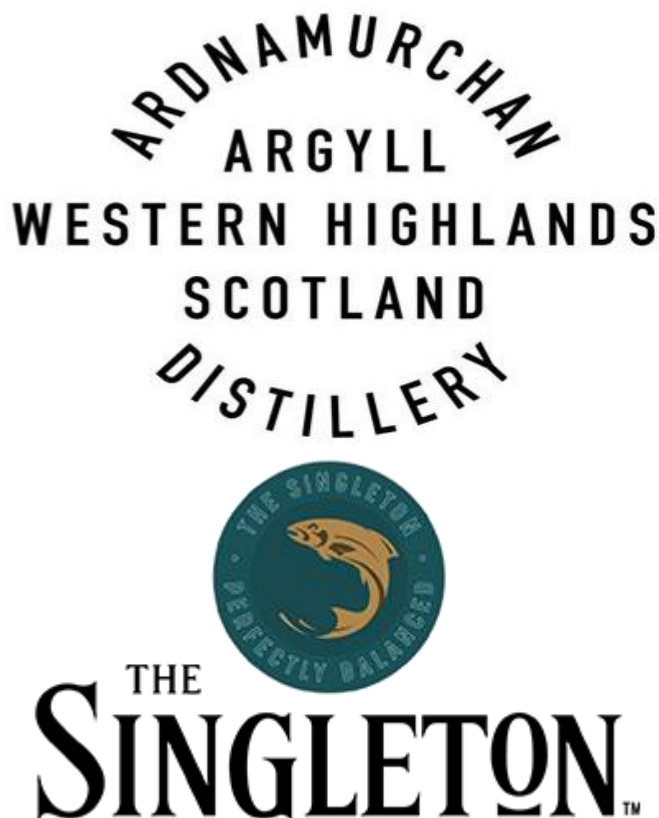


# Kingston Single Malt Society

[www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com](http://www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com)

A social club for the appreciation of Single Malt Whisky since 1998

October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 VOLUME 15; NUMBER 4b; No. 183



## MENU

1<sup>st</sup> Nosing: ARDNAMURCHAN AD/01.21:01  
(introduced by: John Creber)

First course: West African Peanut Soup

2<sup>nd</sup> Nosing: THE SINGLETON OF DUFFTOWN 12 YEAR OLD  
(introduced by: Karen Sargent)

Second Course: Duck Confit Salad with Orange Segments,  
Shaved Fennel, Baby Arugula and a Honey Balsamic Dressing

3<sup>rd</sup> Nosing: ARDNAMURCHAN AD/04.21  
PAUL LAUNOIS LIMITED RELEASE  
(introduced by: John Creber)

Third course: Bourbon Short Ribs, Roasted Garlic Mash and  
Fried Brussel Sprouts

4<sup>th</sup> Nosing: THE SINGLETON OF DUFFTOWN 17 YEAR OLD  
(introduced by: Karen Sargent)

5<sup>th</sup> Nosing: ARDNAMURCHAN 2015 SINGLE CASK  
REFILL OLOROSO PUNCHEON #335  
(introduced by: John Creber)

Fourth course: Chocolate Coconut Cake

6<sup>th</sup> Nosing: THE SINGLETON OF GLEN ORD 18 YEAR OLD  
(introduced by: Karen Sargent)

## **COST OF THE MALTS**

ARDNAMURCHAN AD/01.21:01 LCBO 398784 | 700 mL bottle  
Price \$139.95 Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 46.8% Alcohol/Vol.

ARDNAMURCHAN AD/04.21 PAUL LAUNOIS LIMITED  
RELEASE LCBO 398784 | 700 mL bottle Price \$229.95 Spirits,  
Whisky/Whiskey 57.6% Alcohol/Vol.

ARDNAMURCHAN 2015 SINGLE CASK REFILL OLOROSO  
PUNCHEON #335 LCBO 398784 | 700 mL bottle Price \$229.95  
Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 58.5% Alcohol/Vol.

THE SINGLETON OF DUFFTOWN 12 YEAR OLD LCBO 409490  
| 750 mL bottle, Price: \$56.95, Spirits, Scotch Whisky, 40.0%  
Alcohol/Vol.

THE SINGLETON OF DUFFTOWN 17 YEAR OLD LCBO 18875 |  
750 mL bottle, Price: \$174.95, Spirits, Scotch Whisky, 55.0%  
Alcohol/Vol.

THE SINGLETON OF GLEN ORD 18 YEAR OLD LCBO 18875 |  
750 mL bottle, Price: \$235.95, Spirits, Scotch Whisky, 55.0%  
Alcohol/Vol.

## Upcoming Dinner Dates

Monday November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Rachel Barrie -  
BenRiach / Glenglassaugh / Glendronach - John MacPherson  
Monday December 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 - Christmas Dinner  
Monday December 13<sup>th</sup> 2021 - Christmas Dinner  
Monday January 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 - Robbie Burns Dinner  
Monday February 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 - Islands / Islay  
Monday March 14<sup>th</sup> 2022 - Irish / Lowland / Highland  
Monday April 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 - Bunnahabhain Dinner  
Monday May 30<sup>th</sup> 2022 - Campbeltown / Highlands  
Monday June 20<sup>th</sup> 2022 - June BBQ -  
Speyside/Highlands  
Monday July 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 - Speyside / Highlands  
Friday August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Premium Night

## **SEPTEMBER - KSMS Financial Statement**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| (Money from 44 September attendees @ \$90) | = \$3960.00 |
| September dinner 44 persons                | = \$2520.91 |
| Money remaining for buying Single Malt)    | = \$1439.09 |
| Cost of Single Malts                       | = \$1551.75 |
| Cost of Pours per Person = \$35.26         |             |
| Money for Heels                            | = \$175.00  |
| KSMS Monthly operational balance           | = \$62.34   |
| Cost per person (All inclusive)            | = \$92.56   |

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## Macallan adds 30-year-old to Double Cask series

21 SEPTEMBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

Single malt Scotch producer The Macallan has added a 30-year-old whisky to its Double Cask range.



The Macallan 30 Years Old Double Cask is priced at £3,000 (US\$4,100). The Macallan Double Cask 30 Years Old was matured in Sherry-seasoned American and European oak casks. Bottled at 43% ABV, the whisky will retail for RRP £3,000 (US\$4,100).

Tasting notes for the whisky include aromas of honeycomb, toffee, red apple, fig and vanilla pod. The palate brings cinnamon, ginger, vanilla, dried fruits and oak flavours, finishing with oak, spice and toffee.

Kirsteen Campbell, master whisky maker, The Macallan, said: "The Macallan Double Cask 30 Years Old is a modern take on our classic 30-year-old and is an exceptional aged single malt. With a rich combination and depth of flavour and a complex character, it is a whisky to be savoured, exhibiting notes of cinder toffee, fresh honeycomb, rich vanilla and red apples.

"The Macallan Double Cask brings together Sherry-seasoned American and European oak casks to create the perfect balance of flavours. It is the oak that gives the whisky its natural colour and is the single greatest contributor to the quality, distinctive aromas and flavours."

The brand partnered with American artist and photographer Erik Madigan Heck to create imagery that depicts the flavours, textures and colour of the liquid.

Heck's photography features three compositions: a collection of abstract leaves from an oak tree; an image of a 'blue tree' to represent the 30-year-old whisky; and a still life to communicate the colours and textures of the whisky.

Heck said: "Nature lies at the heart of my work, and I was greatly inspired by the breath-taking natural landscape on The Macallan Estate. I was drawn to an oak tree and its leaves which provided the perfect subjects to evoke the seemingly simply, yet rich and complex character of Double Cask 30 Years Old and to depict the natural colour of the whisky.

"I also created a still life image featuring vibrant colours and varying textures to portray the whisky's luscious flavours while natural light captures its depth of character. The whisky's golden acorn natural colour provides the focal point of the shot, and its rich tone and translucent glow influenced the colour palette of the piece as a whole." In August this year, Edrington-owned The Macallan released the first single malt in a new range inspired by the brand's legacy – [a whisky enclosed in a Lalique decanter](#) and distilled in 1950.



Artwork by American artist and photographer Erik Madigan Heck

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## Macallan unveils chocolate-inspired whisky

13 OCTOBER 2021 By Nicola Carruthers

Edrington has combined the worlds of whisky and chocolate to create a Macallan single malt as part of the new Harmony Collection.



The Macallan Harmony Collection Rich Cacao is bottled at 44% ABV. The Macallan Harmony Collection Rich Cacao is the first whisky in a new 'innovative' series of single malts.

Inspired by the brand's link to nature for nearly two centuries, the Harmony Collection explores the world of sustainable packaging. The brand will combine innovative techniques with natural materials that are at the end of their lifespan.

To create the new bottling, The Macallan whisky maker Polly Logan visited Girona, Spain, to discover the chocolate-making process and its flavour profiles.

Logan said: "As I immersed myself in this world, I uncovered a great synergy between the whisky-making process and that of chocolate. Both take time and exceptional attention to detail, with even the slightest changes to the process encouraging different aromas and flavours to emerge."

Logan teamed up with pastry chef Jordi Roca from three Michelin-starred restaurant El Celler de Can Roca on the new whisky.

Logan continued: "Working in collaboration with Jordi Roca, acknowledged as one of the best and most creative pastry chefs in the world, and with exceptional chocolatier, Damian Allsop, I went on a journey of discovery, learning of the craftsmanship, passion and creativity which goes into making chocolate."

Logan searched Sherry-seasoned oak casks maturing at The Macallan Estate to identify 'rare, indulgent chocolate notes'.

Roca said: "Our collaboration with The Macallan allows us to challenge our own creativity, and in this project, we have been allowed to play with cacao, which is one of my passions. Being able to inspire a whisky and to create a unique tasting experience has been wonderful."



The whisky is made from a combination of European and American oak casks, and is said to pair perfectly with rich chocolate.

The resulting liquid offers an aroma of chocolate fondant, honey, oak, zesty lime and ginger, while the palate brings hints of dark chocolate, honey, dates, vanilla and cinnamon.

The Macallan Harmony Collection Rich Cacao comes in a fully recyclable and biodegradable presentation box, made using natural by-products in the chocolate-making process. The box is crafted with discarded husks from cacao pods.

"For this expression, I sought out a specific chocolate note in The Macallan's traditional Sherry-seasoned European oak casks and combined this with a vanilla note imparted by Sherry-seasoned American oak casks to sweeten the slightly bitter chocolate note I had found," explained Logan. "This exquisite single malt offers a delightful whisky and chocolate pairing experience and the chance to elevate The Macallan experience to a new dimension."

The Macallan Harmony Collection Rich Cacao (44% ABV) will be available globally from October 2021 for US\$160.

The Macallan has also collaborated with chocolate brand Compartés Chocolate to create a whisky and chocolate pairing tasting set.

The pairing tasting set includes a bottle of The Macallan Harmony Collection Rich Cacao, a 10-piece box of custom-made chocolate, a pairing guide and two Macallan Glencairn glasses.

To pre-order the tasting kit, which is limited to 200 sets, visit Reserve Bar on 8 November 2021.

Last month, The Macallan added a [30-year-old whisky](#) to its Double Cask range.

namely hollow water-cooling jackets that will enable Lumsden to vary the rate of reflux in order to create lighter or heavier spirit. The Lighthouse also has a brewhouse attached, and a sensory laboratory on the top floor. Overall, it is a striking structure—one that signals not only a new chapter in scotch creation, but also emphasizes design aesthetics and architectural beauty.



The pot stills in the Lighthouse mimic those in Glenmorangie's main distillery but have hollow water-cooling jackets that will allow Lumsden to alter the spirit with precision.

"I knew the experimental distillery part was a given, but I originally wanted it in an anonymous corrugated iron shed with a huge padlock, so nobody other than me and my team was able to get in or out," Lumsden says. "I'm still glad that we've ended up with what we've got here, and the vision for it is quite stunning. I have reluctantly agreed that it would have been a shame not to have something as magnificent as this."

#### A SECRET SCIENCE

Lumsden is predictably coy when pressed on what sort of innovation he has in mind, but he offers a few points of inspiration. He admires what Buffalo Trace has done with its [Old Charter Oak](#) line, exploring finishes in Mongolian and chinkapin oak, and mentions the Woodford Reserve Master's Collection, where master distiller Chris Morris has used oats and cherrywood-smoked barley to create flavor. "I've taken inspiration from some of the things our friends in the United States have done," Lumsden says. "That's one of the things I love about our industry—that we do tend to have a great deal of respect for our family of distillers and we talk to each other a lot."

Lumsden is also inspired by his fellow scotch whisky makers. He recently had the chance to taste [Arbikie Highland Rye Single Grain](#), a noteworthy whisky for a country that has only recently started to contribute to [rye's global growth](#), but prides himself on being original.

"As a naturally competitive person, I would prefer to be the first to do things," he says. "I obviously would probably not do things exactly the same as other distillers, but I may well take inspiration from them and do something like that." Glenmorangie has finished its single malt in rye barrels before, with its [Spios](#) expression in 2018.

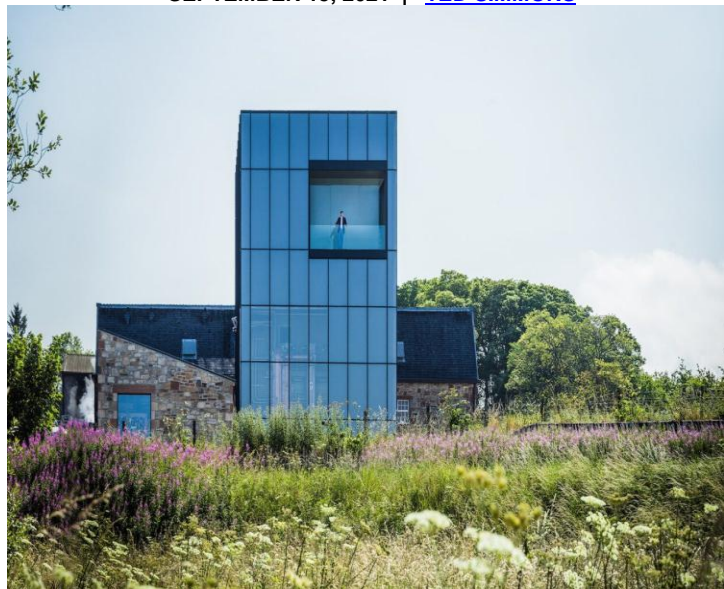
In a video presentation, Lumsden said he is inspired by traveling the world, meeting new people, and eating new foods, and that he'd like to create new flavors that no one has ever heard of. In particular, he expressed a fondness for the flavor of fresh white truffles. He seems less moved though by the [recent changes in the Scotch Whisky Technical File](#) that allow for tequila and other spirit finishes.

"Personally, I'm not convinced that that would actually give a good taste," Lumsden says.

The Lighthouse will not run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but more on a batch basis. There is not a rigid structural plan, and Lumsden will tinker with his ideas and experiments as he develops them. Both Lumsden and Glenmorangie president and CEO Thomas Moradpour emphasize the balance of scotch whisky's storied tradition with the

## With The Lighthouse, Glenmorangie Becomes a Beacon of Innovation

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 | [TED SIMMONS](#)



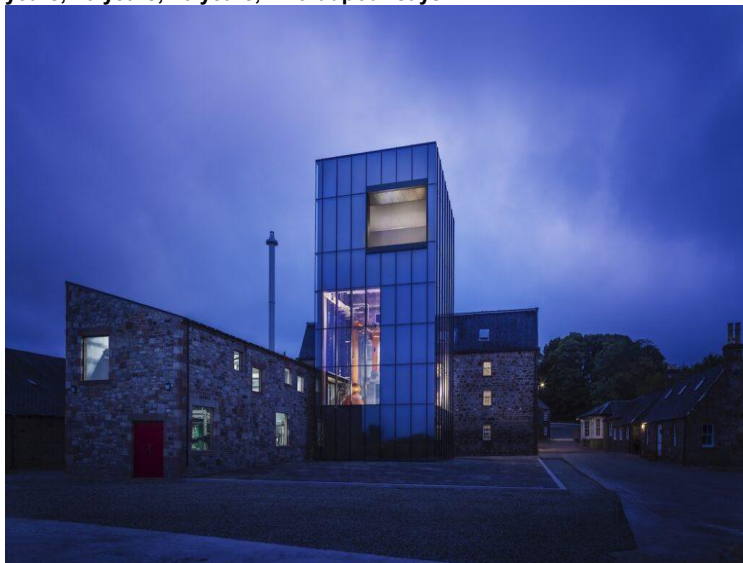
Dr. Bill Lumsden looks out from the Lighthouse's sensory laboratory, where he will work on his many whisky experiments.

In the world of single malt scotch, Dr. Bill Lumsden is a fearless explorer. With curiosity as his compass, the head of distilling and whisky creation at [The Glenmorangie Distillery Co.](#) has created a range of wine cask finishes, harnessed mocha flavors with [Glenmorangie Signet](#), cultivated wild yeast for [Allta](#), and used grain from the property's own barley fields for its [Cadboll Estate](#) expression. Now, Lumsden is setting sail on a new ship, as Glenmorangie unveils the Lighthouse, an experimental distillery where he will pursue his wildest whisky dreams. "I clearly will be making products which will be proudly labeled as Glenmorangie single malt scotch whisky, but I have the capability to do all sorts of other things," says Lumsden. "I haven't really got a crystal-clear picture of everything I'm going to do. And obviously, some of the things are confidential, but it's certainly a distinct possibility that we may have products going into market which are not actually scotch whisky."

The Lighthouse is located on the Glenmorangie campus, and is surrounded by glass walls that tower over the main distillery buildings. The giraffe neck stills in the new facility were made by Forsythe and resemble those of the main distillery, with a few key differences—



dynamic possibilities of its future. “We have to think about maintaining a house style and its integrity and its quality, but also pushing the boundaries to introduce products that may see the light of day in 10 years, 15 years, 20 years,” Moradpour says.



Lumsden says the Lighthouse will not run 24/7 but rather in a batch-like process as he works on various experiments and ideas. To start, however, 3,000 bottles of Glenmorangie Lighthouse will be released only at the distillery. The whisky has been aged for 12 years in bourbon and sherry casks that are now encased in the Lighthouse’s walls. As for whiskies made at the Lighthouse, we will have to be patient. But as he’s done throughout his career, Lumsden will remain at the vanguard of pushing the possibilities of what scotch whisky can be. “I think innovation and experimentation within the scotch whisky industry is unquestionably here to stay,” he says. With the Lighthouse, Lumsden and Glenmorangie are making sure they lead the way.

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## Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter Revealed

July 5, 2021 by [Elias Auode](#)



Labels approved by the TTB have revealed Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter, a limited edition 13 year old single malt Scotch whisky finished in Marsala wine casks from Sicily and bottled at 45% ABV. The back label describes Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter as exhibiting “light flurries of fruit and honey, building to torrents of cocoa dust, flakes of red pepper and chunks of brazil nut toffee, culminating in a feels-like-forever finish that swirls with cinnamon, ginger and clove.” Expect an official announcement with more information, including pricing, release date, and availability, prior to launch.





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## Glenmorangie debuts winter warmer whisky

13 OCTOBER 2021 By Kate Malczewski

Scotch whisky producer Glenmorangie has unveiled a 13-year-old single malt created specifically for the winter season.



Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter will become available in the UK from 1 November

The development of Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter was led by the producer's head of whisky creation, Dr Bill Lumsden, who was inspired by 'the joy of cosy moments indoors' during Scotland's snowy months.

The wintry new single malt is the latest innovation from Glenmorangie, which has doubled down on its commitment to new product development by building The Lighthouse, a multi-million-pound distillery for experimentation. Last month, *The Spirits Business* [got an exclusive first look at the space](#).

To craft the limited edition expression, Lumsden took a batch of whisky matured in ex-Bourbon barrels and finished it in ex-Marsala casks.

"We all know the delight of snuggling up in a winter jumper by the fire, when it's snowy outside," Lumsden said.

"With flavours as bright and vivid as my favourite woollen sweater, Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter deliciously captures those magical, cosy moments."

On the nose, the 46% ABV whisky offers touches of orange toffee, lavender honey and sweet rose, while the palate brings notes of red pepper flakes, cocoa powder, Brazil nut toffee and sweet barley malt.

To celebrate the launch, the producer has developed a selection of seasonal cocktails that showcase the new single malt, including a Winter Old Fashioned and a Quinta Ruban Hot Chocolate. Meanwhile, a Pumpkin Scotch Latte was designed to highlight Glenmorangie's flagship expression.

Priced at RRP £75 (US\$102.19), Glenmorangie A Tale of Winter will be available to purchase in the UK from 1 November through [www.clos19.com](http://www.clos19.com) and at specialist retailers.

In September 2020, the Scotch maker [released A Tale of Cake](#), a limited edition whisky inspired by dessert.

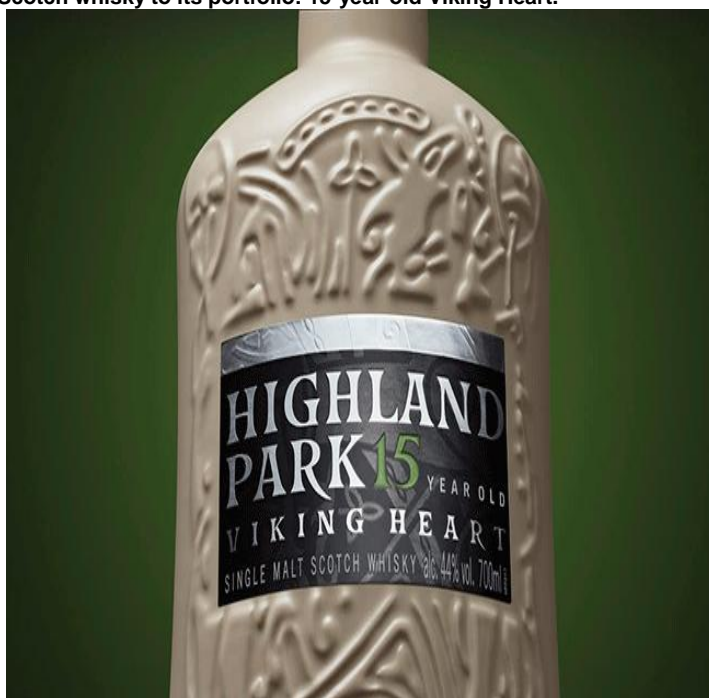
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## Highland Park launches Viking Heart

23 SEPTEMBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

Orkney-based Highland Park has added a new permanent single malt Scotch whisky to its portfolio: 15-year-old Viking Heart.



The 15-year-old whisky joins the brand's permanent offerings. Gordon Motion, Highland Park's master whisky maker, handpicked the casks for the 15-year-old. The liquid contains a 'high percentage' of first-fill European oak Sherry-seasoned casks, said to give dry, spicy notes.

First-fill American oak Sherry-seasoned casks are said to complement this with flavours of vanilla, crème brûlée. Meanwhile, a small proportion of refill casks give 'gentle' heather peat and 'lightly fruity' character.

The whisky has been filled into heavily embossed 700ml ceramic bottles, made in partnership with UK-based Wade Ceramics. The design was inspired by ancient earthenware vessels, which would have been used to store whisky a century or two ago at the distillery.

Motion said: "Our insistence on specially constructed Sherry casks delivers a richness of flavour.

"Vanilla and citrus notes lead and combine with the unique fragrant peat and creamy mouthfeel synonymous with Highland Park.

"The hand selection of quality first-fill and refill casks for Highland Park 15 Year Old delivers a rich colour, which is 100% natural."

Bottled at 44% ABV, Viking Heart will be available for RRP £80 (US\$109.33) from specialist whisky retailers, and the brand's online shop and distillery.

Last month, the Edrington-owned brand released its [second cask strength whisky](#), which sits at 63.9% ABV.

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## Highland Park Debuts New 15 Year Old Single Malt Whisky

By [Gary Carter](#) / September 29, 2021

Orkney-based distillery [Highland Park](#) has launched a new, 15-year-old single malt Scotch whisky that will be a permanent fixture in its range of spirits.

The [Highland Park 15 Year Old Viking Heart](#) is presented in a heavily embossed ceramic bottle, created in partnership with UK based Wade Ceramics. The inspiration of which came from ancient earthenware vessels, the same the whisky would have been stored in a century or two ago at the distillery.

Created from casks hand-selected by Highland Park Whisky Maker Gordon Motion, the 15 Year Old contains a high percentage of first-fill European oak sherry seasoned casks, which he says delivers a warm, dry spicy note. The first-fill American oak sherry seasoned casks, Motion said, back this up with notes of vanilla and crème brûlée.





*Highland Park 15 Year Old Viking Heart (image via Highland Park)*

A small proportion of refill casks allow what's described as the DNA of Highland Park whisky to come through, especially its gentle heather peat and lightly fruity character.

"Our insistence on specially constructed sherry casks delivers a richness of flavor," Motion said in a prepared statement. "Vanilla and citrus notes lead and combine with the unique fragrant peat and creamy mouthfeel synonymous with Highland Park. The hand selection of quality first-fill and refill casks for Highland Park 15 Year Old delivers a rich color which is 100 percent natural."

And bottled at 88 proof, Motion said this retains more of the compounds which deliver a whisky with extra body and enhanced mouthfeel.

You'll find official tasting notes and other information below.

- **Suggested Retail Price:** \$110.
- **US Availability:** end of October/early November
- **ABV:** 44% (88 proof).
- **Volume:** 750ml.
- **Color:** Natural cask driven color, light golden, clear and bright.
- **Aroma:** Charred cinnamon shards, mellow smoke from Orkney's unique heather peat.
- **Taste:** Warm vanilla sponge cake, sun-kissed lemon zest, fresh pineapple, and rich heather honey.
- **Finish:** A complex and rich finish lingers with a gentle aromatic peat smoke.

