

# Kingston Single Malt Society

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

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

JULY 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

VOLUME 14; NUMBER 1c



## COST OF THE MALTS

**GLENMORANGIE 18 YEAR OLD HIGHLAND SINGLE MALT**  
SCOTCH WHISKY LCBO 398784 | 750 mL bottle **Price**  
**\$199.20** Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 43.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**GLENMORANGIE SIGNET** LCBO 327452 | 750 mL bottle  
**Price: \$336.20** Spirits, Scotch Whisky 46.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**NEW BEN NEVIS 10 YEARS OLD** LCBO 432281 | 700 mL  
bottle **Price: \$85.00** Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey, Scotch Single  
Malts 46.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**OLD BEN NEVIS 10 YEARS OLD** LCBO 432281 | 700 mL  
bottle **Price: \$85.00** Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey, Scotch Single  
Malts 46.5% Alcohol/Vol.

**DISTILLER'S ART BLAIR ATHOL 14 YEAR OLD**  
**Distilled: 2003; Bottled: 2018; Bottle # 076 of 397;**  
LCBO 614783 | 700 mL bottle Spirits, **Price: \$173.85**  
Whisky/Whiskey 48.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**BUNNAHBHAIN 2003 AMONTILLADO CASK FINISH**  
**Distilled: 20/02/2003; Bottled: 26/02/2016;**  
**LIMITED TO 1710 BOTTLES; VINTAGES 807462** | 700 mL  
bottle **Price: \$225.95** Spirits, Scotch Whisky 57.45%  
Alcohol/Vol.

## MENU

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and Welcome Nosing:

**GLENMORANGIE 18**

**GLENMORANGIE SIGNET**

(introduced by: Dave Finucan)

1<sup>st</sup> Course: Grilled Corn & Bacon Gazpacho  
with Crème Fraîche and Roasted Red Pepper

3<sup>rd</sup> Nosing: **NEW BEN NEVIS 10 YEARS OLD**  
(introduced by: Mike Patchett)

4<sup>th</sup> Nosing: **OLD BEN NEVIS 10 YEARS OLD**  
(introduced by: Mike Patchett)

2<sup>nd</sup> Course: Warm Spicy Spinach, Pickerel and  
Aged Cheddar Cheese Ball, Focaccia Crostini

5<sup>h</sup> Nosing: **DISTILLER'S ART BLAIR ATHOL 14YO**  
(introduced by: Ken Goodland)

3<sup>rd</sup> Course - Main:

Roasted Pork Rack, Potato Gnocchi,  
Black Garlic Cream, Brandied Apples

Dessert: Drunken Chocolate Scotch Brownie

6<sup>th</sup> Nosing: **BUNNAHBHAIN 2003 AMONTILLADO**  
**CASK FINISH**  
(introduced by: Conrad Falkson)

## Upcoming Dinner Dates

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August 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Distell Tasting -  
Bunnahabhain / Tobermory / Ledaig - Mike Brisebois  
Friday August 28<sup>th</sup> 2020 - 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Premium Night  
September 18<sup>th</sup> - Sprinkbank-Longrow-Hazelburn Night  
September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 - Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /  
Highlands / Islands / Islay  
October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - Speyside / Islands  
November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - Highlands / Islands  
December 7<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Christmas Dinner  
January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Robbie Burns Dinner  
February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Speyside / Highlands / Islay  
March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Irish / Speyside / Highlands  
April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Campbeltown / Islands / Islay  
May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Campbeltown / Speyside  
June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - BBQ (Final Exam)  
July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - 10<sup>th</sup> "Matt" Night  
Friday August 27<sup>th</sup> 2021 - 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Premium Night  
September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /  
Highlands / Islands / Islay  
October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Speyside / Highlands  
November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Speyside  
December 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 - Christmas Dinner

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## Whisky Review: Ardbeg Wee Beastie

By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / July 17, 2020

Peat lovers rejoice! [Ardbeg added a new permanent expression](#) to their line up, just shy of a year [since their last permanent release](#). It's always worth the wait, but sometimes Ardbegians have had to wait over eight years for a new permanent bottling. The Ardbeg Wee Beastie promises a "tongue-tingling, beautifully smoky dram," as the whisky makers set out to create the rawest, smokiest Ardbeg to date.

Ardbeg typically ranges between [50 to 55 ppm \(phenol parts per million\)](#). Before the Wee Beastie, Ardbeg's smokiest scotch was [the Corryvreckan](#). PPM refers to the smokiness of the barley before it undergoes distillation. There is a little caveat, the higher the ppm does not necessarily indicate the smoky flavor in the bottle. For example, [the Ardbeg Ten](#) is perceptibly smoky Ardbeg in flavor, but the barley is not heavily smoked.

While founded over 200 years ago, Ardbeg hasn't slowed down in producing world-renowned whiskies. The Wee Beastie isn't the first Ardbeg to have "beastie" in its name, but unfortunately the [Airigh Nam Beist was discontinued](#). Hopefully, the new 5-year-old Wee Beastie will not suffer the same fate.

I'm hoping the new Wee Beastie from Ardbeg will satiate my peat loving taste buds, so let's see how it tastes...



### Ardbeg Wee Beastie (image via Ardbeg)

Tasting Notes: Ardbeg Wee Beastie

Vital Stats: 47.4% ABV. Non-chill filtered single malt aged 5 years in ex-bourbon barrels and Oloroso sherry butts. 750ml \$47.

Appearance: Fair blonde.

Nose: Smoked brisket burnt ends with a sweet touch of tangy barbecue sauce is the first thing I notice. Apple skin and apple blossom mix with herbal mint tea. The faintest of faint vanilla bean mixes with a struck match.

Palate: Sweet spun sugar hits the tongue first, then fresh green apple takes over. The smoke is there from the peat, but it is underwhelming. Bland wood and leather fill in the middle. While there is a hint of salinity throughout the dram, there is also a touch of spice like cracked black pepper. Soot stays on the tongue during the aftertaste.

The Takeaway  
Summary

The Ardbeg Wee Beastie is a decent Ardbeg, however it is a little rough around the edges compared to others in their line up. Yes, the whisky creators made a whisky the way they intended, raw and smoky, but it is just a little beast. Maybe I had my expectations too high initially because I assumed that it would taste peaty like a punch to the jaw, but I was disappointed because I didn't think there was enough peat. Expectations aside, there is taste besides the peat, which makes the 5-year-old single malt enjoyable all around. I actually prefer this one on a big cube to smooth it out, but it's satisfactory neat. I think it could have stayed in the barrel six years versus five, and the Oloroso sherry butts didn't seem to impart much of a finish. There is a place for this on my home bar, so I hope it finds a place on yours.

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## The Macallan Adds Two New Double Cask Scotch Whiskies To Its Line Up

By [Nino Marchetti](#) / July 14, 2020

The Macallan distillery in Scotland is known for its extensive use of sherry cask aging for its Scotch single malt whiskies. Amongst its many expressions is the Double Cask series, a range of bottlings that are crafted from a combination of whiskies aging in American and

European oak sherry seasoned casks. Two new releases are now joining this line up.

The new The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old and The Macallan Double Cask 18 Years Old, according to those behind it, joined the well-regarded The Macallan Double Cask 12 Years Old, [which was released back in 2016](#). As reflected above, all three offerings come about with their voyage beginning "in the vast green forests of northern Spain and the French Pyrenees, where The Macallan sources its European oak. New oak from the lush forests of Ohio, Missouri and Kentucky in America is also transported thousands of miles to Spain, where both types of oak are handcrafted into casks that are filled with sherry.



The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old and The Macallan Double Cask 18 Years Old (image via The Macallan)

"Once seasoned, the casks are shipped to The Macallan Estate in Speyside where they are filled with new-make spirit. Following years of slumber, The Macallan Whisky Mastery Team uses their skill and expertise to select the best balance of spirit from both the American and European oak sherry seasoned casks to create Double Cask. The 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." "Bringing together American and European oak sherry seasoned casks to achieve the perfect balance of flavors is incredibly exciting for the Whisky Mastery Team," said Kirsteen Campbell, Master Whisky Maker at The Macallan, in a prepared statement, "and we are proud to offer two new expressions to this distinctive range for The Macallan Double Cask fans to explore.

"Oak influence is the single greatest contributor to the quality, natural color and distinctive aromas and flavors at the heart of The Macallan's single malts."

Plans call for the 15 year old and 18 year old, priced respectively at \$135 and \$330 per 750 ml bottle, to become available globally starting this month. You'll find official tasting notes for both below from The Macallan.

Whisky Maker's Notes: The Macallan Double Cask 15 Years Old

- Color: Golden butterscotch
- Aroma: Dried fruits, toffee and vanilla with smooth oak and baked apple balanced with notes of honey and chocolate
- Palate: Sweet raisin and sultana builds with hints of vanilla, wood spice and citrus
- Finish: Warm ginger turning to caramel and citrus with a creamy mouth feel
- ABV: 43%

Whisky Maker's Notes: The Macallan Double Cask 18 Years Old

- Color: Amber honey
- Aroma: Dried fruits, ginger and toffee with rich orange and hints of clove with nutmeg
- Palate: Rich raisin and sultana with notes of caramel, vanilla and ginger balanced by wood spice and zesty citrus
- Finish: Warm oak spice with ginger turning to sweet orange
- ABV: 43%

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## Whisky Review: Ardbeg Blaaack

By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / June 11, 2020

Captain's log: May 30th, 2020 – it is Ardbeg Day. As a pandemic sweeps the globe, travel is restricted and events are cancelled. The Ardbeg distillery is forced to host virtually on the worldwide web. The [Ardbeg](#)



[Blaaack Whisky Trials](#) is a two hour social media event, and the special launch of their limited edition single malt, the Ardbeg Blaaack. The new whisky honors the 20th anniversary of the [Ardbeg Committee](#). So why Blaaack? Well, Ardbeg chose to age their signature single malt in former pinot noir casks all the way from New Zealand. New Zealand is a country with more sheep than people. At one point, there were 30 wooly friends for every person, but in more recent years there are now just [5 to every person](#).



*Ardbeg Blaaack (image via Ardbeg)*

The Ardbeg Blaaack is the ultimate committee release. It knits together the global 120,000 plus member committee that was established January 1, 2000 to ensure “the doors of the distillery never close again.”

With Ardbeg Day celebrations this year fully online, I thought I would make a rare initial tasting video. You can check it out below along with my full review of the Ardbeg Blaaack, the latest edition to the Ardbeg lineup.

**Tasting Notes:** Ardbeg Blaaack

**Vital Stats:** 50.7% ABV. Islay single malt finished in ex-pinot noir casks that hail from New Zealand. 750ml \$140.

**Appearance:** Amber with glints of mahogany.

**Nose:** Peat reek with a slight hint of leather reminds me of slow smoked meat on a Traeger or marinated jerky. It's rich with an organic earthiness similar to a tree log overcome with fungi and moss. A touch of navel orange pops through the umami, but there isn't a true sweet note. The malted barley really comes through the entire dram.

**Palate:** The leather and meaty notes from the nose are present, however, these notes do not overtake the whisky. On the other hand, I can only describe it as the taste of the scent of an old baseball glove. The mouthfeel is unique; it is really clean and light with a smooth feeling, yet it is not oily. Faint orange segment mixes with fruit tartlets. The cereal grain from the nose presents on the tongue as pie dough. I

suppose the “soot” note Ardbeg gives is fairly accurate; to me it comes off like charcoal, but more so cigar ash.

The finish lingers for hours. It just sits at the top of the belly warming you to an excessive temperature. Adding water doesn't get rid of the warming sensation you'll feel, but it will open the whisky and give it a velvety soft mouthfeel. Finally, I recommend cleansing your palate with food since the whisky leaves the taste of having smoked a cigarette for quite a long time after finishing a sip.

**The Takeaway**

**Summary**

The Ardbeg Blaaack has got character. The mouthfeel is incredible, and the it warms you up, which eventually after sitting at the top of my belly gave me the worst heartburn. However, it was totally worth it. If you like a single malt with ashyness, leather, and is malty but not sweet, then the Ardbeg Blaaack is for you.

4.5

## Latest Kilchoman Scotch Whisky The Pleasant Result Of A Mess

By [Nino Marchetti](#) / July 21, 2020

The Kilchoman distillery, considered one of the younger Scotch single malt whisky makers on Islay, is known for a range of core expressions and occasional limited edition offerings. It is usually important to run a tight distillery ship when working around all of these spirits, lest an accident happen such as mixing different whiskies not normally meant to go together while vatting. Such an accident did happen a number of years back, however, and in this case it turned into a good thing.

The new Kilchoman Am Bùrach, according to those behind it, is a Scotch single malt whisky that came about as a result of an accident back in 2014. At that time an “unnamed stillman, whilst vatting casks, accidentally mixed Machir Bay (a core expression from Kilchoman) and Port Matured Kilchoman causing Islay Heads, General Manager, to describe the resulting whisky as ‘Am Bùrach,’” which means “the mess” in Gaelic.



*Kilchoman Am Bùrach (image via Kilchoman)*

As described by the distillery team, this whisky is a one off that's had “a somewhat complicated nine year maturation, a vatting of bourbon and sherry matured Kilchoman combined with port cask matured in 2014, the whisky was then filled back in bourbon barrels for a further six years ahead a six month finish in ruby port casks.”

“Making great whisky is often about being patient,” said Anthony Wills, Kilchoman Founder and Managing Director, [in a prepared statement](#).

“In 2014 the whisky was all over the place but given time to mellow and develop it has become a wonderfully balanced and unique Kilchoman single malt.”

Plans call for just 10,550 bottles to be released worldwide. Limited official tasting notes for Kilchoman Am Bùrach suggest “its depth of character sets it apart, rich, fruity and sweet on the nose, it coats the palate with red fruits, creamy sweetness and herbaceous peat smoke on the palate before a long finish of dried fruit and citrus sweetness.”

