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Old Forester Single Barrel Barrel Strength Bourbon Whisky Review

Jim Casey • 02/16/23



(photo by Outsider)

Old Forester has been a firm force—not to mention innovator—of fine Kentucky bourbon for more than 150 years. And speaking of innovation, after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Old Forester began selling a Single Barrel expression, which was bottled from one individual barrel, so there was no other bourbon “exactly” like it. Old Forester noted that its post-Prohibition Single Barrel was the first on the market since the passage of the Bottled in Bond Act in 1897.

In 2020, Old Forester tweaked its Single Barrel (SB) program by eliminating its SB 90-proof bottle in favor of a SB 100-proof bottle and a SB Barrel Strength expression (with varying proofs). And, as you might expect, the 100-proof bottles have been roundly consistent tasting (at least the four I’ve had), while the Barrel Strength bottles are much more adventurous in my experience.

On tap today, let’s get adventurous with a store pick of Old Forester’s Single Barrel Barrel Strength (SBBS).

At a Glance

- **Company:** Brown-Forman
- **Distillery:** Old Forester Distilling Co.

- **Location:** Louisville, KY
- **Style:** Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whisky
- **Mashbill:** 72% corn, 18% rye, 10% malted barley
- **Age:** Not Stated
- **Proof:** 125.9 (varies)
- **Store Pick:** Red Spirits & Wine (Nashville, TN)
- **Price:** \$100
- **Website | Twitter | Instagram**



(photo by Outsider)

Old Forester SBBS Review: What We Say

| | |
|--|--|
| Nose | Medium Alcohol, Oak, Honey, Candied Pecans, Fruit Cobbler |
| Palate | Caramel, Cherry, Peach, Cinnamon Spice, Chocolate Soufflé, Toasted Marshmallow |
| Finish | Long, Rich Chocolate, Cinnamon, Oak Char, Warm Caramel |
| What You Can Expect to Pay | \$100-\$150 |
| Buy It: Now, Soon, Later, Never | Now |
| Outsider Rating | 93/100 |

Old Forester Single Barrel Barrel Proof opens with medium alcohol and warm oak. There's no doubt a high-proof sip is on the way, but the proof heat is so balanced by the sweetness of honey, candied pecans, and fresh-baked fruit cobbler—a bit of peach and cherry (I always get cherry from Old Forester). I could smell this all day. Outstanding.

On the palate, the scintillating proof heat greets the tip of the tongue, followed by lush caramel, cinnamon spice, and more wonderful cherry. A bit of chewing really unleashes warm milk chocolate, like a light, creamy chocolate soufflé. It just melts in your mouth with a hint of toasted marshmallow. Truly an elevated sip.

The long, gratifying finish delivers more decadent chocolate and rich cinnamon heat with just a tinge of oaky char and burnt caramel. This is everything you want in a bourbon. A fantastic store pick. And one of the best bourbons I've had this year.



(photo by Outsider)

What Old Forester Says About SBBS

After the repeal of Prohibition, my grandfather, George Garvin Brown II, developed a single barrel expression of Old Forester specifically for Bourbon aficionados. It was the first Single Barrel Bourbon for sale since the passage of the Bottled in Bond Act in 1897. Today, we honor the legacy of “firsts” that Old Forester began in 1870 with this unfiltered barrel strength offering.

Recommended Sip

Sipping SBBS neat is right in my wheelhouse. Even a drop or two of water helps accentuate the notes of toasty caramel and chocolate soufflé. However, I wasn't fan of dropping in an ice cube because it really abbreviated the finish, which I so enjoyed neat. For me, this is a neat sipper all day—and night. And don't you dare mix this exceptional bourbon.

If You Like Old Forester SBBS, Try



(photo by Outsider)

- **Larceny Barrel Proof (A123)**
- **Type:** Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey
- **Distillery:** Heaven Hill
- **Location:** Bardstown, KY
- **Proof:** 125.8
- **Price:** \$60-\$70

Larceny drops its Barrel Proof three times each year (January, May, and September). This release from January 2023 is another exceptional winner (just like C922), with notes of dried cherry, toasted oak, cinnamon candy, lemon zest, and leather. In addition, the finish is a long, savory, delightful burn that makes this bottle a high-proof steal, as its moniker implies.

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