55.4% and is a small-batch release initially matured in first and second fill American oak barrels. It is then re-racked for over two years, aging in Oloroso puncheons sourced by master distiller Billy Walker. The whisky was bottled without added color and was not chill-filtered. The result, according [to the brand](#), is an exceptional single malt with rich sherry-matured flavors and notes of sticky raisins, dark chocolate pudding, zesty orange and fresh espresso.



*GlenAllachie 14-year-old Oloroso Wood Finish (image via GlenAllachie)*

Walker has earned widespread acclaim for his wood management and blending expertise. He was inducted into Whisky Magazine's Hall of Fame earlier this year for his 50 years in the industry.

"As soon as we acquired The GlenAllachie distillery, I knew exactly what direction I wanted us to take the liquid in; a single malt known for its bold, indulgent sherried character," Walker said [in a prepared statement](#). "This UK bottling is no different, with all those archetypal Oloroso tones you would expect – rich cocoa, cinnamon sticks, tangy orange and fresh ginger, all alongside a warming mocha depth. A sophisticated single malt that exemplifies the exciting direction that we have been taking The GlenAllachie in."

The GlenAllachie 14-year-old Oloroso Wood Finish will be released in the U.K. for a recommended retail price of £89.99.

Official tasting notes for this 55.4% ABV, cask strength expression can be found below.

- **Colour:** Burnished Mahogany.
- **Nose:** Rich butterscotch alongside warming mocha, toasted almonds and gentle pineapple.
- **Taste:** Fresh espresso and dark chocolate, with zesty orange, sticky raisins and hints of ginger.

## GlenAllachie Releases Cask Strength Oloroso-Finished Whisky Exclusively For The UK

By [Hannah Kanik](#) / September 23, 2021

GlenAllachie Distillery recently released a limited-edition 14-year-old Oloroso Wood Finish Scotch whisky created exclusively for the U.K. market.

The multi-award-winning Speyside distillery said this expression joins its Wood Finish Series. It is presented at a natural cask strength of



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## Clydeside Distillery reveals first single malt

14 OCTOBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

Lowland whisky producer The Clydeside Distillery has released its first single malt Scotch: Stobcross.



Stobcross is the inaugural single malt from The Clydeside Distillery in Glasgow

The whisky was aged in American and European oak casks, and is bottled at 46% ABV. It was made from 100% Scottish barley and water sourced from Loch Katrine.

Stobcross is available to purchase from the distillery shop and website, priced at RRP £45 (US\$62) per 700ml bottle.

An international rollout is planned for the coming months.

Tasting notes include floral aromas, sweetness and tropical notes on the nose.

The palate is said to bring orchard fruits and a hint of white pepper.

Andrew Morrison, commercial director at Morrison Glasgow Distillers, owner of [The Clydeside Distillery](#), said: "Today marks a culmination of many years of hard work. Stobcross pays tribute to Glasgow's industrial heritage and the spirit of innovation, which forged its position on the global stage.

"Our whisky has been lying patiently waiting for almost four years. This precious time, along with our distiller's skills and craftsmanship, has created something truly special. We're incredibly proud to launch our very first single malt."

The Clydeside Distillery is located on the banks of the River Clyde in Glasgow.

Stobcross takes its name from a historic cross that once marked the route to Dumbarton Rock. It was also the name given to a mansion built in the 1600s, in a village that later became Anderston.

The mansion was demolished in 1875 to make room for the Queen's Dock in Glasgow.

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## The Secondary Market for Rare Whisky Is on Pace to Break Records This Year

If projections hold true sales could reach \$102 million by year's end.

By [BRYAN HOOD](#)



AP Images

First it was [trading cards](#). Then [coins](#). Now the rare [whisky](#) market is experiencing a boom.

We may not have reached October yet, but 2021 is shaping up to be a record year for the single-malt Scotch whisky secondary market, according to a whisky consultancy firm based in the UK (h/t [Barron's](#)). If projections hold true, the market is expected to reach \$102 million in sales before the December is over, which would easily set a new record.

If sales do reach that mark, it would represent a 30 percent increase over 2019, according to the report by Rare Whisky 101. The secondary market recorded \$79.6 million in sales that year. If you're wondering why the consultancy firm compared 2021 numbers to those from 2019, it's because the rare whisky market, like so many others trading physical goods, was heavily affected by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. (Despite numerous disruptions, the rare whisky sold at auction brought in \$72.7 million last year, so it wasn't a complete write-off.)



Secondary market sales of rare whisky are up 30 percent compared to 2019 AP Images

Based on the first half of 2021, when nearly 85,000 bottles of single-malt Scotch were sold on the secondary market, Rare Whisky 101



projects that 172,500 will be sold by year's end. That would represent a 20 percent increase over the 143,895 bottles sold in 2019. Additionally, the per bottle price has risen to \$586 compared to \$536 in 2019 (and \$550 in 2020). Basically, whatever metric through which you choose to view the data, rare whisky sales are on the rise.

"In our view, the pandemic has shown us that physical assets, such as whisky, have become ever more popular," Rare Whisky 101 co-founder Andy Simpson said in a statement to *Barron's*. "When combined with a growing global consumer thirst for single malt, which shows no signs of slowing, we see no reason why prices will not continue to rise for the right bottles."

It's not just the rare whisky market that's ascendent right now. As *Robb Report* reported in March, the American Whiskey market is [also experiencing a boom of its own](#). Primary and secondary prices for whiskeys like George Dickel, Woodford Reserve and WhistlePig have hit new heights since 2020 turned over to 2021.

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## Kilchoman Distillery Offers Up Its 100% Islay 11th Edition Scotch

By [Hannah Kanik](#) / September 24, 2021

[Kilchoman Distillery](#) recently released its 100% Islay 11th Edition, noted for being an expression drawn from the farm distillery's own barley before malting, distilling, maturing and bottling of every bottle on site. The 100% Islay 11th Edition was distilled from 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011 barley harvests before being matured for a minimum of 9 years in 26 bourbon barrels and seven oloroso sherry butts. The combination of lightly peated barley matured in both bourbon and sherry casks creates an intense combination of floral sweetness, layers of rich fruity character and soft maritime peat smoke, the distillery said. Earlier editions of the 100% Islay range were typically matured in bourbon barrels. Now, the distillers have been experimenting with more sherry casks in the 8th and 10th editions, including seven and two sherry casks, respectively. This year's release has many similarities with the 8th edition, both having 40% sherry matured whisky in the vatting.



*Kilchoman 100% Islay 11th Edition (image via Kilchoman)*

The 8th edition, though, was a minimum of six years old, whilst the youngest whisky in the 11th edition is nine years old. This adds a huge amount of layered rich influence which balances with the lighter influence of the 26 bourbon barrels selected by head distillers. "Having tasted some excellent older sherry butts we quickly decided that they were at their peak, we then tried a few bourbon barrels of a similar age and the backbone of this edition came together very easily," said Anthony Wills, Kilchoman Founder & Managing Director, [in a prepared statement](#). "Our bourbon barrels and oloroso butts are incredibly consistent and this combination of roughly 40% sherry butts and 60% bourbon barrels works phenomenally with the style of whisky we produce. It allows both the citrus sweetness of our spirit and the rich fruity flavours of the casks to balance perfectly"

The 100% Islay 11th Edition is available around the world, bottled at 50% ABV.

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## GlenAllachie adds to Wood Finish range

28 SEPTEMBER 2021 By *Alice Brooker*

Speyside distillery GlenAllachie has added a third batch of whiskies to its Wood Finish range, produced by master distiller Billy Walker.



The three whiskies are available to buy from global specialist retailers. In April last year, GlenAllachie launched the second batch of the limited edition series of single malts, all finished in a variety of casks including Port, rye, and Sherry.

The distillery's latest batch release comprises 11-year-old Pedro Ximénez Wood Finish, 12-year-old Ruby Port Wood Finish and 13-year-old Madeira Wood Finish.

Walker, who celebrates his 50th year in the industry next year, said:

"From the very outset of my days at GlenAllachie, I aimed to build a deep-rooted understanding of the spirit and how it interfaces with different wood types. This knowledge has allowed for increasing levels of innovation as the months and years have passed.

"The third batch of Wood Finishes are a fantastic representation of this innovation. We are delighted with the three very special single malts we have created, each bringing its own unique flavour experience."

The three whiskies are non-chill-filtered and sit at 48% ABV.

The 11-year-old whisky was matured in American oak barrels for more than nine years, followed by an additional period of maturation in seasoned dessert-Sherry puncheons. This resulted in the expression boasting sweeter and fruitier flavours.

Meanwhile, the 12-year-old Ruby Port Wood Finish was matured for more than 10 years in American oak casks, then experienced a second maturation in pipe casks, which previously contained fortified Portuguese wine. The liquid has tasting notes of spicy ginger, damson jam and grape.

The 13-year-old was stored in American oak barrels, before being transferred into casks that previously held wine from Malvasia grapes. The resulting whisky presents infusions of juicy pineapple, sugared almonds and stone fruits.

The Wood Finish range is available from global specialist retailers. The 11-year-old retails for RRP £59.99 (US\$81.98); the 12-year-old for RRP £62.99 (US\$86.08); and the 13-year-old is available to buy for RRP £67.99 (US\$92.91).

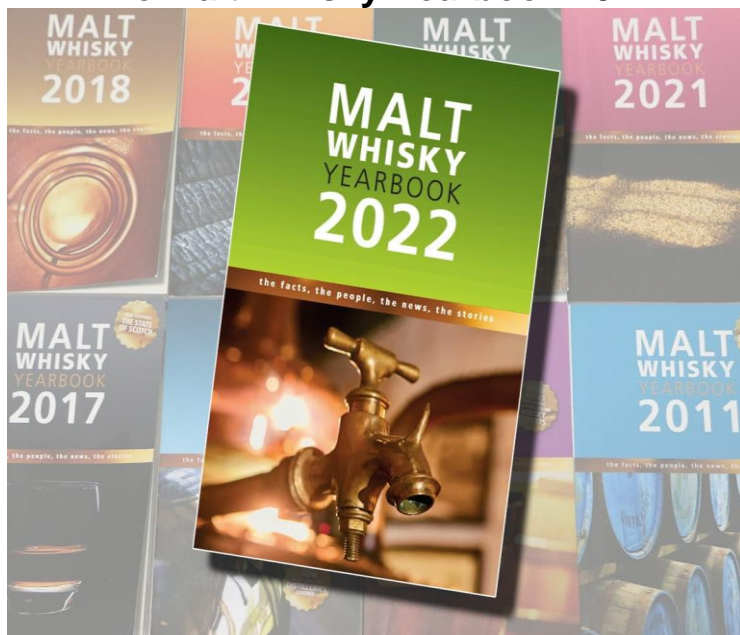
The distillery recently [added a cask strength, Sherry-finished 14-year-old single malt Scotch whisky](#) to its Wood Finish series.

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## The Malt Whisky Yearbook 2022



With the whisky industry being possibly the most dynamic it's ever been – for example, new distilleries being established; existing distilleries changing ownership; defunct distilleries being resurrected; distillery upgrades and refurbishments; new brands appearing; new releases and new expressions entering the market; personnel changing companies; etc, etc – it's a tough job trying to stay on top of every update and development. Fortunately for all of us, one man takes on the task each year and does all the research and reporting for us. For the avid whisky enthusiasts among us who want a one-stop-shop for all the latest data and information, there's really only one resource: Ingvar Ronde's "Malt Whisky Yearbook".

First published in 2005 by Swedish whisky enthusiast, Ingvar Ronde, and updated, refreshed, and released each year since, the Malt Whisky Yearbook has now become an invaluable resource for anyone wanting the short and fast facts about a distillery and its whiskies. Historical timelines; major releases; and the happenings of the previous twelve months are presented for each of the listed distilleries. However, the Yearbook is so much more than just a collection of facts and stats. Over the course of each annual publication, the book has grown and expanded to incorporate opinion pieces, profile pieces, industry assessments and reports, and it has also grown in its listings and information on malt whisky distilleries around the rest of the world. The 2022 edition of the Malt Whisky Yearbook has been further expanded on last year's edition and incorporates...

- Listings and updated details on 727 malt whisky distilleries from around the world.
- New and informative articles by well-known whisky writers including Charlie MacLean, Gavin D Smith, Ian Wisniewski, Neil Ridley, Joel Harrison, and Stefan van Eycken.
- Tasting notes for over 200 whiskies, including independent bottlings.
- A new feature where we meet the Trailblazers of Malt Whisky – those who pioneered malt whisky making in their respective countries.
- A listing of more than 150 of the world's greatest whisky shops (a handy resource for when we can freely travel to other countries again!)
- A fantastic review of "The whisky year that was" – a comprehensive summary of all the news and trends in the industry.
- An entire chapter about the world's leading independent bottlers.
- All the latest info on bottlings and web sites as well as the latest statistics and figures.
- More than 500 colour photos.



Ingvar Ronde, hard at work visiting distilleries to establish the latest changes and developments.

It's more than just a good resource; it's an entertaining read that is well written and presents itself with far greater personality than a mere factsheet. Whisky and Wisdom endorses and commends the Malt Whisky Yearbook to any whisky enthusiast who wants to deepen their knowledge of whisky and their connection with the industry. So how do you get yourself a copy? It's available through [www.maltwhiskyyearbook.com](http://www.maltwhiskyyearbook.com) for £14.95 plus shipping. Cheers, AD

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## Legendary Laphroaig Distillery Manager John Campbell To Move On

By [Nino Kilgore-Marchetti](#) / September 27, 2021

[Laphroaig](#) is one of the more popular Scotch single malt whisky brands out there, and much of that has to do with the distillery management of John Campbell. [This legendary distillery manager](#) has been with the brand for 27 years, with nearly 16 of those in his current role. Now he is set to move on, with plans to "take up a new challenge at an independent distillery company" come mid-November. More on Campbell's move from an email letter put out to the Laphroaig faithful today:



John Campbell of Laphroaig (image via Laphroaig)

Dear Friends,

I am writing today because I wanted you to be the first to know that, after much thought, I have decided that the time has come for me to step down as Laphroaig's Distillery Manager. For a long time, I've been travelling between Islay and the mainland to be with my family. Especially after the last two years we've all experienced, I've decided to make a permanent move to be closer to them and to take up a new challenge at an independent distillery company, so I will be relocating from Islay in mid-November.

As you can imagine, this was not an easy decision for me. I have been at Laphroaig for more than a quarter century, and I'm proud to have been the longest-serving Distillery Manager in its history. Following in the footsteps of legends like Ian Hunter and Bessie Williamson has been the privilege of my life.

More than anything, I would like to thank the Friends of Laphroaig for all your support throughout my 27 years at Laphroaig and my nearly 16 years as Distillery Manager.

It's support that comes in all sorts of forms – from helping me grow the visitor experience at the distillery, supporting the creation of core whiskies in our range, sharing your ideas on what would make good Cairdeas bottlings, always being honest about how you would like Laphroaig to be. Over the years, we have created a Laphroaig tartan, celebrated together at our bicentennial events all around the world, sung with the Laphroaig choir, met on Islay at Feis, and throughout the year, and best of all, we've shared many drams of Laphroaig together. Laphroaig is an amazing whisky and brand that has and will continue to be part of my life, just as Islay will. I will always remain a Friend of Laphroaig myself and will continue to come back to visit my plot and collect some rent.

I am also sure that thanks to your passion and loyalty, Laphroaig will remain the most renowned and beloved peated single malt on the planet and will continue to go from strength to strength. Over the next two months, I'll be working closely with our expert Distillery team to hand over the reins and a new Distillery Manager will be announced in due course. I know you will welcome them with open arms, as you welcomed me.

It's an honour to call myself a Friend, and I wish all of you the very best.

## Context, Education Is Everything When It Comes To Whisky Investment

By [Guest Post](#) / September 29, 2021

*Editor's Note: This guest post comes to us courtesy of Mark Littler, a specialist rare whisky broker based in the UK. His recently released 80-page guide to investing in rare bottles of whisky is available to [download for free here](#).*

With headlines proclaiming that the rare whisky market is forecast to have another record-breaking year, it is easy to see why more people are being drawn to whisky investment. Historic performance shows whisky bottles are both a profitable and resilient investment. Plus, ever-growing databases of bottle prices allows buyers to research and understand the market and what they should pay.

But while trends on databases and headline reports inject confidence to old and new collectors alike, what they do not offer is context. This lack of context, alongside limited education resources for bottle investors, may be partly what is driving the current boom. In turn a lack of comprehension of the market as a whole can cause potentially dangerous bubbles around specific bottles.

Market bubbles are an inevitable result of the rapidly increasing number of collectors and investors coming to the market and competing for the same finite supply of bottles. An unbalance between supply and demand can cause prices to rise. However, when the market is heavily overbalanced, prices may rise beyond what their fundamental value is. Historically this is often followed by a drop as the market corrects itself. Indeed, there are bottles on the market at present that are reminiscent of historic market corrections, such as the one following 'Tulip Mania' of the 17th century.



*The Macallan Lique Genesis Decanter 72 Year Old (image via Sotheby's)*

Modern versus classic

For specific examples let's look at a few bottles of Macallan, firstly, two no age statement (NAS) bottles. Macallan Private Eye launched as a limited edition of 5000 bottles in 1996 for £36 and records show it has been sold less than 500 times since 2004 (when our records begin). Macallan Archival Series Folio 1, launched in 2015 for £199 as a limited edition of 2000, and has sold more than 700 times at auction. Therefore, despite initial edition numbers, Private Eye is rarer than the Folio 1 on the secondary market.

However, the current market seems to favor the more common, modern Folio 1 over Private Eye. Since its release in 2015 Folio 1 has seen growth of almost 4,000% hitting an average of £7,750 in the first of 2021. Private Eye has only seen 315% growth since 2015 and commanded an average price of £4,470 in the first half of 2021. For further context let's look at a vintage, high age statement Macallan from a renowned collectors series; the Macallan 1957 25 Year Old Anniversary Malt. This was the first of the Anniversary Malt series and not only does it contain very high quality whisky (93 points on Whisky Fun) it is also scarcer than both the Folio 1 and Private Eye, having only been sold around 100 times. Despite this, in the first half of 2021 the average price for the 1957 was only £4,300; lower than both the NAS bottles discussed above.

While these examples are looking at just three bottles, they highlight the irregularities of the current market, where modern, relatively common, bottles are now growing faster in value than older, rarer, bottles.

Caution Advised

The performance of the market over the past few years should be viewed with caution as the data can be used to suggest that almost any modern release can be bought and sold for a profit. However, bottles such as the Folio series rise in value due to very specific reasons that cannot be applied to bottles across the market. In addition, the rapid rise of relatively common modern bottles can only happen in an overconfident, buyer heavy, and arguably uneducated, market where there remain 'greater fools' to pay even more for the investment.

Macallan Folio 1 is not as rare as Private Eye, nor does it carry a high age statement like the 1957 Anniversary Malt, so what does it have that these two legendary bottles do not? Despite the impressive performance to date, it is the lack of convincing answer to this question



that leaves us worrying about the viability of modern bottles such as the Folio 1 as an investment over the long term. While whisky bottle investment has historically been a profitable endeavour, we urge that investors arm themselves with as much understanding of the wider market as they can. Pricing relativity and context are more important than ever in such a bull market, which is showing no signs of relenting. As Benjamin Franklin once said “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest”.

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## Glen Moray expands Warehouse 1 line

04 OCTOBER 2021 By Nicola Carruthers

Speyside distillery Glen Moray has unveiled a UK-exclusive whisky finished in ex-Barolo wine casks as the latest addition to its Warehouse 1 Collection.



The new Glen Moray 1998 Barolo Finish single malt is described as ‘autumn in a glass’

Glen Moray’s Warehouse 1 Collection is named after the Elgin-based producer’s Warehouse 1, which is home to ‘innovative’, maturing casks.

Glen Moray Warehouse 1 1998 Barolo Finish is the third bottling in the range, following the release of a [Tokaji cask-finished whisky](#) in June 2021 and a single malt [matured in Sauternes wine casks](#) in November 2020.

Distilled in 1998, the new expression is the collection’s oldest to date. It was matured in ex-Bourbon casks before being moved to three casks that previously held Barolo wine for at least 18 months. Barolo is produced in the Piedmont region in Italy from Nebbiolo grapes, which are high in tannins and acid.

The resulting single malt is described as ‘autumn in a glass’, with notes of toffee, blackcurrant, wood, leather chocolate caramel and dark autumnal fruits, followed by a ‘warming honey finish’.

Glen Moray distillery manager Iain Allan said: “Once again, our distillery team has bottled an absolute gem from Warehouse 1, their special place for experimentation, innovation and patience – time, as always, being one of the most important ingredients in creating our wonderful whiskies.

“Our team searches the world for interesting and unusual casks, and they’re not afraid to use them to push the boundaries of flavour, as they have done with this very special 1998 Barolo Finish release.

“It’s a joy of a dram, a superb combination of our distillery’s sweet, light, citrus style with deeper notes of wood, caramel chocolates, plums, figs, brambles and honey.”

There are only 863 bottles of the whisky, available exclusively in the UK.

The non-chill-filtered Glen Moray Warehouse 1 1998 Barolo Finish is bottled at cask strength (52.9% ABV). It is available from specialist whisky shops for RRP £139.95 (US\$190) per 700ml bottle.

An additional Warehouse 1 Collection whisky is planned to be released before the end of this year.

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## Big Peat 2021 Christmas Limited Edition

Unveiled At 105.6 Proof

By [Gary Carter](#) / October 1, 2021

[Douglas Laing & Co.](#), one of Scotland’s more well known independent bottlers, recently unveiled Big Peat Christmas, the annual special holiday bottling within [their Islay Malt Scotch Whisky brand](#).

This year’s offering comes in at a natural cask strength of 105.6 proof, and the distiller’s tasting notes find the festive release to be “packed with earthy, leathery, ashy charm, balanced by a warming sweetness.” The limited edition launch rounds off a year that has seen Big Peat take home a Gold Award at the San Francisco World Spirits Awards and the Master Medal at the Spirits Business Awards.



Big Peat’s Christmas 2021 Cask Strength Limited Edition (image via Douglas Laing & Co)

Packaged in an icy-blue gift tube with gloss-varnished snowflakes, Big Peat’s Christmas gift tube carries a bespoke illustration depicting the bearded fisherman riding a sleigh on his island home of Islay. The candy-striped, red and white bottle completes the festive release.

Fred Laing, chairman of his family’s firm, said in a prepared statement, “Our family business is truly grateful and pleased to know that our Big Peat Christmas bottling has become something of an annual ritual for other Islay whisky-loving families all over the world. It is so heartwarming to receive messages from keen consumers for whom opening that special bottle of Big Peat Christmas marks the beginning of the festivities with friends and family.”

Big Peat Christmas 2021 is now available from specialist Scotch Whisky retailers in global markets including Europe, North America and Asia.

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## Lochlea Distillery reveals inaugural single malt

06 OCTOBER 2021 By Nicola Carruthers

Lowland distillery Lochlea, located on the site of the former home of Scottish poet Robert Burns, will release its first single malt whisky next month.



The first single malt from Lochlea Distillery will be launched in early November

The Ayrshire-based producer will launch Lochlea Single Malt First Release in early November.

The UK will receive half of the first batch of 7,000 bottles produced, with the rest being distributed across 10 other markets in Europe and North America.

Bottled at 46% ABV, the single malt whisky was matured in first-fill Bourbon and PX Sherry casks. It is priced at RRP £50 (US\$68) per 700ml bottle.

The non-chill-filtered expression is bottled at natural colour. The design of the bottle features tyre tracks inspired by those seen around the distillery. The single malt was produced under the guidance of distillery manager Malcolm Rennie, who has 34 years of experience in the whisky industry. He previously worked at Kilchoman, Bruichladdich and Ardbeg. Lochlea Distillery's commercial manager, David Ferguson, said: "We've been quietly distilling, casking and maturing our liquid since 2018, and this is the first chance people will have to try Lochlea whisky. We cannot wait to see it opened, shared and enjoyed."

"A great deal of time, perseverance and attention to detail has gone into this first release to ensure it is as authentic to Lochlea as possible – nothing added and nothing taken away."

"This whisky will showcase the DNA of our Lochlea spirit, with a slight twist, ensuring it is different to our core expression which is set to be released in early 2022."

The Lowland distillery is the result of a £6 million (US\$8.1m) investment, with plans for the site [approved in 2015](#). Production of the whisky started in August 2018.

Lochlea Farm was previously the home of Burns from 1774 to 1784.

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## Diageo Special Releases 2021: Legends Untold

30 SEPTEMBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

Leading spirits producer Diageo has revealed the single malts selected for this year's Special Releases collection, called Legends Untold.



Diageo's Special Releases 2021 includes a 26-year-old Lagavulin bottling

The Special Releases collection will be available this autumn from specialist retailers across Europe, the US, Canada, Australia, select markets in Asia and global travel retail.

In a first for the annual series, the bottles will feature heavily detailed illustrations and design work from digital illustrator Ken Taylor.

The 'legends' of each whisky can be activated via on-pack QR codes, beginning with a narration of the single malts' tale. Whisky fans will then be guided through a 'mixed reality' tasting experience.

Dr Craig Wilson, master blender, said: "We have delved into the core characteristics of several classic distilleries, exploring the elements and reimagining the liquids for the Legends Untold collection."

"The mythical creatures of this year's collection represent the true expressions of the distilleries."