## Arbikie: a brand history

22nd July, 2020 by Tom Bruce-Gardyne

The Stirling brothers have turned their vision of a sustainable field-to-bottle distillery into a thriving reality. *The Spirits Business* reports on Arbikie's progress to date.



*\*This feature was originally published in the April 2020 issue of The Spirits Business*

Picture the opening scene of 'Arbikie' the movie. Three brothers staring out at rain-soaked fields of wheat, barley and potatoes on the family farm. The crops are starting to rot, the mood is one of despair, and the brothers are drinking heavily to drown their sorrows. Suddenly, in a great burst of sunlight, bottles of gin, whisky and vodka begin to dance before their eyes.

Truth be told it wasn't quite like that. The lightbulb moment that led John, Iain and David Stirling to turn Arbikie into a highly innovative field-to-bottle distillery did involve drink – but it happened elsewhere. The three grew up together on the 2,000-acre farm in Angus, halfway up Scotland's east coast, but the idea presented itself in a New York bar circa 2010. The fact that David co-owned the bar, Iain had a drinks industry background starting with Whyte & Mackay and John was an accountant at KPMG, suggests the Stirlings are not stereotypical Scottish farmers.

The brothers believed they had spotted a gap in the way old Scotch whisky distilleries evolved from the farm. "We were a few drinks in, and after a few more drinks the idea became better and better," John recalls. In the sober light of day, somewhat amazingly, the idea still had legs. They sat down and crunched the numbers. They had the raw ingredients and an empty building in a disused dairy, and they had a strategy. "Our vision from the very start has been to produce the best single malt we possibly can," says John. "We set this target that our first release was going to be an 18-year-old."

It was a statement of intent that there would be no compromise on quality. The whisky stills were only fired up in 2015, so we won't see an Arbikie malt for some time.

Taking such a leisurely, long-term view is a luxury afforded by the lack of outside investors or private equity, as John explains: "We didn't want to be in a position where people would say, 'Where's the money?' Where's the profit?'" While the casks slowly mature, Arbikie's master distiller, Kirsty Black, has been busy with other spirits.

First came Tattie Bogle potato vodka in 2014. At £39 (US\$45) a pop you can see the attraction for Arbikie with farm gate prices of just 20-30p per kilo of spuds, and supermarkets rejecting anything knobbly or blemished. However, potato spirit is over three times more expensive to make than grain spirit, claims John, who explains the process: "You boil up the spuds into a mushy paste, and when it starts to react with the yeast it smells like fresh apples. Even doing vodka at 95% ABV, you can tell the difference between cultra potatoes, which are slightly earthy, and maris piper."



*Arbikie malts are a long game (photo courtesy: Tim Keweritsch)*

In its drive to maximise alcoholic yield, he believes the whisky industry risks causing harm, and says: "Basically, you have one variety of grain dominating whisky production, and if that fails you've got a big problem." He also feels the big distillers "have in many ways driven down the price of grain", and are being disingenuous if they trumpet their green credentials while importing barley from wherever's cheapest, regardless of food miles. Meanwhile, Arbikie has been planting heritage varieties in the name of biodiversity and flavour. "In future we will produce some very interesting spirits where it's more about the malt and the grain as it used to be, and less about the ex-Bourbon casks," he says.

Arbikie began planting rye in 2014 and launched Scotland's first Highland rye single grain whisky four years later, having explained to a concerned Scotch Whisky Association that rye had been used traditionally. Vibrantly spicy, it was described as "a wee belter" by whisky writer Dave Broom.

Meanwhile, other white spirits have appeared, including Kirsty's Gin and Haar Vodka made from wheat. Most innovative of all, however, has been the recently released Nàdar gin, "which is pea-based and climate positive", says John. "Kirsty did a five-year PhD project on producing alcohol from peas and legumes. It's world-leading as no one else has ever done this. Peas are brilliant in that they nitrogen-fix and also carbon-fix."

Nàdar's backstory gives it an edge in such a saturated gin market, and goes to the heart of Arbikie's sustainable ethos and its commitment to try and produce everything on the farm. So far John reckons they are more than 90% there, with gin botanicals in poly tunnels, and juniper planted in the hedgerows, though yet to bear fruit. "We haven't come across anything we can't grow at the moment," he says. The only exception being sugarcane, which is too tall for a poly tunnel, and that means no Arbikie rum.

Yet, returning to Tattie Bogle vodka, you have to ask if consumers really care about provenance or ingredients, this being a spirit where the premium end has traditionally been about lifestyle, and the commodity end is all about price. John accepts that may be true for most consumers but says: "I think things are now changing. People never used to care where their food came from. Now they do enormously, and we're seeing that gradually within spirits." That said, one suspects the single estate message will have less impact than the environmental one, and if so, climate-positive pea gin could be a real winner.

For all that, the gin and vodka are there to pave the way for Arbikie single malt when it finally appears. "The hardest aspect when we started, and the one we underestimated the most was route to market," John admits. Even in the US where his brother David lives and takes care of sales, "it probably took us two years longer than we expected", he says.

Today, the brand has a growing presence in the UK, South Africa and now Canada, and is eagerly eyeing up Southeast Asia. But it's certainly not easy being a 21st-century farm distillery, and you wonder if that message will get through if, and when, they ever do make 'Arbikie' the movie.





1794 – An ancient map shows a distillery at Arbikie  
1971 – AK Stirling purchases Arbikie Farm



2010 – The seeds of Arbikie farm-to-bottle whisky are sewn  
2014 – Tattie Bogle vodka is released  
2015 – Arbikie Single Malt Scotch production begins and Kirsty's Gin is launched



2018 – Arbikie Highland Rye becomes Scotland's first rye whisky in 198 years  
2020 – Nàdar Gin is launched and construction begins on new visitor centre



Only 258 bottles of 19-Year-Old Laphroaig 2001 Single Malt: Cailleach Beira have been released

The 19-Year-Old Laphroaig 2001 Single Malt: Cailleach Beira Scotch whisky was finished in a first-fill Château Léoville-Las Cases Bordeaux barrique.

Cailleach Beira is said to be the mother of all deities in Scottish folklore and the "personification of winter".

Bottled at 53.9% ABV, the whisky has been priced at £475 (US\$600) per 700ml bottle. Only 258 have been made available to purchase online through [cask88.com](http://cask88.com) and [whiskyfoundation.com](http://whiskyfoundation.com).

Patrick Costello, Cask 88 director, said: "This particular single cask caught our attention because of its complex and brooding personality that reminded us of Cailleach Beira herself."

"Originally intended as a warming dram to guide through the change of seasons, changes to our release schedule have given our Cailleach Beira the chance to walk in the sun."

Tasting notes include black cherry jam on wholemeal toast and a burning peat fire on the nose, leading to dark malt loaf studded with dried cherries and pecan nuts on the palate, along with honey-glazed ham and smoked paprika. Once the smoke clears, the finish is said to taste like brandy and praline chocolates.

The new release joins a 45-Year-Old Ben Nevis Single Malt, represented by the Cù-Sith from Scottish folklore, and a 22-Year-Old Arran 1997 Single Malt, represented by the selkie.

## SHERRY MATURED SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY UNDER \$100

by [Stephanie Moreno](#)  
July 16, 2020

Although sherry wine has fallen out of favor over the years—apologies to Fraiser and Niles Crane—sherry matured single malt Scotch whisky is decidedly en vogue. Sherry, a fortified wine made in the south of Spain, is made in various styles ranging from dry to sweet. Whisky makers tend to favor oloroso sherry, a dry but oxidized style which brings a nutty and fruity flavor to whisky. However, other styles can be used such as bone-dry fino sherry and sticky-sweet Pedro Ximenez sherry.

The sherry wines season the oak they are matured in, generally for two years. Then the whisky makers acquire those casks to mature their whisky. Both European oak and American oak are used by sherry producers and they're generally made into hogsheads or butts. Keep in mind that standard American oak ex-bourbon barrels hold 53-gallons/200 liters. Meanwhile, hogsheads hold around 66-gallons/250 liters and a butt holds 132-gallons or 500 liters.

Both styles of oak bring unique features to the party. European oak is more porous than American oak which conversely has a much tighter grain. Therefore, European oak barrels impact the whisky a bit quicker than American oak and give off a richer and deeper color. American oak will take a bit longer to do that. Of course, the two types of oak will also influence the flavor of the whisky. American oak tends to provide sweet flavors of vanilla and coconut while European oak brings dried fruits, spices and tannins to a whisky.

### SHERRY MATURED SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY PICKS

So now that you know some basics about sherry seasoned oak, we've compiled an essential sherry matured single malt Scotch whisky list for you to try. These whiskies are matured exclusively in [sherry casks](#) rather than virgin or American whiskey casks so you can really see how both the wood and the sherry can affect the whisky. These picks are widely available and are each under \$100.

## Cask 88 bottles 19-year-old Laphroaig

20th July, 2020 by Melita Kiely

Whisky broker and independent bottler Cask 88 has added a 19-year-old Laphroaig single malt to its Scottish Folklore series.

If you'd like to take a look at the more commonly found sherry finished single malt Scotch whisky you can try [Balvenie Doublewood 12 Year](#), [Glenmorangie Lasanta Sherry Cask](#), or [Bowmore 15 Year](#).  
[THE MACALLAN SHERRY OAK CASK 12 YEAR](#)  
[THE MACALLAN DOUBLE CASK 12 YEAR](#)

If you asked most seasoned Scotch whisky drinkers to name one sherry matured single malt to try, chances are they'd recommend The Macallan. The distillery is famously known for working in partnership with sherry bodegas to create sherry-seasoned barrels exclusively for the brand. For these two sherry matured single malt whiskies, each aged exclusively in sherry casks. However, the Sherry Oak Cask Series is predominantly made with European oak while the Double Cask Series is made mostly with American oak. Try them both in a Pepsi-challenge style face-off and see which one you prefer.



The

Macallan Sherry Oak Cask 12 Year /Photo Credit: The Macallan

#### [ABERLOUR A'BUNADH](#)

Aberlour Distillery was founded in 1879 by James Flemming and this sherry matured single malt is made in homage to him. The name A'Bunadh [a-BOON-ah] means "original" in Gaelic and the single malt was designed as a replica to a whisky produced at this distillery in the late 1800s. A'Bunadh is matured exclusively in Spanish oloroso sherry casks and bottled at cask strength.

#### [GLENFARCLAS 12 YEAR](#)

Glenfarclas—Valley of the Green Grassland—is one of the few remaining family-owned and operated distilleries in all of Scotland. It is also one of the very few distilleries that still uses direct-fire stills instead of steam-filled unit heaters. Glenfarclas 12 Year matures in 100% European oak oloroso sherry casks and is bottled 43% ABV.



Glenfarclas 12 Year

#### [GLENDRONACH ORIGINAL 12 YEAR](#)

GlenDronach was founded in 1826 in the Highlands of Scotland. Although the distillery originally used direct coal fire to heat the stills, in 2005, this distillery finally changed to an indirect heat source (steam). Today, Dr. Rachel Barrie is the brand's master blender. GlenDronach Original 12 Year is a sherry matured single malt made using both oloroso and Pedro Ximenez sherry casks.

#### [KILCHOMAN LOCH GORM](#)

Kilchoman was founded in 2005 and was the first distillery to be built on Islay in 124 years. Each year the distillery releases Loch Gorm, named for the largest freshwater loch on Islay. The brand gets its water from The Allt Gleann Osamail burn, one of the loch's major tributaries. Loch Gorm is a peated sherry matured single malt made exclusively with European oak oloroso sherry casks.



Kilchoman Loch Gorm /Photo Credit: Kilchoman

#### [HIGHLAND PARK 12 YEAR VIKING HONOUR](#)

Highland Park is renowned for the peat the brand uses and for its exclusive use of ex-sherry casks. The climate on the Orkney Islands is quite windy and sea swept creating a dismal environment for trees. As such, the Orcadian peat bogs have more heather, grass, and plants than those on Islay. Highland Park 12, first released in 1979, uses about 20% 1st-fill sherry casks.

#### [TAMDHU 12 YEAR](#)

Launched in 2018, Tamdhu 12 Year is a sherry matured single malt made with both first-fill and refill American oak and European oak casks. These casks were seasoned with oloroso sherry. The single malt is bottled at 43% ABV and it replaced the distillery's [10 Year bottling](#).

## HOW TO

### How to Pair Whisky (and Rum and Brandy) with Cigars

AUGUST 12, 2019 | JACK BETTRIDGE | FROM FALL 2018



Cigars and brown spirits, like bourbon, rum, and cognac, are a match made in heaven. (Photo by Jeff Harris)

In a series of old candy commercials the actors would bump into each other, accidentally mixing peanut butter with chocolate, and voila, the peanut butter cup was invented: two great tastes that taste great together. One can imagine a similar conjunction of cigars and spirits: one reveler arrives with cigars, the other with whisky; they share and "Boy, don't these go well together?" The difference is that smoke and liquor flavor combinations are endless, from not only chocolate and peanuts, but vanilla, maple, toffee, a wealth of herbs and spices, leather, fruits, and the possibilities go on. But when faced with myriad choices it can be difficult to know where to begin. The good news is a few simple guidelines will get you on your way. The great news is you'll never work your way through all the options as you try to demonstrate again and again what has been known for centuries: the drink bone's connected to the smoke bone.

### [4 Foolproof Scotch and Cigar Pairings](#)

The cardinal rule is that you should start by matching the body of the smoke with the body of the drink. Full-bodied cigars tend to pair best with full-bodied whiskies. Milder cigars often perform well with



lighter whiskies. Any imbalance in one element can drown out the other or, worse, a milder spirit might find off-notes in a fuller cigar. Yet it's a rule that will avoid mistakes more than discover great unions. Despite the logic, many is the time when sublime marriages come of opposites attracting.

