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Bulgaria's Whiskey Fest Prominently Features American Whiskies

Report Categories:

Market Promotion/Competition

Approved By:

Jonn Slette, Agricultural Attaché

Prepared By:

Alexander Todorov, Marketing Specialist

Report Highlights:

The seventh-annual [Whiskey Fest](#) whiskey exposition, October 26-28, 2018, in Sofia, billed itself as Central and Eastern Europe's premier distilled spirits exposition and trade fair. The U.S. Ambassador delivered opening remarks about American whiskey culture and highlighted that over 30 U.S. whiskey labels were exhibited at the show. Whiskey Fest presents a growing opportunity to market U.S. whiskies and other distilled spirits in Bulgaria's and Eastern Europe's growing market for U.S. whiskies.

General Information:

At the seventh-annual Whiskey Fest, October 26-28, 2018, Bulgarian whiskey fans, importers, traders, media, hotel, tourism, and restaurant industry professionals experienced a high-end, three-day event featuring whiskies from the United States and globally. Whiskey Fest bills itself as Central and Eastern Europe's largest whiskey exhibition, with over 400 whiskey labels and more than 100 brands. It is Bulgaria's most important event for distilled spirits importers and traders, as the target audience are the retail and hospitality sectors, media, whiskey enthusiasts, and other spirit-related businesses. About 3,300 whiskey fans visited the show throughout its three-day run, which featured over 38,000 samplings. Hundreds of media and online publications broadly highlighted participating brands and raised awareness about whiskey culture. The organizers focused on improving knowledge of whiskey through master-classes presentation led by world-known experts and Brand Ambassadors. All these components contributed toward developing Bulgaria's whiskey market and to increase sales. Besides advertising and sales, the event also unequivocally promotes responsible drinking habits.

Nearly 300 people attended the opening event, which featured the U.S. and British Ambassadors, and the Irish Charge d'Affaires. During opening remarks, U.S. Ambassador Eric Rubin noted that U.S. whiskies were prominently featured with 11 brands with more than 30 labels represented and that it enjoys a stable presence on the market by setting record exports to Bulgaria for the past several years. He briefly educated the audience about bourbon, rye, and Tennessee whiskies and said, "I look forward to sampling all the excellent whiskey and raising a glass to toast the pioneers of the American whiskey industry and the Bulgarian connoisseurs who have made this great American product so popular here". Ambassador Rubin noted that over 30 U.S. whiskies, including Jim Beam, Maker's Mark, Jack Daniel's, Woodford Reserve, Four Roses, Wild Turkey, Bulleit, Hudson bourbon and rye, Journeyman, Knob Creek, Booker's, Baker's, and Basil Hayden's were exhibited. Following his remarks, the Ambassador visited exhibitor booths with President of [Spirits Bulgaria](#) and met with local trade and industry reps. 11 Brand Ambassadors also presented different brands through 16 Master Classes for invitees.

The organizers of Whiskey Fest expressed their appreciation to FAS Sofia for its support. FAS Sofia's distilled-spirit contacts agree that this event has become critical for developing the Bulgarian whiskey market. Market share for U.S. whiskey is currently estimated at 17 percent in volume. Two U.S. whiskey labels are among the top 10 in terms of sales volumes, including Jim Beam (2) and Jack Daniel's (6). U.S. exports of distilled spirits to Bulgaria have increased since 2007, surpassing \$11 million in 2017 (Bulgarian National Statistical Institute). Whiskey Fests provides an opportunity for U.S. distilled-spirits companies to conduct marketing and outreach to a range of Bulgarian industry stakeholders and media.



Center of picture: President of the Bulgarian Spirits Association; Irish Charge d' Affaires, Ambassador Rubin, and UK Ambassador Hopkins





Ambassador Rubin delivering opening remarks



Irish Charge d' Affaires, Ambassador Rubin, and UK Ambassador