"Taking inspiration from them, we have revealed new depths of flavour and embraced the essence of each of the whiskies' unique flavour profiles revealing the legend it brings to life. This year's collection is just the very beginning of the story."

The Legends Untold whiskies are:

Mortlach 13 Years Old



ABV: 55.9%

Region: Speyside

Cask: Virgin and refill American oak casks

Bottles available: Limited quantities

RRP: £135 (US\$181)



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### Singleton of Glendullan 19 Years Old



ABV: 54.6%

Region: Speyside

Cask: Refill American oak casks, finished in Cognac casks

Bottles available: Limited quantities

RRP: £140 (US\$188)

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### Talisker 8 Years Old



ABV: 59.7%

Region: Island/ Isle of Skye

Cask: Heavily peated refill casks

Bottles available: Limited quantities

RRP: £90 (US\$121)

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### Lagavulin 26 Years Old



ABV: 44.2%

Region: Islay

Cask: PX/oloroso-seasoned first-fill casks

Bottles available: 7,542

RRP: £1,650 (US\$2,217)

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### Lagavulin 12 Years Old



ABV: 56.5% ABV

Region: Islay

Cask: Refill American oak casks

Bottles available: Limited quantities

RRP: £130 (US\$175)

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### Cardhu 14 Years Old



ABV: 55.5%

Region: Speyside

Casks: Refill American oak casks, finished in red wine casks

Bottles available: Limited quantities

RRP: £120 (US\$161)

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### Oban 12 Years Old



ABV: 56.2%

Region: Coastal Highland  
 Cask: Freshly charred American oak casks  
 Bottles available: Limited quantities  
 RRP: £105 (US\$141)

Royal Lochnagar 16 Years Old



ABV: 57.5%

Region: Highland  
 Cask: American oak and European oak refill casks  
 Bottles available: Limited quantities  
 RRP: £200 (US\$269)

## Diageo Special Releases 2021

GRAHAM SEPTEMBER 30, 2021



In the history of Malt we have often accepted samples from various suppliers. These have ranged from full bottles such as from Ukrainian [Scyfion](#) to more regular press samples such as the [Glencadam sets](#). Being offered samples is incredibly useful for us reviewers, as it allows us to pass on experiences beyond our own spending choices, be that on full bottles or whisky tasting events. I often make conservative rather than risky choices when buying full bottles and end up sticking largely to familiar distilleries, much to my personal frustration at times. Without samples we would not have been able to bring you the wonderfully eccentric world of Eastern European wines and wine cask finishing from Scyfion. Press samples come with no expectations, no requirements, no proof of engagement in the way that paid collaborations on social media do. We don't commit to review them at all. And we certainly don't feel obliged to give them a good score. That's the independence that Malt is renowned for.

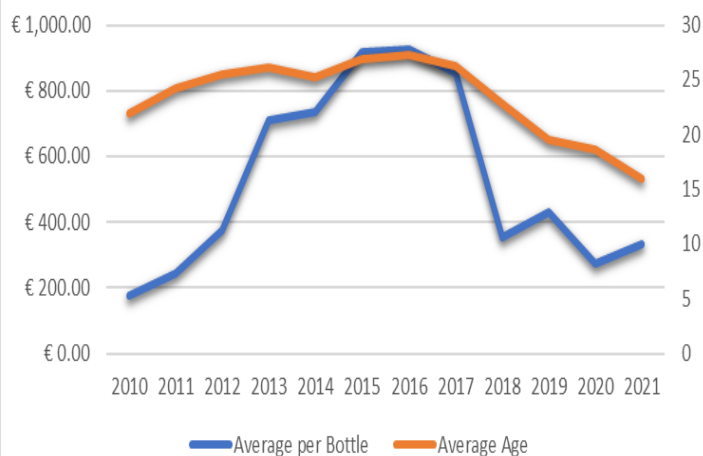
I was offered a tasting pack from the Diageo 2021 Special Releases. This range represents a selection of whiskies that never enticed me enough to make a purchase. The launch is usually a very glitzy affair with the great and the good amassed to experience the releases that Diageo feel are extra special from the distilleries within their portfolio. Mark attended the [2016 event](#) and gave a flavour of the pre-covid glamour. Mark also gives a good review of the background to the range. In summary, it was historically quite an event, not least due to the rare release of old Port Ellen and Brora from the Diageo stocks. Interestingly, the 38-year-old Brora released in 2016 would have set you back £1,450 but can still be found on collectable sites for about £800 extra. The 40-year-old released out with the Special Releases range in 2019 can be picked up for £4,500, a whopping £3,000 extra for just 2 more years in the cask.

The status whiskies from the closed distilleries have been dropped from the Special Releases since 2017. The trend has also seen, on average, younger whiskies making their way into the range over the last five or six years. In 2021, the only whisky over 20 years is Lagavulin, whereas in 2015 only Caol Ila (17 years old) and Lagavulin (12 years old) were below 20 years old. The Clynelish in 2015 was a NAS, but prices would suggest its components were mostly older than 20 years.

In reality – for most whisky drinkers – it is not the well-aged collectible or investable whiskies that deliver excitement about the annual release, but the mid-range age statements from familiar workhorses. Even for the likes of Talisker, the price can [deaden the palate](#) to an extent, and has been a factor in scoring previous releases such as [Talisker 2019](#) and [Lagavulin & Talisker in 2020](#);

Malt is all about value and I thought I'd do a bit of number crunching. I wanted to explore the relationship between the "specialness" of the annual outturns and the prices charged. I don't think we can aggregate sufficient reviews to give any meaningful indication of quality but – using age as a variable – can give us an overall picture or rarity and desirability. Looking at the graph below, we can see the massive price hikes between 2010 and 2017. These were driven ever skyward by the inclusion of the rare, closed distilleries of Rosebank, Port Ellen, Brora and the like, which account for the majority of the cost in each release.

## Average Release Age vs Average Bottle Price Diageo Special Releases 2010 - 2021





Perhaps more noticeable is the abrupt change in direction in 2017, after which no further rare malts were included in the Special Releases. Diageo manoeuvred these into an ultra-premium range of decades-old one-offs, the “Prime and Ultima.” This comprised sets retailing for more than £20,000 in the UK. What we can also see from the graph is that the ages are dropping off, and the resulting prices have dropped a lot too. However, in 2021 you are certainly paying more for less; that may be largely driven by the extreme price for the Lagavulin 26 year old. I think that – no matter the general usefulness of the chart – it does indicate that the range peaked in 2017 and is on a steep decline. Since 2018 the labels have become more flamboyant. 2021 sees mythical beasts in the “Legends Untold” theme, which has an air of Game of Thrones about it. The success of the Game of Thrones series in attracting non-whisky drinkers was not lost on Diageo. The Special Releases were themed “Rare by Nature” with all sorts of animals in 2019 and 2020. It all seems like an exercise in distraction to me.



More positively, the availability of these whiskies is good, with 3,000 to 5,000 bottles being the average outturn per distillery previously. This year there is over 7,500 of the most exclusive Lagavulin 26, and I assume significantly more of the undisclosed “limited quantities world wide” of this year’s release.

Despite the fanfare, the range does not sell out that quickly and many bottles can still be found on the shelves of large retailers from 2017 through to 2020. Some 2018 bottles are still available in Diageo’s own [online shop](#). Perhaps that is in part due to the “special” prices that the Special Releases also command; these are perhaps roughly 20% to 25% above similar whiskies in the core range. That does make the range relatively un-flipped. Each year word gets around the whisky community quickly relating to the ones that are good the ones to avoid. Word of mouth, therefore, can still drive the sales.

Often, with any whisky outturn, early voices of opinion differ significantly from those reviews that come out after a little time. This feels as though the initial views are driven by the neck-pour or a particular bottle, whereas the later reviews have had a bit more time and air to open-up.

Let’s also mention the packaging on the press pack, which is extremely over the top, but probably equally extremely low key compared to previous in-person launches. This pack represents the opposite of a blind tasting; this is sensory pre-conditioning to a tasting and comes with an immersive web-experience for each release which I skipped. When the box arrived, it would be an understatement to say I was quite taken aback.

Let me tell you how concerned I was that the packaging would influence my opinions: I called Malt’s editor to make sure a review

would be acceptable, and then I drove a 140 mile round trip to drop off the second half of these samples to my friend George aka [WhiskyDodie](#). George tasted the samples blind and wrote his tasting notes before I revealed the contents of each bottle; to say he was a bit taken aback at the reveal is also an understatement! Whatever the result, please don’t say Malt doesn’t go above and beyond to bring you impartial reviews! Never underestimate the influence of the environment within which the tasting occurs. This is something to reflect on with this review and indeed as you encounter other reviews that pop up on any given day that a press embargo ends.



As part of the PR launch, I had a quick chat with Ewan Gunn, Senior Global Brand Ambassador, Diageo Scotch Whiskies. It was a one-to-one, so I was comfortable asking some of the pertinent and challenging questions to him:

Malt: What drove the cask selection this year? It seems more naked.

Ewan: The collection was developed by Dr. Craig Wilson, who also blended the two Rare by Nature releases in 2019 and 2020. We are, as a business, aiming to focus on and present distillery character generally, and that is certainly the case with this release.

Malt: Is that driven by cask availability; higher volume but less good casks?

Ewan: Not at all, we do aim to be very judicious with wood. We are probably ahead of the curve in wood management having our own bodega to manage and season casks. We are very refined at getting the right amount of seasoning including using bespoke blends of sherries to give character and getting just the right amount of penetration of the fortified wines into the wood.

Malt: Since repositioning the closed distilleries in the ultra-premium range the Special Releases have become somewhat younger and perhaps a little less anticipated. Is the range running out of steam?

Ewan: Well, I certainly don’t agree that the range is running out of steam. It has evolved certainly; Dr. Craig Wilson has created more of a coherent collection of whiskies than the Rare Malts or previous Special Releases were. That has been reflected in the packaging and experience to bring these bottles together into a single collection. We certainly expect people will buy the complete set, but acknowledge that not everyone can afford that. The average age has declined, but age alone cannot be a measure of how special a whisky is. Pricing is still a focus, and sometimes the range will evolve to ensure that prices are accessible. We want the range to attract new whisky drinkers and please existing ones. The stocks of the closed distilleries and the market price were such that it was unsustainable to keep them within the Special Releases going forward.

So, do this year’s releases offer a glimmer of hope for the range? Let’s find out.





#### Oban 12 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review

*From freshly charred American oak casks. 56.2% ABV. £105.*

Graham's notes:

Colour: Pale gold.

On the nose: Grassy and herbal, light butter toffee, vanilla, meringue, sugary and sweet, no char detectable on the nose.

In the mouth: Bang, super fruity and rich, pick'n'mix jellies, fizzy sour sweets, M&S Colin Caterpillars, getting more complex on the finish with oak spices, a hint of charr, blood orange and a pinch of salt on the extra-long finish.

Conclusions:

I'd say this has a lot going on, best taste profile too. Plus, it's pretty hard to get Oban at cask strength sadly. At the distillery the bottle-your-own is only 20cl, and many whisky enthusiasts have gone right back for a second bottle of that having tasted it. This will be very popular.

Score: 8/10

George's blind notes:

On the nose: Apple concentrate, Turkish delight icing sugar left over in one of those travel container tins, agave syrup, grassy notes, with hints freshly boiled condensed milk

In the mouth: bang straight away very sweet, where's my teeth enamel gone? vanilla, lemon posset, hints of rose hip tea, tinned grapefruit, a hindrance of wood and the remnants of single cream added to fruit cocktail syrup. On the finish, Short, oak, sweet, then very drying in the mouth

Conclusions:

Oh man, seems light this has been heavily influenced by a white wine cask and it seems like a very fresh and young Chablis that your friend bought you as they don't like spending more than a fiver at LIDL.

Score: 5/10



#### Cardhu 14 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review

*Refill American oak finished in red wine casks. 55.5% ABV. £120.*

Graham's notes:

Colour: Pale gold, without even a slight red wine tinge.

On the nose: Rounded and approachable, bruised red apples, wholemeal bread dough, cheap vanilla fudge, caramelised sugars, strawberry boiled sweets, crushed raspberries, baking spices, sugar donuts with more red fruits with water.

In the mouth: Very, very flat, slow delivery, a flash of artificial strawberry before peppery jalepeno spice and a bitter finish. Water brings out a lot more simple red fruits lifting the overall experience. Water a must.

Conclusions:

Well, probably the only place you'll encounter Cardhu at these higher strengths is in the special releases, as all core expressions are 40%. Last year's expression is still widely available. I'm a bit over red wine with all the young STR whisky around these days. Not bad but not special.

Score: 5/10

George's blind notes:

On the nose: Unripe flat peaches, barley syrup, coconut water.

In the mouth: Cinder toffee stored from one of those market stalls slightly not at its best, sour lychees, black Gaeta olives, Midori melon liqueur, Apple Sourz™. Very short finish, dry, oak tannins.

Conclusions:

This seems again influenced by a white wine cask.

Score: 4/10



#### Royal Lochnagar 16 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review

*Refill casks. 57.5% ABV. £200.*

Graham's notes:

Colour: Rich gold.

On the nose: Sweet and rich, unbaked biscuit dough, ground ginger, allspice, icing sugar, dusty plasterboard, pre-mixed filler, window putty with water and time it gets richer and more distinguished.

In the mouth: Medium bodied, smooth, just enough oak, sweetness builds but the finish on this dram is the key here fruity bright, rich effervescence dancing across the tongue. Something eternal that I can't pin down that makes this quite alluring. Delicious.

Conclusions:

The Royal Lochnagar 12 at 40% is an oft-overlooked dram that is remarkably tasty. Beyond that, the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary NAS gave a full strength hit but – at £250 – sat on the shelf for a long time. Other releases of Lochnagar include a charity auction release where bottles all fetched North of £350 plus fees, but this release was 26 years old. This presentation of Lochnagar is certainly rare. More importantly, it has an alluring quality and fantastic finish.

Score: 7/10

George's blind notes:

On the nose: Wafts of warm cut hay on a damp day, honey dew melon, gorse bush in full bloom.

In the mouth: Plum frangipani: boom. Then directly sharp, some hints of red peaches and raspberries. Finishes short again, light oak tannins, with an after taste of freshly cut tobacco leaves.

Score: 5/10





**Glendullan 19 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review**  
**Refill American oak and a cognac cask finish. 57.5% ABV. £140.**  
**Graham's notes:**

**Colour:** 18 carat gold.

**On the nose:** Cognac and brandy, minerality, a little gravitas, freshly painted walls, oak spices, coffee house, granite.

**In the mouth:** Cognac smoothness; this spirit is so light, it has so little presence that the cognac and French oak have overwhelmed it. Only a slight hint of fruity malt and fresh Kingsmill White bread.

**Conclusions:**

There is quite a bit of Glendullan available from independent bottlers from the Single Cask to That Boutique-y Whisky Company and James Eadie all keenly priced. As per my recent [Cognac Cask Review](#) the balance between the cask and the whisky is a delicate one. This perhaps falls too far to the cask, with the overall saving grace being that cognac is unlikely to impart anything unpleasant, just overpower. Not bad but not special.

**Score:** 5/10

**George's blind notes:**

**On the nose:** Dark strawberries over ripened and goeey, nail varnish, and black fruit strudel.

**In the mouth:** Black forest fruits, Candere!™ sugar, burnt toffee praline, zabaglione pudding, hints of aged oak and liquorice. Finishes sweet at first, tingling to a sourness just like hitting one of those Wham bar sherbet bits. not that enjoyable

**Score:** 5/10



**Mortlach 13 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review**  
**Refill and virgin oak. 55.9% ABV. £135.**  
**Graham's notes:**

**Colour:** Pale gold.

**On the nose:** Spray furniture polish, buttery toffee sauce, bright and herbal, spiced bread sauce, Sello tape, with time grassier and more herbal with hints of fruitiness.

**In the mouth:** Mortlach body, salt'n'pepper fatty pork belly, cayenne, black peppercorns, savoury with sweetness from a trendy ketchup.

Roasted pineapples and rapeseed oil. Finish is short, with cask spices lingering longest, a bit dry and chalky

**Conclusions:**

We are commonly presented Mortlach in sherry casks, which works great with the full-bodied and meaty profile that is loved by so many. This presentation is strange in that I think it will split the Mortlach core fans, some of whom will no doubt miss the sherry and sweetness whilst the others will appreciate the rare naked presentation. A very interesting dram, but I'm not sure I'd want a whole bottle.

**Score:** 6/10

**George's blind notes:**

**On the nose:** Woody, aged teak oil from a harboured boat, black grapes and dewberries.

**In the mouth:** Baked apple and black currant crumble, melamine polish, and subtly tannic. Drying, tannic finish, with a light wood influence and black tea.

**Score:** 5/10



**Lagavulin 26 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review**  
**Pedro Ximenez and Seasoned Oloroso Casks. 44.2% ABV. £1,650\***  
**Graham's notes:**

**Colour:** Copper.

**On the nose:** Restrained smoky peat that speaks of refined age, a sweet backbone that is not too distinctly sherry. Classic leather armchair in a cigar lounge, wood lined drawing rooms, but a brightness too. Very inviting. With time TCP and first aid kits, and rubber bumpers from Inverness

**In the mouth:** Peat smoke, quite a light body, rich toffee, vanilla, a little fruit, the peat is the star hear and it's a real vintage character that speaks to age well beyond 26 years. Herbal smoke, with cough medicine, tiger balm, and TCP emerge along with crushed limestone.

**Conclusions:**

This has a great character that reminds me of 1960's and 1970's blended whisky, especially Logan Deluxe that contained a healthy proportion of Lagavulin. The peat seems older than 26 and perhaps some very old casks that dropped below 40% have been used as top-dressing for this release. A distillery with a cult following. This expression is a great experience, but I think some would be hoping for more sherry given the declared cask make-up. Clearly a point has been deducted for this dram which appears to be £1,000 a bottle overpriced, lucky to be only a single point reduction really.

**Score:** 6/10

\*I challenged Ewan on the price of this release. He acknowledged the high price but felt that it was reasonable and reflected the available stock of Lagavulin at this kind of age. Just 7,500 bottles will be spread around the world, and some markets will only get a few bottles. Ewan also thought it was unlikely that there was any whisky much older than 26 years old but was going to check. Unfortunately we could not confirm this for Malt readers before the editing deadline.

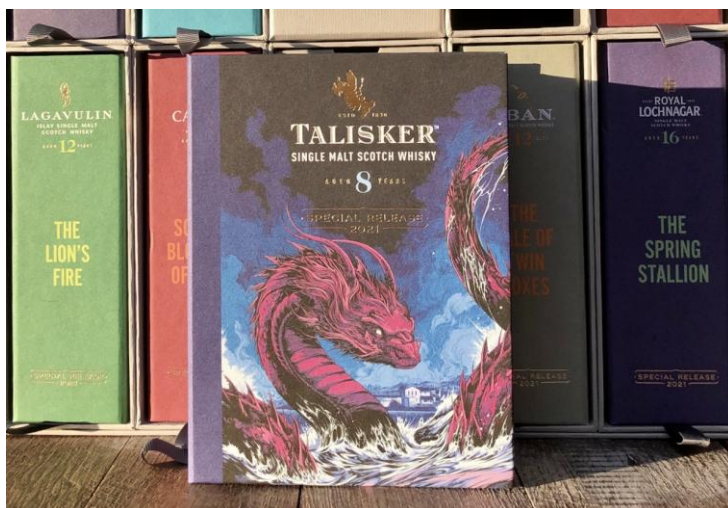
**George's blind notes:**

**On the nose:** Spent pipe tobacco, hints of dill, pontefact cakes.

**In the mouth:** Wooooaaahhhhhh man its a watered down ashtray, hints of darker fruits plums and elderberries, the ashen notes take over again followed by hints of leather polish. Finishes very ashen again, drying, then a subtle sweetness the teeters at this medium finish.

**Score:** 4/10





### Talisker 8 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review

Heavily peated spirit in refill casks\*. 59.7% ABV. £90.

Graham's notes:

Colour: Very pale gold.

On the nose: Custardy malt, the peat, which drops off to leave much more freshly homemade custard, unripe pears, white grapes, Staoisha anyone?

In the mouth: Uncomplicated, juicy sweetness, then another wave of thick rich peat which is more herbal and organic than smoky, brine and a touch of orchard fruits.

Conclusions:

Unusual for Talisker, which is renowned for a more delicate and refined approach to peat. It's an uncomplicated crowd pleaser and very refreshing to see honest presentation of whisky. Whilst I can see this being very popular, I can't help but think you'd be just as well buying indie bottles of Bunnahabhain Staoisha for less than £50.

Score: 5/10

\*Ewan explained that these are refill Talisker casks refilled with Talisker spirit, however the casks that displayed the heaviest peat character were selected from the parcel for this release. So, I assumed these are the least active in taming the peaty spirit.

George's blind notes:

On the nose: Peat, there a fresher green fruit nose, youthful yellow apples, but weirdly some exotic fruits, dragon fruit so not too sweet, hints of banana custard, maybe some vegetal notes too.

In the mouth: Angostura bitters, sour limes, its punchy, some salinity, its metallic (yeah like liking a copper pipe – I'm a plumber), also a little filthiness like some machine oils. Finishes long, it's ashy like burning embers, it's still a bit briny and salty with that metallic taste.

Conclusions:

It reminds me of Kilkeran Heavily Peated.

Score: 6/10



### Lagavulin 12 Years Old 2021 Special Release – Review

Refill casks. 56.5% ABV. £130.

Graham's notes:

Colour: Very pale gold

On the nose: Peat with a heavy malty backbone, mezcal, unripe sour green apples, beach sand, crushed chalk, citrus peel.  
In the mouth: Full-bodied rich lemony peat and bready malt. Honest whisky. So good a full strength. A bit peppery, real autumnal bonfire on the finish. More orchard fruits and citrus with water but not improved overall.

Conclusions:

My preferred presentation of Lagavulin is not smothered in sherry. A stark naked Lagavulin that showcases the quality of the distillate. Cracking. I've half an eye on the Lagavulin 8 though which might be a suitable value alternative?

Score: 6/10

George's blind notes:

On the nose: Man, its medicinal, an iodine bandage, tobacco smoke, but there is a nice balance of fruit coming through pears, almost hints of rhubarb – I like it. Even tropical fruits like mango and pineapple.  
In the mouth: It's a more oily texture, some creaminess, there is a taste of roasted coffee grounds, not too much on the ashen front, there is a hint of chalkiness to it and hints of marshmallows  
On the medium finish it is tannic, charred with subtle wood and a fading fruitiness.

Conclusions:

It's got a bit of Campbelltown to it or it's a tame Laphroaig.

Score: 6/10

Overall Conclusions:

For me, the press pack is the product. Or, as an absolute minimum, it should be offered alongside full bottles. What makes this collection special is the ability to taste them side-by-side and appreciate these as a set. In 2010, a complete set would have set you back around €1,500, whereas in 2021 a set will cost you €3,000. Very few consumers will buy the set, and few of those that do will open them. We all deserve to be able to taste, compare, and contrast the different expressions presented in this set, rather than picking a single bottle to treat ourselves too. The tasting set would be a great gift; a real talking point, and a way to appreciate all of the effort that has gone into creating the random but visually pleasing theme could be appreciated at length. Let me say this: I do not wish the end of the Special Releases, but it feels like they are – to use Ewan's phrase – "evolving" away from what we have come to expect. Instead of slaying of the mythical beasts, I beseech Diageo to consider releasing circa 5,000 complete sets of miniatures in 2022 to compliment a slightly smaller outturn of full bottles. Doing so would make these expressions open to many, many more keen whisky drinkers and potentially new whisky enthusiasts too. One must look only at the success of whisky advent calendars to see there is a market for sets of tasting packs. With the Special Release, it could be Christmas in September.

Ewan Gunn revealed that a small but significant number of sets were sold by Diageo in 2020 on the company website, and he thought there may be a good chance that some sets may be available from this year's release too... so keep your eyes out if you want to treat yourself or another significant person in your life.

## Everything You Need to Know About the 2021 Diageo Special Releases

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021 | [DAVID FLEMING](#)





Fall is a time for whisky lovers, and among the highlights of the season are the [Diageo Special Releases](#)—the company's annual collection of limited, highly sought-after single malt whiskies. This year's edition was unveiled this morning.

Curated by Diageo master blender Craig Wilson once again, the collection includes the usual number of whiskies—eight in total. This year's picks are a 13 year old Mortlach, 19 year old Singleton of Glendullan, 16 year old Royal Lochnagar, 8 year old Talisker, 14 year old Cardhu, 12 year old Oban, and two expressions from Lagavulin—a 26 year old and a 12 year old, the Lagavulin 12 being a perennial member of the group.

In keeping with a trend of recent years, the releases include fewer ultra-aged (and thus ultra-priced) whiskies. This year's oldest and most expensive expression—and only real bank-breaker—is Lagavulin 26 year old at \$2,400. The pricing then drops to \$250 for Royal Lochnagar 16 year old, and the remaining six are pegged at below \$200. Compare that to [the 2017 collection](#), when five of the eight whiskies were older than 20 years—including a 52 year old Port Dundas (\$900), 37 year old Port Ellen (\$3,500), 34 year old Brora (\$1,700), 32 year old Convalmore (\$1,400), and 24 year old Blair Athol (\$460). Only three Special Releases in 2017 were priced below \$200.

This year's edition is named Legends Untold, and each bottle carries a QR code linking to what Diageo calls a “multi-sensory experience” of legends and tales from the distilleries in the collection. The whiskies will be available this fall at specialist retailers in Europe, the U.S.

Canada, Australia, selected Asian markets, and airport Travel Retail.