That's because one component in a pairing is a complement to flavors in the other. Bitter and sour notes need sweet and savory flavors to temper them. In turn, the latter gain interest from the former. When all taste constituents start to ping and feed off one another you get pure excellence. One of my favorite experiences is what I call the "Snickers bar effect." Nuts and chocolate and salt and caramel come together and taste like a grown-up candy bar. Certain spirits excel at cigar pairing, and, hint: they're all brown. All types of fine brandies work. (The cliché of gentlemen enjoying a cognac and a smoke after a dinner party holds true.) Whiskies from across the globe are excellent choices; [scotch is a classic](#). Rum can be heavenly, but has pitfalls. If you are into wine, choose something with plenty of structure (maybe even something fortified, like [port](#) or [vermouth](#)). With clear choices like gin and vodka, it's not so much that they react badly, but neither should you expect magic in the match.

## BOURBON

Bourbon is the universal donor to a cigar pairing. If you're offered a drink while smoking and you have no idea of the nature of the cigar or the labels behind the bar, make bourbon your first call. The whiskey's typical flavor notes of maple syrup, honey, caramel, nuts, charred wood, and fruit practically guarantee finding complementary flavors in a cigar. Bourbon brings needed sweetness to the leather and dark toast of stronger cigars, while even milder cigars can generally stand up to all but the strongest of bourbons because of their lush barrel notes. Tennessee whiskeys, having been charcoal filtered for smoothness, tend to do better with lighter smokes. Similarly, the spiciness of straight ryes may clash with peppery tobaccos, but they play well with toasty, nutty cigars.

Try: [Maker's Mark](#) with a full-bodied Nicaraguan cigar.

Top picks: [Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series Exclusivo](#) (\$12), [Vegas Cuban Generoso](#) (\$7), [Padrón 2000 Maduro](#) (\$6)

Why it works: The toast, nuts, caramel, and pepper notes in the cigars are made for this bourbon, which provides complementary sweetness on a canvas of wheat.

## CANADIAN WHISKY

Since Canadian whisky is stereotypically smooth, it predictably makes a friend with mild cigars that won't overrun its subtle charms. However, this pairing is often an opportunity for breaking the rules. Cigars with leather notes (which usually fall into the full-bodied niche) tend to see those characteristics drawn out by Canadian whisky's vanillin. Furthermore, spicier Canadians with high rye content will benefit from nutty notes in a cigar.

Try: [J.P. Wiser's rye](#) with cigars with light-colored wrappers that nevertheless pack lots of flavor.

Top picks: [My Father Connecticut Robusto](#) (\$8), [Avo XO Preludio](#) (\$10), [Davidoff Winston Churchill Churchill](#) (\$20)

Why it works: These three cigars, all mild to medium-bodied with Connecticut-seed wrappers, bring subtle flavors like toast, mint, and spice, while allowing the whisky's spice to pop without overrunning it.

## IRISH WHISKEY

The most widely available examples in this category are—similar to Canadians—notably smooth blended whiskeys. Again, that would suggest pairings with mild to medium cigars. If the tobacco has a fruity side that the whiskey can do a jig with, that's a plus. However, they needn't always be treated with kid gloves. Remember how well Irish whiskey goes with coffee and you might want to consider a smoke with a java note (a flavor typically associated with full-bodied cigars).

Try: [Powers John's Lane](#) with a range of body weights and flavors.

Top picks: [Alec Bradley Black Market Esteli](#) (\$9), [La Palina Classic Rosado Robusto](#) (\$7), [Gran Habano Connecticut Lancero](#) (\$7)

Why it works: Three cigars, three reasons. The first brings toast and nuts for a candy bar connection. The second brings coffee to the cocktail. The third, a very mild cigar, brings lemon and butterscotch to the fore.

## BRANDY

Armagnac and cognac are traditional cigar matches, born of the Brits' fondness for the distilled wine of France. Good fortune may have brought brandy and cigars together, but natural chemistry has helped them stand the test of time. Floral and fruity brandies of subtlety and nuance demand milder cigars. Those with Connecticut

wrappers are often good choices. Older cognacs—especially XOs that have developed nutty rancio notes and lots of complexity—are best for stronger cigars with leather and cocoa. Armagnacs, distilled but once, are laudable for their versatility and pair well to a wider range of cigars. But don't forget that American brandies are coming into their own (see Summer 2018 issue) and often have the bolder barrel flavors needed to counterbalance cigars with big bodies.

Try: [Hennessy XO](#) with the earthy flavors often found with Mexican wrappers on Nicaraguan cigars.

Top picks: [Wise Man Maduro](#) (\$11), [La Aroma de Cuba Mi Amor](#) (\$9), [My Father La Opulencia Robusto](#) (\$10)

Why it works: The fruit and flowers of a complex cognac can find balance and extra structure in the cigar's earthy and savory notes.

## RUM

The concept of terroir points to an obvious synergy between rum and cigars. Whether in Cuba or Dominican Republic, cigar tobacco and the sugar cane used for rum seem to coexist from birth.

Furthermore, the makers are often devotees of both products. Then there's the sweet profile of rum—always a boon to a cigar pairing. Leave the white rum for Daiquiris and Mojitos, and follow the brown-spirits theory to an expertly matured rum. These tropical treats cozy up with a cigar in much the same way as bourbon: lots of cane and barrel notes find a way to seduce similar charisma in a cigar.

Try: [Bacardi 8 Años](#) with darker, full-bodied cigars.

Top picks: [La Flor Dominicana Double Ligeró](#) (\$10), [Arturo Fuente Chateau Fuente Sun Grown Robusto](#) (\$5), [Oliva Serie V Torpedo](#) (\$10)

Why it works: Rum plays well with a range of bodies, but unlocking the inscrutable flavors within a heavy-duty smoke is the cane spirit's specialty. The sweetness smooths rough edges and lets earthy and leather notes emerge.

## Glen Moray reveals Distillery Edition whisky trio

16th July, 2020 by Nicola Carruthers

Scotch whisky producer Glen Moray has unveiled three new wine cask-finished expressions as part of its annual Distillery Edition range.



*The Glen Moray Distillery Edition 2020 trio is available to buy in person or via a phone consultation*

Every year, the producer releases a Distillery Edition, which is usually reserved for visitors at the Speyside site. For the 2020 Distillery Edition releases, whisky fans who are unable to visit the site will be able to purchase the new expressions through a distillery 'dial-in' service.

Glen Moray will offer personal phone consultations over the peak visitor season in July and August from 9am to 5pm, with four members of the team guiding callers through the range, offering recommendations, answering questions and taking orders. Glen Moray's brand ambassador and distillery visitor centre manager, Iain Allan, said: "Buying a bottle of Glen Moray from our annual Distillery Edition is as much about the experience of a visit to the distillery as it is about buying a wonderful new whisky. For the many people who would normally make the trip and take away one of these special bottles, we wanted to find a way to make the range available but avoid making it just a basic transaction over email or the internet.

"Everyone working at the distillery enjoys nothing more than talking about whisky with fellow enthusiasts, answering questions and sharing behind the scenes stories of how Glen Moray is made. So if

you can't make the visit in person this year, please just pick up the phone and dial our distillery team."

The trio of single cask bottlings are the oldest wine cask-finished whiskies from Glen Moray to date. The new expressions comprise: Chardonnay Cask (cask 7670), Burgundy Cask (cask 213) and Chenin Blanc Cask (cask 431).

The three whiskies have been matured in the ex-wine casks for between 16 and 17 years, after being laid down between 2003 and 2004 in Glen Moray's Warehouse 1.

Chardonnay Cask (58.9%) is described as having a nose of "sweet freshly cut pineapples drizzled in toffee sauce then sprinkled with white pepper". The palate brings raspberry jam and warm toast, followed by bubblegum and citrus.

The Burgundy offering (60.1% ABV) provides aromas of almond and marzipan with flavours of chocolate coated cherries on the palate and a "hidden tang of lemongrass" after the addition of a small drop of water.

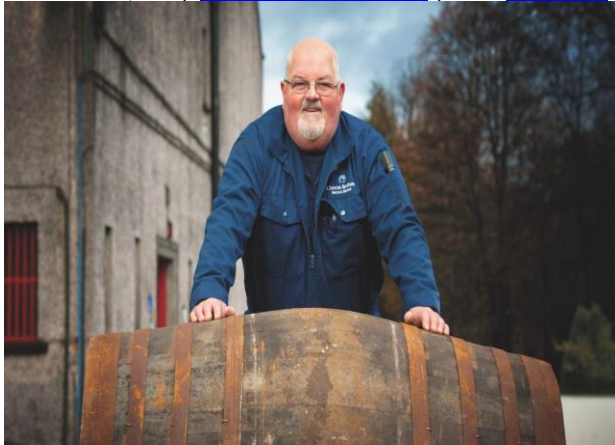
Bottled at 60.3% ABV, the Chenin Blanc bottling has a nose of pear drops and chamomile tea, while the palate offers notes of ginger, Seville orange, tropical fruits and almonds.

Each expression in the 2020 Distillery Edition series is non-chill-filtered and bottled at cask strength with natural colour. The whiskies are priced at £85 (US\$106.50) each per 700ml bottle.

The Elgin-based Glen Moray Distillery reopened yesterday (15 July) with safety measures in place. Customers must pre-book tastings and café visits due to limited numbers. Tours are currently not available.

## Cask-Strength Single Malt Is Built for Heavy Lifting

DECEMBER 16, 2019 | [SUSANNAH SKIVER BARTON](#) | FROM [SPRING 2019](#)



Aberlour Distillery makes one of the most widely enjoyed cask strength single malts, A'bunadh, which is fully aged in oloroso sherry casks. (Photo by Martin Hunter)

Taken at face value, the words "[cask strength](#)" signify something extra: alcohol. But there's much more to these whiskies than just higher proof. Cask-strength single malt scotch, which has no additional water added before bottling, is indisputably more flavorful; the molecules that make up what our noses and palates detect as delicious aromas and flavors are bound to alcohol, not water. With more alcohol in a dram, there's more flavor potential. You don't have to love high proof to benefit from cask-strength whiskies. These whiskies put the power of enjoyment fully in the hands of the drinker. Rather than tasting whisky that has already been diluted to a standard 46%, 43%, or even 40% ABV, the imbibor is left to determine the ideal strength—a process that can be as simple as tasting neat, then [adding a few drops of water](#) at a time to taste. Or it can be as precise as measuring out whisky and water and trialing different combinations to methodically determine a particular whisky's optimal proof. Whatever route you go, cask-strength whiskies simply offer more drinking options.

### CASK STRENGTH DEFINES

Formal regulations regarding the term "cask strength" are surprisingly scarce, even among the fastidious Scots. The [Scotch Whisky Regulations of 2009](#) do not define cask strength, but the UK's Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs noted in a 2013 technical file, "The alcoholic strength of 'cask strength' Scotch Whisky must not be adjusted after maturation." The [Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau](#) (TTB), which regulates whisky labels in the U.S., does not currently have a formal definition of cask

strength or barrel proof, but it has issued a ruling: in order to use these terms on the label, the spirit's proof can't be more than two proof degrees lower than it was when gauged for tax purposes. So if a whisky exits the barrel at 111 proof (55.5% ABV), it can be no less than 109 proof (54.5% ABV) when it's bottled.

## [Here's Your Proof: 7 Cask Strength Single Malt Scotches to Try](#)

There are some scotches, like [Ardbeig Corryvreckan](#) and [Uigeadail](#), that are always bottled at the same high ABV; but, according to the director of distilling, whisky creation, and whisky stocks for [Ardbeig](#) and [Glenmorangie](#), Bill Lumsden, these don't meet the Scottish standard for cask strength because a little water is added to achieve a consistent ABV across batches. "Generally we're looking at between 57% and 58% ABV [for the 57.1% ABV Corryvreckan, when it's initially blended], so obviously very little water is added to that," he explains. Such minor adjustments would actually qualify as cask strength or barrel proof as far as the U.S. is concerned. Lumsden says that maintaining a consistent proof avoids the need for new labels with every batch. Similarly, [Glenfarclas 105](#) is always bottled at exactly 60% ABV and it does qualify as cask strength; the distillery is able to achieve this uniformity by blending casks to achieve a consistent flavor and proof, avoiding the need to add any water.

In most cases, however, distilleries take the path of releasing cask-strength whiskies in batches, with each batch boasting a unique flavor profile and slightly different proof. Different batches of [Laphroaig 10 year old cask strength](#), for example, vary in both proof and taste experience. For fans, such variations are to be embraced, a telltale sign of each new batch. "It allows people to see different sides of the brand," says distillery manager John Campbell, who explains that each batch of the cask-strength whisky intentionally varies in flavor. "Everybody who loves [Laphroaig](#) has a fantasy to get into the warehouses...and [10 year old cask strength] just takes that fantasy to the end."

### QUIRKS OF CASK STRENGTH

Although cask strength is often equivalent to high proof, that's not always the case. Some cask-strength scotches soar to 60% ABV and higher, while others reside precariously close to the legal minimum of 40%, usually in the case of very old whiskies, like the 2018 release of Balvenie 50 year old, which was 41.6% ABV. The variance is due to many factors: the liquid's original strength when it was filled into cask, the length of time it spent aging, and the conditions—including climate, warehouse type, cask type, and warehouse location—under which it matured.



