

Guide to the Labeling of Alcoholic Beverages

This Guide covers the label declarations which must appear on the label of an alcoholic beverage, along with explanations as to how this labeling information must be presented on the label. It should be noted that this Guide does not include any discussion of the net quantity requirements other than the declaration on the label. The document explains how the net quantity is declared on the label, but does not outline how the net quantity of a filled container is measured.

Alcoholic Beverages

A beverage containing 1.1% or more alcohol by volume is considered an alcoholic beverage. These products must meet the labeling and compositional requirements found in Division 2 of the *FDR*. Readers are also advised to verify provincial legislation as it may differ from the federal requirements.

Common Name

The common name is defined under B.01.001 and required by B.01.006, *FDR*. It is also included as a requirement under subparagraph 10(b)(ii) of the *Consumer Packaging and Labeling Act (CPLA)* and 30 of the *Consumer Packaging and Labeling Regulations (CPLR)*.

Many alcoholic beverages have a standard of identity or composition prescribed in Division 2 of the *FDR*. For beverages meeting one of these standards, the common name appearing in bold face type in the regulations **must** be used.

Beer

Common names are also prescribed by means of labeling regulations. Section B.02.132 establishes mandatory common names or qualified common names as outlined below for various standardized beer products based upon alcohol content.

ITEM	PERCENTAGE OF ALCOHOL BY VOLUME	QUALIFIED COMMON NAME OR COMMON NAME REQUIRED ON THE LABEL AND IN ANY ADVERTISEMENT
1.	1.1 to 2.5	Extra Light Beer, Extra Light Ale, Extra Light Stout, Extra Light Porter
2.	2.6 to 4.0	Light Beer, Light Ale, Light Stout, Light Porter
3.	4.1 to 5.5	Beer, Ale, Stout, Porter
4.	5.6 to 8.5	Strong Beer, Strong Ale, Strong Stout, Strong Porter, Malt Liqueur
5.	8.6 or more	Extra Strong Beer, Extra Strong Ale, Extra Strong Stout, Extra Strong Porter, Strong Malt Liqueur

Liqueurs

When the flavour is shown on the label of a liqueur, the flavour designation becomes part of the common name and therefore should be grouped with the word "**liqueur**". When there is no indication of the flavour, the word "**liqueur**" suffices as the common name [B.01.070].

Unstandardized Alcoholic Beverages

The common name for alcoholic beverages without a prescribed standard is the name by which the food is generally known or, when none is available, a name that describes the true nature of the product. When choosing a common name for an unstandardized food without an established common name, the proposed name should be evaluated against subsection 5(1) of the *Food and Drugs Act [FDA]* and section 7 of the *Consumer Packaging and Labeling Act (CPLA)*, sections that contain broad prohibitions against the provision of misleading information.

Location

The common name must be shown on the principal display panel (the main panel) of the container.

Type Size

The common name must be shown in type of at least 1.6 mm in height, based on the lowercase letter "o".

Language

The common name must appear in English and French. The following are considered bilingual common names.

Advocaat or Advokaat, Akvavit, Americano, Anisette, Apricot Brandy Liqueur, Aquavit, Armagnac, Bourbon, Brandy, Calvados, Campari, Chartreuse, Cherry Brandy Liqueur, Crème de Banane, Crème de Bleuets, Crème de Cacao, Crème de Cassis, Crème de Menthe, Crème de Noyau, Curaçao Orange, Dry Gin, Fior d'Alpe, Grappa, Highland Whisky, Irish Whisky, Kirsch, Kummel, Liqueur de Fraise, Mandarinette, Manhattan, Marc, Martini, Ouzo, Pastis, Peach Brandy Liqueur, Poire William, Prunelle de Bourgogne, Rye Whisky, Scotch Whisky, Tequila, Triple Sec, Strega, Sake or Saki, Slivovitz, Sloe Gin.

Net Quantity Declaration

Manner of Declaring

For alcoholic beverages, the metric net quantity declaration must be shown in units of volume. Quantities of one litre or more must be shown in terms of litres while quantities of less than one litre are shown in terms of millilitres. Alternatively, quantities of less than one litre may be shown in words, while a net quantity of 500 millilitres may also be declared as 0.5 litre.

The acceptable symbols for millilitres are mL, ml, **mℓ**. The acceptable symbols for litre are L, ℓ, l. Care should be taken when using the lowercase "l" as the symbol for litre. If not used properly, it may be mistaken for the number "one". It should be noted that these symbols do not take any punctuation and are considered bilingual.

