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## EXTREME VODKA

The very best vodka brands reward a discerning palette, says IAN WISNIEWSKI

Established as the most fashionable spirit, a vast choice of vodkas culminates in deluxe brands that make a definitive statement. Ordering them confirms that you have the style and knowledge to exercise serious discernment.

Vodka's appeal reflects supreme versatility. Offering the largest cocktail repertoire, including ultimates like the dry martini and the cosmopolitan, vodka also inspires more new cocktails than any other spirit. And with cocktail culture an essential part of contemporary lifestyle in the UK and USA, while also developing across Europe and Scandinavia, vodka's continued success is assured. However, as vodka is usually mixed, it can be impossible to appreciate a brand's character, even though there's plenty of variety on offer.

Vodka is typically distilled from certain types of grain or potatoes, with each ingredient delivering an individual character (wheat for example yields an aniseed note). But even if you can't actually taste a brand's superior credentials in a cocktail, you know the character and quality are there. And all you have to do is pay the asking price.



OPPOSITE TOP: a secret tobacco warehouse in Havana, Cuba.  
ABOVE: Snow Leopard vodka donates a percentage of profits to the Snow Leopard Trust

| PRICING KEY |            |
|-------------|------------|
| €15         | .....€     |
| €15-€25     | .....€€    |
| €25-€50     | .....€€€   |
| €50-€75     | .....€€€€  |
| > €75       | .....€€€€€ |

SPIRITS WORLD

### THREE OF THE BEST

Salve that hangover with the thought that your binge drinking is helping to save wildlife



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#### Belvedere

A pioneer of the deluxe sector when launched in the USA in 1996, Belvedere ([www.belvederevodka.com](http://www.belvederevodka.com)) is a Polish vodka distilled from rye. A luxurious texture releases rye bread notes with a hint of nuttiness, together with subtle, underlying sweetness, leading to a distinguished finish.

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#### Snow Leopard

Distilled from spelt, an historic variety of grain, Snow Leopard ([www.snowleopardvodka.co.uk](http://www.snowleopardvodka.co.uk)) combines sophistication with depth, and the palate delivers a creamy, subtly sweet, aniseed flavour. Named after a highly endangered species, a percentage of profits from this new Polish vodka will be donated to wildlife conservation charities, including the Snow Leopard Trust.



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#### Ketel One

Ketel One ([www.ketelone.com](http://www.ketelone.com)) has been produced by the Nolet family since 1992, though the family has been distilling in the Netherlands since 1691. A fresh aniseed flavour and creamy texture open up with deeper underlying graininess, and balancing sweetness. Being elegant and indulgent, Ketel One shows that even countries without a vodka tradition, but with centuries of distillation expertise, are also contributing to vodka's continual evolution.