Bottled in batches, Springbank 12 year old Cask Strength varies in ABV, though not in robust, rich flavor. (Photo by Scottish Viewpoint/Alamay)

As a whisky sits in the cask, its ABV is affected due to the evaporation of liquid known as the angels' share. In hot, dry climates, the cask loses water from the solution at a faster rate than it loses alcohol, so the whisky's alcohol strength increases over time. In Scotland, which is humid and temperate, as a cask's liquid evaporates, the alcohol strength of the contents decreases. A cask's warehouse environment and specific location also impact the final ABV. Casks in a dunnage warehouse, with earthen floors and thick walls, are stacked only two or three high; there's little temperature variance and steady humidity, and thus fairly even evaporation. In a rackhouse-style space, which has more air circulation and can experience more profound seasonal temperature swings, casks are placed from ground level to several stories high;



those in the upper tiers, especially, are exposed to higher temperatures, leading to more rapid depletion of liquid, including alcohol.

For fans of cask-strength scotch, variations in final proof—and flavor—are one of the whisky's many charms. After Glenfarclas 105, [Aberlour A'bunadh](#) was one of the first widely available cask-strength single malts when it debuted in the late 1990s. The whisky, which was created as an homage to Aberlour's historic 19th-century single malt, is filled into oloroso sherry casks at 63.5% ABV, matured for a range of years, varying by batch, and bottled at cask strength two to three times a year. Yet its batches have varied from 57% to 62% ABV. "Each batch of A'bunadh can be subtly different," says master distiller Graeme Cruickshank. "They don't have a direct science where it's going to come out exactly how you expect it to every time, because there are many different aspects of the maturation."

### MORE IS MORE

Taken literally, cask strength describes only the alcohol strength of the whisky. But because cask-strength whiskies are designed for flavor seekers, a number of other benefits frequently come along for the ride. In the case of Laphroaig, the 10 year old Cask Strength receives only minimal filtration designed to remove large particles of char, but leaving textures and flavors that would otherwise be stripped away by finer filtering. Likewise, at [Aberlour](#), A'bunadh stands alone in its exclusive use of sherry casks, which represent a huge price premium over the bourbon casks that are enlisted along with sherry for the distillery's other expressions. Because they are designed for purists, cask-strength Scotch whiskies often serve as an indicator of quality.

#### [Is Cask-Strength Scotch A Better Value? We Did The Calculations](#)

However, cask strength does not necessarily indicate a stylistic change or a dramatically different expression. In other words, if you are not a fan of a particular distillery's whisky at lower proof, you may like it even less at cask strength. The potential exceptions are single-cask scotches bottled at cask strength: these are often oddball casks or one-off releases from independent bottlers that showcase atypical expressions of a particular distillery. They can be surprisingly well-received by drinkers who would normally spurn that distillery's whiskies. On the other hand, you may pick up a cask-strength, single-cask whisky made at your favorite distillery and taste something utterly unlike what you were expecting. In this case, adding water may bring out familiar notes—or it may not. Caveat emptor.

A caution every cask-strength fan should keep in mind: when consuming whisky at such a high proof, the effects of alcohol are felt more quickly and intensely. This seems obvious, but I doubt I'm the only one who has gotten several drams into a bottle of, say, [Tamdhu Batch Strength](#)—a deceptively easy-drinking whisky bottled between 58% and 59% ABV—before noticing just how powerful it is. Even distillers are susceptible to this. "You've got to watch the Laphroaig cask strength sometimes, because it can be really smooth," Campbell says. "It's like, 'Where's the alcohol?' It's [seemingly] not there and before you know it, that 120 proof catches up with you."

It allows people to see different sides of the brand. Everybody who loves Laphroaig has a fantasy to get into the warehouses...and [10 year old cask strength] just takes that fantasy to the end. — Laphroaig distillery manager John Campbell  
Sherry cask-matured scotches, like Tamdhu, Glenfarclas 105, and Aberlour A'bunadh, seem to be especially adept at masking their full strength. Cruickshank posits that the sweetness of the sherry softens some of the alcohol punch. "Cask-strength whisky with sherry influence, without water, is much kinder on the palate," he says.

### WATER DOWSING

Cask-strength whiskies are sometimes maligned as "too hot" or "punchy"—unfair accusations for something that simply delivers on the promise of its label. Of course these whiskies taste hot; their alcohol content can be 50% higher than a standard bottling—or even more!

I prefer to add water to most cask-strength whiskies, though the amount varies depending on the dram, and I usually use an eyedropper to avoid over-dilution. [Ten to twenty drops of water](#) equals a fraction of a quarter-ounce; added to a 2-ounce glass of 60% ABV whisky, the water doesn't reduce the strength in a meaningful way. Yet just that small amount tempers the heat of the

alcohol on my palate and allows additional flavors and aromas to emerge. If it's still burning, I can always add a few more drops. Some people drink cask-strength whisky as-is—no added water, just the full, face-melting experience. I've had friends (all men) tell me that they feel sheepish adding water, as if it calls their masculinity—or whisky creds—into question. For anyone feeling similarly, take heart in this confession from Lumsden: "From a purely personal perspective, as someone who uses their nose and palate for a living, I actually am a little bit scared of [cask-strength whiskies]. And invariably, if I've got a cask-strength whisky, I'll take a small sip of it, and get my initial thought process going. But for actually drinking them, I'm bit of a wimp and I generally will cut them with a little bit of water."

However you like it, remember that drinking cask-strength whisky isn't a feat of strength; it's an activity that should make you happy, whatever that tastes like. "Cask strength doesn't mean to say that your hair is shooting backward and your throat's on fire," says Campbell, who's no stranger to strong whisky. "It can be a quite profound experience."

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## Diageo creates paper bottle for Johnnie Walker

13th July, 2020 by Melita Kiely

Leading spirits producer Diageo has partnered with venture management company Pilot Lite to launch a plastic-free, paper-based bottle, which will debut with Johnnie Walker next year.



*Diageo will debut the paper bottle on Johnnie Walker in early 2021*

The bottle is the result of a new partnership between Diageo and Pilot Lite, called Pulpex Limited – a sustainable packaging technology company.

The paper-based bottle is made entirely from sustainably sourced wood. It will be fully recyclable using standard recycling collections. Ewan Andrew, chief sustainability officer, Diageo, said: "We're proud to have created this world first. We are constantly striving to push the boundaries within sustainable packaging and this bottle has the potential to be truly ground-breaking."

"It feels fitting that we should launch it with Johnnie Walker, a brand that has often led the way in innovation throughout its 200 years existence."

Pulpex Limited has also created a partner consortium of FMCG companies, including Pepsico and Unilever, with more partners due to be confirmed later this year. These firms are also expected to launch their own paper bottles using Pulpex Limited's design and technology in 2021.

Sandy Westwater, director of Pilot Lite, added: "We're thrilled to be working with global brand leaders in this consortium."

"By working together, we can use the collective power of the brands to help minimise the environmental footprint of packaging by changing manufacturing and consumer behaviours."

Last month, Diageo North America unveiled a [100% recycled plastic bottle](#) for Seagram's 7 Crown American whiskey brand.

Meanwhile, last year Pernod Ricard-owned Absolut Vodka teamed up with The Paper Bottle Company to [create a recyclable paper bottle](#).

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## These Whiskies Are Works of Art - Literally

JUNE 18, 2020 | [TED SIMMONS](#) | FROM [WINTER 2019](#)



In November 2018 a bottle of [Macallan 1926 60 year old](#), which had been hand-painted by Irish artist [Michael Dillon](#), set a whisky auction record when it sold for \$1.28 million. Few of us can afford a whisky that is such a certifiable work of art—inside and out—but you can still dress up your backbar. These more affordable artistic whisky labels, many of them limited editions, will transform your bar into a bona fide gallery.

### ALMOST TOO PRETTY TO DRINK: 6 BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED WHISKIES



[Woodford Reserve Kentucky Derby Edition \(2019 release\)](#)—45.2%, \$44

Keith Anderson, a Brown-Forman employee, debuted his racehorse painting on the 2018 Woodford Reserve Kentucky Derby bottle. The annual edition has been featuring artists since 2003. “I got to meet the artists who did the bottles and they’re the ones that told me ‘If you ever get a chance, you need to and the doors will open,’” Anderson says, and open they did. Following his encore on the 2019 bottle, Anderson is creating ticket and program art for [Churchill Downs](#), home of the Derby.

[FEW Alice in Chains All Secrets Known Tequila cask-finished bourbon](#)—50.5%, \$75

Knoxville, Tennessee native [Justin Helton](#) bridged his love of music and art by selling his original custom posters for bands like the Grateful Dead and Phish, at events like the Bonnaroo Music Festival. Following the 2016 release of the successful Flaming Lips label, FEW Spirits partnered with Helton for this psychedelic tribute to Alice in Chains. “I do so many concert posters and music-related design; it’s one of those fun projects that still ties that in but it’s a completely different animal in itself,” he says.



[Compass Box The Peat Monster blended malt scotch](#)—46%, \$65

In 2019, Compass Box reworked both Peat Monster’s recipe and the label created by [Marc Burckhardt](#) for the whisky’s 10th anniversary in 2013. A portrait of Compass Box founder John Glaser was replaced with a bundle of flowers meant to symbolize creativity and growth. Burckhardt, who’s a fan of peaty whisky, incorporated books and glass vessels to capture the chemistry and science of whisky making. The original painting hangs in the Compass Box blending room in London.

[Fukano 6000 Japanese rice whisky](#)—40.4%, \$90

American artist [Linh Do](#) injected her own sardonic humor, and influences like the 1943 French novella “The Little Prince” and an episode of “The Twilight Zone” into this label. The overturned astronaut is emblematic of the whisky in the bottle. “If you’re somebody who’s a traditionalist and who’s used to single malt Scotch whisky you would have a tendency to shy away from rice whisky,” Do says. “It’s supposed to represent that he’s turning the industry on its head and forcing you to rethink what the definition of whisky is.”



[Redwood Empire Emerald Giant rye](#)—45%, \$45

[Steven Noble’s](#) exquisite line work appears on [Espolòn tequila](#), [Kraken Black spiced rum](#), and now rye whiskey. He usually begins his illustrations with hand drawing, scratchboard, or woodcuts, styles apparent in this folksy tribute to California conservationist John Muir. Noble relies on strong graphic imagery to tell powerful stories quickly. “You get a formula of success that works, and usually [that’s] getting the message across, making it succinct and specific enough,” he says.

[Johnnie Walker Blue Label Year of the Pig blended scotch](#)—46%, \$250

Johnnie Walker continued their Chinese calendar series in 2019 with the Year of the Pig. [Chrissy Lau](#), a native of England living in Sydney, drew upon her Chinese heritage for inspiration with the pigs on three panels symbolizing the energy and prosperity associated with Chinese New Year, along with fireworks, lanterns, and clouds. “I was keen to create a design that was inspired by my own interpretation and heritage,” she says, noting she also has whisky heritage; her dad is a collector.



## Whiskey Review: Little Book Chapter 03: The Road Home

By [Shauna McKnight](#) / March 27, 2020

It's no secret that Jim Beam is the top selling bourbon in the world. Freddie Noe is the son of Fred Noe, Jim Beam's master distiller, and he's also [the brains behind the Little Book series](#), a collection of premium blends first released in 2017. If that's not impressive enough, Freddie Noe also happens to be Jim Beam's great-great grandson; an eighth generation descendant of the Beam family, which made the brand a staple in liquor cabinets across the United States. In fact, the Little Book series gets its name [from Freddie's childhood nickname](#), given to him by grandpa Booker. [History and family tradition run deep](#) within the Beam clan. Freddie's grandfather Booker is well-known for his unfiltered, cask strength Booker's Bourbon, and worked in the family business for over 50 years. He says that Beams have been living in Bardstown Kentucky for over 200 years – [Booker actually lived in the house that his own grandfather](#) Jim Beam built near downtown Bardstown. And of course, Jim Beam himself built the Clermont distillery in Bardstown right after prohibition. Its safe to say whiskey runs in their blood. Figuratively, of course. Little Book: The Road Home is the third iteration of blends [in the series](#). It features a blend of all four expressions in the Jim Beam Small Batch Collection crafted by Noe's grandfather Booker Noe: Knob Creek, Booker's, Baker's, and Basil Hayden's. With Little Book: The Road Home, Freddie [pays homage to his grandfather](#) and looks toward the future – the future of the business yes, and also his own growing family. The release is particularly special to him as his grandfather was the master distiller of all four of the spirits in the blend, which his father then marketed to the public. It was important that the character of each expression wasn't lost or overshadowed. It was so vital that Noe honor his family history it actually took 57 recipes to find what he was looking for: an inviting scent and perfect balance of all four unique bourbons.



Little Book Chapter 03: The Road Home (image via Shauna McKnight/The Whiskey Wash)

Report this ad

Tasting Notes: Little Book Chapter 03: The Road Home

Vital Stats: A blend of four premium bourbons – 9 year aged Knob Creek, 9 year aged Basil Hayden's, 11 year aged Booker's and 12 year aged Baker's. All whiskeys are blended and bottled at barrel strength. 122.6 proof, and costs around \$125 for a 750 ml bottle. Appearance: Dark, amber and copper notes. Very rich color, and thin but sticky legs. There's nothing viscous about it – very straightforward in appearance.

Nose: The strength of the whiskey is apparent on the nose. It's got rich notes of vanilla, oak and some astringency from its high ABV. Sweet notes of caramel stand up to the smokiness of the oak and other scents like allspice and clove find their way into the profile in a subtle way.

Palate: The balance between all four expressions in this blend is apparent from the first sip. Notes of strong rye, caramel, vanilla and charred oak hit in the front, while other nuanced flavors of cut grass, mango, honey and more charred oak continued into the body and throughout the finish. The rye and oak act like a backbone for all the flavors. I can taste how the nuances of each whiskey are captured and amplified by the higher proof.

The Takeaway

Summary

Little Book: The Road Home is going on the list of my favorite bourbons. It was so easy to sip on; I added an ice cube to make it extra refreshing. I would enjoy this with a New York Strip and buttery asparagus, sitting on a hot porch pretending I'm in Kentucky.