#### 2021 DIAGEO SPECIAL RELEASES



### Cardhu 14 year old

Style: Single malt scotch  
Origin: Scotland (Speyside)

Age: 14 year old

ABV: 55.5%

Price: \$150

Release: Autumn 2021

Availability: Limited

Cask type: Refill American oak casks, finished in red wine casks



### Lagavulin 26 year old

Style: Single malt scotch

Origin: Scotland (Islay)

Age: 26 year old

ABV: 44.2%

Price: \$2,400

Release: Autumn 2021

Availability: Limited (7,542 bottles)

Cask type: PX/Oloroso seasoned first-fill casks

### Lagavulin 12 year old



Style: Single malt scotch

Origin: Scotland (Islay)

Age: 12 year old

ABV: 56.5%

Price: \$150

Release: Autumn 2021

Availability: Limited

Cask type: Refill American oak casks



### **Mortlach 13 year old**

Style: Single malt scotch  
Origin: Scotland (Speyside)  
Age: 13 year old  
ABV: 55.9%  
Price: \$125

Release: Autumn 2021  
Availability: Limited

Cask type: Virgin and refill American oak casks



### **Royal Lochnagar 16 year old**

Style: Single malt scotch  
Origin: Scotland (Highlands)  
Age: 16 year old  
ABV: 57.5%  
Price: \$250

Release: Autumn 2021  
Availability: Limited

Cask type: American oak and European oak refill casks



### **Oban 12 year old**

Style: Single malt scotch  
Origin: Scotland (Highlands)  
ABV: 56.2%  
Price: \$115

Release: Autumn 2021  
Availability: Limited

Cask type: Freshly charred American oak casks



### **Singleton of Glendullan 19 year old**

Style: Single malt scotch  
Origin: Scotland (Speyside)  
Age: 19 year old  
ABV: 54.6%  
Price: \$175

Release: Autumn 2021  
Availability: Limited

Cask type: Refill American oak casks, finished in cognac casks





### Talisker 8 year old

Style: Single malt scotch

Origin: Scotland (Skye)

Age: 8 year old

ABV: 59.7%

Price: \$115

Release: Autumn 2021

Availability: Limited

Cask type: Heavily peated refill casks

### Dalmore launches Port-finished 30YO

05 OCTOBER 2021 By Alice Brooker

Whyte & Mackay has released The Dalmore 30 Year Old 2021 Edition, the first bottling in a new annual series.



Only 1,318 bottles of The Dalmore 30 Year Old are available

The new series celebrates the longstanding partnership between The Dalmore and Douro-based Port producer Graham's, with the Highland distillery's whisky makers receiving access to rare Graham's casks. This first release, a 30-year-old single malt, was aged in American white oak ex-Bourbon casks before being finished in Graham's 30 Year Old Tawny Port pipes.

Whisky maker Gregg Glass said: "This new annual release, although instantly collectable, is intended for whisky fans seeking the finest Scotch whisky to enjoy every year, and we're proud that it is a celebration of our longstanding relationship with Graham's Port." Only 1,318 bottles of the expression have been made available.

"The Dalmore 30 Year Old 2021 Edition is the result of our shared patience and dedication to craftsmanship over more than 180 years, creating an exceptional single malt which is divinely decadent with every drop," Glass added.

On the nose, the single malt presents sweet aromas of freshly baked brioche and candied orange, opening up to a palate of black forest fruits derived from the Port pipes. The finish gives way to aromas of vanilla pod, Napoleon cake and shaved almonds.

Charles Symington, head winemaker for Graham's, said: "It's wonderful to see this series come to life with the launch of The Dalmore 30 Year Old.

"Our rare 30 Year Old Tawny Port is an exceptional liquid that we are tremendously proud of and its complex palate works beautifully with The Dalmore's whisky to create something truly special."

The bottling comes in a framed case. Sitting at an ABV of 42.8%, The Dalmore 30 Year Old 2021 Edition is available exclusively from Harrods in the UK for RRP £4,500 (US\$6,126).

### The Travel Retail Masters 2021 results

05 OCTOBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

With the travel industry making tentative steps back to some semblance of normality, spirits brands are ramping up their travel retail offerings. Melita Kiely highlights the expressions you should be putting in your hand luggage.



Traveller numbers are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023

There is no denying it – travel is slowly, but surely, returning. Over the past few months, social media feeds have been awash with holiday snaps, plane photos documenting the inaugural post-pandemic flight, and a steady return to 'normal'.

Insights from the International Association of Airport and Duty Free Stores (IAADFS) in June painted a positive outlook for the travel retail sector. The *Business Intelligence Service Recovery Monitor* for the second quarter of 2021, compiled by IAADFS with data from research

agency M1nd-set, forecast traveller numbers in 2021 would [recover to 52% of pre-pandemic levels](#). They are expected to exceed pre-pandemic numbers by 2023 and hit 5.6 billion by 2030 – albeit a 7% drop compared with pre-Covid-19 forecasts, to factor in around two to three years of lost growth in the channel.

As travel opens up again, brands are hoping to reconnect with shoppers in duty free. The Travel Retail Masters 2021 looked to assess the quality of spirits available in travel retail, aided as always by an expert panel of tasters. Once Sensible had packed all of the entries to ensure total anonymity throughout the tasting, the judges gathered at the Novotel Hotel in London Bridge, UK.

The judges comprised: David T Smith, co-founder of the Craft Distilling Expo; Bernadette Pamplin, spirits writer and judge; Derek Millar, retired whisky sales advisor; and Melita Kiely, editor of *The Spirits Business* magazine, who chaired the tasting.

### Scotch Whisky

| Company                  | Product                                  | Medal  |
|--------------------------|--|--------|
| Loch Lomond Group        | Loch Lomond Madeira Single Malt          | Master |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Glen Scotia Victoriana                   | Master |
| The Glenmorangie Company | Glenmorangie The Tribute                 | Gold   |
| The Glenmorangie Company | Glenmorangie The Elementa                | Gold   |
| The Glenmorangie Company | Glenmorangie The Accord                  | Gold   |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Loch Lomond 18 Years Old Single Malt     | Gold   |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Loch Lomond 14 Years Old Single Malt     | Gold   |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Loch Lomond 12 Years Old Single Malt     | Gold   |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Loch Lomond Original Single Malt         | Silver |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Glen Scotia 16 Years Old Single Malt     | Silver |
| Loch Lomond Group        | Glen Scotia Campbeltown 1832 Single Malt | Silver |

## Gordon & MacPhail 80YO sets auction record

08 OCTOBER 2021 By Nicola Carruthers

An 80-year-old Gordon & MacPhail whisky has established a new record for the world's oldest single malt sold at auction after a bottle fetched US\$193,000.



Just 250 bottles of Gordon & MacPhail Generations 80 Year Old have been made

Whisky specialist Gordon & MacPhail unveiled [Generations 80 Years Old last month](#), which is the world's oldest single malt Scotch.

The rare whisky hails from The Glenlivet Distillery, drawn from a single cask that was laid down in 1940 under the watch of George and John Urquhart, members of the family that founded Gordon & MacPhail. Only 250 bottles have been produced, presented in a decanter and oak case designed by architect Sir David Adjaye OBE.

Decanter #1 went under the hammer at Sotheby's Hong Kong on 7 October, complete with a framed cask end from the original barrel and a lithograph of Adjaye's design. The bottle had been estimated to sell for between US\$100,000-US\$200,000.

The bottle attracted auction-goers from across Asia and Europe before a European private collector, new to Sotheby's, snapped up the whisky. The winning bidder will also receive a whisky tasting experience for four in London, to be led by Gordon & MacPhail's director of prestige, Stephen Rankin, and attended by Adjaye.

Jonny Fowle, Sotheby's spirits specialist, said: "From the moment news broke of the existence of a whisky matured in oak for 80 years, it generated a huge buzz of excitement.

"For those lucky enough to taste it, myself included, this is an exceptional whisky that not only lingers on the palate but also long after in the mind.

"As we have seen, exceedingly rare single malts are highly coveted, and when collectors are presented with something truly special, they are prepared to go the extra mile."

Proceeds from the auction will be donated to Scottish charity Trees for Life, which aims to rewild the Caledonian forest.

The remaining 249 decanters will be sold in the off-trade.



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## Oldest Glen Grant whisky hits Shanghai auction

08 OCTOBER 2021 By Nicola Carruthers

Bottle number 88 of Glen Grant's oldest single malt to date fetched CNY380,000 (US\$58,922) at an auction in Shanghai, China.



Only 360 decanters of the 60-year-old whisky have been made. Last month, Speyside distillery Glen Grant revealed a [60-year-old single malt Scotch](#) to celebrate [master distiller Dennis Malcolm](#)'s six decades in whisky.

The 60-year-old comes from a single ex-oloroso Sherry cask, #5040, which was filled on 24 October 1960. It will be the distillery's oldest bottling in its 181-year history.

The new bottling was unveiled at a launch event at The St Regis hotel in Shanghai last week, which culminated in a live auction of bottle number 88 of the whisky. The number is symbolic in China for good luck and fortune.

The sale marked the highest price ever paid for a bottle in the region for Campari Group's portfolio.

"The Glen Grant The Dennis Malcolm 60th Anniversary Edition is a 60-year-old single malt Scotch whisky that pays tribute to one of the longest standing master distillers in Scotland and a globally recognised Scotch whisky craftsman, Dennis Malcolm," said Matteo Fantacchiotti, managing director Asia Pacific, Campari Group.

"This extremely rare and unique liquid is the hallmark of Dennis Malcolm's career and a once-in-a-lifetime experience available to just 360 discerning whisky connoisseurs globally, many of them residing here in the Asia Pacific region."

The Glen Grant Dennis Malcolm 60th Anniversary Edition is available to buy globally from October, and in select markets in Asia from November 2021. Only 360 decanters are available, priced at €25,000 (US\$29,500) each.

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## Writers' Tears releases ice wine-finished Irish whiskey

08 OCTOBER 2021 By Kate Malczewski

Ireland's Walsh Whiskey has debuted Writers' Tears Ice Wine Cask Finish, created in partnership with Canadian winery Inniskillin.



Walsh Whiskey claims its new ice wine-finished Irish whiskey is a 'first' for the category

The new bottling is a triple-distilled vatting of single pot still and single malt whiskeys that has been spent an additional 12 months in ice wine hogsheads.

"I first tasted ice wine in 2011, so plans for this expression have been fermenting in my head for some time," explained Bernard Walsh, who co-founded Walsh Whiskey with his wife Rosemary.

In January 2020, Bernard and Rosemary travelled to Inniskillin Winery in Niagara, Ontario, Canada, and worked with now-retired head winemaker Bruce Nicholson to choose the 12 hogsheads for the job. The barrels were originally produced at the Berthomieu Cooperage in France.

"When taking us around the vineyard, Inniskillin's then-head winemaker Bruce Nicholson explained how they only harvest well-matured, thick-skinned Vidal grapes when the weather presents a window of opportunity between -8 and -14 degrees Celsius – Bruce's ideal 'sweet spot' being -10 to -11 degrees," Bernard continued.

"Based on what we have produced, Inniskillin ice wine certainly contains that intense sweetness that can carry through in the wood to our whiskey."

The selected barrels were disgorged of ice wine in March 2020, shipped to Ireland, and filled with Writer's Tears Copper Pot expression two months later.

"With our core Writers' Tears Copper Pot expression we have a unique combination of predominantly spicy single pot still married with single malt Irish whiskey. This core expression gets a whole new dynamic complemented beautifully by the intense natural sweetness imparted by Inniskillin's show-stopping ice wine."

Sitting at 46% ABV, the bottling is said to offer notes of peach, apricot and spice on the nose, with a floral, nutty palate and a fruity finish.

Walsh Whiskey is rolling out 3,500 bottles of the expression across the US, Ireland and Canada, priced at US\$84.99/€70/CAN\$99.95. It will become available in the States in early November, and is already available in Ireland, where it can be purchased exclusively from Celtic Whiskey Shop in Dublin. It is also already on the market in Canada.

Last month, Walsh Whiskey [unveiled its first single pot still expression](#).

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## Woodford Reserve Releases "Chocolate Malt Whisper" Bourbon

By [Gary Carter](#) / October 4, 2021

Woodford Reserve just released a new, limited-edition bottle they are calling "a happy accident" at the distillery that ended up producing bourbon with a whisper of chocolate notes.

The result was what's described by the brand as a unique whiskey that features a medley of dark chocolate, cocoa and roasted coffee flavors with fruity and citrus notes.

Woodford's Chocolate Malt Whisper is a Kentucky straight bourbon that was produced immediately after the production of the spirit that was later released as the 2019 Master's Collection edition, [Chocolate Malted Rye](#).



**Chocolate Malt Whisper Bourbon (image via Woodford Reserve)**  
Some of the flavor notes from that Malted Rye carried over in the distillate of the next batch of bourbon. It influenced the flavor profile, resulting in a bourbon that had a “whisper” of roasted chocolate notes. “Sometimes unforeseen developments occur in the distillery that result in great flavors,” said Woodford’s Master Distiller Chris Morris in a prepared statement. “This is one of those cases.” Chocolate Malt Whisper is part of Woodford Reserve’s annual [Distillery Series](#), which Morris and his team developed to push the distillery’s creative boundaries of whiskey. Each selection in the series is concocted by Morris and Assistant Master Distiller Elizabeth McCall, and each is available for purchase at the Woodford Reserve Distillery and limited Kentucky retailers. There are three annual releases of the distillery series. Chocolate Malt Whisper Bourbon is available in 375ml bottles and clocks in at 90.4 proof. It’s available for the suggested retail price of \$49.99.

Official tasting notes are below.

- **Color:** Orange chocolate
- **Aroma:** A medley of dark chocolate, dusty cocoa and roasted coffee beans brightened with a hint of citrus oil and mint.
- **Flavor:** Smoky roasted cocoa, vanilla beans and dark chocolate sweetened with a very slight drizzle of caramel atop faint fruit and citrus notes.
- **Finish:** Lingers like a chocolate brittle walnut fudge brownie.

## Glen Grant teams up with Rolls Royce

12 OCTOBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

Speyside whisky The Glen Grant hosted an exclusive event at the new Rolls Royce showroom in Mayfair, London, to mark the launch of its 60-year-old Scotch.



Dennis Malcolm at Rolls Royce, Mayfair, London

The Glen Grant Dennis Malcolm Anniversary Edition Aged 60 Years was created to celebrate the master distiller’s 60 years in the whisky trade. [The Glen Grant master distiller](#) was in attendance to host a tasting of the rare liquid, joined by Bob Kunze-Concewitz, CEO of Campari Group, which owns the Speyside distillery.

The whisky was drawn from an oloroso Sherry cask, filled on 24 October 1960. It is the distillery’s oldest bottling in its 181-year history. Bottle number 88 of brand’s oldest single malt to date [fetched CNY380,000 \(US\\$58,922\) at an auction](#) in Shanghai, China, earlier this month.

Malcolm said: “It’s been such a joy to spend my life working in an industry and with a craft that I’m so passionate about.

“Much like our UK launch partner, Rolls Royce, The Glen Grant has always been about consistent dedication to craftsmanship and quality, and this comes across in the high standard of what we produce.

“This quality cannot be maintained without the right people, looking after the brand and ensuring that care and attention go into every bottle. This evening was a night to celebrate all of the people who have made The Glen Grant the brand that it is today.”

The Glen Grant [Dennis Malcolm 60th Anniversary Edition](#) is available to buy globally from October, with the exception of select markets in Asia, where it will launch in November 2021. Only 360 decanters are available, priced at €25,000 (US\$29,500) each.



The Rolls Royce showroom in Mayfair hosted the UK launch event



## Johnnie Walker adds to Ghost and Rare series

12 OCTOBER 2021 By Alice Brooker

Diageo has unveiled Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ghost and Rare Pittyvaich, the fourth release in the limited edition series.



The new whisky is available to purchase from 1 November. The bottling joins the Ghost and Rare collection, [launched in 2017](#) to spotlight whiskies from 'ghost' distilleries that have long since closed. Past blends have highlighted liquids from [Glenury Royal](#), [Port Ellen](#) and the [recently reopened Brora facility](#).

Master blender Jim Beveridge and his team hand-selected the whiskies for the new expression.

A whisky from Pittyvaich distillery sits at the heart of the blend. The Speyside site opened in 1974 and closed in 1993, after 18 years of production.

"We have waited patiently for the perfect moment to showcase this rare gem of the whisky world," Beveridge said.

"Pittyvaich may only have thrived for a short period, but the whisky laid down by this distillery is something unmistakable."

Other components in the blend come from Port Dundas and Carsebridge, combined with rare whiskies from Speyside distilleries Mannochmore, Auchroisk, Cragganmore and Strathmill, as well as Royal Lochnagar.

Beveridge added: "[Pittyvaich's] distinct autumnal character has always intrigued us and fired our imagination to create something really special that would pay tribute to the whisky makers of this Speyside distillery."

On the nose, the expression presents notes of dark fruit and berries, which give way to butterscotch and cinnamon.

On the palate, Pittyvaich boasts sweet fruit flavours of fresh apple, balanced with hints of honeycomb and soft wood from the ghost whiskies of Port Dundas and Carsebridge.

The whisky is bottled at 43.8% ABV, and retails for RRP £275 (US\$374) per 700ml bottle.

Available from 1 November, each bottle sold is individually numbered.

Versatile and affordable, [blended scotch](#) is a gateway for many whisky drinkers, a realible option for large crowds, and one of the most popular whisky styles worldwide. Scotch blenders work with a vast library of malt and grain whiskies to create a perfect balance of complexity and drinkability, but most start with a base, otherwise known as a heart malt.

Some are more candid about [the malts that go into their blends](#) than others. William Grant & Sons, owner of Ailsa Bay, Balvenie, Glenfiddich, and Kininvie distilleries, does not disclose the heart malts contained within its [Grant's](#) blend. However, looking at parent company portfolios can offer clues to likely constituent malts. We examined three of the most popular scotch blends, spoke to the blending teams behind them, and did our best to fill in the remaining gaps. Pour one of these blends alongside its heart malt to see if you can taste the source and inspiration.

### JOHNNIE WALKER

Owner: Diageo

Heart Malts: Cardhu and Clynelish

Other Malt Distilleries: Auchroisk, Benrinnes, Blair Athol, Caol Ila, Cragganmore, Dailuaine, Dalwhinnie, Dufftown, Glen Elgin, Glen Ord, Glen Spey, Glendullan, Glenkinchie, Glenlossie, Inchgower, Knockando, Lagavulin, Linkwood, Oban, Mannochmore, Mortlach, Roseisle, Royal Lochnagar, Strathmill, Talisker, Teaninich

Taste them together: [Jane Walker by Johnnie Walker](#) with [Cardhu 12 year old](#)

### DEWAR'S

Owner: Bacardi

Heart Malt: Aberfeldy

Other Malt Distilleries: Aultmore, Craigellachie, Macduff (Glen Deveron), Royal Brackla

Taste them together: [Dewar's 12 year old](#) with [Aberfeldy 12 year old](#)

### CHIVAS REGAL

Owner: Pernod Ricard

Heart Malts: Strathisla and Longmorn

Other Malt Distilleries: Aberlour, Allt-a-Bhainne, Braeval, Dalmunach, Glen Keith, Glenburgie, Glentauchers, Glenlivet, Milntonduff, Scapa, Tormore

Taste them together: [Chivas 18 year old](#) with [Longmorn 16 year old](#)

## Whisky Review: The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old

By [Whisky Kirk](#) / September 20, 2021

*Editor's Note: This whisky was provided to us as a review sample by The Macallan. This in no way, per [our editorial policies](#), influenced the final outcome of this review. It should also be noted that by clicking the buy link towards the bottom of this review our site receives a small referral payment which helps to support, but not influence, our editorial and other costs.*

The Macallan distillery in Scotland is known for its extensive use of sherry cask aging, but not for creating Frankenstein-like sherry monsters. Basically, we are talking about a "sweet spot" whisky that has wide appeal. Another nice thing about The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old is its deep, rich color that occurs naturally in the aging process.

As of 2020, Macallan's Double Cask series now comes in 15 years of age, as well as 18 years. The 12 year old flagship offering is also still available. That was first sold in 2016.

One thing that stands out about all three of The Macallan's Double Cask offerings is the way new American oak barrels are shipped to Spain for the making of sherry. European oak is also used to create sherry in Spain. Afterwards, each type of barrel, seasoned with the sherry that was aged in them, is sent to The Macallan in the Speyside region of Scotland. Hence, this whisky's name "double cask."

According to a spokesperson, "[t]he result is a perfect partnership, with the sherry seasoned American oak imparting delicate flavors of vanilla, while the European oak delivers the subtle and unmistakable spice and classic style of The Macallan."

This hands-on approach to the sourcing and sweetening of cask wood is fairly unique. Not many distilleries are able to maintain such a close working relationship with sherry producers that pass along seasoned casks to Scotland. This rigorous form of quality control has been known to result in reliably consistent whisky offerings. However, it's worth mentioning that there is a slight flaw in the latest batch of 15 year old Double Cask (in the opinion of this review) that can be attributed to sherry cask management.

## Taste These Scotch Blends Alongside Their Heart Malts

SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 | [TED SIMMONS](#)





#### *The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old (image via The Macallan)*

**Tasting Notes:** The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old  
**Vital Stats:** Aged 15 years. 43% ABV (86 proof). Price in US varies widely from \$85-\$145. Natural color. Speyside, Scotland.  
**Appearance:** Polished mahogany.  
**Aroma:** Fruit compote, vanilla bean, toffee, Asian pear, pie crust, Manuka honey, and milk chocolate, along with just a hint of gunpowder.  
**Palate:** More fruits, but this time dried with a hint of ginger. Irish breakfast tea, fragrant oak, orange zest. This followed by nutmeg and sour sop (a flavor that hovers between dried pineapple and overripe banana). Thankfully, no sulfur haunts the mouth. The finish is slightly oily (for only 43%), and length is on the long end of short, but falling short of medium. A kind of pepperiness swells at the death (European oak esters).

#### **The Takeaway Summary**

The finish is this whisky's drawback. Two or three more points in the ABV scale would have worked wonders to remedy such a weak finish. It's worth mentioning that The Macallan 18 year old Double Cask is noticeably better, even at an anemic 43% ABV.

Can the difference be chalked up to three more years in wood, or is there something else, as well? Hard to say. On the other hand, The Macallan 15 Years Old Double Cask is better than its Triple Cask sibling, even from years gone by. Bravo.  
 Aside from a weak finish in the more recent 15-year-old Double Cask release, there is that hint of gun powder on the nose to consider. Sulfur is a tricky thing, which, unfortunately, can come with the territory if sherry wood is involved in the aging process.  
 In this case, the note is far from overpowering. But even the (metaphorical) hint of a smoking gun has been known to cause some hands to cover their glasses politely, should a second round be offered. By way of a disclaimer, it should be mentioned that aversion to light sulfur in a whisky's scent is a matter of opinion. This view is by no means universal, or even definitive.



The 1969 bottling will retail for £35,000 (US\$47,700)

The new collection will be available in the UK from the start of next year. It will include the 50-year-old Bowmore 1969 and the exclusive 2021 releases of Bowmore 30-Year-Old and Bowmore 40-Year-Old. Bowmore 1969 sits at 46.9% ABV and was the final launch in the [brand's Vaults series](#). The single malt was matured in American oak ex-Bourbon barrels and hogsheads. Tasting notes include fragrant and floral aromas, with citrus and sweetness.  
 Meanwhile, the brand's 40-Year-Old (48.7% ABV) was created as a limited edition run of 159 bottles. It will retail for £6,750 (US\$9,204). The nose is likened to treacle, exotic fruits and beeswax, leading to pipe tobacco, chocolate and leather on the palate.  
 The 30-year-old was bottled in 2000 from vintage 1989 stocks at an ABV of 45.1%. It was matured in Sherry hogsheads and Bourbon barrels, and will retail for £2,000 (US\$2,700).  
 The whisky is said to have ripe apricot and charred pineapple notes on the nose, leading to tropical fruits and honey on the palate.  
 David Turner, Bowmore distillery manager, said: "These exquisite, aged and rare launches are a credit to the Bowmore portfolio and continue to drive our desire to produce highly revered products."  
 "We have been able to showcase how vital time is to each individual vintage, how time spent in casks shapes and influences each spirit, making it even more characterful."  
 "Each release tells the rich stories of Bowmore, but importantly have their own unique style and character."  
 In July this year, the brand revealed a [trio of limited edition bottle designs](#) for the global travel retail channel as part of its collaboration with Aston Martin.  
 Furthermore, earlier this year a complete collection of [Black Bowmore whiskies sold for US\\$563,000](#) at a Sotheby's sale, setting a new record for the brand at auction.

## **Bowmore unveils 'ultimate' whisky collection**

22 SEPTEMBER 2021 By Melita Kiely

Islay Scotch whisky Bowmore has revealed the 'ultimate' rare whisky collection for 2022, including a 1969 bottling priced at £35,000 (US\$47,700).





Tomatin launches final French Collection whisky  
Scotch single malt whisky brand Tomatin has launched the final edition in its limited-edition French Collection.

The Cognac Edition uses whisky distilled in 2008, which began its maturation in traditional Scotch whisky oak casks before being moved into ex-Cognac casks in November 2018 for its final stage of maturation.

To celebrate this final launch in The French Collection, Highlands distiller Tomatin has released the final instalment of a four-part immersive content series that was created to complement the collection. It is available to view [on the Tomatin website](#).

Launched in 2020, Tomatin's French Collection also includes the Montbazillac Edition, Sauternes Edition and Rivesaltes Edition whiskies.