Examples of acceptable presentation:

750 **mℓ** 2 L

Location

The net quantity declaration must be shown on the principal display panel, and shall be clearly and prominently displayed, easily legible and in distinct contrast to any other information on the label.

Type Size

The numerical portion of the net quantity declaration must be shown in bold face type and be in a type size that is proportional to the area of the principal display surface of the container. The larger the container, the larger the type size requirement. Paragraph (c) of the definition for principal display surface is applicable to most cylindrical containers (bottles).

The symbols used in the net quantity declaration must be at least 1.6 mm in height, based on the lowercase "m" in the case of the symbol for millilitres.

Language

The net quantity declaration must be shown in English and French. All symbols for the metric units are considered bilingual.

Standardized Container Sizes

Wine bottled after January 1, 1979 may only be sold in Canada in a container size that has a net quantity of product of 50, 100, 200, 250, 375, 500, or 750 millilitres or 1, 1.5, 2, 3 or 4 litres.

Alcohol by Volume Declaration

All alcoholic beverages containing 1.1 percent or more alcohol by volume must declare the amount of alcohol contained in the product.

Manner of Declaring

The alcohol content declaration must be shown as "**X % alcohol by volume**" or be abbreviated "**X % alc./vol.**". Periods must follow both abbreviations.

Location

The alcohol by volume declaration must be shown on the principal display panel.

Type Size

The minimum type size of 1.6 mm in height based on the lowercase "o" is considered mandatory to meet the legibility requirements.

Language

The alcohol by volume declaration must be shown in both English and French. The French translation is "**X % d'alcool par volume**". When abbreviated, the statement "**X % alc./vol.**" is fully bilingual.

Name and Address of Dealer

Definition

The identity and principal place of business of the person for whom or by whom the product is produced for sale, must be shown on the label. The identity is the registered name of the company. The principal place of business should include the city or town plus the country for imported products. However, for the United States, declaration of the state alone is considered sufficient. For Canadian companies, the address should include the name of the province.

Location

The name and address of the dealer are required to be shown on any part of the label other than that applied to the bottom of the container.

Type Size

The minimum size is 1.6 mm in height based upon the lowercase "o".

Language

The name and address may be shown in English or French.

Imported Goods Labeled with the Name and Address of a Canadian Dealer

One of the following requirements must be met for products which are wholly manufactured in a country other than Canada, whether packaged and labeled in Canada or elsewhere, when the name and address on the label is that of a Canadian dealer:

1. The name and address of the Canadian dealer preceded by:

- a) **"imported by/importé par"**, or
- b) **"imported for/importé pour"**; or

2. a declaration of the geographic origin of the product.

These statements, unless required by other legislation to appear elsewhere, must appear immediately adjacent to the dealer's name and address and must be in type of at least as large as that used in the declaration of the Canadian dealer's principal place of business.

Origin Claims

Brandy - Country of Origin

Brandy that is wholly distilled in a country other than Canada requires a country of origin declaration on the label. This declaration must be shown in both English and French and should be in a minimum type height of 1.6 mm based on the lowercase "o". The declaration may be shown on any part of the label, other than that applied to the bottom of the container.

As the standards for Armagnac and Cognac require these products to originate from a specific area, the common name implies a specific origin and a country of origin statement is not considered mandatory for these two products.

Wine - Country of Origin (Please note that this section is under review)

A clear indication of the country of origin is required on all standardized wine products. This declaration must be shown in English and French and must appear on the principal display panel.

A wine may claim to be wine of a country if:

- a) the wine is made from at least 75 percent of the juice of grapes grown in that country and it is fermented, processed, blended and finished in that country, or
- b) in the case of wines blended in that country, at least 75 percent of the finished wine is fermented and processed in that country from the juice of grapes grown in that country.

The declaration should be stated as "**product of (naming the country)**" or "**(naming the country) wine**". For example:

"Product of France" or "French Wine"

The labels of products which do not meet the conditions mentioned above must describe the various origins on the label. For example:

"Made in Canada from (naming the country or countries) grapes (or juices)" or

"Blended in Canada from (naming the country or countries) wines"

Names of Wines - Geographical Origin

This section is subject to review under the recently signed Canada-European Community Wine and Spirits Agreement.

When a descriptor that implies a specific geographical origin is used on a wine that does not originate from the area suggested by the descriptor, the common name of the wine must be accompanied by a qualifier designating the true origin of the wine. The qualifier must be an integral part of the common name, displayed in identical font and size as the rest of the common name, e.g., Canadian Champagne, Australian Burgundy.

Names which fall into this category are Burgundy, Bordeaux, Chablis, Champagne, Chianti, Claret, Madiera, Malaga, Marsala, Medoc, Moselle (Mosel), Port, Sauterne, Sherry and Tokay.