5.0

User Rating 4.25 (4 votes)

## BOURBON VS SCOTCH: WHAT MAKES THEM SO DIFFERENT?

by [Matt Strickland](#)

November 24, 2019

If you're reading this, there's likely a chance that you enjoy the occasional whiskey. It makes sense. Whiskey is (and has been) the darling of the drinks world for a while now. Folks are learning everything they can about their favorite barrel-aged, cereal-based tippie—and there are so many types to choose from! There are a lot of differences between the various whiskey types around the world, but most folks tend to pit bourbon vs scotch when claiming a favorite style.

An aversion or [adoration of peat](#), a love affair with big charred oak, or a distaste for bourbon's fattened sweetness are a few of the explanations for one's particular predilections. Bourbon and scotch are figuratively (and literally) oceans apart. The flavor differences between these two whiskeys are huge. But the reasons for these differences go well beyond bourbon's use of at least [51% corn in the mash](#). In fact, some Scotch whisky blends arguably have more corn in them than some bourbons do, but that's another story.

### BOURBON VS SCOTCH

Bourbon is characterized as having a so-called "fatter" and sweeter flavor profile, relying on new, heavily charred oak barrels for much of its character. The corn base does provide a grainy sweetness which is amplified by the fact that the mash is fermented and distilled with all the grain solids still in the liquid.



Old Forester's column still / Photo Credit: Old Forester

These whiskeys are typically produced using a column still in conjunction with a *doubler*. A doubler is a technological relative to the *thumpers* used in moonshine production. It provides a simple second distillation for the bourbon. Folks studying the provenance of their favorite drams sometimes hear "column still" and think of neutral vodka. But when we're talking about bourbon, the result is nothing but flavorful. The neutrality of column stills is very much a myth. Just like any other tool or instrument in the workspace, the results depend on how you use it.

Bourbon is most often distilled to a relatively low 130-135 proof (65-67.5% ABV). This type of distillation leaves a lot of flavor congeners in the distillate. The distillate is usually reduced to 125 proof or lower (125 proof is the legal maximum for barrel aging bourbon). Coupled with large charred new American oak barrels, which age in the hot and humid Southern climes of Kentucky and Tennessee, you get a big, chewy, caramel and vanilla-laden whiskey. It helps that the climate and lower barrel proof tend to age whiskey a bit faster than cooler climates with spirits of higher barrel proof. Speaking of which: segue!

### BARLEY AND SOMETIMES PEAT

Scotch whisky behaves differently, even if some of its DNA has historically found its way into bourbon production. When thinking of differences between bourbon vs scotch, consider the barley. In the case of single malts, that's all you can use. Maybe the barley has been smoked with peat moss (hello, Islay) or maybe it hasn't, which is common in Speyside. Then there's the fact that the barley is mashed and subsequently separated from the sweet liquid prior to adding yeast. This removes some of the more intense cereal notes that bourbon can take on.



The malting floor at Highland Park Distillery / Photo Credit: Highland Park

Scotch mashes are typically [fermented a bit cooler](#) than many bourbons which produces different types of aromatics. It's a complicated subject so let's just leave it at that. Next the fermented distiller's beer is distilled in pot stills at least twice. The spirit comes out of the still averaging around 70% ABV, which is a smidge higher than that of bourbon. The higher ABV off the still as well as a higher barreling ABV (63-65% is typical) favors the maturation of a more subtle and delicate spirit (there are exceptions of course).

#### USED VS NEW BARRELS

Scotch barrels are usually, but not always, sourced from distilleries or wineries that previously used them for something else such as bourbon or sherry. Even then, they are often re-charred on the inside, so they aren't as neutral in character as many folks assume. And finally, due to the different types of casks at the distillery's disposal, there are a lot of options for blending an array of flavors together. This is not commonly done in bourbon land because the law says a new charred oak barrel must be used—yes, every time.



Barrels at Bowmore Distillery / Photo Credit: Bowmore Distillery  
The previous paragraphs have really just scratched the surface here, but you can see that the differences of bourbon vs scotch are the result of much more than mere ingredient selection. Hopefully this gives a bit more insight into the inner workings of whiskey. Maybe it has made you curiously thirsty to revisit something outside of your preferred dram for some "research". Of course, consumers have the luxury of choice and in the case of both bourbon and scotch, flavor and enjoyment are never in short supply.

## Freddie Noe releases Little Book Chapter 3

6th September, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Eighth generation Beam distiller Freddie Noe has unveiled the third expression in his annual blended whiskey series, called Little Book Chapter 3: The Road Home.



*The Road Home is the third expression in the Little Book series*  
Freddie Noe, who is the son of current Jim Beam master distiller Fred Noe, named the series after the childhood nickname given to him by his grandfather, founding distiller Booker Noe. The limited edition blend comprises: nine-year-old Knob Creek and Basil Hayden's Bourbons, an 11-year-old Booker's Bourbon and a 12-year-old Baker's Bourbon.

The palate offers "complexity from the vanilla, wood and caramel notes" of the Knob Creek and Booker's Bourbons, and is balanced by the "spiciness" of Basil Hayden's. Baker's Bourbon, meanwhile, provides a "lingering, warm and sweet finish".

"This particular blend carries a lot of sentimental value for me," Freddie Noe explained. "Each of the individual Bourbons are special to me, just as they were to my grandad, and I really wanted to make sure they came through the final blend in a way that would make him proud."

"Every aspect of Chapter 3 had to be absolutely perfect – the vanilla notes, the finish, the aroma – so I meticulously tested each blend to get it to a place that represented the entire Small Batch Collection while creating something totally new that I think people are really going to love."

The Road Home honours Freddie Noe's "storied family roots in Kentucky".

"With the birth of my son this year I spent a lot more time at home, reflecting often on family and our legacy," Freddie Noe continued. "I wanted to create something that honoured the legacy and values passed down to me by my family."

"Whenever I drive down the road to the distillery, the same one my granddaddy Booker drove down, I'm reminded of his adventurous spirit, especially of his creation of the Small Batch Collection in a time when no one was drinking premium Bourbon."

"I like to think he passed that same spirit along to me, which ultimately led me to blending."

The Road Home is recommended served neat, over ice or with a drop or two of water.

The expression was launched following "high acclaim" for the first two whiskeys in the series – Noe Simple Task, which [launched in September 2019](#), and The Easy, which [debuted in September 2017](#).

Little Book Chapter 3: The Road Home is available in limited quantities from September 2019, priced at US\$124.99 per 750ml.

## Pappy Van Winkle Tasting

[TAYLORAPRIL 11, 2019](#)





At last, I am reaching the top of the Buffalo Trace mountain. It's been a long uphill climb through [Weller Special Reserve](#), [Blanton's](#), and [Stagg Jr.](#) Today, I have the good fortune of reviewing not one but five(!) expressions from the fabled Van Winkle family of bourbon whiskies.

Fate smiled on me recently when I received an invitation to a tasting of Van Winkle bourbons at Wrigleyville's [Big Star](#). The restaurant's original Wicker Park outpost has long been a mecca for lovers of tacos, whiskey, and loud country music. It's the kind of place I'll be taking the MALT crew once the planned "Chicago Whiskey Fest 2022?" finally materializes.

As the big day drew near, I began my background research in earnest. As noted in my prior reviews, it's always worth doing one's own investigations into the genesis of these brands, whose names swirl around in the evanescent mists of whiskey folklore. As a rule of thumb, those of us inquiring after the truth can rely on half of what we read and even less of what we hear.

Thus, a history of the "[Old Rip Van Winkle Distillery](#)" begins – surprisingly – with the revelation that no distillery with this name ever existed. The story of Van Winkle bourbons is actually two stories. The first is of people in the Van Winkle family line. The second is of a distillery called Stitzel-Weller. Research from multiple sources has produced the intertwined narrative below, edited for clarity:

The diminutive Julian P. "Pappy" Van Winkle Sr. (all five-foot-six-inches of him, or roughly 1.35 Adams) had been a traveling salesman for whiskey wholesaler W.L. Weller since the age of 19. He and a partner purchased the A. Ph. Stitzel distillery, the source of Weller's bourbon. A merger of the two businesses resulted in the construction of the Stitzel-Weller Distillery in 1935. Pappy passed away in 1965, with a lifetime of bourbon drinking and cigar smoking not impeding his progress to the ripe old age of 91.

Julian Jr. (I feel that not calling him "Sonny" was a missed opportunity) ran the Stitzel-Weller distillery until 1972. At that time, so dire were the prospects for bourbon demand that family shareholders forced a sale to conglomerate Norton-Simon. The Van Winkles were able to acquire aged stocks from the distillery, renamed "Old Fitzgerald," in order to continue the production of Old Rip Van Winkle bourbon, for which they had retained the trademark. In 1981, Julian III (Pappy's grandson) took over the family business, which was then mostly engaged in the production of bourbon in kitschy ceramic decanters. At this time, the waters become a bit muddied. Stitzel-Weller/Old Fitzgerald stopped bottling bourbon for the Van Winkles. Julian III started sourcing aged stocks of bourbon from the defunct Hoffman Distillery in Louisville, eventually purchasing the plant for its bottling operations and barrel storage for \$80,000 in 1983 (sadly, the property, plant, and equipment were sold again in 2002, also for \$80,000). The Van Winkles then began procuring bourbon from a wide range of distillers, including Wild Turkey and Old Boone. A 15 year old "Old Rip Van Winkle" expression was first released in 1989; comprised of Old Boone stocks, it was notable for its high rye (not wheat) mash bill.

A waterfall of acquisitions resulted in the (former Stitzel-Weller, now Old Fitzgerald) distillery being acquired by Guinness, then becoming part of United Distillers, which closed the distillery in 1992. The Van Winkle family soldiered on, utilizing Old Boone stocks and whatever barrels remained from Stitzel-Weller. The 20-year-old expression (the first to bear the name "Pappy" and the iconic photograph) was released in 1994. Four years later, the inaugural 23-year-old bottling was released using aged stocks sourced from the old Stitzel-Weller distillery, which were distilled with the (now famous) wheated mash bill.

Preston (great-grandson of Pappy) joined the family firm in 2001. The Van Winkles had been sourcing whiskey from the recently-renamed Buffalo Trace distillery and decided to formalize a partnership in 2002 (the family retains majority ownership in the partnership). Buffalo Trace had acquired the Weller brand from Diageo in the late 1990's, and there were obvious synergies from emphasizing the shared wheated mash bill. The 15-year-old "Old Rip Van Winkle" was replaced by the 15-Year-Old-Pappy expression in 2004, giving us the lineup we see now. The mothballed Stitzel-Weller distillery was resurrected (sort of) in 2014 as the visitor's center for Diageo's Bulleit brand.

That, my friends, may be the most meandering whiskey tale I have ever heard, and it's not for lack of serious competition. To summarize: the Van Winkles went from selling someone else's bourbon, to distilling and bottling their own bourbon, to bottling bourbon they had previously produced, then to bottling a lot of other peoples' bourbon and some of their own, and finally to having

Buffalo Trace produce and bottle bourbon for them, which is where we find ourselves today.

Let's consider the whiskey itself: what is it that makes these bourbons so flavorful in comparison to, say, Weller, which is distilled from the same wheated mash bill? The secret, per both Preston and the folks at Buffalo Trace (who kindly answer my interminable stream of questions to the extent permitted) is barrel selection. Warehouse location, and position of barrels within the warehouse, is the determining factor in deciding which bourbons feel the maximum salutary effect of temperature and air flow. The Van Winkles (*père et fils*) are given "first crack at barrels from the best parts of the warehouse" according to Preston, namely the first and second stories towards the center of the building. Whereas Burgundy has the 1.88 golden hectares of Romanée-Conti, the "Grand Crus" of bourbon are delineated by building and rick. As I noted in [a review](#) of wheated sibling Weller, the Van Winkle bourbons are now among the most sought-after bourbons – nay, whiskies – in the world. Roughly 9,400 cases of annual production (with plans to double this quantity within six years) are far from sufficient to satiate demand. Such is the incentive for malfeasance that Buffalo Trace has gone as far as to spend [\\$500,000 per year](#) on anti-counterfeiting efforts.

These bourbons are released each fall, with distribution varying by state. Some places conduct a public lottery; in others, favored customers (retailers, publicans, deep-pocketed bourbon enthusiasts) get allocated bottles selectively. The majority of bottles seem to find their way to auction where, predictably, the going rates are far above suggested retail prices.

So, how to assess these fairly within the gently-price-sensitive MALT [scoring framework](#)? I have noted both retail and auction prices below, for the reference of anyone thinking about picking these up on the secondary market. My scores will predominately reflect the MSRP, with some added commentary about value-for-money at the prevailing prices, which a reader is more likely to have to pay to lay hands on these.

I had previously encountered the 10-year-old and 12-year-old expressions (as well as the 13-year-old Van Winkle Family Reserve rye) on the shelves of other local bars. Pours weren't cheap, but they ranged from "very good" to – in the case of the 13-year-old-rye – among the best whiskies I have ever tried. However, I lacked the complete picture.

This evening offered the opportunity to try all the Van Winkle expressions (2018 release) together. The invitation promised a tasting of 5 pours, guided by Preston Van Winkle. (Full disclosure: I paid \$100 for a ticket to this event, which included snacks). Doing my best to block out chatter, honky-tonk music, and the aromas of Mexican food in order to form some critical opinions about the whiskies on offer, I was able to generate the following notes:

The first whiskey is the Old Rip Van Winkle 10 Year Old. It is bottled at 107 proof (53.5%) and has an MSRP of \$60, though the estimated auction price is around \$350 (using results from the most recent HDH spirits sale).



#### Old Rip Van Winkle 10-Year-Old: Review

Color: Medium-pale amber.

