

## THE GRAND FINALE

After-dinner drinks have always been popular in America. Now, with our new desire to end a meal less heavily, Cognac, Armagnac, fruit brandies, or

eaux-de-vie brandies made from grape pomace such as marc and grappa are replacing fruit liqueurs in popularity.

A true fruit brandy, or eau-de-vie, must be distilled entirely from the fruit itself; the result is a dry, often colorless liquid whose aroma bursts forth from the uncorked bottle. It's almost

as if you've been transported to an orchard or a berry field.

Some prefer these brandies served ice cold. We like them at room temperature, but in any case, offer them in your finest tiny glasses. They are expensive, since they are the pure essence of the fruit, but worth experiencing.

ESSENCE	FRUIT	ORIGIN	NOTES
Armagnac	Saint-Emilion, Meslier, and Picpoule grapes	Gers and Landes, France	Armagnac is amber to brown in color, depending on its age. The smoother and more richly flavored are aged five years or longer in oak.
Applejack	Apple	United States	An American favorite, but without the rich body of Calvados.
California Brandy	Thompson Seedless grape	California	These pale gold brandies are not yet the equal of the European, but are pleasant to sip and excellent for cooking.
Calvados	Apple	Normandy, France	Rich in color and crisp apple flavor, it reflects the sophistication of aging.
Cognac	Saint-Emilion, Folle Blanche, and Colombar grapes	France	Cognacs are brandies; not all brandies are Cognacs. A true Cognac is made only in the Cognac region, by a lengthy aging process. The resulting amber liquid is worth the price.
Grappa	Grape pomace	Piedmont and Friuli, Italy	A by-product of the wine-making process. It has a fiery and biting flavor.
Fraise	Strawberry	France	An eau-de-vie that is not sweet, but fully fruit-flavored.
Framboise	Raspberry	France	Made from the essence of 40 pounds of fruit per bottle, it fairly explodes with the smell and flavor of raspberries.
Marc de Bourgogne	Grape pomace	Burgundy, France	Another by-product of the wine-making process; it is often considered harsh and "plebeian," but in France it is the favorite of the rural gentry.
Mirabelle	Yellow plum	Lorraine and Alsace, France	Clear and delicate—this is a spectacular sipping brandy.
Pear Brandy or Poire Williams	Williams pear	France, Switzerland, Germany	An eau-de-vie with the full, elegant flavor of pears. An experience.