Graham Eunson, master distiller at Tomatin, said: "The fourth and final release from Tomatin's French collection is the jewel in the crown. The Cognac Edition, along with the rest of the collection, showcases our innovative dedication to craft and excellence, and is the perfect illustration of the art of comparative final maturation.

"We have been overjoyed by the response from the whisky community to the earlier releases, and by introducing the Cognac finish as the final edition, we hope to attract a wider audience to our unique concept allowing them to better understand the art of cask maturation."

The Cognac Edition is available to purchase through the [Tomatin online shop](#) and other specialist retailers (RRP £65).

16 September 2021 - Bethany Whymark

## Unpeated Single Malts To Drink This Fall, Chosen By Bartenders

[CHRISTOPHER OSBURN TWITTER](#) OCTOBER 7, 2021

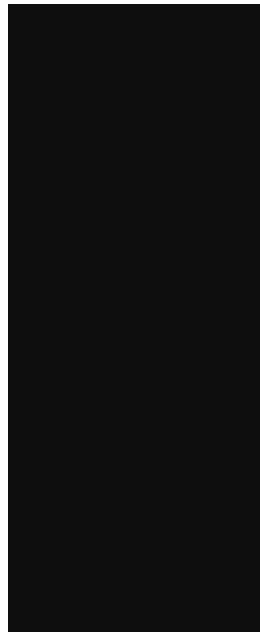
Single malt [Scotch whisky](#) beginners might not realize just how different [whiskies](#) from the various regions can be. If you've only tried one or two and they've both been from the Highland region, there's a decent chance you've tasted flavors like [heather, honey, and gentle smoke](#). Most whiskies from Islay, on the other hand, are known for their [campfire-like, robust, briny, peat-smoked notes](#). These "[peat bombs](#)" are for an experienced palate and (even after years of drinking) aren't for everyone.

That's why, today, we're going to highlight Scotch whiskies from various regions (even Islay) that *aren't* peaty, smoky, medicinal, or otherwise ridiculously bold in flavor. Instead, we're talking about [single malts](#) that are unpeated yet flavorful enough to grab your interest.

To find these expressions, we turned to the professionals for help. We asked a few of our favorite [bartenders](#) to name their go-to unpeated single malts that they'll be sipping from now until spring.

Check them all out below!

Glenmorangie Signet



GLENMORANGIE

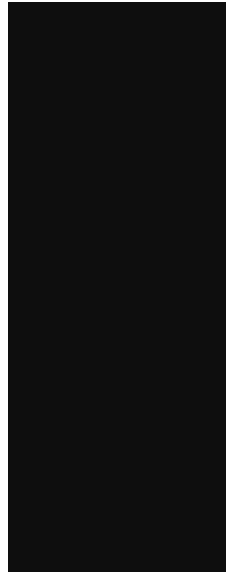
Joan Percival, bartender at [Proof Whiskey Bar](#) in Omaha, Nebraska  
ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$234](#)

Why This Bottle?

*If you're celebrating, no matter if you're with experienced Scotch drinkers or newbies, there's no better widely available non-peated dram than Glenmorangie Signet. The Signet has a depth of flavor that will impress literally anyone with its chocolatey intensity. It's a NAS [no age statement], but the care that has gone into crafting this masterpiece is evident. Along with the centerpiece chocolate decadence, is oak, but very subtly, along with a golden brown baked pie crust and just a hint of red fruit.*

GlenKinchie 12



GLENKINCHIE

Eric Heinel, certified sommelier and beverage director for [David Burke](#) in New York City

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$71](#)

Why This Bottle?

*The standard answer here is The Macallan. That would be the big name that consistently delivers a high-quality product. If you are looking to be more adventurous, I love to enjoy Glenkinchie 12 single malt Scotch. It's rich, sweet, flavorful, and warming on a cool fall evening.*

Aberlour A'bunadh



#### ABERLOUR

Hayden Miller, head bartender of [Bodega Taqueria y Tequila](#) in Miami

ABV: 59.9%

Average Price: [\\$100](#)

Why This Bottle?

*Aberlour A'bunadh. It's an absolute sherry bomb. Sherry makes everything sexy. It's also cask strength, bold, and un-filtered. Yet it remains sweet and filled with notes of caramel, sherry, and dried fruits.*

The Balvenie Doublewood 12



#### THE BALVENIE

Rachel Stidham, bartender at [Paul's Landing](#) in St. Petersburg, Florida

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$69.99](#)

Why This Bottle?

*For me, it's The Balvenie Doublewood 12. It's a really smooth Scotch smoked in an oak barrel, great for sipping to savor the cherry and vanilla flavors combined with a nutty sweetness and cinnamon spice.*

Glenmorangie Quinta Ruban Port Cask Finish



#### GLENMORANGIE

Robbie Robinson, sommelier and mixologist at [The Ballantyne](#) in Charlotte, North Carolina

ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$59.99](#)

Why This Bottle?

*I love Glenmorangie Quinta Ruban Port Cask Finish. It is a 14-year-old non-peated scotch, finished in Ruby port casks. It's medium-bodied and has notes of cinnamon, jelly, and hints of cocoa nibs.*

Glenfiddich 12



#### GLENFIDDICH

Joshua Duncan, beverage manager at [Adrift Tiki Bar](#) in Denver, Colorado

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$49.99](#)

Why This Bottle?

*I personally love Glenfiddich. While I generally enjoy my Scotches heavily peated, there is so much variety and beauty in the depth of a good single malt scotch; peated or not. I truly appreciate everything that Glenfiddich makes from the 12-year to the 25-year, but for the price, the Glenfiddich 12-year is an absolute gem. Most notably for its bright smoothness and distinctive fruity pear note, this whisky sips easily and offers a bit of complexity on the back end from its aging in sherry casks.*



## Auchentoshan 18



### AUCHENTOSHAN

Jessica King, master mixologist at [Brother Wolf](#) in Knoxville, Tennessee

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$148](#)

Why This Bottle?

*Although it's a bit pricy, the Auchentoshan 18 year is a favorite. While I generally prefer a peated malt whisky, the delicate chocolate and warm, toasty vanilla notes would be surrendered to smoke in this expression.*

GlenGoyne Cask Strength



### GLENGOYNE

Emily Lawson, bartender and owner of [Foxhole Public House](#) in Bentonville, Arkansas

ABV: 59.1%

Average Price: [\\$79.99](#)

Why This Bottle?

*GlenGoyne Cask Strength is a delicious, sherry cask Scotch. It's buttery and peppery without the deep peat stink. It's a terrific warmer for those cool autumn nights.*

Glenfiddich 15



### GLENFIDDICH

Stephen George, director of outlets and bartender at [20 | Twenty Grill](#) in Carlsbad, California

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$75](#)

Why This Bottle?

*There are so many good non-peated single malts out there, but I would probably go with Glenfiddich 15-year. This is a unique Solera style approach, combining the aging cask character of sherry, new oak, and bourbon barrels. I chose this because I do prefer peated single malts, but the subtle flavors and layers of this whisky would be lost in a peated whisky.*

Bruichladdich The Classic Laddie



### BRUICHLADDICH

Evan Hosaka, lead bartender of [The Dorsey at The Venetian Resort](#) in Las Vegas

ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$59.99](#)

Why This Bottle?

*Bruichladdich's Classic Laddie comes in at 50% ABV, 6-7 years in age, and offers a great non-peated style not typical of the Islay region. You'll notice flavors of vanilla, green apples, and honey amongst other layers of complexity. Definitely a bottle to have at home. If you like peated Scotch, explore their other expressions too.*

GlenDronach 18 Allardice



#### GLENDRONACH

Darron Foy, bartender at [The Flatiron Room](#) in New York City

ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$188](#)

Why This Bottle?

*In my personal opinion, of course, I would never say no to a Glendronach 18 Allardice. I always have a bottle in the house. In any bar I'm in — if they have it — it's in my glass. Glendronach doesn't do bad whisky. The 18 is 100% matured in oloroso sherry casks and time and time again proves why Glendronach is sherry heaven.*

*Chewy and viscous, with notes of dark chocolate, raisin, Xmas cake, and cherry, beautifully rich and elegant. A real beauty.*

The Balvenie 15 Year Single Barrel



#### THE BALVENIE

Jeremy Williams, head mixologist at [MDRD atop the Amway Grand Plaza](#) in Grand Rapids, Michigan

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$124](#)

Why This Bottle?

*Without getting too far up in years, I enjoy The Balvenie 15 Year Single Barrel. This expression from Balvenie spends time in ex-sherry casks that help contribute that rich, dry fruit and nutty characters. The color of this whiskey is special too. It's a rich amber mahogany.*

#### The Glenrothes Vintage Reserve



#### THE GLENROTHES

Frederic Yarm, bartender at [The Smoke Shop BBQ](#) in Boston

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$49](#)

Why This Bottle?

*Glenrothes Vintages are some of my favorites with the oldest one in my collection being the 1991. With a sherry cask finish, there are a bounty of fruity notes including apricots, apples, pears, and stone fruits. And this is balanced by baking spices, vanilla, and a hint of chocolate from the barley to be a rather engaging and pleasing dram.*

Every Scotch Whisky Brand From Diageo's Massive Portfolio, Ranked

[ZACH JOHNSTON](#) TWITTER LIFE WRITER

SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

<https://uproxx.com/life/diageo-scotch-whisky-ranked/>

This ranking was almost impossible for several reasons. One, ranking every Scotch [whisky](#) from drinks giant Diageo barely makes sense. Is it even possible to rank an Oban over a [Talisker](#)? Or a Mortlach over [Lagavulin](#)? What about the [blends](#)? Or the fact that Diageo owns 35 Scotch whisky brands with a [bajillion expressions](#) between them all? See, this is already a dizzying prospect and we haven't even started yet. Is there any shot at creating a method or will it all just be madness?

Come what may, I'm going to press on. That said, it's kind of amazing that the easiest part of this ranking is the fact that I've actually [tasted](#) all of these brands. Diageo is really good at putting out deep cuts from their various distilleries over the years. The [Rare By Nature](#) and [Flora and Fauna](#) collections make it surprisingly easy (though expensive) to try otherwise impossible to find bottles from very small Diageo distilleries from around Scotland.

Well... maybe "easy" is a bit of an oversell. The point is that they are out there and it's not as hard to track them down as it might seem. For this ranking, I'm relying on my tasting notes from each [brand](#). Then, I'm calling out the one bottle to try from each shingle. In some cases, I've only tried one bottle — so that's the one I'm calling out (again, we're talking some truly rare brands from tiny distilleries here). Taken all together, this is an attempt to make some sense of one of the world's largest collections of distilleries and blenders under one giant corporate umbrella.

Let's see how it goes! Click on those prices if you want to try a bottle yourself!



### 35. Vat 69 — Vat 69 Gold



DIAGEO

ABV: 45%

Average Price: [\\$16](#)

The Whisky:

Vat 69 is a blend of mostly grain whiskies from all around Scotland. The name refers to a contest with 100 unique vats of whisky where the 69th blend won the big prize. Other than that, this is bottom-shelf whisky with no frills.

Tasting Notes:

There's a weird faux strawberry shortcake with a spray can whip cream on top that could be construed as vanilla flavored. The palate has a bit of orange candy sweetness with a bitter edge and a slight spice. The end is short, hot, and very malty.

Bottom Line:

Besides nostalgia for a grandparent, I can't really see a reason to try this but at least the Gold isn't overly astringent if you're mixing it with Coke.

### 34. Grand Old Parr — Grand Old Parr Scotch Aged 12 Years Blended Scotch Whisky



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$35](#)

The Whisky:

This old-school blend is built around Cragganmore and Glendullan single malts. The whiskies mellow for 12 years before they're vatted and proofed for this bottling.

Tasting Notes:

There's a bit of cinnamon apple cookies on the nose with a touch of honey. The taste is very malty with a touch of cedar, tobacco spice, and more honey/apple/cinnamon. The end is warm, malty, and slightly sweet thanks to the honey.

Bottom Line:

This is fine. It's a mixing whisky, so mix it if you come across it. Otherwise, you're not missing much.

### 33. Bell's — Bell's Original



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$20](#)

The Whisky:

This near-bottom-shelf blend is based on Blair Athol malts with a supporting cast of Caol Ila, Glenkinchie, Dufftown, and Inchgower malts and various grain whiskies in the mix.

Tasting Notes:

This is clearly malty with a hint of lemon honey candies, woody spices, and a hint of vanilla. The palate doesn't offer much else but does amp up the malts, spice, and vanilla towards a soft finish.

Bottom Line:

This isn't bad if you're looking for a cheap highball base. Beyond that, there's not really much more to say.

### 32. Justerini & Brooks — J&B Rare Blended Scotch



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$32](#)

The Whisky:

J&B is a back bar mainstay. This old-school blend became hugely popular in the U.S. after Prohibition and still sits on most American bar shelves to this day, though often just collecting dust. The juice is a mix of 42 single grains and single malts that lean heavily into Speyside whiskies.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is malty with a flourish of orange zest next to cedar bark and sweet, buttery toffee. That sweetness carries and folds in fatty nuts and a bit of red fruit. The oak and spice kick in late as the sip fades fairly quickly while warming you up.

Bottom Line:

This is another throwback bottle. It's perfectly fine for highballs or a scotch on the rocks and that's about it.

### 31. Copper Dog — Copper Dog Speyside Blended Scotch Whisky



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$35](#)

The Whisky:

This is a new-ish release from Diageo that utilizes a lot of Speyside whiskies. Eight single malts are chosen for this blend to specifically highlight the small region within the Scottish Highlands.

Tasting Notes:

This is classic Speyside from nose to finish with apple and honey dominating the whole way through. The palate adds a warm malt and spice next to a very slight nuttiness and maybe a touch of orange marmalade. The end is short, warm, and slightly honeyed.

Bottom Line:

This is another good highball candidate that isn't too shabby in a cocktail, either.

### 30. Strathmill — Strathmill 12 Flora & Fauna

DIAGEO

ABV: 43%



Average Price: [\\$48](#)

The Whisky:

This whisky is the base of J&B above. The malts are rarely ever seen on the open market as a single malt bottling, making this 12-year-old drop from the Flora and Fauna line pretty damn rare.

Tasting Notes:

There's a medley of nuts, dark chocolate, and orange peels on the nose that support deep earthiness that's damn near mushroom-y. The palate leans more towards the chocolate and nuts with a touch of dark spices and maltiness. The end is short, somewhat bitter, and has a citrus-y vibe.

Bottom Line:

This is one of those bottles that makes you go "hum... that's interesting." You kind of get into it and play with the juice in highballs, cocktails, and on the rocks until the bottle is empty. And then you never think about it again.

It takes 7 years to grow agave. But ten generations to make our tequila.

Ad by Jose Cuervo Tradicional.

See More

### 29. Royal Lochnagar — Royal Lochnagar Game of Thrones House Baratheon Aged 12 Years



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$80](#)

The Whisky:

This 12-year-old single malt is all about representing the Highlands. The distillery is close to Cairngorms National Park and was rumored to be a favorite of Queen Victoria back in the day, giving this an old-school vibe.

Tasting Notes:

The malts come through with a hint of vanilla, orange peels, and dry wicker. Burnt sugar drives the taste while a very thin wisp of smoke carries you towards ginger beer and cinnamon toast with a buttery feel. The end circles back around to that dry wicker with a final note of honey.

Bottom Line:

Overall, this is pretty decent stuff that I wish there was more of. Still, it's best suited for a highball and cocktails but will do in a pinch for an on the rocks drink.

### 28. Black & White — Black & White Blended Scotch Whisky



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$28](#)

The Whisky:

Good ol' Black & White. This used to be Dean "The King of Cool" Martin's go-to whiskey — so there's a bit of panache that still goes with drinking it. The black and white dogs on the label have become damn near synonymous with whisky in the U.K. to this day. The juice leans into Speyside grain whisky more than malt and is pretty damn dialed in.

Tasting Notes:

The bread grains come through with a note of lemon curd and a wisp of smoke. The lemon carries on and is married with a Christmas cake



spice and caramel sweetness in the body of the sip. The end is short and sweet both literally and figuratively.  
**Bottom Line:**  
 For a cheap blend, you could do a lot worse (looking at you, Vat 69). There's a certain charm to this whisky that's very easy-going and easy-drinking.  
 It takes 7 years to grow agave. But ten generations to make our tequila.  
 Ad by Jose Cuervo Tradicional.  
 See More

27. White Horse — White Horse Blended Scotch Whisky



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$18](#)

The Whisky:

This whisky is another throwback blend. Islay's Lagavulin is at the foundation of this juice with various other malts and grain whiskies popping in to add some depth.

Tasting Notes:

There's a smoked salted caramel vibe on the nose next to woody apples and a touch of cedar. The taste leans away from the smoke towards wet-grain malts, more apples, and a touch of rich, creamy honey. The end smooths out towards a vanilla pudding spiked with eggnog spices and a final puff of smoke-laced caramel.

Bottom Line:

This is one of those bottles that you'll either love or hate. It's very deep for being a damn-near bottom-shelf dram but doesn't "wow" in any way really.

26. Haig — Haig Club Deluxe



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$52](#)

The Whisky:

This grain whisky hails from Cameronbridge Distillery. The mash is a 90/10 split of wheat and malted barley that's aged for about seven years.

Tasting Notes:

This is very fruity with stewed apples mingling with banana bread, orange, and lemon. The palate adds an eggnog spice vibe to the mix with a nice vanilla depth and a touch of cedar. The spiciness peaks with a bit more banana bread and walnut on the end.  
**Bottom Line:**  
 This is an interesting way to get into grain whisky, which is usually buried in blends under malt whiskies. It's fairly easy-drinking, unique, and makes one hell of a highball.

25. Cardhu — Cardhu Aged 11 Years 2020 Rare By Nature



DIAGEO

ABV: 56%

Average Price: [\\$110](#)

The Whisky:

Every year, Diageo releases their Rare By Nature series of single malts from around Scotland. Last year's limited releases dropped with a classic yet young single malt from Cardhu. The eleven-year-old expression was aged in a combination of refill, new, and ex-bourbon American oak barrels with an aim to draw out the whiskey's sweeter and spicier edges.

Tasting Notes:

This is amazingly light with a bit of shaved wood next to big notes of tart and sweet apples and pineapple next to a rush of bright lemon zest and an underbelly of wet earth. The sweet fruits stay strong as the taste edges towards a flourish of warm, peppery spice next to a buttery biscuit. The end is long and full of that spice and sweetness. A little water really brings the fruitiness back into the foreground with a brightness that's enrapturing.

Bottom Line:

Cardhu is extremely popular in Spain and this bottle was an attempt to broaden the brand's appeal in other markets. Cards on the table, this is a really good single malt whisky from a great, though lesser-known, distillery. In short, this is where things get pretty damn hair-splitting until the top ten.

24. Glen Elgin — Glen Elgin 12



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$80](#)

#### The Whisky:

Glen Elgin is the foundation of White Horse (above). The distillery in Speyside runs six stills and most of their juice goes to that blend, making this a rarer bottle to find (especially in the U.S.)

#### Tasting Notes:

This is an orchard fruit bomb on the nose with touches of butterscotch, eggnog spice, and black tea bitterness. The palate follows that path while adding in notes of oatmeal raisin cookies with a flake or two of finishing salt, more bitter black tea, and a touch of nuttiness. The end lingers a while as that oatmeal cookie really leans into the dry fruit and oats.

#### Bottom Line:

This is the point where I desperately try and find a new way to say, "Hey, this is really nice. You should try it in a highball or on the rocks."

### 23. Knockando — Knockando 12



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$45](#)

#### The Whisky:

Knockando is yet another small Speyside distillery doing their thing. This expression is an entry-point 12-year that offers a really solid foundation for the region's distinct flavor profiles.

#### Tasting Notes:

You're drawn in by a nose full of cinnamon-stewed apples drizzled in honey with a distinct whiff of dried heather and maybe a little dried wheat. The palate veers far away from that with a pumpkin savoriness next to buttered banana bread full of walnuts, nutmeg, and clove next to a hint of milk chocolate. The end is pretty slow with a nutmeg spicing up a bit towards a peppery warmth.

#### Bottom Line:

If you're looking for a Speyside that really nails the region's profile, this is it. Also, the name is fun to say.

### 22. Auchroisk — Auchroisk 10 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$60](#)

#### The Whisky:

This bottle used to be labeled as "Singleton" for the U.S. market because they didn't think Americans could pronounce "Auchroisk." They dropped that back in 2001 and went back to the original name. This is one of the only bottlings from the distillery in single malt form. The rest of the juice goes into J&B above.

#### Tasting Notes:

Wet green grass mingles with a very creamy vanilla pudding (think bourbon) next to a touch of marzipan and lemon curd on the nose. The taste doesn't veer too far away from those notes while adding in eggnog spices, a little cedar, and some vanilla tobacco chew. The end is long and very silky with hints of that green grass drying out into a bale of straw.

#### Bottom Line:

Speaking of names, I don't think I've ever pronounced this one correctly. So, I guess the good people at Diageo weren't wrong on that front. Still, this is a pretty unique bottle and worth tracking down for an equally unique tasting experience.

### 21. Buchanan's — Buchanan's Special Reserve Aged 18 Years



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$86](#)

#### The Whisky:

The Scotch blend is a mix of Diageo single malt and single grains that are all at least 18-years-old. Those whiskies are aged in ex-bourbon and ex-sherry casks before their married into this well-crafted expression.

#### Tasting Notes:

There's a sense of malt next to hints of orange zest, honey, and bright cherry. The palate really delivers on the cherry as the orange zest becomes candied and a nutty edge arrives, ushering in a subtle and almost sweet smoke. The smoke dries a bit as a note of pine arrives late, supported by the orange, cherry, and honey with a touch of warm spice.

#### Bottom Line:

This felt like it should rank higher. This is a really good blended whisky that's a real workhorse (you can sip it, mix it, highball it, whatever). That being said, this has never reached the heights of Diageo's most famous blend and we have a lot of single malts to still get through. So here we are.

### 20. Glenlossie — Glenlossie 10 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%



Average Price: [\\$58](#)

The Whisky:

This is another Speyside malt that's almost exclusively used for blends. Diageo doesn't really disclose which blends, but we can guess from the bottles on this list. The unique thing here is that Glenlossie is next door to the Mannochmore distillery and the two campuses share the same employees and warehouses.

Tasting Notes:

This opens with a dry maltiness next to cedar bark, pears, and wet moss. The taste is very light with whispers of lemon oils, black pepper, wet grains, and earthy umami. The finish doesn't overstay its welcomes and has a light lemon-pepper vibe.

Bottom Line:

This is a very rare find and worth it for just having something different.

### 19. Glen Spey — Glen Spey 12 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$48](#)

The Whisky:

Glen Spey is another Speyside whisky that's primarily used in J&B Blended Scotch. Where other malts primarily made for blends are scarce, there are a few 20-year plus expressions out there though they rarely make it over the pond.

Tasting Notes:

This has a very soft nose that dances between Chardonnay grapes, fresh honey, bales of wet straw, and brand new Band-Aids tied together by the final line of smoke from a dying campfire. The woodiness comes through on the palate with an almost charcoal feel next to fermented apples, more straw, and a touch of sultanas. A nuttiness arrives late as the taste slowly fades out, leaving you with a fruity, nutty, and malty finish.

Bottom Line:

For a Speyside, this is just interesting. That smoke is more reminiscent of a very light Islay while still feeling squarely Speyside.

### 18. Clynelish — Clynelish 14



DIAGEO

ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$72](#)

The Whisky:

Up on the cold northern coast of Scotland, you'll find a little town called Brora. There used to be a distillery there of the same name, which made peat monsters up until the 1980s. Clynelish took over the location and started making their own peated malts, this time while leaning more into the sea than the peat. And in this case, they've created a very lightly peated single malt that spends a decade and a half resting near that sea until it's just right.

Tasting Notes:

This has a nostalgic sense of a cold, rainy beach. You're not necessarily on that beach but you can remember to sea spray, the salt on your lips, the smell of dried seaweed, and a touch of old smoke from a nearly dead fire. The taste dances between notes of burnt orange peels, old leather tobacco pouches, and this soft mineral water mouthfeel that carries with it creamy vanilla just touched with sea salt. The end is medium-length, salty, and has this mildly bitter edge that's akin to a cocoa bean pith.

Bottom Line:

I wanted to rank this so much higher but here it is at around the midpoint. I'm okay with that. This is a great single malt but there are even greater ones to come.

### 17. Inchgower — Inchgower 14 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$58](#)

The Whisky:

This malt from the very bottom of the Speyside region is one of the rarer bottles on the list. The malt usually only shows up in Bell's Blended Scotch (above). Beyond that, this 14-year-old only really shows up in special releases like this.

Tasting Notes:

This is pure silk from start to finish with a nose that touches on lemon cookies, bales of wet alfalfa, buttery toffee, and a touch of caramel-malted barley. The palate is an apple orchard in full bloom with a bright rush of wildflowers, fresh ginger, rich honey, wet slate minerality, and lemongrass. The finish adds a slight resinous pine with a mild yet dry black peppercorn.

Bottom Line:

This is one of those bottles that I wish were more accessible. If you see one, treat yourself to a unique and delicious dram.

### 16. Linkwood — Linkwood 12 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$60](#)

The Whisky:

You rarely see Linkwood on the shelf as a single malt. This is almost exclusively used in Johnnie Walker (below) and White Horse (above).