On the nose: A topnote of acetone dominates the nose. This smells young, but high-quality. Tons of fruit: orange peel, kumquat, watermelon juice. Orange creamsicle. Goetze's Candy Caramel Creams.

In the mouth: Starts with a bright, slightly bitter burst of tangerine. Barrel char and a metallic note are evident at midpalate. There's a round ripeness that re-emerges, along with caramelized sugar. This is densely flavorful. Finishes bright and clean, with a wisp of tannic oakiness. Very good bourbon

Score: 8/10

Next comes the Van Winkle Special Reserve 12 Year Old. It is bottled at 90.4 proof (45.2%) and has an MSRP of \$70. Indicative auction prices are more like \$600.

#### Van Winkle Special Reserve 12-Year-Old: Review

Color: Sunny orange.

On the nose: Peppery sweetness to start. More sedate than the 10-year-old, this has caramelized sugar and some green leafy aromas. Hard to find too much to say about this one.

In the mouth: Pale, dilute. More of a soft wheaty character, in line with the Weller bourbons. Lingers a bit, with a gently smoky bitterness. The quietest of the bunch.

Score: 5/10

Here comes Pappy! The 15 Year Old is bottled at 107 proof (54%) and has an MSRP of \$100. Expect to pay nearer \$1,500 at auction. This is reported (by Mr. Van Winkle) to be the favorite of the family.

#### Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve 15-Year-Old: Review

Color: Dark copper.

On the nose: Vanilla buttercream abounds, though it is gently and smoothly integrated. Savory notes of ham hock and chicken broth. Salted chips (crisps).

In the mouth: Gorgeous, generous ripe orange fruit at midpalate, with a leavening note of candied sweetness. Finishes with a lingering ferric note that tiptoes into the smoky spiciness of grilled chili pepper. The most complete and balanced of the bunch.

Score: 9/10

On to Pappy 20-Year-Old. It is also bottled at 90.4 proof (45.2%) and has an MSRP of \$170. This sells at auction for closer to \$2,000. Mark previously had a taste of this [back in 2014](#). An interesting programming note: the vicissitudes of time and fortune mean that this distillate is mostly from the Bernheim distillery, [better known to MALT](#) readers as the producer of Evan Williams and Elijah Craig bourbon.

#### Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve 20-Year-Old: Review

Color: Dirty gold.

On the nose: Ash, wet pennies, clementines. Kumato tomatoes and wilted mint leaves. There's the autumnal fruity scent of the orchard floor after picking.

In the mouth: Woody and ashy to start. Faint ripeness of red apples turning brown. Dirt. Cask asserts itself with lots of drily earthy notes. A step down from the 15-year-old.

Score: 6/10



At last, we have the Pappy Van Winkle 23-Year-Old. The crown jewel of the Van Winkle portfolio, it is bottled at 95.6 proof (47.8%) and carries an MSRP of \$270. At auction, this fetches roughly \$2,500. Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve 23-Year-Old: Review

Color: Rusty rose.

On the nose: Burnt banana peel, more wet metal, aloe vera. Roasted turkey breast and fresh raspberries. The milkily chemical aroma of hand lotion.

In the mouth: Starts with a burst of freshly-squeezed lemons.

Through the palate and into the finish, there's a balance of warmly sweet, roasty, smoky and fruity notes. Complex.

Score: 7/10

#### Conclusions

The most fun I had with these was when I stopped studying them and started enjoying them, as drams in a glass, to be mingled with conversation and food. Bar the 10 year old and the 15 year old, they don't bear scrutiny for the MSRP. At auction prices, you're buying these as collector's items or as an "investment," though (as a professional investor) I stand by my assertion that whiskey has all the hallmarks of the world's worst investment: thinly-traded market, highly subjective valuation, no intermediate cash flows.

So what's the point of this tasting, or indeed of the existence of Van Winkle bourbons as a going concern? Assuming the 9,400 cases are split 40%/30%/15%/10%/5% between the 10/12/15/20/23 year old expressions, respectively, MSRP would yield Buffalo Trace \$10 million of annual revenue. Put differently, the annual sales of Van Winkle bourbons would account for 0.8% of Buffalo Trace's yearly output of 10 million liters.

As noted in the Weller review, these bourbons lend a halo to the remainder of the Buffalo Trace range. They're a P.R. activity, a calling card. They're nice enough, and a couple are decent value for MSRP, not that you or I will ever purchase them for that amount. BUT (big but) they garner a disproportionate amount of attention, and as such are immeasurably valuable to their parent, or its marketing department.

All that to say: with clear eyes and a pure heart, I cannot advise anyone to go out to an auction house and pay the vastly inflated sums these bottles command. Sorry (not sorry).

Oh, I nearly forgot: how did Pappy himself drink his bourbon? In a tall glass with huge ice cubes and a twist of lemon, as he sat on a stool in a cornfield shooting doves with a double-barreled shotgun. Forget auctions, forget hype, forget four-figure profits. If you read this and would like to please Pappy's ghost: pour yourself a heaping glass of bourbon, served however you may like it, and be happy.

## The 17 Best Bourbon Whiskeys You Can Buy in 2019

MARCH 22, 2019 [DRINKS](#) By [CHRIS WRIGHT](#) Photo by [HENRY PHILLIPS](#)



Bourbon has never been more popular than it is right now. This definitive guide of the best bourbons of 2019 explores everything you need to know about America's favorite brown spirit, including important terminology and, of course, a list of the best bottles you can buy at your local liquor store.

[Prefer to skip directly to the picks? Click here.](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

### [The Short List](#)

- Best All-Around Bourbon: [Buffalo Trace](#)
- Best Value Bourbon: [Evan Williams Black Label](#)
- Best Value Bourbon: [Evan Williams Black Label](#)
- Best Bourbon for Cocktails: [Four Roses Yellow Label](#)
- Best Kept Secret: [Heaven Hill 6-Year-Old Green Label](#)
- Best Budget Sipper: [Larceny Bourbon](#)



## Best Everyday Bourbons

- Best Gateway Bourbon: [Four Roses Small Batch](#)
- Best Bourbon to Drink Neat: [Four Roses Single Barrel](#)
- Best Bourbon to Pair with Food: [Maker's Mark](#)
- Best Rye Substitute: [Knob Creek](#)
- The Smoothest Bourbon: [Elijah Craig Small Batch](#)
- Best All-Around Bourbon: [Buffalo Trace](#)
- Best Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon: [Henry McKenna Single Barrel](#)
- Best Craft Bourbon: [New Riff Kentucky Straight Bourbon](#)

## Best Bucket List Bourbons

- Best High-Proof Bourbon: [Elijah Craig Barrel Proof](#)
- Most Nuanced Bourbon: [Old Forester 1920 Prohibition Style](#)
- Best Blended Bourbon: [Barrell Craft Spirits 15-Year-Old Bourbon](#)
- Best Wheated Bourbon: [Buffalo Trace William Larue Weller](#)
- Most Complex Bourbon: [Four Roses AI Young Limited Edition](#)

### The Short List

Best All-Around Bourbon: Buffalo Trace, \$25+



Good as a sipper and in cocktails, Buffalo Trace's namesake bourbon is the perfect do-it-all whiskey. What's more, each bottle is a kind of lottery. Given Buffalo Trace's lineage of excellent whiskeys from W.L. Weller, George T. Staggs and Van Winkle, there's a chance you stumble upon something special.

Tasting Notes: Strong notes of caramel and nutmeg, with hints of hay and apricot on the nose and a "snap-crackle-pop mouthfeel."

Average Price: \$25 – \$35

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

Best Value Bourbon: Evan Williams Black Label, \$11+



"If Evan Williams were to sell this whiskey to someone else, that brand would mark it up to \$40, and people would be happy buying

it," says expert whiskey reviewer Fred Minnick. But Evan Williams is a value brand. So its whiskey, at a great proof point of 86 and an age that Minnick says is roughly five-and-a-half years old, goes for less than \$20. "It's a fantastic bourbon, especially for the money," he says.

Tasting Notes: Well rounded, with a range of flavors including brown sugar and nutmeg atop the standard range of vanilla and caramel.

Price: \$11 – \$15

## Introduction

Bourbon, the Great American Spirit, is not as simple as one might think. Yes, its definition is writ in but a few sentences on the holy stone of Federal Decree: It must be made in the United States; its grain bill must include at least 51 percent corn; it must be produced at not more than 80 percent alcohol (160 proof) and stored in charred new oak containers at no more than 62.5 percent (125 proof). And yes, it is a blue-collar spirit, made by thirsty farmers, for thirsty farmers. But underneath these fundamentals swims a deep sea of factors — additional rules and regulations, hype machines and deceptive marketing, false myths and a boom that began in 2008 and is still going strong today — that make bourbon more complex than it seems. Sour mash and Bottled-in-Bond, non-distiller-producers and high-ryes. Where's the thirsty modern man, farmer or otherwise, to begin?

"Because of bourbon's continued growth in popularity, the misinformed malcontents are spreading like a bad virus," writes [Fred Minnick](#) in his 2015 standout guide, [Bourbon Curious](#). Minnick loves bourbon; now the editor in chief of [Bourbon+magazine](#), he's written seven books and three of them involve America's brown spirit. But he's not afraid to dissect its misguided marketing and secretive practices. *Bourbon Curious* opens with plenty of stick ("the proof, age, and whiskey type are the only things you can trust on an American whiskey label") before getting to its carrot: hundreds of pages of information and mouthwatering tasting notes on just about any bourbon you'll find on liquor store shelves. The key to understanding it all, Minnick says, is transparency from brands combined with an understanding of a term most bourbon drinkers don't use: terroir.

"Spirits tend to gravitate toward branding, whereas wine gravitates toward terroir," Minnick says. "But an educated bourbon consumer can piece together terroir — and really, it's by distillery." The top bourbon distilleries — Four Roses, Buffalo Trace, Heaven Hill, Wild Turkey, Jim Beam, Brown-Forman and others — distill the bourbon that makes up a large number of brands you'll find on liquor store shelves that are worth drinking. Minnick's recommendation for the novice: Familiarize yourself with those distilleries and try to pick apart the distinct flavors produced by each, whether that's Wild Turkey's funky note or Four Roses' spicy flavors. "If someone really wants to get into this hobby and this world, they have to immerse themselves," he says.

To help you in your bourbon journey, we asked Minnick to discuss the absolute best bourbons across three price points — everyday values, mid-range palate builders and rare gems. Before we get to the bottles, however, a quick primer on terminology and pricing. If you prefer to skip directly to the picks, click [here](#).

About Our Expert

Fred Minnick is a *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author and the editor in chief of [Bourbon+](#) magazine. He's written seven books, including a memoir about shooting combat photography in Iraq. Today, however, his main focus is whiskey. He also serves as an expert panelist for spirits competitions and is the "bourbon authority" for the Kentucky Derby Museum.

## How Bourbon is Made

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Bourbon Terms to Know

**Bourbon Whiskey:** Whiskey produced in the U.S. at not exceeding 80 percent alcohol by volume (160 proof) from a fermented mash of not less than 51 percent of corn and stored at not more than 62.5 percent alcohol by volume (125 proof) in charred new oak containers."

**Straight Bourbon Whiskey:** "Bourbon whiskey stored in charred new oak containers for two years or more. 'Straight bourbon whiskey' may include mixtures of two or more straight bourbon whiskeys provided all the whiskeys are produced in the same state."

**Bottled in Bond:** "The spirit must be the product of one distillation season by one distiller at one distillery. It must have been stored in a federally bonded warehouse for at least four years and be bottled at

100 proof. The bottled product's label must identify the distillery where it was distilled and bottled."

**Sour Mash:** A fermentation technique used by almost all bourbon distillers that employs pre-fermented mash from a previous distilling in a new mash. The sour mash prevents wild yeast from entering the mash and causing infections.

**Proof:** The percentage of alcohol, displayed as double that of the alcohol percentage.

**High Rye:** A bourbon with a higher than normal percentage of mash bill made up of rye (as opposed to using more corn, wheat, or barley, the other main grains used in bourbon mash). This tends to produce spicier flavors in the bourbon.

**Wheated:** A bourbon with a higher than normal percentage of mash bill made up of wheat (the main grain remains corn). This tends to produce a softer, less spicy whiskey.

**Small Batch:** A subjective term signaling a bourbon made using a select number of barrels or recipes in a blended bottling.

**Single Barrel:** A bourbon made using single barrels, providing a higher range of variation in flavor, and the chance at specific, unique characteristics.

**Non-Distiller Producers (NDP):** Companies that purchase their whiskey from someone else rather than making it themselves. This is not a new phenomenon and it plays a large role in blended bourbons.

### Best Budget Bourbons



These bourbons are all under \$25. They have some of the same flavors found in the world's best, most sought-after whiskeys. They just don't carry the same level of complexity; the flavors tend to come and go more quickly.

"A more expensive whiskey might have this rich note that lasts for ten to twelve seconds," Minnick says, "whereas a cheaper bottle has that note just for one to two seconds." Still, this price range has the best value of the entire market, and it also provides opportunities for bourbon to be used in cocktails — or as gifts.

**Video:** 3 Affordable, Must-Buy Bourbons

Volume 0%

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**Best Value Bourbon:** Evan Williams Black Label



**Verdict:** "If Evan Williams were to sell this whiskey to someone else, that brand would mark it up to \$40, and people would be happy

buying it," Minnick says. But Evan Williams is a value brand. So its whiskey, at a great proof point of 86 and an age that Minnick says is roughly five-and-a-half years old, goes for less than \$20. "It's a fantastic bourbon, especially for the money," he says. "You can get a lot of satisfaction out of that."

**Proof:** 86

**Distilled By:** Heaven Hill

**Tasting Notes:** Well rounded, with a range of flavors including brown sugar and nutmeg atop the standard range of vanilla and caramel.