Caribbean Rum

Up to 1.5 percent of rum manufactured in Canada may be blended with rum manufactured in one or more Commonwealth Caribbean countries. The resulting product may be identified on its label as a product of the Commonwealth Caribbean country (or countries). The name and address of the Commonwealth manufacturer(s) or the Canadian bottler should appear on the label.

In 1989, the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations questioned whether authority existed under the *Food and Drugs Act* to put in place a regulation to facilitate the marketing of Commonwealth Caribbean rum in Canada. Consultations with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade are still ongoing on this issue, with a view to revocation of this regulation in the future.

List of Ingredients

Manner of Declaring

Standardized alcoholic beverages (those with compositional standards in Division 2 of the *FDR*, such as beer, wine, and rum) are exempt from the requirement to show a list of ingredients on the label. Unstandardized alcoholic beverages (those for which there is no standard in Division 2 of the *FDR*) require a complete list of ingredients and their components. These ingredients must appear in descending order of proportion or as a percentage, both based on the weight of the ingredients prior to these being combined to make the product. Therefore, products such as sake, cocktails (manhattans, martinis), pernod, aquavit, etc., require a list of ingredients.

Location

The list of ingredients is required to be shown on any part of the label, other than that applied to the bottom of the container, except in the case of an ornamental container. An ornamental container is a container that, except on the bottom, has no promotional or advertising material other than a trademark or common name and that appears to be a decorative ornament because of its shape or texture or any design on its surface. It is sold for a decorative ornament as well as a container for food.

Type Size

The list of ingredients should be shown in type of at least 1.6 mm in height based on the lowercase letter "o".

Language

The list of ingredients must be shown in both English and French.

Durable Life Date

When the durable life of a product is 90 days or less, a durable life date must be declared on the label in the prescribed manner. Some draft beers may require a durable life date.

Vignettes

Any vignette used on the label must not be misleading with respect to the nature or origin of the product. In addition, when a vignette denoting the flavour of a product is shown on the label and an artificial flavour is used to provide all or part of this flavour, a bilingual statement indicating that artificial flavour is used must be shown on or adjacent to the vignette, in type of at least the size as that required for the numerical portion of the net quantity declaration.

Age Claims

It is recognized that aging plays a key role in the traditional brewing process. If increasing the time taken for the manufacturing process results in definite taste characteristics, certain claims relating to this aging process may be acceptable.

When materials introduced during processing contribute detectable characteristics to the final product, references to taste may also be made (for example, Beechwood aged taste).

Brandy

Claims regarding the age of brandy are limited to the time the brandy was stored in small wood, (defined as casks or barrels of not greater than 700 litres capacity or in other wooden containers. Brandy other than Armagnac, Canadian Brandy, Cognac, Dried Fruit Brandy, Fruit Brandy, Grappa, Lees Brandy, and Pomace or Marc, including any domestic or imported spirit added as flavouring, must be aged and held in small wood for at least 6 months or in wooden containers for at least one year.

Gin

Claims regarding the age of gin are prohibited except that gin that has been held in suitable containers may bear a label declaration to that effect.

Rum

Claims for the age of rum are restricted to the time the rum was stored in small wood. Rum, including any domestic or imported spirit added as flavouring, must be aged in small wood for not less than one year.

Whisky

Claims for the age of whisky are restricted to the period during which the whisky was stored in small wood. Whisky other than Bourbon and Tennessee must be aged at least three years in small wood, except that any domestic or imported spirit added as flavouring need only be aged for two years. Where Canadian Whisky has been aged in small wood for at least three years, any period not exceeding six months during which that whisky was held in other containers may be claimed with respect to the age. For example, Canadian Whisky aged three and a half years in small wood and eight months in glass containers may claim an age of four years.

Nutrition Labeling

Beverages with an alcohol content of more than 0.5% are exempt from showing a Nutrition Facts table. However, when a nutrient content claim is made or if a reference is made to energy or any nutrient listed in the tables to Sections B.01.401 and B.01.402, the exemption no longer applies and a Nutrition Facts table or applicable nutrient information becomes mandatory. The presence of a nutrient content claim or the phrase "Nutrition Facts" also triggers the requirement for a Nutrition Facts table on the label.

Unstandardized alcoholic beverages containing added sucralose, aspartame or acesulfame-potassium are required to carry the Nutrition Facts table as well as meet the labeling requirements for these artificial sweeteners. The alcohol by volume statement is not considered to be a nutrient content claim and does not trigger nutrition labeling.