Tasting Notes:

This nose is complex and travels from a cellar full of bushels of orchard fruits in baskets in late fall to a cool porch with a cup of vanilla tea waiting for you to a final stop at your grandmother's side with a whiff of old-school perfume drenched in cigarette smoke. The palate thickens as a syrup-y sweetness arrives next to that vanilla and fruit and a touch of marzipan and pine. The end is very long and will leave you with an orris root bitterness.

Bottom Line:

This feels like one of those malts that could blow up if Diageo pushed it a little harder. It's so unique and brings something interesting to the table every time I try it.

#### 15. Benrinnes — Benrinnes 21



DIAGEO

ABV: 56.9%

Average Price: [\\$480](#)

The Whisky:

Benrinnes is that other distillery in Aberlour. The distillery is also one of the only malts that were triple distilled (like Irish whiskey). The juice in this bottle goes back to that era of distillation with a focus on sherry cask maturation.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is full of peanut brittle touched with finishing salts, match flints, brewer's yeast, Milk Duds, and sticky toffee pudding. The palate leans into the date cake and adds in bold eggnog spices next to a bowl full of dried fruits soaking in brandy next to a savory fruit that's halfway between a cucumber and winter squash. The finish lingers for a while and leaves you with an almost burnt chocolate maltiness, salt flakes, and more of those dates.

Bottom Line:

This is pretty wild and engaging. Sure, it's expensive. But there isn't a whole lot out there quite like this.

#### 14. Mannochmore — Mannochmore 25



DIAGEO

ABV: 53.4%

Average Price: [\\$660](#)

The Whisky:

This is an extremely rare glimpse into Mannochmore distillery which primarily produces malt to blend and only limited-edition releases. This 2016 release of just under 4,000 bottles contains very old juice aged in new American and European oak as well as used bourbon and sherry casks. It then goes into the bottles at barrel strength.

Tasting Notes:

The fruitiness of the malt is accentuated by bourbon vanilla, dry peppery spice, and what feels like the Cherry Coke syrup from a soda machine without the fizzy water added. The palate has a spiced malted bread vibe with hints of anise, black pepper, salted caramel, and prunes. The end kind of doesn't end as hints of rosewater-rich marzipan, orange oils, and more prune linger the longest.

Bottom Line:

I kind of can't believe this ranked this low. It's truly a great and unique bottle of booze. But, folks, there are so many great bottles of booze coming up that you should consider this where the 'good stuff' starts.

#### 13. Glenkinchie — Glenkinchie Distillers Edition



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$85](#)

The Whisky:

This limited edition expression from last year's Diageo Distillers Edition is expertly crafted whisky. The Lowland juice has a finishing maturation in a specially made barrel which is constructed from used and new American oak that's then filled with Amontillado sherry for a month. Once that fortified wine is dumped, the whisky goes in for its final maturation.

Tasting Notes:

There are hints of very soft wood next to berries steeped in honey with a light vanilla edge. The taste dips into a slight black pepper with a note of brie rinds or, maybe, a cheese cellar. The end is slow and leaves you with a nice, warm buzzing in your senses and a real feeling of velvet roundness.

Bottom Line:

This was a very "ah-ha!" malt for me the first time I had it. It's just goddamn delicious — neat, or on the rocks. The only reason it ranks this low is that while it's great, there's a weird forgettability about it (sorry to all those who grew up with this malt, I mean no disrespect).



## 12. Dalwhinnie — Dalwhinnie 15



DIAGEO  
ABV: 43%  
Average Price: [\\$80](#)  
The Whisky:

This entry-point bottle to the wider world of Dalwhinnie is a hell of an easy drinker. The juice is aged in Scotland's coldest distillery, making the maturation process a severe one. The juice spends 15 years hiding in those barrels as the temperatures dip well below freezing across all those winters.

Tasting Notes:

Imagine a bowl of pear and apple peels sitting next to an open jar of floral summer honey on the nose. Dots of citrus oils mingle with that honey as a smooth vanilla character arrives on the back of sweet brown bread bespeckled with smoked walnuts. The nuts, sweet bread, and floral honey all converge on the finish as it slowly fades towards a final billow of sweet smoke at the back of your mouth.

Bottom Line:

This is another whisky that's just freakin' delicious. It's kind of hard not to place it in the top ten of this list but there just wasn't room for it. I mean, come on! Lagavulin didn't even make it into the top ten as you can see next.

## 11. Lagavulin — Lagavulin 16



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%  
Average Price: [\\$105](#)  
The Whisky:

This is the most recognizable Lagavulin out there. The malts are smoked just down the road from the distillery at Port Ellen and the juice is crafted expertly by the sea at Lagavulin. Then the whisky spends 16 long years mellowing in old American and Spanish oak.

Tasting Notes:

Imagine a beach fire that's using dried seaweed as fuel next to mugs of honeyed black tea and a clump of wet moss on the nose. The taste of this dram meanders through dried pipe tobacco smoke laced with hints

of vanilla and tart apple while notes of briny caramel lead towards an oyster shell minerality. The finish is pure silk as the seaweed grows wetter and the smoke sweetens towards that caramel, vanilla, and apple.

Bottom Line:

This is probably Islay's most iconic malt. You really cannot go wrong here unless, of course, you don't dig on the peaty malts. I generally don't vibe with peated whisky all that much *except* for this one (and Talisker). Take that with the grain of malt it is.

## 10. Singleton — Singleton Of Glendullan 38 Year



DIAGEO

ABV: 59.8%  
Average Price: [\\$1,340](#)  
The Whisky:

This 2014 release was aged for 38 years (that means it went in the barrel 1976) in European oak at The Singleton's Glendullan facility. There were only 3,756 bottles of this masterpiece released. If you can find one and have an extra grand lying around, invest in this bottle.

Tasting Notes:

This is an amazingly subtle sip — nothing overpowers. There are notes of ripe melon and mango with hints of malty and buttery shortbread biscuits. Woody and sweet apples mingle with notes of orange and cinnamon with brown butter toffee and oak char. Pitchy pine resin, toasted oak, sandalwood and eucalyptus, caramel apples, tart cranberries, and sharp peppery spice bring about a crescendo of a finish.

Bottom Line:

This is just ridiculous. It's one of the top malts you can drink. Though, for my palate, that sandalwood note just isn't my jam. Other than that, this is damn near perfection.

## 9. Caol Ila — Caol Ila Distillers Edition



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%  
Average Price: [\\$88](#)  
The Whisky:

This yearly release from the tiny Islay distillery, Caol Ila, is all about the finish. The 12-year-old juice is finished in Moscatel sherry casks to give it a truly deep fruitiness next to that briny Islay peat.

#### Tasting Notes:

This really draws the peat far into the background as notes of smoked apricots, star anise, and honey-soaked almonds on the nose. The palate has a slight anchovy oil edge that leads towards a very distant whisp of smoke from a campfire far down a rainy beach next to orange oils, smoked salt flakes over buttery toffee, and a touch of more of those honey almonds. The end holds onto that nuttiness and sweetness with a good spray of seawater as the campfire smoke draws nearer and picks up a little more of those stone fruits along the way.

#### Bottom Line:

Let's just say that every bottle from here on out slays.

### 8. Cragganmore — Cragganmore Distillers Edition



DIAGEO

ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$85](#)

#### The Whisky:

Cragganmore is an iconic Scottish distillery. The whisky is matured in sherry casks for 12 years. It's then transferred into American oak casks that held port for a final maturation phase before proofing and bottling.

#### Tasting Notes:

Fennel leads to some dried fruits and fresh apples on the nose. The taste, on the other hand, leans into sweet oak, figs, pear candies, and a softness that's almost hard to believe. The end is full of sweet fruits and has just the right touches of oak, vanilla, and savory greens as it fades at a good clip.

#### Bottom Line:

I love this bottle. It's something that I truly savor and save for when I need something new, comforting, and light.

### 7. Teaninich — Teaninich 17



DIAGEO

ABV: 55.9%

Average Price: [\\$278](#)

#### The Whisky:

Teaninich is one of the rarest drops from the Diageo distilleries. There is the Flora and Fauna edition and this 2016 limited edition. The rest of the juice goes into Johnnie Walker. This drop was comprised of malt aged in ex-bourbon and ex-sherry and then bottled at cask strength.

#### Tasting Notes:

This is very Highland with a nose of orange marmalade on butter wheat toast bespeckled with pumpkin seeds, poppy seeds, and maybe a sunflower seed or two next to vanilla candies wrapped in white wax paper and a touch of canned brown bread. The palate has an apple cider vibe with hints of that brown bread sweetness leading towards the syrup from a can of peaches, eggnog spices, and a hint of cedar. The finish is soft and slow and leans into the peaches as the spice gently fades towards apple-cider-soaked cinnamon sticks and allspice berries.

#### Bottom Line:

If you can find this, you're going to be in for a *treat*. It's really one of those brands that you wish had so many more expressions on the shelf.

### 6. Blair Athol — Blair Athol 12 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$55](#)

#### The Whisky:

Besides this bottling, you really only see Blair Athol malt in Bell's whisky (above) and very limited releases from the distillery or boutique brands. The whisky is a Highland malt that spends 12 years chilling out in ex-bourbon and ex-sherry casks.

#### Tasting Notes:

The sherry really shines on the nose with a deep dried fruit feel next to Christmas cake spices that were soaked in dark rum — all leading towards hot coals straight from a fireplace. On the palate, light yet very thick syrup arrives with a malty edge, notes of lemon jam, dried apricots, and a vanilla tobacco chewiness. The finish takes its sweet time and turns that light syrup into bitter lemon syrup over dried-out malt crackers with a throughline of burnt rosemary sprigs.

#### Bottom Line:

I can attest that this blows your palate up. There's so much going on and it, somehow, makes sense and really drives home how unique some of these malts are.

### 5. Johnnie Walker — Johnnie Walker Blue



DIAGEO



ABV: 40%

Average Price: [\\$240](#)

The Whisky:

This is the mountaintop of Johnnie Walker's whiskies. The blend is a marriage of ultra-rare stock from extinct Diageo distilleries around Scotland. That's just ... cool. This expression is all about barrel selection and the mastery of a great noser and blender working together to create something special.

Tasting Notes:

Dried fruit with a plummy sweetness mingles with a very soft and almost dry pall of smoke. The palate then veers in a completely different direction — folding in orange oils, marzipan, rose water, honeycombs, and a dusting of bitter cacao once water is added. The end is slow, smoky, and full of dry fruits, nuts, and a malty nature.

Bottom Line:

If there's a better blended malt whisky in the world, we haven't found it.

#### 4. Dailuaine — Dailuaine 16 Flora & Fauna



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$68](#)

The Whisky:

This is an obscure single malt distiller that's really only used for feeding the best Johnnie Walker blends. This extremely rare release spends 16 long years resting in sherry casks before it's proofed and bottled for this one-off drop.

Tasting Notes:

Imagine the best charcuterie board you've ever experienced — crumbly cheddar, Stilton, cellar-cured hams, funky salami, olives, orange marmalade, crusty rye bread, salted and creamy butter — and you'll be on the right track. Add in a glass of bold and tannic red wine next to Werther's Originals and you'll really be getting the vibe of this dram. Now, imagine that all culminated in a Christmas cake brimming with nuts, candied fruits, eggnog spices that's all been soaked in butter and brandy for months. Then, it all slowly fades away, leaving you with that nutty holiday cake and a line of smoke from a fresh tobacco leaf.

Bottom Line:

This could have been number one. It's mind-bogglingly delicious. But finding it is going to be a pain in the ass in the U.S.

#### 3. Oban — Oban 14



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$95](#)

The Whisky:

This is a great gateway to both Oban and scotch to have on hand. The juice is classically made and then matured in the Oban storehouses for 14 long years — all within a stone's throw of the sea.

Tasting Notes:

Citrus, salt, and a billow of peat smoke open this one up in classic fashion. That citrus carries on as a foundation for mild spices. A note of honey, hints of pears, and plummy dried fruits mingle on the tongue. The oak spice and extremely mild peat smoke meet on the end with a slight malty sweetness as the sip fades.

Bottom Line:

Oban is one of my favorite distilleries in the world. While the 21 is my go-to, the 14 is where you need to start your Oban journey. It's cheaper and truly special.

#### 2. Mortlach — Mortlach 20



DIAGEO

ABV: 43.4%

Average Price: [\\$230](#)

The Whisky:

Dufftown's Mortlach is one of those distilleries that may just make you fall in love with scotch. The mash is distilled 2.81 times, according to Mortlach's unique distilling methods. That juice is then loaded in sherry casks and left to do its thing for 20 long years. The results are vatted, brought down to proof with that soft Speyside water, and bottled.

Tasting Notes:

There's an apple pie feel that pulls you in with stewed and spicy apples, black raisins, and walnuts next to a hint of caramelized pineapple and a whisper of sea salt. That apple pie filling kicks up a notch as a savory and buttery pie crust comes into play, while hints of mint, figs, vanilla,

oak, and dark cacao mingle on the tongue. The end comes along very slowly with more walnuts and raisins leading towards a final savory note that's almost ... extra virgin olive oil?  
Bottom Line:  
Complex. Unique. Delightful. Bold. Delicate. Engaging. Comforting. This malt is the full package.

### 1. Talisker — Talisker 25



DIAGEO  
ABV: 45.8%  
Average Price: [\\$600](#)  
The Whisky:

This whisky is a marriage of American bourbon barrels, Spanish sherry casks, and Talisker's seaside location. The whiskies in this single malt spend a minimum of 25 years resting in old bourbon and sherry barrels a few short steps from the sea in the Isle of Skye. Talisker's tiny warehouse feels a bit like an old pirate ship that's seen too many sea battles and that aura is imbued into every barrel as it matures.

#### Tasting Notes:

This one opens with a note of wet wildflowers next to sweet beeswax candles (unlit) with hints of murky apple cider, creamy chocolate, and a whisper of briny campfire smoke. The taste really brings out the wooden beams of the Talisker warehouse with notes of sea salt next to cobwebs and wet moss that's all counterpointed by a blossoming wisteria, orange tobacco, and a little bit more of that campfire smoke lurking in the background. The end holds onto the florals as it slowly fades away, leaving you with a wisp of smoke, a misting of sea spray, and a touch of that orange.

#### Bottom Line:

If you don't like this, we can't be friends.

Seriously though, this is one of the best whiskies ever made. Of the thousands of drams I've tasted, maybe a handful comes as close to the pure bliss of this juice. Save up your cash and dive into a truly great whisky with this bottle.

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## Unicorn Scotch Whisky Bottles To Start Building A Collection Around

[ZACH JOHNSTON](#) [TWITTER](#) LIFE WRITER

SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

Collecting rare [Scotch whisky](#) is a life-long (and very expensive) endeavor. Whereas collecting rare and [expensive bourbon unicorns](#) can still be about actually drinking the stuff, buying the [Scotch whiskies](#) below is often more about trading commodities, making sound investments, and signaling your status. Still, since I get to dip my toes into that exclusive world every now and then, I thought I'd drop a few bottles that I've added to my personal collection as investment bottles and a few that I'd like to.

Eight out of the ten [bottles](#) below are pretty widely available and cost anywhere from \$200 to \$1,000. They're unique, rare, old, and very collectible. I also added one bottle that inches towards \$10,000 and a final bottle that costs as much as a luxury car. Just to be clear, I've not tried the last bottle on the list — just heard about it ceaselessly from my whisky-collecting pals (I have included tasting notes from the distiller).

It goes without saying but this list barely scratches the surface of the [bazillion bottles](#) of scotch worth collecting out there. This is an introduction and not meant to be comprehensive in any way. Click on the prices if you want to dive in to the whiskey collecting game.

Related: [Unicorn Bourbons To Start Building Your Whiskey Collection Around](#)

Johnnie Walker Blue Label Year Of The Ox



DIAGEO

ABV: 46%  
Average Price: [\\$209](#)  
The Whisky:

This is the mountaintop of Johnnie Walker's whiskies. The blend is a marriage of ultra-rare stock from extinct Diageo distilleries around Scotland. That's cooler than Brad Pitt wearing work boots and aviators on his motorcycle. This expression is all about barrel selection and the mastery of a great noser and blender working together to create something special.

#### Tasting Notes:

Dried fruit with a plummy sweetness mingle with a very soft and almost dry waft of smoke. The palate then veers in a completely different direction — folding in orange oils, marzipan, rose water, honeycombs, and even a dusting of bitter cacao once a drop of water is added. The end is slow, smoky, and full of dry fruits, nuts, and has a malty nature.

#### Collectibility:

These are truly bespoke limited yearly releases that you have no reason to open — just grab a regular Johnnie Blue to sip. The Ox expression will 100 percent go up in value. It's also a freaking beautiful piece to have.

Talisker 30



DIAGEO

ABV: 45.8%  
Average Price: [\\$1,000](#)



#### The Whisky:

Talisker's seaside vibes are on full display in this beautiful bottle. The last limited release was only 3,186 bottles, making this a very rare expression from the Isle of Skye distillery.

#### Tasting Notes:

Based on the 2017 release, the nose is shockingly subtle and soft with velvety notes of smoldering dried nori next to matchsticks that have been dipped in a buttery and rich dark chocolate with sea salt gently sprinkled all over. The palate leans into the dialed-back peat by bringing about a smoked cream with fire-seared peaches next to a hint of wet cedar, very old tobacco leaves, and a touch of almond or oat milk touched by salt. That salt drives the mid-palate towards a finish that's like getting kissed by merfolk on a beach next to a campfire that's heating a cauldron full of spicy stewed peaches in more of that cream.

Sound interesting? It is!

#### Collectibility:

These are very rare drops that you can still find pours of in the best whisk(e)y bars in the world. Our advice: Order a pour at the bar and save the bottle in the vault.

Octomore 11.1



#### RÉMY COINTREAU

ABV: 59.5%

Average Price: [\\$200](#)

#### The Whisky:

This is the first of four releases in Octomore's 11.x "Super Heavily Peated" line. The juice is fermented from 100 percent Concerto and Propino malted barley grown in Scotland. The whisky then spent about five years in ex-bourbon barrels from Jim Beam, Heaven Hill, and Jack Daniel's before it went into the bottle at cask strength with zero fussing.

#### Tasting Notes:

These are peat bombs and that's apparent from the first whiff of green moss and wet firewood bark smoldering over a campfire on a rainy day while notes of Windex mingle with honey apples and a touch of ginger spice. The taste dances between dried and smoked red chilis preserved in honey and a peaches-and-cream vibe that leans more towards buttermilk tartness with a dash of salt and a sprinkle of wet brown sugar. The honey and vanilla last into the mid-palate until the peat takes over the finish with a deeply charred bitterness that's kind of like throwing burning coal in your face and then chewing on it (some people really like that).

#### Collectibility:

There were about 30,000 of these bottles released with a much smaller number actually making it across the pond. These aren't the rarest whiskies on the list but they're fought over in the U.S. because there's nothing quite like them. They are unique and we'll never see this exact expression released again.

Orphan Barrel Forager's Keep



DIAGEO

ABV: 48%

Average Price: [\\$590](#)

#### The Whisky:

This was Diageo's first Orphan Barrel from Scotland (they usually focus on long-forgotten bourbons). The juice in this bottle is a 26-year-old single malt from the long-shuttered and now-demolished Pittyvaich distillery. So not only are you getting a super rare and old whisky, you're getting something that we'll never see again.

#### Tasting Notes:

The nose draws you in with sharp green apples nestled in loose straw in wicker baskets in a sunny orchard with a throughline of light vanilla cream. The apple and vanilla mellow out into an almost cream soda note on the palate, as a rush of orange oils and wet cedar spice things up. The end adds in a dry cedar and apple tobacco vibe with a hint of silken maltiness.

#### Collectibility:

This is a very rare release from a dead distillery. We literally will never see this again. And when it's gone, it's gone forever. That's reason enough to squirrel one of these away.

The Balvenie Single Barrel 25



WILLIAM GRANT & SONS

ABV: 47.8%

Average Price: [\\$700](#)

#### The Whisky:

Malt Master David Stewart hand-selects these Balvenie barrels for bottling. He searches through refill ex-bourbon barrels that are 25-years-old to find one that's exactly right according to his legendary abilities. The whisky is then touched with a drop of water to help highlight the flavors and textures Stewart is looking for.

#### Tasting Notes:

This draws deeply from woody holiday spices that are stored in an old cedar box that once held honey-dipped cigars. A flourish of orchard

fruit arrives by way of spicy stewed pie filling and a honey tobacco sharp-yet-sweet buzz that leads towards a silky — almost ... calm — mouthfeel. The finish holds onto the honey as notes of vanilla husks, dried wildflowers, stewed pears, and more of that velvet honey slowly fade away.

**Collectibility:**

There's a lot of great collectible bottles from The Balvenie. While their Tun drops and 30-year-old are a little more flashy, this 25 year is a touch more accessible to the casual collector and will certainly be something to hold onto for a while as people drink them, thereby making them rarer.

**Mortlach 21 Rare By Nature 2020 Release**



**DIAGEO**

ABV: 56.9%

Average Price: [\\$868](#)

**The Whisky:**

Mortlach is a Dufftown icon. The juices in this bottle are single malts that are small-batched and then refilled into former Pedro Ximenez and Oloroso sherry seasoned casks for final maturation. The whisky was then bottled at cask strength, allowing you a full vision of what was in the barrel.

**Tasting Notes:**

This opens with a holiday cake feel with plenty of candied fruits, spices, dried fruits, and nuts next to a touch of cream soda and a line or two of rich toffee syrup. The palate builds on the holiday cake vibe with chili-infused dark chocolate next to hints of ripe cherries and plums with a light echo of dried tobacco and cedar. The end is not too long and leaves you with a silky mouthfeel and a spicy warmth.

**Collectibility:**

Anything from Mortlach that has an age over 20 years is pretty damn rare and collectible. This 21-year age statement is very unique and we will not see it again outside of this 2020 limited edition release.

**Ardbeg Traigh Bhan 19 Year**



**LOUIS VUITTON MOËT HENNESSY**

ABV: 46.2%

Average Price: [\\$320](#)

**The Whisky:**

This is Ardbeg's yearly release of special batches of 19-year-old peaty malt. The whisky is Ardbeg's signature peated whisky that's bottled during a "haar." That's a thick and briny foggy morning on Islay, which imparts that x-factor into the whisky as it goes into the bottle.

**Tasting Notes:**

You're drawn in with a super subtle waft of soft smoke with hints of sour cream, fennel, and cold-smoked salmon on a pine cutting board that's been washed in the sea. The palate holds onto that briny seaside vibe as it veers towards sea salt-laden dark bricks of fudge bespeckled with dried orange zest and lavender. The end circles back around to a sooty smoke that feels like a warm granite rock that's been dipped in the sea and then rolled around in the dying embers of a fire.

**Collectibility:**

Ardbeg is great at releasing limited editions we'll never see again. This is a special release that's worth holding onto as long as you can, as people really love drinking Ardbeg at the moment

**The Glenlivet XXV**



**PERNOD RICARD**

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$456](#)

**The Whisky:**

This masterpiece from Glenlivet is their iconic whisky that's left to mature for 25 years. That whisky is then finished in an Oloroso sherry cask for that final chef's kiss before going in the bottle at an incredibly accessible 86 proof.

**Tasting Notes:**



Imagine the best, most bespoke dark chocolate-covered raisins from a ridiculously expensive chocolate shop and you'll be on the right track. Those sweets are the foundation for burnt orange peels, Almond Roca candies, and sweet caramel malts with zero edges. The finish is so long that you might still be thinking about it on your death bed thanks to an orange/spice/nutty matrix of *silky-whisky-smoothness* (also my favorite TLC album title).

**Collectibility:**

This is another whisky that you see getting poured a lot at whisky clubs, high-end bars, and amongst collectors looking to try something magical from the iconic shingle. That means these releases tend to dwindle pretty quickly, leaving the leftover bottles looking very attractive to collectors.

**The Dalmore Constellation 1981 Aged 30 Years**



**WHYTE & MACKAY**

**ABV: 54%**

**Average Price: [\\$6,660](#)**

**The Whisky:**

The whisky from The Dalmore is very old with unique aging. The juice spends about 25 years in used American oak before it's finished for almost five years in Metusalem Oloroso sherry casks. Those barrels are used to age sherry for 30 years before they head to Scotland to be filled with whisky. Moreover, the finishing on this whisky is longer than most whiskies are aged in general.

**Tasting Notes:**

This leans heavily into cedar chips that have been touched by droplets of orange oils, lavender oils, and then mixed with dried potpourri. Those dried florals lean into eucalyptus, Earl Grey tea, and a touch of rose perfume filtered through a pack of Pall-Mall cigarettes. The palate leans away from the dried florals and essential oils towards bitter orange-infused marzipan with dark chocolate covering next to a hint of salted ginger candies and eggnog spices (clove and nutmeg especially) and some nice creaminess. The mid-palate really lets the marzipan and nutmeg peak as the finish leans into the creaminess of the dark chocolate with a silken brandy-drenched chocolate orange vibe.

**Collectibility:**

There were only 787 bottles of these produced. Need we say more as to the collectibility of this very rare bottle of scotch?

**Bowmore 54 Years Old 1957**



**BEAM SUNTORY**

**ABV: 42.1%**

**Average Price: [\\$155,000 and up](#)**

**The Whisky:**

This bottle is a little like time travel. Released in 2012, this juice was distilled in 1957 and spent 54 years chilling, untouched, in Bowmore's warehouse. When it was released, it was the oldest Islay malt ever released on the open market.

**Tasting Notes ([from the distillery](#)):**

*On The Eye: Glistening warm gold. Breathe In: An elixir of blueberries and wild figs with mellow almonds, tropical fruit, and rich oaky overtones. Sip: Layer upon layer of sweet and refined ocean tastes with soft blueberries, cassis and figs, sea salt, and fresh eucalyptus. Savor: Long and whispering finish of cassis, bergamot, and star anise.*

**Collectibility:**

The MSRP on this was \$155,000 and only available at the distillery. And, well, it's the oldest Islay malt you can buy. Enough said.