**Price:** \$11 – \$15

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

**Best Bourbon for Cocktails:** Four Roses Yellow Label



**Verdict:** "This is such a dynamic whiskey," Minnick says. "And it's the best cocktail bourbon out there." Four Roses is a highly regarded distillery, with a high-rye mash bill that produces an extra spiciness and a concentration on yeast that has been "eye-opening" for the bourbon world. They've also led the way in transparency.

"They'll tell you everything there is to know about their whiskey — they don't hide the mash bill, the distillation proof. I presume you could ask 'em how much their CEO makes and they'd tell you,"

Minnick says.

**Proof:** 80

**Distilled By:** Four Roses

**Tasting Notes:** An earthy nose, but spicy on the tongue, with immediate and pleasant notes of cinnamon and baking spices.

**Price:** \$12 – \$20

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

**Best Kept Secret:** Heaven Hill 6-Year-Old Green Label





**Verdict:** This is the bourbon Minnick buys as a gift for his family and friends. “It’s 90 proof for around \$9, and you just don’t beat it for the money,” he says. “I’ve done some blind tastings with it and it out-tastes Jack Daniels, Jim Beam, even Buffalo Trace in one tasting.” But it’s only available in Kentucky. Why? “I have some theories about that,” Minnick says. “The Shapiras, the people who own Heaven Hill — this label is for them and their employees. It gets zero marketing dollars.”

**Proof:** 90

**Distilled By:** Heaven Hill

**Tasting Notes:** Corn, vanilla, caramel and brown sugar, with oak tannins.

**Price:** \$9 – \$12 (only available in Kentucky)

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

**Best Budget Sipper:** Larceny Bourbon



**Verdict:** “This has an incredible sweetness to it,” Minnick says. “It’s not complex, but the sweetness is really nice — the way it hits the palate. It’s a good, inexpensive, wheated everyday sipper.”

**Proof:** 92

**Distilled By:** Heaven Hill

**Tasting Notes:** It’s a wheated bourbon, with loads of bready sweetness, butterscotch, and toffee.

**Price:** \$20 – \$25

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

**Best Everyday Bourbons**



According to Minnick, this is where the majority of the bourbon world lives. “You start with the six- to twelve-year-old bourbons that you can find regularly.” What changes from the entry-level spirits is complexity. The very best bourbons in this range “will have note

after note after note after note, and then you can still taste that dominant note on your palate,” Minnick says.

**Best Gateway Bourbon:** Four Roses Small Batch



**Verdict:** Four Roses’s upgrade over Yellow blends 180 barrels of four different recipes per bottling. “If you love cinnamon notes, you’ll love this,” Minnick says. It’s more complex than Yellow, but still drinks easy. “It’s what I want to sip at a ballgame.”

**Proof:** 90

**Distilled By:** Four Roses

**Tasting Notes:** cinnamon, citrus, caramel, vanilla, and an apple-pie sweetness.

**Price:** \$30 – \$35

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

**Best Bourbon to Drink Neat:** Four Roses Single Barrel



**Verdict:** Made using a single recipe and barrel per bottle, it’s between 7 and 8 years old and has more complexity than the Small Batch. “For being the same brand as the Small Batch, they taste very different. This one is more of a sipper. I want to really sit there and think about it when I’m drinking it,” Minnick says.

**Proof:** 100

**Distilled By:** Four Roses

**Tasting Notes:** Toasted marshmallow and campfire on the nose,

adding cinnamon, caramel and vanilla on the tongue, with a particularly creamy mouthfeel.

Price: \$40 – \$50

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

Best Bourbon to Pair with Food: Maker's Mark



**Verdict:** Minnick has a unique use for one of bourbon's classic names. "I drink so much Makers with BBQ," he says. Its mellow balance — helped by the prominent caramel notes of its wheated mash bill — doesn't overpower meaty flavors.

**Proof:** 90

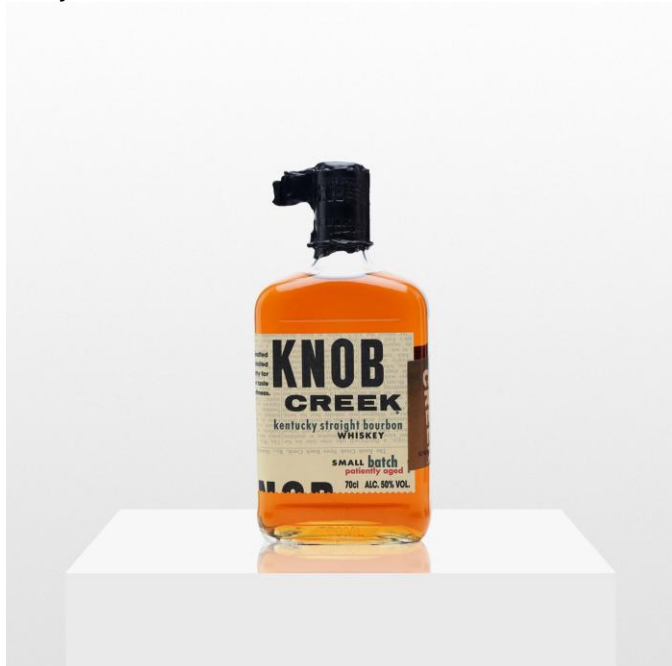
**Distilled By:** Maker's Mark

**Tasting Notes:** On the nose, dried apricot, chocolate, coffee, and corn; on the tongue, bread pudding, caramel-apple, and pumpkin pie.

Price: \$30 – \$45

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

Best Rye Substitute: Knob Creek



**Verdict:** Its "cornbread" note makes this Minnick's stand-in for rye in Manhattans. That cornbread flavor profile is shared across many Jim Beam bourbons, but Knob Creek's 100 proof is the perfect expression of the flavor, as opposed to Booker's 126 and Jim Beam Black's 86.

**Proof:** 100

**Distilled By:** Jim Beam

**Tasting Notes:** Nutty on the nose, with a distinct cornbread flavor on the tongue.

Price: \$30 – \$40

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

The Smoothest Bourbon: Elijah Craig Small Batch



**Verdict:** Though it shares DNA with other Heaven Hill bourbons like Evan Williams and Henry McKenna, Elijah Craig Small Batch is balanced, with extra maltiness. "It's got so much caramel, and a beautiful nutmeg note," Minnick says. "This is all about the sweetness."

**Proof:** 94

**Distilled By:** Heaven Hill

**Tasting Notes:** Caramel, chocolate, vanilla, caramel, and a distinct nutmeg flavor.

Price: \$25 – \$40

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

Best All-Around Bourbon: Buffalo Trace



**Verdict:** Good as a sipper and in cocktails, it's the perfect do-it-all whiskey. What's more, each bottle is a kind of lottery, with a chance of something special, given Buffalo Trace's lineage of "some of the greatest whiskeys out there," Minnick says — they include W.L. Weller, George T. Stagg, and Van Winkle. "Sometimes you get a bottle that just explodes in your mouth."

**Proof:** 90

**Distilled By:** Buffalo Trace

**Tasting Notes:** Strong notes of caramel and nutmeg, with hints of baled hay and apricot on the nose and a "snap-crackle-pop mouthfeel."

Price: \$25 – \$35



[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

Best Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon: Henry McKenna Single Barrel



**Verdict:** The McKenna distillery was established in 1855, founded by the noted Irish immigrant distiller. Seagrams closed the business in the 1970s, and Heaven Hill purchased the brand name in 1994, but no longer uses the original recipe; as Minnick notes in Bourbon Curious, “The original yeast, mashbill, and flavor profile are gone, lost with time.” But one thing the new bottle does have is time: its 10 year age statement makes it one of the older bourbons at this price range.

**Proof:** 100

**Distilled By:** Heaven Hill

**Tasting Notes:** Rye spiciness, caramel, and vanilla, with a steady undertone of oak.

**Price:** \$30 – \$35

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

Best Craft Bourbon: New Riff Kentucky Straight Bourbon



**Verdict:** New Riff Distilling was founded in 2014. “Relative to Kentucky, they’ve been around for a few days. The rest of the nation is just kinda getting to know ‘em,” Minnick says. The mash bill here, made entirely of non-GMO grains, is 65 percent corn, 30 percent rye and 5 percent malted barley.

**Proof:** 100

**Distilled By:** New Riff Distilling

**Tasting Notes:** Oak tannins and vanillas, butterscotch, sweet corn and some rye spice at the finish.

**Price:** \$40

Bucket List Bourbons



These run north of \$60, all the way up to a month’s paycheck. Buying in this range is high risk, high reward. “Sometimes you’re gonna be disappointed,” Minnick says. “Just because a bourbon is 90 bucks doesn’t mean it’s good.” The benchmark bourbons at this range have upwards of 100 flavor notes to pick out, often happening at the same time and lingering on the tongue for ages. Or, as Minnick put it, the best should make you think, “If god gave birth to his bourbon child, this is what it would taste like.”

Best High-Proof Bourbon: Elijah Craig Barrel Proof



**Verdict:** This bourbon just won Whisky Advocate’s whiskey of the year, and Minnick was on the tasting panel. “It was very, very nice bourbon,” he says, wistfully. It has none of the harshness you’d expect from a 133.2 proof bourbon, and doesn’t undergo chill filtering — instead just using light filtration to remove barrel char flakes.

**Proof:** 133.2 proof

**Distilled By:** Heaven Hill

**Tasting Notes:** Caramels are rich, vanillas powerful. Minnick calls it notes “a party of pies: apple, cherry, blueberry, and even pumpkin.”

**Price:** \$55 – \$100

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

#### Most Nuanced Bourbon: Old Forester 1920 Prohibition Style



**Verdict:** It's bottled at 115 proof — “for this distillery, that's the perfect proof,” Minnick says. “I'm going through a bottle a month. The notes kind of just linger. You can have five different notes hitting at once. I believe that to be the definition of nuance.”

**Proof:** 115

**Distilled By:** Brown-Forman

**Tasting Notes:** Dark notes of fruit and burnt brown sugar. Chocolate, creme brulee, and strong nuttiness on the palate.

**Price:** \$60 – \$80

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

#### Best Blended Bourbon: Barrell Craft Spirits 15-Year-Old Bourbon



**Verdict:** Barrell is a blender, not a distiller. But its openness about the subject (blends have long been considered “rotgut”) and the flavor mastery of founder Joe Beatrice and master distiller Tripp Stimson have won the old bourbon guard over. “It won my American Whiskey of the Year award last year in a blind tasting,” Minnick says. “It's got so much flavor to it, so much complexity — it's just brilliant whiskey.”

**Proof:** 105.1

**Distilled By:** Blend of Indiana, Tennessee and Kentucky bourbons

**Tasting Notes:** fruit notes on the nose, with a blast of cocoa and butterscotch on the tongue, finishing with elegance.

**Price:** \$300

[LEARN HERE: HERE](#)

#### Best Wheated Bourbon: Buffalo Trace William Larue Weller



**Verdict:** “Are we including bottles that are impossible to find?” Minnick asks. Sure. This treasure from Buffalo Trace's Antique collection does its namesake a service, representing some of the world's best wheated bourbon, a style Weller himself pioneered. “If God gave birth to a bourbon child, this is what it would taste like,” Minnick says. “It's so fucking amazing.”

**Proof:** 128.2

**Distilled By:** Buffalo Trace

**Tasting Notes:** A caramel bomb, with immense vanilla notes on the nose. Dried fruits, nutmeg, and honey on the palate.

**Price:** \$800+

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

#### Most Complex Bourbon: Four Roses AI Young Limited Edition



**Verdict:** File it under another bourbon you'll never find on liquor store shelves. The 50th-anniversary whiskey is made in part of 23-year old bourbon and has, according to Four Roses brand ambassador AI Young himself, flavor profiles of “cinnamon, peaches and cherries, plus aromas of gardenias and magnolia blossoms.” Minnick scored it a 96 for Whiskey Advocate. “It's just so complex,” he says. “Last I tasted it, I was up to 100 notes that I picked up on it. They have something special there.”

**Proof:** 109.98

**Distilled By:** Four Roses

**Tasting Notes:** On the nose, leather, maple syrup. On the palate, honeysuckle, cinnamon, and floral notes.

**Price:** \$500+

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)



### Best Budget Bourbons

- Best Value Bourbon: [Evan Williams Black Label](#)
- Best Bourbon for Cocktails: [Four Roses Yellow Label](#)
- Best Kept Secret: [Heaven Hill 6-Year-Old Green Label](#)
- Best Budget Sipper: [Larceny Bourbon](#)

### Best Everyday Bourbons

- Best Gateway Bourbon: [Four Roses Small Batch](#)
- Best Bourbon to Drink Neat: [Four Roses Single Barrel](#)
- Best Bourbon to Pair with Food: [Maker's Mark](#)
- Best Rye Substitute: [Knob Creek](#)
- The Smoothest Bourbon: [Elijah Craig Small Batch](#)
- Best All-Around Bourbon: [Buffalo Trace](#)
- Best Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon: [Henry McKenna Single Barrel](#)
- Best Craft Bourbon: [New Riff Kentucky Straight Bourbon](#)

### Best Bucket List Bourbons

- Best High-Proof Bourbon: [Elijah Craig Barrel Proof](#)
- Most Nuanced Bourbon: [Old Forester 1920 Prohibition Style](#)
- Best Blended Bourbon: [Barrell Craft Spirits 15-Year-Old Bourbon](#)
- Best Wheated Bourbon: [Buffalo Trace William Larue Weller](#)
- Most Complex Bourbon: [Four Roses AI Young Limited Edition](#)

## Known as Poor Man's Pappy, This Bourbon Whiskey Just Got a Lot More Interesting

OCTOBER 13, 2019 [DRINKS](#) By [WILL PRICE](#)



There's a new consolation prize for bourbon hunters giving up the hunt for bottles of Pappy or Weller.

