed to fading.

3. Fermentation. Follow the manufacturer's instructions supplied on the yeast packet. The manufacturer has spent a lot of time developing the mix in these packets to produce the optimum results.

Fermenting a wash at a high temperature is fast, but it produces a lot of unwanted byproducts, and has an adverse effect on the final product. It is strongly recommended that you run your fermentation at the lower end of the temperature range specified by the manufacturer.

Keeping the temperature as constant as possible during fermentation is also important. Using a heater pad when required and insulating the fermenting vessel (using a blanket etc) is highly recommended. Let the fermentation finish. When bubbling through the airlock stops and it appears that fermentation has finished, give the wash a good stir, turn on the heater pad and leave the wash to heat for 24 hours. At this point of the fermentation it doesn't matter what temperature the wash gets to. This will ensure all possible activity is completed.

Always use a hydrometer. Use it to record the Specific Gravity (SG) at the start, during and at the end of fermentation. This is the only way to monitor the fermentation, to know when it is finished and to troubleshoot any problems.

4. Still. A Reflux Still refines the distillate to a high degree, producing a distillate of very high alcohol content with very little of the 'character' of the wash or mash coming through. A Reflux Still is a must for producing neutral spirit or Vodka.

A Pot Still produces a distillate with much lower alcohol content but with a correspondingly increased level of the 'character' coming through. This is important for distilleries producing Spirits such as Whisky, Tequila and Rum etc. where the character of the base ingredients is required in the final product.

5. Carbon treatment. When distilling alcohol there are always impurities carried over from the boiler to the collection vessel. The collected alcohol needs to be treated using activated carbon which is **specifically** designed to remove these impurities from alcohol.

There is a lot of ignorance and misinformation surrounding activated carbon and the carbon treatment of alcohol.

Activated carbons are not all the same; in fact they are very different. If the carbon you use to treat your alcohol is not the right one, you have wasted your time and money (even though it was cheap)! You are also drinking untreated alcohol.

The essencia Carbon Filter is an all in one, multi stage filtering and treatment system designed to filter and treat the **entire** finished product, including the water used to dilute the spirit.

For best results, and for the sake of your health, essencia recommends that you do not drink spirit at more than 40% alcohol by volume. You should water-down alcohol if necessary - see packs for details.

Note: If you consume alcohol over 60% by volume, alcohol poisoning will result leading to death or serious permanent injury.

Will I make methanol when I distill?

Distillation itself does not **make** methanol.
It simply refines whatever has been put into the boiler.

When the essencia System is followed, using essencia ingredients and equipment, there is no methanol in the final product.

If you wish to distil other mixtures the amount of methanol in the distillate will depend on the amount in the mixture.

We strongly advise against distilling anything when its exact makeup is not known.

Making alternative fuel is one thing, but if you want to make a drinkable alcohol spirit, the results could prove disastrous.

Why don't I have to age my spirit like commercial distilleries?

In many commercial distilleries, aging is necessary due to the quality of the spirit and to gain the specific characteristics of each style.

Following the essencia method, you make an extremely clean alcohol, then add a flavouring to **replicate** the specific characteristics of your favorite whisky, bourbon, rum, gin or whatever.

You don't **have** to, but there is some benefit in ageing your spirit as it will smooth out.

Your alcohol can be consumed immediately after the flavouring is added, and if you use essencia flavourings, these will actually continue to improve with age.

Does using a new and technically-advanced still, produce purer alcohol?

Yes. Using the most advanced type of still available – the essencia Express or Super Express Still will produce a very pure alcohol and will produce it very fast.

I am Gluten intolerant. Which Essencia flavors do not contain any Gluten?

ALL essencia flavoring products are certified Gluten free. These include:

Scotch Whisky
Tennessee Bourbon
Navy Rum
Walkers Whisky
Kentucky Bourbon
Caribbean Rum
VSOP Brandy
Rye Whisky
White Rum
Coffee Liqueur
Coconut Rum
Blue Sapphire Gin
Irish Cream