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# WHISKY & WISDOM

Matching a whisky to every James Bond film



– Refreshed and updated for 2021 –

James Bond and whisky? Whisky has been paired with food for decades, although in more recent years we've seen whiskies paired and matched to cigars, watches, [music](#), and even movies! If you're going to sit down in your comfy sofa and pass away a few hours being entertained by 007, then having a good dram in your hand goes a long way to enhancing the James Bond experience.

Of course, Jimmy's drink of choice may be a vodka martini, but we can shake and stir things up for the whisky drinkers out there who are James Bond fans: Here is our effort to pair and match the perfect whisky to every (official) James Bond film.

## Dr No (1962)

Noting the year that this came out and what a defining moment it was, it's hard not to go past the Dalmore 1962 for this. However, we'd like this list to feature whiskies that all of us can actually access and afford! (Besides which, the '62 Dalmore was given due reverence in *Kingsman*.) No, with so much of this movie set in the Caribbean, it follows that this movie should be watched whilst quietly sipping away at The Balvenie 14yo Caribbean Cask.

## From Russia with love (1963)

It says something about this film that it is remembered so fondly and ranks highly in any online poll – and yet it is relatively devoid of the big-budget action, stunts and sets that would come to define later movies. *From Russia with love* benefits from the depth of its characters, whilst painting a deep and defining picture of SPECTRE – its operations and its agents. And, whilst we never see Blofeld's face, we're left under no illusion as to his villainy. This is "old school" Bond and it screams for an old school whisky: Glendronach 21yo



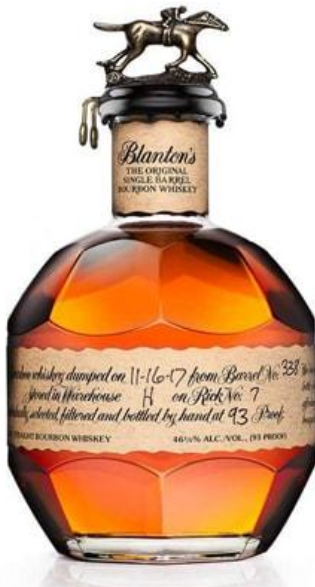
## Goldfinger (1964)

Opinion is divided over which is the *worst* James Bond film (there are several contenders!) but there is near universal agreement about which one is the *best*: *Goldfinger*. It strikes the perfect balance of action and humour; it has excellent gadgets, villains, henchmen, Bond girls, dialogue, and an evil plot. It's a brilliant, all-rounder of a movie that demands an excellent, all-rounder of a whisky. So pour yourself a Highland Park 12yo and settle back.



(Although, as an alternative, with much of the action taking place at *Goldfinger*'s horse stud and racing farm, as well as being set in Kentucky, then a bottle of Blantons wouldn't go astray either!)





### Thunderball (1965)

James Bond films are defined by many things: The actor playing Bond, the villain, the gadgets, the love interest, and so on. One of the other tangible aspects on which each film is judged is the opening credits sequence and the theme song. With *Thunderball* being absolutely belted out by a young and exuberant Tom Jones, this movie calls for a Welsh whisky. Penderyn it is.

### You only live twice (1967)

With a lot of the action set in Japan, it would be easy and lazy to reach for a Japanese whisky here. But the early Bond films are more cerebral than that. Blofeld's lair and the movie's climatic battle take place in a volcano, and the volcano was one of the first "big sets" built and featured in a Bond film. And what whisky do you think of when you think of volcanos? The Cuillin ranges of Skye are hard to go past, and Talisker 10yo works beautifully with this film.



The Cuillins on Skye

### On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969)

Is OHMSS a good or bad film? Or will it forever be remembered simply because George Lazenby wasn't Sean Connery? Australia's George Lazenby certainly brought something to the role and captured a side of Fleming's Bond that one or two future actors failed to grasp. (It's often forgotten or conveniently overlooked that Lazenby was offered a contract for seven Bond films, but elected to quit after just this one outing). So in a nod to Lazenby's Bond, you should watch this film armed with a big glass of Australian whisky. We won't start an argument by nominating just one (particularly since availability is limited in different markets around the world), but Whisky & Wisdom

recently watched OHMSS with a dram of Heartwood. Top work, Moneypenny.

### Diamonds are forever (1971)

Sean Connery returned for this romp through Las Vegas and the film is predominantly set in the US. So an American whisk(e)y wouldn't go astray here – or at least something featuring American oak. Since the movie blends Connery's Scottishness with America so seamlessly, we need a whisky that also combines Scotland and America. With its rich and sublime use of American oak, Glenmorangie Astar fits the bill beautifully, but if you can't find Astar, then Glenmorangie "The Original" will do just fine – after all, Connery was *the original*.

### Live and let die (1973)

Roger Moore's first outing sees Bond return to the Caribbean, with a plot that revolves around voodoo and drug trafficking. Glenfiddich's 21yo expression has gone by several different names over the last 15 years (Havana Reserve, Gran Reserva, and now Reserva Rum Finish), but it has always remained an enjoyable malt that sees well-aged Glenfiddich finished in Caribbean rum casks. Regardless of the name on the label, it's a great whisky that carries what is otherwise one of the weaker films in the Bond canon.

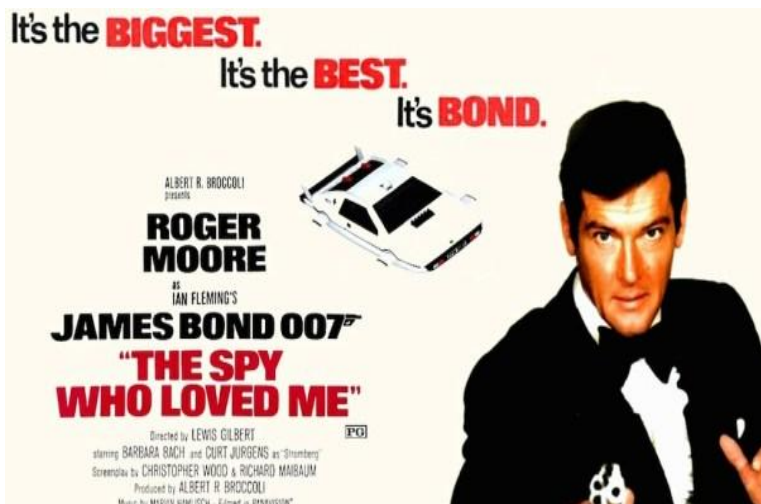


### The man with the golden gun (1974)

This movie was a missed opportunity, with Christopher Lee's excellent Scaramanga having so much potential to be an incredible Bond villain. Instead, it was a weak and confused film that fell short whilst trying to cash in on the Kung Fu film craze of the time. Nonetheless, a movie about a golden gun that fires golden bullets surely needs a golden whisky. The old Johnnie Walker Gold Label (the Centenary Blend) would be a good choice (if you can find it), but if you'd prefer a single malt, then Macallan Gold from the discontinued 1824 Series or Dalwhinnie's Winter's Gold might distract you for two hours.

### The spy who loved me (1977)

After two duds, Roger Moore finally delivers with the film that many believe to be the best of his Bond outings. Jaws was a genuinely terrifying henchman; Stromberg was a suitably ruthless villain, and Barbara Bach was...well, stunning. The film is notable for so many memorable moments (including the Lotus Esprit submarine), but one of its most stunning was the ski chase at the start and the iconic stunt as Bond flew off the snow-capped mountain and released his Union Jack parachute. Glenfiddich's Snow Phoenix would thus be a great match for the movie, but if you can't get your hands on this, then a good maritime malt pairs nicely with the rest of the film's maritime themes. Q would hand you a standard issue Old Pulteney 12yo.



Roger Moore was 57 when he filmed his last outing as Bond, and – well, let's just say it shows. Watching his love scene with Grace Jones is about as comfortable as drinking Chivas Regal at a Diageo convention. Whisky matches can be like-with-like or they can work via *contrast*, and Moore's geriatric performance in this film needs to be offset and contrasted with a young whisky. The **Glen Moray Elgin Classic** range has five NAS expressions, although former Distillery Manager Graham Coull happily once shared that they're all roughly around six years old. The youthful but very flavoursome **Glen Moray Elgin Classic Port Cask** helps to carry the movie. It also pairs well with Duran Duran's excellent title song. Feeling the need for peat instead? **Ardbeg 5yo** is suitably youthful, and goes off like a bomb – a bit like the device that took care of May Day at the end of the film.

### The living daylights (1987)

Timothy Dalton brought a harder edge to Bond (which wasn't too difficult after Moore's efforts) and Dalton's interpretation was praised for being more like the Bond that Fleming described in the books. It's a no-nonsense film that pairs with a no-nonsense whisky, and the dry, iodine-like **Lagavulin 16yo** is the perfect clinical match.



### Moonraker (1979)

*For your eyes only* was supposed to be the next film in the series, but with Star Wars mania everywhere, *Moonraker* was fast-tracked through production instead. Jaws made a welcome return (and delivered some comic relief) as Hugo Drax played out his deadly scheme to rid the world of mankind and to start a new master race of humans. With the climatic battle played out in space, **Ardbeg Galileo** is a great whisky to cheer Bond through his usual array of girls, gadgets, and guns.

Can't find Galileo? Any of the **Ardbeg Supernova** releases would also capture the theme.

### For your eyes only (1981)

After the spectacle of *Moonraker*, *For your eyes only* saw a return to a more grounded storyline of espionage as MI6 and the KGB race to be first to recover the missing ATAC device from a sunken British ship. The film makes good use of outdoor scenes; glamorous locations; and some memorable action and stunts. **Glenlivet 12yo** is equally well-grounded yet delivers glamorous moments, and you can't help but feel a wee bit more sophisticated and Bond-like yourself as you sip this special Speysider whilst watching the film.

### Octopussy (1983)

A consistently high performer on the "Worst Bond films of all time" lists, *Octopussy* almost fell into parody. Much of the action takes place in India, and so an Indian whisky is definitely called for. Paul John "Bold" matches the colour and vibrancy of the film, and has suitable depth and seriousness to offset the fluff of the final circus scene.



### Licence to kill (1989)

This was a dark and violent film with a plot that revolved around revenge as Bond ruthlessly sets out to avenge the attempt on Felix Leiter's life and the murder of Leiter's wife. Dalton succeeds brilliantly at showcasing Bond's darker, more brutal side, but it was a side that audiences didn't want to see. It's definitely a "love it or hate it" film with many opinions – and thus it begs to be matched with Laphroaig 10yo. For bonus points, make it a **Laphroaig 10yo Cask Strength Batch 007**.

### Goldeneye (1995)

Six long years passed before the series re-booted with Pierce Brosnan gaining his licence to kill. Much had changed in the international arena since the last film, and the fall of the Berlin wall and communism across eastern Europe meant that the writers had to find a new "bad guy". *Goldeneye* was fast and slick; it had its moments; and it represented a renaissance of sorts – all of which are traits shared with a vibrant Benriach. Try this with **Benriach 10yo**. Prefer something smoky instead? Perhaps give a nod to Brosnan being Irish and pair this with the excellent Teeling Blackpitts.

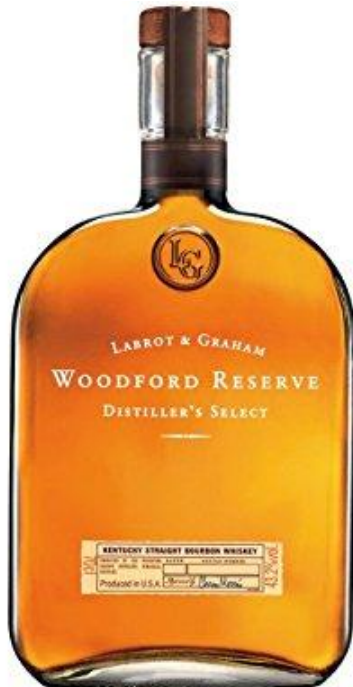
### A view to a kill (1985)





### Tomorrow never dies (1997)

Whilst a number of fans cite this as a disappointing instalment, Whisky & Wisdom believes this is the best Bond film to star Pierce Brosnan. It's a fantastic Bond outing that mixes brilliant excitement and action with some wonderful humour. Sheryl Crowe's title track was also a winner. The "baddies" are genuinely *bad* in this flick, and Herr Stamper is one of the series' more memorable henchmen. But it's hard to get past Crowe's signature vocals in the opening credits – her raspy drawl just screams *bourbon* at you, and the film is that much richer as you watch whilst knocking back a **Woodford Reserve**.



### The world is not enough (1999)

Mixed reviews at the time leave this film somewhat in no-man's land. It has the requisite Bond girls (including the scrummy Sophie Marceau) although the decision to cast Denise Richards as Dr Christmas Jones drew appropriate ire. Robbie Coltrane injects some humour (as does John Cleese), and Robert Carlyle's "Renard" ticks the box for maniacal villain. However, the plot is convoluted and the film is weighed down as a result. This calls for a light yet full-flavoured whisky to keep your palate entertained – **Clynelish 14yo** has just the right amount of depth without being too serious a dram.

### Die another day (2002)

Pierce Brosnan's final outing as Bond had a promising and entertaining beginning, although it rapidly descended into a farce of outlandish stunts (parasurfing), outlandish gadgets (the invisible car), outlandish sets (ice palace, anyone?) and outlandish – and very cringeworthy – CGI production. The film was also criticised for its excessive *product placement*, and keen Scotch drinkers will spot a bottle of Talisker on M's desk during one scene in the film. But that's no reason to pair this film with Talisker.

Just as pre-production on the film was underway in 2001, a particular distillery on Islay was brought back to life – one that would also go on to achieve some outlandish things. Bruichladdich forged new ground with undertakings such as its quadruple-distilled spirit; its steadfast belief in terroir; and the multitude of new releases that came out every second week as they dealt with their cask inventory. But some of **Bruichladdich's** outlandish pursuits became a great success, and *Die another day* is actually half-enjoyable if you've got a big glass of **Octomore** in your hand.

### Casino Royale (2006)

Daniel Craig was a revelation as Bond, and *Casino Royale* was a tremendous re-boot for the series, not to mention an exceptionally sophisticated and action-packed film – even allowing for the action that took place around a card table! Given the link to playing cards – particularly in the opening credits – anything from Ichiro's Hanyu Malt Card Series would be very apt, although also a rare and expensive choice. The Bond's scenes with Vesper Lynd (particularly their introduction aboard the train) were suave, sexy, clever, and wonderfully understated. Just like **Caol Ila 18yo**. It's also a whisky that will call your bluff.



### Quantum of solace (2008)

The follow-up to *Casino Royale* was the first Bond film to officially be a "sequel" and continue the story of the previous film. But the film disappointed on several fronts, and was ultimately a *confused* affair. It would pair beautifully with Ardbeg Serendipity, which was also the most confused *whisky* ever to be bottled, but that's obviously a difficult bottle to find these days. Even the film's villain, Dominic Greene, is a weedy, pitiful chap, and it takes a big whisky to inject some fire and "oomph" into this particular viewing. **Aberlour a'Bunadh** does the trick quite nicely.

### Skyfall (2012)

One of the best Bond films ever, this movie works on so many levels. It was a joy also for whisky spotters, noting that there are four scenes that feature a bottle of **Macallan**! The 1962 Macallan 50yo features in one particularly memorable scene, but I daresay that bottle is beyond the reach of most of us. Macallan has changed its tune and its badging

as much as Bond has changed its actors over the years, so whether you choose to pair this with a **Sherry Oak**, or a **Double Cask**, or a **Triple Cask Matured**, or something from the multitude of limited release series, we'll leave that up to you.



### Spectre (2015)

After the success and excitement of *Skyfall*, you find yourself watching *Spectre* with an almost unhealthy air of expectation. At two hours and forty minutes, it's a long film and you'll need a whisky that can sustain the interest of your tastebuds for its duration. Too much sherry or peat would simply fatigue your palate over this movie's set pieces, so we'll play this one straight: **Oban 14yo**

### No time to die (2021)

Although filmed and "in the can", the cinema release was held back for over a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notable and lamented for being Daniel Craig's last turn at the role, the film visits Bond after he's spent five years in retirement, and introduces us to a female 007.

Reviews varied, with some saying it was a truly brilliant film in every aspect; others suggesting it got weighed down trying to tick too many boxes. (Although that's arguably a challenge that every Bond flick has to face and somehow overcome).



In a nod to Daniel's service – five films over a 15 year period – we're going with a 15 year old that's also given tremendous performances over the years at a higher strength. (46% ABV, to be

precise). **Glenfarclas 15yo** has the grunt, complexity, quality, and interest to go the distance with this long, but very engaging film.



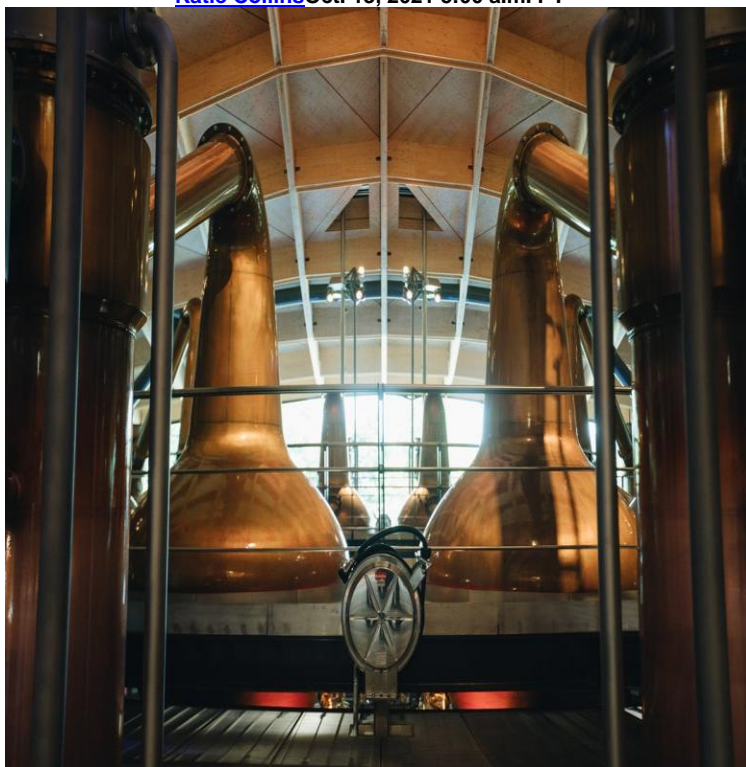
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So there's our list and a sensible selection of whiskies to accompany you as you enjoy 007's exploits. And for those wondering about *Never say never again*.... a Macallan Replica bottling seems most appropriate.

Cheers, AD

## On the whisky trail in Scotland

From Edinburgh to Angus to Speyside, Scotch is being crafted with respect for the environment and for its heritage, along with a passion for innovation.

[Katie Collins](#) Oct. 13, 2021 5:00 a.m. PT



1 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Macallan's new distillery opened in 2018.





2 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The new Macallan distillery took two years to plan and four years to build.



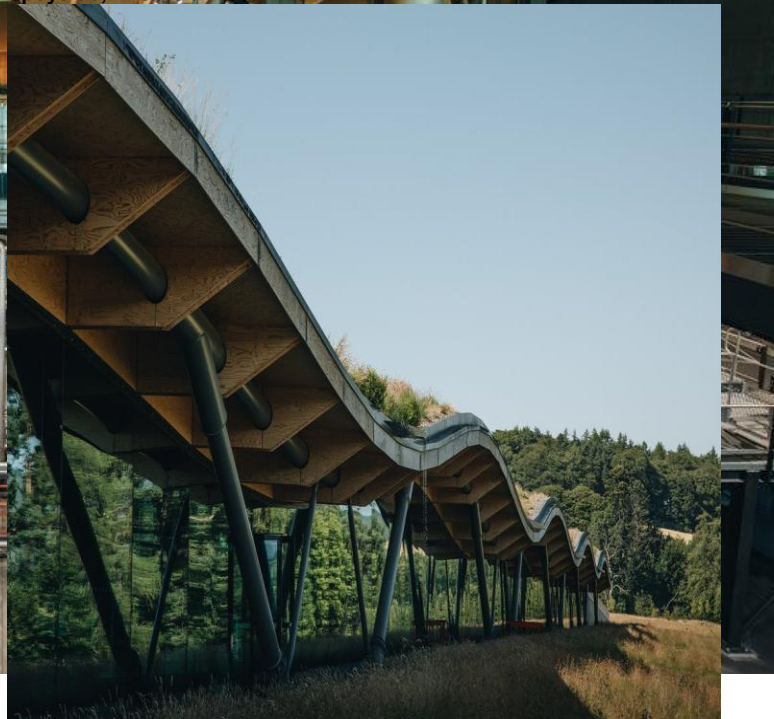
4 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
There are 36 copper-pot stills in Macallan's distillery.



5 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The new building remains on the Macallan estate in Craigellachie, Speyside, in Scotland.



3 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Macallan distills about 11 million liters of spirit per year (nearly 3 million gallons).



6 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET



The five undulations in the distillery roof mimic the surrounding hills.



7 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The grass-clad roof is shaped from Scandinavian pine.



8 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Macallan is a distillery that's not so much in the environment as part of it.



9 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
There are two distilleries in Craigellachie, as well as the Speyside Cooperage.



10 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The Spey River lends its waters to many distilleries in the region.

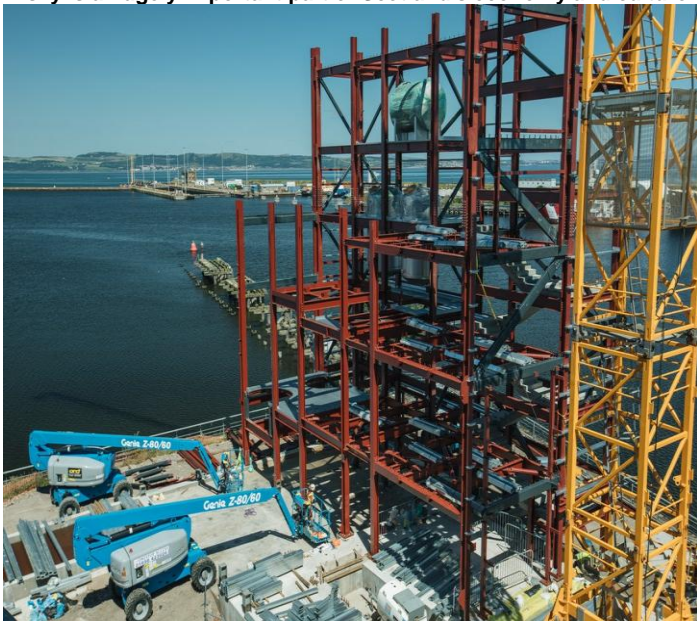




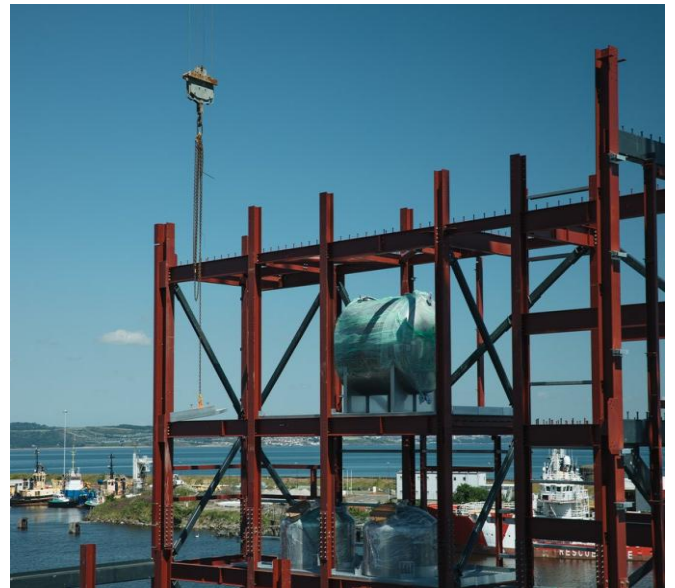
11 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Macallan started focusing on single malt in 1965.



12 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Whisky is a hugely important part of Scotland's economy and culture.



13 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Edinburgh's whisky scene is livening up with the addition of a new vertical distillery in Leith.



14 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The Port of Leith distillery will have room for an onsite lab when it's built.



15 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The Port of Leith distillery hopes to focus on whisky vintages rather than aiming for year-on-year consistency.



16 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET



Port of Leith distillery has been experimenting with finding new flavors by using different yeasts.



17 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Like many distilleries, Port of Leith launched its gin first, which distills in days and weeks, rather than years.



