

Mesh & Bone Arakku

INGREDIENT LIST:

Distilled coconut nectar, filtered water

To prevent confusion, it's best to start with what Mesh & Bone arakku is not. It's not the Indonesian Batavia *arrack*, the spirit distilled from sugar cane and red rice. It's also not Mediterranean *arak*, the anise-flavored liqueur. The tastes and methods of production for arakku are completely different, and they are not substitutes for each other. Mesh & Bone arakku is a one-of-a-kind spirit made only in Sri Lanka.



MANUFACTURING PROCESS

The production of Mesh & Bone arakku revolves around the fermentation and distillation of a single ingredient, the sap of the flowers from coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*). Each morning at dawn, men known as *toddy tappers* scale enormous coconut palms specially grown for arakku production and collect the sap of the coconut flowers at the top of each tree. They move carefully from tree to tree along a network of ropes (not unlike tightropes) strung between the treetops. Each tree produces up to two liters of sap per day.

Due to its concentrated sugar and yeast content, the collected sap naturally and immediately ferments into a mildly alcoholic drink called *toddy*, known in Sinhalese as *raa*. Within a few hours after collection, the *toddy* is poured into large vats, called wash backs, made from *halmilla* wood, a species native to Sri Lanka. The *toddy* ferments in the wash backs until its alcohol level reaches 5 to 7%. It is now ready for distillation.

Distillation takes place in an apparatus called a copper column pot still. The initial distillate is 70% alcohol by volume (ABV), or 140 proof. Then the undiluted arakku is transferred into *halmilla*-wood barrels and aged for up to 15 years, which softens the flavor and gives the arakku complexity and richness. When barrel aging is complete, filtered water is added to the aged arakku to bring its ABV to 34%, and final blending takes place. The arakku is then ready for labeling, bottling, and shipping.

Mesh & Bone Cidre Pomme & Poire

INGREDIENT LIST:

Fermented apple juice, fermented pear juice, natural pear flavor.

Pear varieties: *Plant de Blanc*, *Antricotin*, and *Fausset*, among others

Apples varieties: *Avrolles* and *Guillevic*

The growing of cider apples and pears and the production of *cidre* in France is strictly regulated. Almost all orchards for the production of cidre are in the Normandy and Brittany regions of northwestern France. Cidre is usually sparkling and is produced through natural fermentation with no yeast or sugar added.

MANUFACTURING PROCESS

Apples and pears are picked for cidre production from October through December, and sorted by variety and certification (GIP, BIO) from among 220 growers. Apple and pears are processed similarly but separately and blended after fermentation and filtering.

The fruit is washed, crushed, and allowed to macerate for 1 hour in stainless steel tanks, which extracts maximum flavor and natural color from the fruits' skins. The macerated fruit is then run through a hydraulic press for 1.5 hours.

The pressed juice is collected and put into stainless steel tanks to clarify for between 2 and 6 days, then naturally fermented for between 2 weeks and 3 months, depending on type of cidre. No extra yeast or sugar is ever added.

When our cidre has reached the desired taste/sensory profile, it is filtered to remove residual yeast, blended, and bottled immediately, at an ABV of 2.5%. The cidre is then ready for labeling and shipping.



Mesh & Bone Shochu

INGREDIENT LIST:

Barley, barley malt, spring water

MANUFACTURING PROCESS

The raw material for Mesh & Bone shochu is barley (*mugi*). Highest-quality barley is washed, soaked, steamed, and cooled. Spores of *koji* mold (both black and white varieties) are then added to the prepared barley. After two days, the barley has been converted to barley *koji*, its starches having been converted to glucose (*saccharification*). Yeast and spring water are then added. Active fermentation then begins and the glucose converts into alcohol. The fermentation must occur at a temperature of between 77 to 82° F and must be monitored hour by hour. This process lasts for five days, and produces the first batch of *moromi* (fermentation mash). Citric acid, formed as a by-product of the fermentation, helps protect the *moromi* from bacteria.

Spring water and more steamed barley are then added to the finished first *moromi* for a second process of saccharification and fermentation, again at a temperature of 77-82° F. This second process lasts for fourteen days under very close monitoring.

Once the second *moromi* has finished fermentation, it is distilled in a traditional single pot-still. This imparts a richer flavor than distilling multiple times through a *patent still*, which is typically used for mass production. Therefore, our final product is classified as a *honkaku* [authentic] *shōchū*. The undiluted distillate, called *genshu*, has an alcohol level of 44-60%. Immediately after distillation, the *genshu* is cooled and filtered to soften the assertive flavor and aroma of the barley and to remove any traces of fats (oils) from the barley kernels.

The *genshu* is stored to mature for three to six months, when the flavors and aromas mellow. It is then blended with other matured *genshus* by our *shōchū kura tōji* (master shochu blender), and diluted with spring water to reduce the final alcohol level to 25%. After a final filtration, the now finished shochu is bottled, labeled, and ready to ship.



Mesh & Bone Sotol

INGREDIENT LIST:

Sotol plant (*Dasyliirion wheeleri*) nectar

Filtered water

Sotol is an alcoholic drink obtained from the distillate of the fermented nectar extracted from the *sotol* plant (*Dasyliirion wheeleri*), also known as *sereque*. *Sotol* is a 100% all-natural spirit, with no other ingredients other than filtered water. Sotol is certified kosher and 100% organic.

MANUFACTURING PROCESS

The *sotol* or *sereque* plant grows naturally in the high *sierras* of the Chihuahuan Desert in northern Mexico. Each plant must mature for 15 years before it is ready for harvesting, which takes place in the wild, and is a very arduous process. Highly-trained *jimadores* (harvesters) select only the best and largest plants. Their judgment is critical; only the proper selection of plants will guarantee a consistent final product of the highest quality. Since the *sotol* plant only grows wild, the harvesters must establish their camps in the same remote waterless deserts where the plants grow. All food and water for the harvesters must be trucked in during the harvest.

Using a special razor-sharp tool called a *coa*, the *jimador* expertly cuts the plant loose from its roots, then trims the spiky leaves from the plant's core. This trimmed core is called the *piña* (pineapple) because of its pineapple-like appearance, but it is, of course, not a fruit. A *piña* normally weighs between 25 and 40 pounds. The harvested *piñas* of *sotol* are transported by truck to the distillery in the town of Delicias, where they are washed, processed, and unloaded manually onto a conveyor that feeds directly into a series of ovens.

Cooking the *piñas* makes the natural sugars of the *sotol* plant available for fermentation into alcohol. Naturally occurring bitter-tasting compounds in the *sotol* plant are eliminated in the hot, humid cooking process, which softens the *piñas*. After cooking, the *piñas* are shredded to make nectar extraction easier, using a high-speed blade mill.

The cooked and shredded plant fibers are then pressed between large rollers to extract the sweet nectar. The pulp left behind in the pressing process is discarded. The nectar then ferments in wooden vats. Fermentation is complete when all the sugars in the nectar have been converted to alcohol and the natural production of carbon dioxide halts. The now 22-proof liquid (or *mosto*) is then allowed to settle.

Distillation takes place in a continuous two-column still. Undesirable compounds form at the beginning and end of distillation, so only the distillate from the middle of the process is retained for the final product. After distillation, the undiluted sotol is 160 proof, or 80% ABV. Filtered water is then added to achieve a final ABV of 38%, after which the sotol is bottled, labeled, and shipped.

