

# The Telegraph

## Why a hot toddy is the perfect tonic for uncertain times

Not just reserved for colder months, a hot whisky drink can be soothing whatever the weather

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Try a tot to calm and revive | Credit: Alamy

I'm calling for an extension of hot toddy season. A steaming tumbler of spirit, sugar, spice and boiled water is, of course, primarily a drink for the coldest months, but in these strange times it seems appropriate through Easter and beyond. I made a classic hot whisky toddy the other night and it was very soothing – not only the shot of alcohol, warmth and sweetness, but also the ritual itself.

My go-to recipe is 30ml whisky (a toddy shouldn't be too strong), a teaspoon of sugar (preferably brown, but white is fine), two cloves (no more, they can overpower), 60ml very hot water (not actually boiling), and a squeeze of lemon juice. Stir – with a cinnamon stick if you feel fancy – and drink straightaway but slowly, hands around the glass, breathing in the steam between sips.

You can play around with this basic method: a quarter to a half-teaspoon of ground ginger, stirred in properly, spices it up more; honey instead of sugar is great, and feels more wholesome. Maple syrup instead of sugar or honey is another hit – the toddy tastes richer for it. Try a maple syrup hot toddy with your Easter chocolate, perhaps...

What doesn't work is messing around with most other spirits. Whisky/whiskey really should be the base – I use Scottish or Irish, but you may prefer American. It's the oak flavour that you are after. A dark rum toddy isn't nearly as nice and don't even think about gin. The only other spirit that creates a great toddy is brandy, and best of all the terrific armagnac of south-west France, which is fruitier than whisky but still delivers the essential heart of oak.

**Try these...**



From left: **Domaine Tariquet XO Armagnac Bas-Armagnac**; Green Isle Blended Scotch Whisky The Character of Islay; Glen Moray Fired Oak Speyside Single Malt Whisky

### **Green Isle Blended Scotch Whisky The Character of Islay Whisky Company, Scotland**

(40%, [masterofmalt.com](http://masterofmalt.com), £29.95 for 70cl)

A keenly priced blend based on Islay malt, with Speyside malt and Lowland grain whiskies. It's well-balanced with a honeyed hint, apple and pear aroma and light smokiness. Works a treat in a hot toddy.

### **Glen Moray Fired Oak Speyside Single Malt Whisky, Scotland**

(40%, [Morrisons](http://Morrisons) and independent whisky shops, £34 for 70cl; [masterofmalt.com](http://masterofmalt.com), £37.84)

This single malt cranks up the oak flavour; it's been aged for 10 years in ex-bourbon casks then finished in charred oak. The oak spice and vanilla sweetness is in check and delicious hot.

### **Domaine Tariquet XO Armagnac Bas-Armagnac, France**

(40%, selected Waitrose and [waitrosecellar.com](http://waitrosecellar.com), £34 for 70cl down to £28 until Tuesday)

This is a tempting offer on a fine armagnac that's beautifully mellow and has gorgeous layers of candied peel, spiced oranges, prunes and cloves. If you're not a fan of whisky, this could star in your hot toddy instead.