

# OXFORD RYE

Oxford Rye is a unique spirit distilled from ancient heritage rye - a crop that used to dominate the English countryside in pre-industrial times.

Described as 'liquid rye', this delicate and golden-coloured spirit is the purest expression of The Oxford Artisan Distillery's used of such grains. Twice distilled and then rested in American oak barrels to bring out its best characteristics, Oxford Rye has an intoxicating aroma of sandalwood and vanilla, with nutty and spicy notes on the palate.

To qualify as a pure 'rye spirit' and not be a 'rye whisky', a liquid must be under three years old, which is the case here.

Oxford Rye is one of a range of spirits produced by the firm, which is one of Britain's very few 'grain-to-glass' distilleries (those who grow and distil their own grain, as opposed to buying in neutral spirit).

The distillery's ancient heritage grains have been chosen for flavour over yield and have been painstakingly sourced and grown by its Head of Grain and Sustainable Development, John Letts, from varieties that had been commonly used in Britain until the late 19th century. John is an organic farmer, archaeo-botanist and plant breeder who has been growing heritage grains for over 30 years. Born in Canada, he has lived most of his life in Britain. He grew up working on farms in Southern Ontario before obtaining a degree in Environmental Studies and Botany at Trent University in Canada. He then moved to the UK where he studied Environmental Archaeology at UCL in London, and plant science at the University of Reading.

In the mid-1990s, John discovered hundreds of examples of almost perfectly preserved late medieval thatch in the bottom layers of ancient buildings in Southern England, which guided his subsequent research on the history of thatching, medieval crops and sustainable farming.

In 2006, he set up Heritage Harvest Ltd to support his research, which was the first company to market genuine heritage (i.e. genetically diverse) grain flour in the UK. John maintains a large collection of heritage grains at his small-holding in Prestwood, Bucks where he develops new populations of cereals for baking, brewing and distilling. He manages and works closely with an expanding community of growers to ensure that The Oxford Artisan Distillery has a steady supply of top-quality, sustainably-grown grain to make their unique spirits.

The Oxford Artisan Distillery's Master Distiller, Francisco Rosa (affectionately known as Chico) has been working within the drinks industry since 16. After internships at several wineries, he studied oenology, whilst homebrewing on the side.

Chico attained a BSc (First) from the Instituto Superior de Agronomia in Food Science and Engineering, which took him into the areas of winemaking, brewing, wood ageing and grain farming. This also included an Erasmus stage at the Univerza v Ljubljani in Slovenia, on fruit technology. He then completed the world-renowned MSc in Brewing and Distilling at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, broadening his scope into raw materials, distillation, eco-sustainability, process management, health and safety and rye whisky production. His MSc completely shifted his focus to spirits and it was here that he met the team from The Oxford Artisan Distillery - and the rest is history!

Chico is forever experimenting and tinkering in his lab at the distillery and is driven by creating experiences. Chico says, 'Flavour is one of the best ways to take us into an experience, a story of time and place told with the help of our memories. Making spirits is my favourite way to share experiences. The pursuit for flavours and how to approach them in the best way is a constant of my daily life, from brewing coffee or cooking or improving or designing a new whisky expression.'

Oxford Rye can be enjoyed neat, with or without ice - or as a long drink, with ginger ale, a splash of Angostura bitters and a squeeze of lime.

[theoxfordartisandistillery.com](http://theoxfordartisandistillery.com)

