

bottle of Glenfiddich 21 Rum Finish Single Malt Scotch. A distributor representative helped us locate the only remaining bottle statewide in Pittsburgh, hundreds of miles away. The state (control) bought only a few bottles and spread them miles away in different state-run stores. We put a special order in to have it sent from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia. Meanwhile, over the Ben Franklin Bridge and ten minutes into free-state New Jersey, the product was available. State-run liquor authorities make it illegal for stores and restaurants to buy out-of-state, though.

The bottom line is that when you can't find a bottle, there's a complicated network of systems in play. It could be that your state chose not to carry it, the brand doesn't have enough bottles to sell in all fifty states (so they choose a few key places to penetrate), the store doesn't like it, the bartender or beverage director hates it, or that it's so popular it flies off the self. These are the elements I contend with when I make recommendations to my students, and as I've compiled the lists in this book. It's a balancing act of availability, value, and deliciousness.

TABLE 4: BANG FOR YOUR BUCK STARTER COLLECTION

STYLE	COST	BRAND SUGGESTIONS	COMMENTS
Single Malt Scotch, Nonpeated	\$45–\$60	Choose Two Glenfiddich 12, 15 GlenDronach 12, 15 The Balvenie 12 DoubleWood Auchentoshan 12 Glenmorangie 10 Old Pulteney 12 The Macallan 10 Fine Oak	There are many iconic “big brands” listed. I don’t subscribe to the idea that small is better. These are respected, historic, award-winning whiskeys. I own all of them. You can find these just about anywhere.

STYLE	COST	BRAND SUGGESTIONS	COMMENTS
Single Malt, Peated	\$50–\$60	Choose One Bowmore 12 Ardbeg 10 Laphroaig 10 Highland Park 12 Springbank Talisker 10	Unless you discover you are an absolute peat fanatic, pick only one—it's a spice, not a mainstay.
Bourbon	\$15–\$40	Choose Two W. L. Weller (any release) Four Roses Yellow Label Four Roses Small Batch Very Old Barton 90 or 100 proof Buffalo Trace Basil Hayden's Eagle Rare Single Barrel 10 Rebel Yell Small Batch Wild Turkey 101 Proof Wild Turkey Russell's Reserve Evan Williams Single Barrel Colonel E. H. Taylor Small Batch Ancient Age Elijah Craig 12 Elmer T. Lee Old Grand-Dad Old Forester Woodford Reserve Bulleit Angel's Envy Michter's US 1 Knob Creek Single Barrel 9 YO	Ignore the hype surrounding some brands and check out these amazing buys. Many are made by the Kentucky "Big Boys," like Buffalo Trace, Four Roses, and Heaven Hill. All demonstrate a great bourbon profile: balanced, floral, and bursting with vanillas, coconuts, and toffees.

STYLE	COST	BRAND SUGGESTIONS	COMMENTS
Rye	\$15–\$40	Choose One Old Overholt Rittenhouse Rye 100 proof Wild Turkey Rye 80 proof Michter's Rye Russell's Reserve 6 Year Rye Knob Creek Rye	These ryes make particularly great cocktails; I recommend them on ice if not in cocktails.
Irish Whiskey, Single Malt	\$35–\$50	Choose One Tullamore Dew 10 Knappogue Castle 12 Single Malt The Tyrconnell Single Malt Bushmills Blend Tullamore Dew Blend	Premium Irish whiskeys like pot still and single malts get expensive fast. No need to do that yet. These are all great approachable, drinkable Irish whiskeys to start with.
Japanese Whisky	\$70–\$80	Choose One Yamazaki 12 or Hakushu 12 Nikka Taketsuru 12 Pure Malt	Choose Hakushu for a slightly peated offering; Yamazaki for more floral, cask, and spice; Nikka for slightly peated, coffee, and chocolate notes.
Small Artisanal Distiller, American Whiskey	\$50–\$60	Choose Two Whiskeys from These Distillers (They'll Have a Range) Kings County Spirits Tuthilltown Spirits Corsair Distillery Catskills Distilling Balcones Distilling High West Distillery Hillrock Estate Distillery St. George Spirits Kentucky Bourbon Distillers (Willett, Noah's Mill, Rowan's Creek) Anchor Distilling Company (Old Potrero) Westland Distillery Long Island Spirits Koval Distillery Widow Jane Distilling (Bloody Butcher variants especially)	These are all grain-to-bottle distillers, doing everything on site.