Dry

In the case of alcoholic beverages, the term "**dry**" is not regarded as a sugar content claim and does not trigger the application of the Nutrition Facts table, providing no other statements or claims are made about the sugar content.

Gin

Gin may be labeled or advertised as "Dry Gin" or "London Dry Gin" if sweetening agents have not been added. The standard for "Gin" provides for the addition of a sweetening agent.

Liqueurs

The minimum sugar content required for liqueurs is 2.5 percent. Although the level in many liqueurs is often well beyond this minimum, it is questionable whether the term "dry" is a meaningful description.

Rum and Whisky

In rum and whisky, where sugar could be added indirectly as part of the flavouring, the range of residual sugar content is very small and is not readily detectable. Thus, the use of the term "dry" could be misleading and should not be used.

Vodka

The standard for Vodka does not provide for the addition of sugar or other sweetening agents. For this reason, the description "dry" is potentially misleading and should not be used.

Wine

In relation to wines, the term "dry" refers to a low residual sugar content in the wine, i.e., most of the sugar has been fermented into alcohol. The term "dry", therefore, means the product has little or no sugar. There is however, a large measurable range in the sugar content of wines. The actual sugar content of what would be perceived and described as a "dry" wine varies with the specific type of wine. For example, a dry sherry wine would have more residual sugar than a dry table wine. The claim "dry" does not trigger the application of the Nutrition Facts table.

Light

Historically, the term "light", in relation to a rum, is recognized as a description of the colour and/or flavour of the product, and therefore need not be further qualified. The claim "light" on rum does not trigger a Nutrition Facts table.

"Light" may be used to describe the following alcoholic beverages which contain the alcohol levels indicated in the table below:

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE	ALCOHOL LEVELS
Beer, Ale, Porter, Stout	2.6 - 4 % alc./vol. [B.02.132]
Cider	4 % alc./vol. or less
Wine	9 % alc./vol. or less
Whisky	25 % alc./vol. or less

In the case of the above alcoholic beverages, it is assumed that through long-established practice, most consumers understand "light" to be a reference to a lower alcohol content. No further qualification of "light" is required on labels and in advertisements of these products provided that the declaration of the percentage of alcohol by volume appears prominently on the principal display panel of the label, and that "light" is not used to refer to some other aspect or characteristic of these products. If "light" is used to describe a reduction in some constituent other than alcohol, then it must satisfy the conditions established by the regulations for nutrition labeling, for light as a sensory characteristic or light as a reference to the reduction in fat or of energy.

Addresses of Provincial and Territorial Liquor Boards

It is to be noted that some provinces require alcoholic beverage labels to be reviewed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and any non-compliance issues corrected as part of their listing procedure.

Newfoundland Liquor Corporation
P.O. Box 8750, Station A
90 Kenmount Road
St. John's, NL
A1B 3V1
Tel.: (709) 724-1112
<http://www.nfliquor.com>

Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation
93 Chain Lake Drive
Bayers Lake, Business Park
Halifax, NS
B3S 1A3
Tel.: (902) 450-5802
<http://www.nsliquor.ns.ca>

Prince Edward Island
Liquor Control Commission
P.O. Box 967
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 7M4
Tel.: (902) 368-5720
<http://www.peilcc.ca/>

New Brunswick Liquor Corporation
P.O. Box 20787
Fredericton, NB
E3B 5B8
Tel.: (506) 452-6826
<http://www.nbliquor.com>

Société des alcools du Québec
905, avenue Delorimier
Montréal, QC
H2K 3V9
Tel.: (514) 873-3816
<http://www.saq.com>

Liquor Control Board of Ontario
55 Lakeshore Boulevard East
Toronto, ON
M5E 1A4
Tel.: (416) 864-2453
<http://www.lcbo.com>

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission
P.O. Box 1023
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 2X1
Tel.: (204) 284-2501
<http://www.mlcc.mb.ca>

Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority
P.O. Box 5054
Regina, SK
S4P 3M3
Tel.: (306) 787-1738
<http://www.slga.gov.sk.ca>

Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
50 Corriveau Avenue
St-Albert, AB
T8N 3T5
Tel.: (403) 447-8600
<http://www.aglc.gov.ab.ca>

British Columbia Liquor Distribution Branch
2625 Rupert Street
Vancouver, BC
V5M 3T5
Tel.: (604) 252-3000
<http://www.bliquorstores.com/en>

Yukon Liquor Corporation Board
9031 Quartz Road
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 4P9
Tel.: (867) 667-5245
<http://www.ylc.yk.ca>

N.W.T. Liquor Commission
31 Capital Drive
Suite 201
Hay River, NT
X0E IG2
Tel.: (867) 874-2100