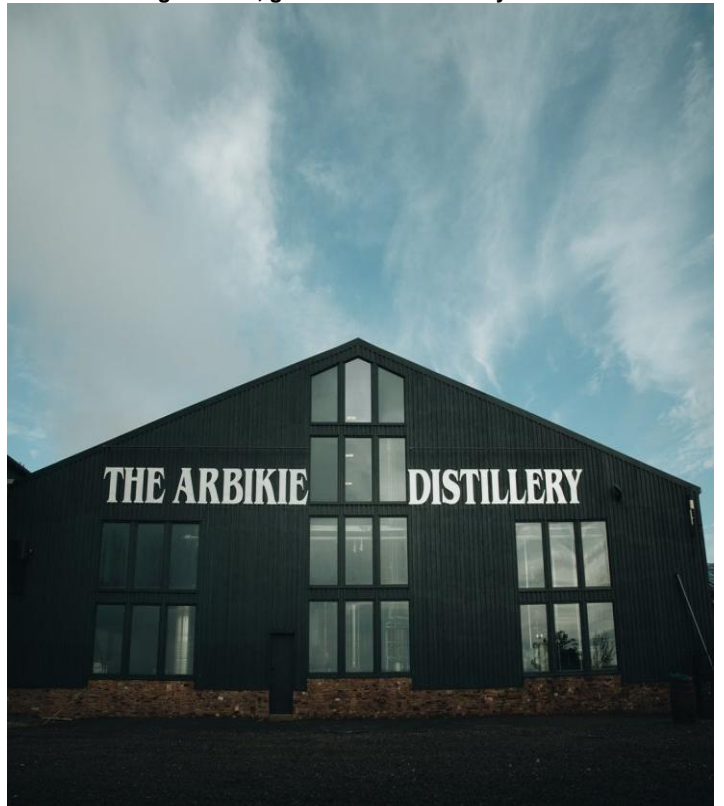
18 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET

In Angus, Arbikie distillery is just getting started.



19 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Arbikie is a single-estate, grain-to-bottle distillery.



20 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET

The distillery itself is housed in one of the farm's old cow sheds.



21 of 39Andrew Hoyle/CNET





22 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
It's a much smaller scale than Macallan, but that smaller size allows Arbikie to be more experimental.



23 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Arbikie is also making carbon-positive vodka and rum.



24 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The copper-pot stills are all handmade.



25 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Grain is one of the essential components for making whisky.



26 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Arbikie's first single malt won't be available until around 2035.



27 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
All Scotch single malt must be matured in oak casks.





28 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Arbikie is responsible for bringing rye whisky back to Scotland.



29 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
John Stirling is making whisky on the family farm he grew up on.



30 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
At Edinburgh's Balmoral Hotel, bar manager Cameron Ewen believes people should drink whisky however they enjoy it best.



31 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
Researchers at Edinburgh's Heriot Watt University are experimenting with new ideas.



32 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET  
The university's brewing and distilling course is producing some exciting new possibilities for Scotch and other spirits distilled in Scotland.





33 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Though Scottish whisky has a long tradition, there are numerous countries producing top-quality whisky, including India, New Zealand and the US.



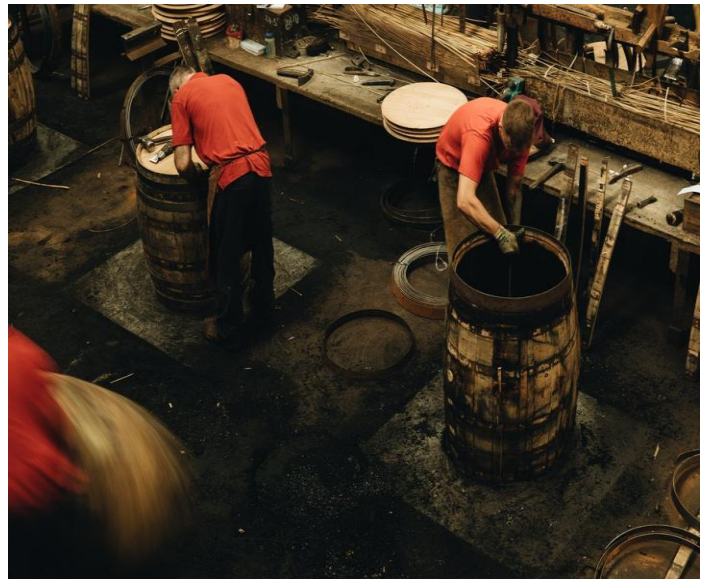
34 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Many of Japan's whiskies are very highly regarded on the world stage.



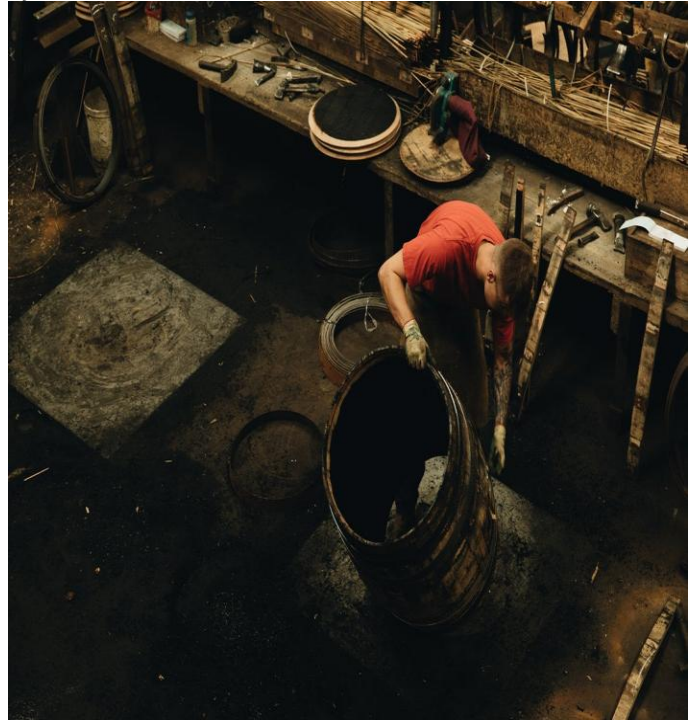
35 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Scotland has more than 130 whisky distilleries.



36 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

The Speyside cooperage is where oak casks for maturation are made by hand.



37 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Apprenticeships to become coopers (barrel makers) take seven years to complete and are highly prestigious positions.



38 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

As well as making new barrels, the cooperage also restores older barrels so they can find new life with new distilleries.



39 of 39 Andrew Hoyle/CNET

Drink it neat, over ice, with a dash of water, or inside a big, fruity cocktail; how you drink Scotch is entirely up to you.

## Single malt Scotch whisky producers revitalize an old spirit with new twists

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/food-and-wine/article-single-malt-scotch-whisky-producers-revitalize-an-old-spirit-with-new/>

There were less than 100 single malts on the market in the 1980s when [Bill Lumsden](#) got his start in distilling. Compared to blended Scotch whiskies, which were enjoyed around the world, these small-batch, pot-distilled spirits – with names that many found difficult to pronounce – were rare and offered a range of different tastes and characteristics.

The world of single malt Scotch was intimidating. For many outsiders, the exclusive – and often expensive – spirit still is.

Now working as the director of distilling, whisky creation and whisky stocks for the Glenmorangie and Ardbeg distilleries, Lumsden, who holds a PhD in biochemistry, says he's having fun coming up with new innovations and expressions that aren't designed to appeal solely to traditional, dyed-in-the-wool whisky drinkers.

Last year, he produced a limited-edition whisky called [A Tale of Cake](#), which offered aromas and flavours inspired by childhood memories of his grandmother's pineapple upside-down cake. This year, Glenmorangie launched a richer and sweeter single malt whisky simply

called [X](#), meant to be mixed into cocktails or enjoyed neat as the occasion warrants.

"We're trying to reach out to people who might in the past actually have been too scared to drink single malt Scotch," Lumsden says.

Perhaps they thought a single malt's taste would be too strong, or lacked the insight into the spirit to fully appreciate its nuances, he explains.

"There are a lot of knowledge bullies out there saying: 'Oh, no, no – that's not how you drink malt whiskey,'" Lumsden says. "We're taking this view that if you really want to know all about the barrel type, and the distillation, and the size of the spirit cut and the barley variety, etc., we can tell you that. But if you don't, then don't worry. Just enjoy the fact that it has a simply delicious flavour."

Single-malt producers throughout Scotland are looking to trade their tweed-and-tartan image for a more inviting and unpretentious approach. With its traditional fan base aging, there's a desire to introduce a wider audience to the world of single malt and other Scotch whisky.

The goal is to shake off archaic perceptions that single malts are a strongly flavoured and complex drink governed by rules of how to appreciate its uniqueness – without losing its identity and rich heritage in the process. After all, older, knowledgeable consumers still account for the bulk of sales.

Distilleries are embracing different oak barrels that previously held Port, Madeira, American rye whiskey, PX sherry, sauternes, or various types of red wines to create different flavour profiles in their spirits as they age.

### STORY CONTINUES BELOW ADVERTISEMENT

They are also looking to different areas for sourcing oak – such as Italy and Hungary – besides the traditional regions in France, Spain and the United States – as well as expanding options for seasoning the wood and toasting or charring the inside of the barrels to offer a greater range of flavours.

By creating new products designed to introduce their offerings to those who don't usually drink Scotch – and establish a base of younger drinkers – distilleries are not only competing against less stuffy (and potentially less pricey) bourbon, Irish whisky or Canadian whiskies. They are squaring off against beer, hard seltzer, or even popular mixed drinks.

Louise Dennett, global head of brand and innovation at The Glenmorangie Company, sees an opportunity to showcase the hospitality and sense of occasion that comes with enjoying a single malt whisky.

While distillers such as Glenmorangie are more than happy to "go down the rabbit hole" about how their whiskies are made, "we're not going to lead with that," Dennett says.

"Sharing a glass of Glenmorangie together is an emotional experience. We're just inviting people into that and not intellectualizing it, but also not dumbing it down."

This week's recommendations include some recent innovations from traditional Scottish distilleries that were crafted to help newcomers navigate the single-malt category.

Glenmorangie distillery.

### HANDOUT

Ardbeg Wee Beastie 5-Year-Old Whisky (Scotland), \$77.25

RATING OUT OF 100

89

Wee Beastie was aged for five years in a combination of former bourbon and oloroso sherry casks prior to release. It's billed as "a monster of a dram," with telltale smoky aromas. The palate is more gentle and fruity in nature, with the fresh peaty notes returning on the lingering finish. To my taste, this is best enjoyed in a cocktail, such as a whisky sour or mixed with ginger ale. Available in Ontario at the above price, \$68.99 in British Columbia, various prices in Alberta, \$79.99 in Manitoba, \$78.29 in Nova Scotia.

Glenfiddich Experimental Series #4 Fire & Cane (Scotland), \$73

RATING OUT OF 100

87

Fire & Cane draws its name and inspiration from a Glenfiddich peated whisky (the fire), which was finished in barrels that were used to mature rum (the cane). The result is a fragrant and mellow spirit with pronounced grassy, herbal and campfire notes rounded out by caramel and toffee flavours. The sweet, rich warming sensation is easy to appreciate. Available in Ontario at the above price, \$84.99 in British Columbia, various prices in Alberta, \$79.49 in Saskatchewan, \$79.99 in Manitoba, \$80.25 in Quebec.

Glenmorangie Original Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky (Scotland), \$69.45

RATING OUT OF 100



Made in Glenmorangie's consistently enjoyable house style, this fresh and nicely layered 10-year-old single malt is defined by its fruity and creamy character. The mix of orange and tree-fruit flavours gains interest from vanilla and toffee notes, which carry through to a mellow and lingering finish. Available in Ontario at the above price, \$68.99 in British Columbia, various prices in Alberta, \$77.99 in Saskatchewan, \$69.99 in Manitoba and Newfoundland, \$69.50 in Quebec, \$68.29 in New Brunswick, \$65.12 in Nova Scotia, \$63.39 in Prince Edward Island. Glenmorangie X (Scotland), \$58.50

RATING OUT OF 100

88

A single malt Scotch that was made to be mixed in cocktails, X offers pleasant orange, spice and chocolate notes as part of a sweeter and richer style of spirit. It's not as complex as Glenmorangie's traditional single malts, but the lingering vanilla and apricot flavours also make this enjoyable served neat or with an ice cube. Available at the above price in Ontario, \$59.99 in British Columbia (\$55.99 until Oct. 31), various prices in Alberta.

Highland Park Magnus Single Malt Scotch Whisky (Scotland), \$58.95

RATING OUT OF 100

89

Made in Highland Park's house style, this gentle spirit offers attractive peat, citrus and vanilla notes, but with less complexity than the distillery's popular 12-Year Single Malt. The finish is pleasingly dry and spicy, which makes it enjoyable on its own. Available in Ontario at the above price, \$53.99 in British Columbia, various prices in Alberta, \$54.99 in Saskatchewan, \$55.99 in Manitoba, \$65 in Quebec, \$57.29 in New Brunswick, \$59.98 in Nova Scotia, \$49.71 in Newfoundland.

## Lakes Distillery debuts whisky inspired by wine country

15 OCTOBER 2021 By Alice Brooker

English producer The Lakes Distillery has added to its Whiskymaker's Editions line with a red wine-influenced single malt.



Sequoia is available to buy for for RRP £70 (US\$96.18)

Following the release of its [Recuerdo whisky](#) earlier this month, The Lakes Distillery has released a single malt called Sequoia.

The expression is inspired by northern California's wine country, particularly the flavours of red wine, and was made using a 'diverse combination of cask types'.

On the nose and palate, redcurrants are said to give way to notes of spiced chocolate, red grapes and dried fruits, along with butterscotch, fig and cinnamon.

The Sequoia bottling joins the Whiskymaker's Editions collection, created by Lakes whiskymaker Dhavall Gandhi. The range comprises [Colheita](#), a whisky matured in Port and the first expression in the range; [Le Gôûter](#), a patisserie-inspired single malt; [Bal Masque](#), matured in French oak casks; [Miramar](#), a 'fruity and lively' liquid; and [Recuerdo](#), a bottling aged in ex-Sherry casks.

The non-chill filtered whisky clocks in at 53% ABV, and is available in Booths stores and at The Lakes' own distillery shop for RRP £70 (US\$96.18).

1,300 bottles are available to buy in the UK, and 3,000 bottles have been released to international markets.

Sequoia will also be available to purchase at specialist whisky retailers in Japan, Singapore, China, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy.

## Taking stock: what's next for Scotch whisky?

15 OCTOBER 2021 By Nicola Carruthers

The Covid-19 pandemic dealt a major blow to the Scotch whisky industry, with suppliers and contractors forced to close, staff laid off and production volumes down. But, as Nicola Carruthers discovers, the sector is ready to bounce back.

*\*This feature was originally published in the July 2021 issue of The Spirits Business magazine.*

Covid-19 has presented multiple challenges for the Scotch sector.

While the crucial on-trade channel was hit with restrictions, some distillers had to halt production, and many were forced to temporarily shut their visitor centres.

Farmers, maltsters, still makers and engineers were not immune to the effects of the pandemic, which came at an already uncertain time for distillers. The sector has also been battling Brexit and the US's 25% tariff on single malts, which has now been paused for five years.

The Scotch whisky industry directly employs more than 10,500 people in Scotland, including 7,000 in rural areas, and its supply chain is worth more than £1.8 billion (US\$2.5bn), according to trade body the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA).

Tony Brewerton, operations director at Scotch whisky producer Loch Lomond Group, says the impact of the pandemic on the supply chain has been "significant", mostly because of challenges to resources, and measures that restricted the spread of the virus.

Brewerton says: "In the supply chain, our suppliers faced the same challenges as we have in managing their businesses and adapting to the new measures, so the inconsistent supply of dry goods coming into the site caused significant turbulence in our production plans, and continue to do so."

"Many of our suppliers have diverse customer bases across multiple industries. With other industries experiencing major impacts, suppliers were forced to enter into widespread furlough with employees. This reduction in staff saw reduced capacity, and suppliers struggled to keep up with our demand due to their furlough decisions."

Simpsons Malt produces malted barley, which is used to make Scotch whisky. The family-owned company currently operates two malting facilities in Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, and Tivetshall St Margaret, Norfolk. Simpsons Malt is due to open a third site in Speyside to meet demand from Scottish producers. The site, subject to planning permission, will offer "state-of-the-art" maltings, as well as malted barley storage facilities.

The company saw its sales tumble during 2020 due to the pandemic. Simpsons Malt's profit before tax nearly halved to £4.7 million in 2020 (it was £9.8m in 2019), with turnover reaching £123.5m, compared with 2019's £168m. The reduced profit in 2020 was due to the impact of the pandemic on the malting division of the business, particularly in the second quarter of the year.



Simpsons Malt experienced a decline in sales in 2020

### Reduced levels

Simpsons Malt said the malt supply chain had to adjust to the government's lockdown measures, which led to many of its distilling and brewing customers either closing or operating at significantly reduced production levels.

Richard Simpson, vice-chairman of Simpsons Malt, says the firm had to access the furlough scheme. Both of the company's sites were equally affected, he notes. But he says the company is "well on its way back to pre-pandemic levels", with a lot of demand from brewers as the on-trade reopens.

Julian South, executive director of trade body the Maltsters Association of Great Britain, also notes that the initial impact of Covid-19 was the “slowing of demand for malt” but this “quickly eased”. However, the impact on whisky has been less than on beer, which is largely sold in the on-trade, according to South. David Keir, sales and marketing director at The GlenAllachie Distillers Co, says: “Bottling halls are operating under restrictions, which has had an impact on capacity, and you only need one team member to test positive then the whole crew has to isolate, which causes further disruption.” Scottish firm Alexander Inglis & Son was one of the UK’s largest suppliers of grains and cereals used in the whisky and distilling industries, until it [fell into administration in May 2021](#). The business struggled following a poor harvest in 2020 and a fall in demand for its services due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Willie Thomson, chair of the Combinable Crops Committee at National Farmers Union (NFU) Scotland, notes: “We have lost one or two of our big merchants, either swallowed up by others or that have had a tough time. There are fewer buyers.”

For process engineering firm Allen Associates, the pandemic caused many of its projects to be delayed. “At the beginning it was difficult, everyone was quite concerned about the situation in the world,” explains managing director Scott Allen. “Projects went on hold and projects that were due to start didn’t start. We cut our staff quite drastically, by half, because there was no work. The furlough scheme was brilliant.” Thankfully, Allen was able to bring all of his staff back as projects restarted and new work came in.

“What’s affecting us a lot is that the price of raw materials are increasing drastically,” says Allen. “Projects are difficult to price, there’s a worldwide issue in terms of material prices, linked to Covid. The high demand is affecting everyone. Prices for stainless steel and copper are increasing by 10% to 15%.”

Keir also notes the rising costs of raw materials. He says: “We’ve been suffering with increased costs hitting us on raw materials, and we continue to absorb these but it’s getting harder to do so. Some dry goods components have experienced cost increases of almost 50% through 2021.”

Anthony Wills, founder and managing director of Islay distillery Kilchoman, notes the difficulty of acquiring materials. “We use [still maker] Forsyths, which had a case of Covid and had to shut down last summer. It impacted what they could do. We were looking to buy a couple more washbacks but buying some, or any vats that we wanted, proved quite difficult to source. There were big delays of around four to five months. It means that we don’t go up in production until we get that stuff in place.”

Brewerton also notes the difficulty of “getting hold of machinery required to make necessary improvements to our equipment”. Meanwhile, David Livingstone, distillery manager of Isle of Arran Distillers in Lochranza, says many contractors stopped work during the pandemic, causing a backlog.

The producer was seeking to replace some of its distillery equipment, which normally would take three or four months, but had been extended to six months.



Island life: Arran Distillery had trouble getting contractors on and off the isle

#### Remote location

The distillery, based on an island off the west coast of Scotland, also faced an additional challenge thanks to its remote location.

“Getting contractors on and off the island was a fairly big issue,” Livingstone explains.

“They would find accommodation but then go to book ferries and there was no availability. Ferries are down to the reduced limited numbers allowed. All the businesses on the island are struggling because they rely on the ferries.”

Getting stock such as full casks off the island has also “thrown up a lot of challenges”, adds Livingstone, who notes that lorries are being booked up, which “potentially moves the bottling dates back”. There have also been some additional transport charges, he adds.

Allen also notes that the company was unable to visit islands such as Islay and Orkney due to restrictions, which meant that the firm had to provide cost estimates for projects virtually. However, he notes that online meetings have been beneficial and helped to limit travel expenses.

Thomson of NFU Scotland notes that one major challenge for the malting industry is the new farms support system in Scotland, with farmers still waiting for details of what the future of agricultural support looks like.

The new system, which comes after the UK left the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (Cap), will take effect in 2024. Each UK nation has its own plans for the policy upon the removal of direct payments through the Cap.

“We have no idea what the budget will be or what we need to do for the support,” Thomson explains. Future policy is expected to be underpinned by ambitious targets to reach net zero.

Kilchoman also felt the effects of Brexit, Wills notes, which caused “delays getting goods in, while the corks and capsules we import take a bit longer”. He also cites additional costs and cardboard shortages, predominantly for cartons.

There’s no shortage of investment being put into the industry. In 2018, plans for a £62 million (US\$85m) global centre for barley research were given the green light. The site will be based at the James Hutton Institute’s Invergowrie site near Dundee, Scotland.

The International Barley Hub seeks to secure the long-term future of the barley sector by developing varieties and growing systems that can cope with future climate change, plus new uses for the crop. South says the hub will be important for the industry and will help to create new ways of growing barley, as well as improving sustainability.



Kilchoman: feeling the impact of Brexit

#### Key focus

Sustainability is a key focus for the Scotch industry, and the [SWA has outlined a strategy](#) that commits the sector to reaching net-zero emissions in its operations by 2040.

The world’s largest Scotch whisky distiller, Diageo, recently [participated in a pilot project](#) that reduced the carbon footprint of a glass whisky bottle by up to 90%. The pilot produced 173,000 Black & White bottles using 100% recycled glass – making the batch the most environmentally friendly bottle ever made for a Scotch brand.

Furthermore, in March 2021 [plans were revealed for a green energy hub](#) at the Port of Cromarty Firth in Scotland that could cut the environmental impact of Scotch makers Glenmorangie, Whyte & Mackay and Diageo.

So far it seems the impact of the pandemic on the Scotch industry has been short term, as consumer demand for whisky remains strong and



producers across the supply chain, from grain to glass, continue to invest in the business for the long term.

## Membership and Dinner prices for 2021-2022

|                          |                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Membership Fee:          | \$50 (singles)<br>\$75 (couples)    |
| One Time Initiation Fee: | \$15                                |
| Standard Dinner Fee:     | \$90 (member)<br>\$100 (non-member) |

## Reservation policy

- The agreement with the Kitchen's requires that we provide five (5) business days notice for them to guarantee accommodation for our requested numbers. To accommodate the Kitchen's needs and meet our obligation with them; our members are requested to respond to the emailed invitation five (5) business days prior to the respective dinner to guarantee a seat at the dinner. Following the RSVP date members will be placed on a waitlist.
- For these individuals the process will be as follows, using the Monday September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 dinner date as an example:
  - Dinner invitations will be sent out Friday August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Please respond to me ([rdifazio04@gmail.com](mailto:rdifazio04@gmail.com)) in the form of an e-transfer. I will then acknowledge that you have a seat. Please understand that if you do not receive a response you are not guaranteed a seat at the respective dinner. In such circumstances (e.g., computer glitches) please e-mail me again or call me (613-532-5285).
  - Once payment is received I will send a confirmation and your seat will be guaranteed reserved.
  - An RSVP only does not guarantee the seat and if there is a waiting list, you run the risk of losing your seat.
  - Unless otherwise stated accommodation at the dinner will be guaranteed for all members who respond by Friday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 @ 6pm or until capacity is achieved.
  - Please keep in mind until further notice our maximum attendance will be capped at 40. So delays run the risk of you missing out.

## Cancellation policy

- Using the same example as above, anyone who cancels anytime prior to Friday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 @ 6pm will be removed from the list.
- Anyone canceling between Friday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 @ 6pm and Monday September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 will be expected to pay for the cost of the dinner and scotch (\$90). It is the responsibility of the member who cancels their (or their guest's) reservation to find a replacement. If I am asked to find a substitute and one is found, then the member will be asked to pay for 50% of their dinner cost.
- Anyone who fails to attend the Monday September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 dinner without having cancelled and been successfully replaced will be expected to pay the full cost (\$90). A member will be responsible for their guest's cancellation (\$100).
- If a member asks to be included at the dinner between Friday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 @ 6pm and Monday September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 their name will be placed on a wait-list and be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.

## Dinner Payments

- Please consider sending your payment by e-transfer prior to the dinner. The password will be "KSMS2021RDF", to whatever your security question is. Receiving payment in advance will allow everyone the opportunity to socialize before the dinner as well as reduce the accounting work required after.
- For e-transfers, Members are responsible for collecting from their guests, and then forwarding one payment in total by e-transfer.

## Assigned / Reserved Seating

- Assigned Seating will be offered for the January, June, August, and December dinners.
- Reserved Seating will only be considered if it is a group consisting of a single member plus 3+ guests or a couple member plus 2+ guests.



## Perfume / Cologne and Whisky

- Our enjoyment of fine whisky at KSMS starts with a nosing - for many a definitive and delicate moment in their relationship with a new dram. The power of aroma is unquestionable. From defining life experiences to the recall of special memories, the sense of smell is as individual as a fingerprint and has the ability to evoke some of the most precious, rewarding and distinctive moments. Unfortunately strong perfumes can mask and distort other aromas and smells and interfere with the ability to register and recognize subtler fragrances.
- To be fair to all we ask all our members to please refrain from wearing scented products and perfumes to our KSMS evenings.

## Just a note because we care.

Please understand that for the purpose of each event you are advised to drink responsibly and refrain from excessive consumption. The dinners hosted by the Kingston Single Malt Society are sampling events. By agreeing to pay and thereby attend the dinner you agree to release from legal responsibility and hold harmless Kingston Single Malt Society, its President Roberto Di Fazio, and any other volunteers from liability or claims arising from these events.



## Kingston Single Malt Society

Roberto Di Fazio, President

827 Old Colony Road

Kingston, Ontario, K7P 1S1, Canada

613-532-5285

[rdifazio04@gmail.com](mailto:rdifazio04@gmail.com)

<http://www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com>