Available January 2020, the barrel proof version of Heaven Hill Distillery's affordable, well-loved [Larceny bourbon](#) is made with the same mashbill as its predecessor and therefore falls in the category bourbon drinkers call "wheaters." Where most bourbon recipes are comprised of corn, rye and malted barley, a select few substitute wheat for barley. The category has experienced a small whiskey nerd renaissance as it's rode the coattails of Pappy and Weller. Retailing between \$20 and \$25 and available year-round, Larceny has long been known as one of two great entry points into wheated bourbons (the other being Maker's Mark). It's in our guide to [best wheated bourbons](#) and [best overall bourbons](#), where bourbon expert Fred Minnick called it "a good, inexpensive, wheated everyday sipper." Its barrel proof variant will retail for \$50 and release three times a year, with each release bottled at different proof points (the specific proof of the first release was not made available). Heaven Hill says the whiskey in the bottle will be aged between six and eight years and will arrive at retail early 2020.

## THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO PAPPY VAN WINKLE BOURBON WHISKEY: HYPE AND HISTORY EXPLAINED

By Gear Patrol Photo by Henry Phillips

You'd think [Pappy Van Winkle](#) is a brand that needs no introduction — except that it does. The truth is that most people don't know anything

about "Pappy," other than that it's supposed to be the best of its kind. So let's set the record straight. Here's everything you need to know about America's most-sought-after spirit.

Quick Links

[Why It's Famous](#)

[Ways to Get It](#)

[Bottles, Prices & Taste](#)

Pappy History, Abbreviated

Opening Shop: [Pappy Van Winkle](#) refers to Julian Sr. "Pappy" Van Winkle, who created the original line of Van Winkle whiskeys. Van Winkle is a Dutch name that loosely translates to "from shopkeeper." After gaining some experience through jobs and an earlier distilling venture before [Prohibition](#), Julian Sr. opened a new Stitzel-Weller distillery in 1931 at the age of 61 outside of Louisville. He influenced the business until his death in 1965 at the age of 91.

A Decades-Long Decline: In the 1970s and 1980s, the public's drinking preferences shifted towards other spirits (especially vodka), a change that severely damaged the bourbon industry. After years of steady declines in sales and a disagreement between heirs around what to do with the business, Pappy's son, Julian Jr., sold the Stitzel-Weller distillery and the rights to all of its whiskey brands in 1972 — except for the Old Rip Van Winkle name.

Julian Jr.'s decision to purchase back some of the Stitzel-Weller whiskey stock and bottle it under the Old Rip Van Winkle label had preserved his father's work to some degree, but the market for Kentucky's whiskey remained dry. Julian Jr. died in 1981, leaving the Old Rip Van Winkle line and the Stitzel-Weller stocks to his son, Julian III. Around that same time, Stitzel-Weller stopped bottling for the Van Winkle family. So Julian III switched to the Hoffman Distillery down the road in Lawrenceburg to bottle and store his whiskey.



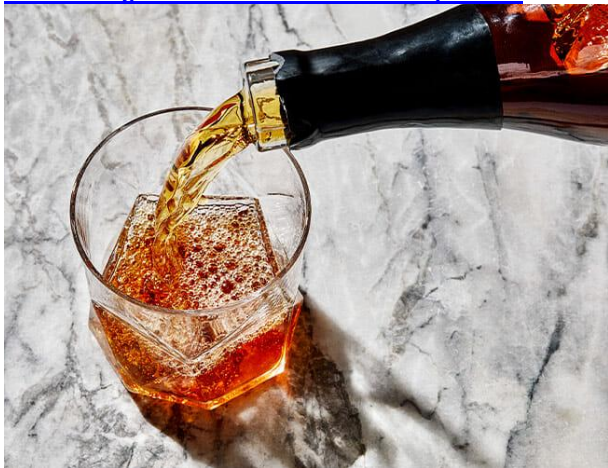
Mr. Pappy Van Winkle himself.

The Comeback: In the late '80s and early '90s, bourbon started creeping back into American drinking culture, and Julian III's brand began garnering attention. He began sourcing older whiskeys he purchased from other distilleries — Stitzel-Weller chief among them — and released a 10-year-old bourbon, followed by 12-, 14- and eventually 20- and 23-year-old bourbons. A Chicago sales rep entered the 20-year-old bottle into the Beverage Tasting Institute's panel, where it scored a 99. It was the company's first big break. According to Julian III, the bourbon inside that bottle had been purchased from [Wild Turkey](#), who had acquired it themselves from a distillery called Old Boone. This was the genesis of Pappy hype culture. Whiskey Craze: The question of who made the juice inside any particular bottle of Pappy Van Winkle is a huge source of debate and interest for die-hard whiskey fans, particularly in the light of the Buffalo Trace partnership. There is no possible way that Buffalo Trace could produce the exact same bourbon that had won Pappy awards in the past.

At some point after 2002, a portion of whiskey produced by Buffalo Trace was being mingled with the old Stitzel-Weller stock to create new bottles of Pappy and Old Rip Van Winkle. The speculation on which vintages of each offering stopped including Stitzel-produced bourbon, a distillery with a certain mystique, have added mystery to Pappy lore, and made older bottles far more valuable.

Today, few names in whiskey demand the money and interest Pappy does, and none trigger the same fanatical cold calling of liquor stores hundreds of miles away.

## The Best High-Proof Bourbon You Can Buy in 2019



Don't buy high-proof bourbon for high proof's sake, but prospect carefully and you'll unlock liquid pleasures beyond the vale. [Read the Story](#)

### How to Buy Pappy

**Spoilers:** *short of having a connection with a liquor store owner or distributor, there are no guarantees in the hunt for Pappy. Use these best practices wisely, but temper expectations at the door.*

**Get on the List:** Even the best liquor stores are limited to the allocated bottle count distributed to them. After Buffalo Trace has sent out the year's allotment, there won't be new bottles until the next year. This means stores have very few bottles and lots of customers who want them. The most common solution for shops of all sizes is a raffle, so ask the cashier at your local spots if one exists and get yourself on it. Winning the raffle won't net you a free bottle, but at least you get a chance to buy it.

**Look at a Map:** Stores in population centers are more likely to be allocated coveted whiskey, but they're also more likely to pull huge crowds. Stores with less visitors or in lower-populated areas are allocated less of the good stuff. This makes the edges of suburbia prime whiskey hunting territory — where retailers are more likely to receive Pappy and there are fewer people fighting for each bottle. **Be a Good Customer:** The simple and sagely advice of all experienced whiskey collectors. Give your business to a store near you over a period of time and you're more likely to get a "sure" when asking about rare or allocated bottles. It should be noted that this technique is employed more effectively with smaller stores, as larger ones aren't necessarily fighting to keep every customer that comes through the door.

**Open Up Your Wallet:** It can be comforting (or obnoxious) to know that once every method is exhausted, there are always sellers somewhere out there. It could be a friend of a friend, some guy on Craigslist or an exchange through Facebook direct message, but rest assured someone out there is willing to take you for all you're worth for the whiskey you seek. It will be expensive and you could get ripped off ([fake Pappy is not uncommon](#)), but, like it or not, these secondary buying markets do exist.

**Mark Your Calendar:** The Pappy Van Winkle Collection releases around the same time every year — late October to November. Whether you're chasing it at retail (best of luck!), signing up for raffles or resigning yourself to paying exorbitant secondary market prices, that's when new bottles begin circulating. Be warned: most shop owners are either hesitant to provide, or flat-out don't know, when their allocation will arrive. Shipping to stores can vary by region, state and city; short of having a friend who works for the distributor, you won't know *exactly* when it's landing.



### Every Bottle of Pappy, Explained

The Pappy Van Winkle Collection is made up of six bottles. Find tasting information, retail prices and street prices for all six here. [Old Rip Van Winkle 10-Year](#)



Retail Price: \$70

Street Price: ~\$500

Proof: 107

A charming, out-of-place wizard with a rifle pressed across his chest dons the label of the most available of the Van Winkle whiskeys. It's *just* under barrel proof, with a splash of water added after it's batched to reign it in. Its proof and age mean there's a flavor punch, but it's mostly baking spices, wood and alcohol, rather than the sweetness that earned Pappy its rep. It's a great bottle to track down for completionists or those who just want a bottle for bragging rights.

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)



#### Van Winkle Special Reserve 12-Year



Retail Price: \$80  
Street Price: ~\$700  
Proof: 90

Special Reserve 12-year is the Van Winkle whiskey for the Basil Hayden's drinker. Forgive the heresy of this comparison, anyone who's tried it knows it to be true. Its lower proof (90) and average maturation time (for Pappy, at least) means you don't get harsher alcohol burn on the nose or palate and you don't get swallowed up by oak tannins. That said, like Basil Hayden's, it's satisfying for everyone from the novice to the seasoned pro.

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

#### Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve 15-Year



Retail Price: \$120  
Street Price: ~\$1,000  
Proof: 107

Only three of the bottles in the greater Pappy Van Winkle Collection bear the word "Pappy" on them — this is the youngest. It's different from its fellow PVW bottles in one major way, and a few minor ones. Major: it's bottled at barrel proof (107), the only expression in the collection handled that way. So while you get some of the sweetness associated with older Pappy, you also get a thick, oily body and a healthy burn on the first few sips. It used to be the go-to Pappy for those tip-toeing into the collection, but its second-hand price has climbed from splurge to you-better-check-your-bank-account in recent years.

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

#### Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve 20-Year



Retail Price: \$200  
Street Price: ~\$1,500  
Proof: 90

The most-awarded of the Pappys, it's often said 20-year can be mistaken for a fine cognac. It's significantly lower proof (90) than its compatriots, sacrificing its body for a wicked balance of wood tannins and fruity sweetness. This bottle hasn't been a reasonable buy in decades, so don't expect to find any deals here.

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)

#### Pappy Van Winkle's Family Reserve 23-Year



Retail Price: \$300  
Street Price: ~\$2,400  
Proof: 96

This is unobtainium. The oldest of the Pappy Van Winkle Family Reserves sits right between its younger siblings in proof (96), but distant in flavor. The last three years of maturation it boasts over the 20-year are very clear — this is a woody, tannic, mouth-drying whiskey. Some of the floral, fruit-driven sweetness of the 15- and 20-year is diminished because of this. This isn't to say it's not an exceptional sipper; rather, it's not what anyone would call "smooth." If you find it under \$1,000 anywhere, buy it — you'll be able to sell it to some schmuck for at least twice that much.

[LEARN MORE: HERE](#)



### Van Winkle Family Reserve Rye 13-Year



Retail Price: \$120

Street Price: ~\$1,250

Proof: 96

This is a rye, but we can assume it isn't a high-rye. The stuff drinks just like bourbon and is probably the second or third best-reviewed of the entire collection. It's one of the oldest ryes on the market (Sazerac Rye from Buffalo Trace's Antique Collection steals the crown) and it shows in spades — whatever spiciness you associate with rye is bowled over by a rich mix of tobacco, honey, toffee and fruit. This is the Van Winkle whiskey for the whiskey nerd in your life.

Following a tour of the distillery, guests will also be able to sample seasonal cocktails at a Bourbon bar and enjoy a dinner at Fred's Smokehouse, which serves Bourbon-infused barbecue dishes inspired by Beam family recipes.

Bourbon lovers can request a one-night stay at the house by visiting Fred Noe's profile on Airbnb.

Reservations are first-come, first-served with a "very limited" number of dates available until the end of 2019.



*The Jim Beam property contains three bedrooms and a fully-stocked bar*

### Woodford Reserve unveils 2019 Master's Collection Bourbon

16th October, 2019 by Melita Kiely

Brown-Forman has released the latest addition to the Woodford Reserve Master's Collection: Woodford Reserve Chocolate Malted Rye Bourbon.



*Woodford Reserve Chocolate Malted Rye Bourbon is a limited edition release*

The one-time release will be rolled out across the US and throughout the rest of the world from this month (October).

Bottled at 45.2% ABV, the whiskey was made with a mash bill of 70% corn, 15% chocolate malted rye and 15% distillers malt. It will be sold at an RRP of US\$129.99.

Chris Morris, Woodford Reserve master distiller, said: "The rye malt was roasted to a level that its natural sugars caramelised into a dark chocolate note.

"This special Bourbon even surprised me as it matured in our warehouses. Each time I tasted it, the chocolate notes became even more pronounced."

Tasting notes for the whiskey include mocha, caramel and roasted nuts on the nose, leading to flavours of dry cocoa nibs, dark chocolate spice, cherry fruit and oak on the palate, with a long, chocolaty finish. Elizabeth McCall, assistant master distiller, said: "Woodford Reserve Bourbon has a complex and balanced flavour profile that includes a hint of chocolate.

"Chocolate Malted Rye takes those cocoa notes to a new level. Everything we do at Woodford Reserve goes back to our core belief that flavour is everything."

### Jim Beam offers one-night stay on Airbnb for \$23

16th October, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Jim Beam is giving Bourbon fans the opportunity to stay at its Kentucky distillery this autumn and enjoy amenities such as a fully-stocked bar, fireplace and a barbecue.



*The "charming" house on the grounds of the Jim Beam American Stillhouse*

From 21 October, consumers aged 21 years and above will be able to book a one-night stay at the Jim Beam American Stillhouse in Clermont through accommodation-sharing site Airbnb.

"There's no better time to experience Bourbon country than during the cool, crisp months of fall, so we're welcoming Bourbon fans to join the Beam family during an overnight stay at our home in the rolling hills of Kentucky," said Fred Noe, Jim Beam's seventh generation master distiller.

Built in 1919, the "historic and charming" house overlooks the nearby Everbach Lake on the distillery grounds.

It comes with three bedrooms, two-and-a-half bathrooms, a fully-stocked bar loaded with Jim Beam, a barbecue, fireplace, garden with cowboy cauldrons and fishing docks.



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## Loch Lomond bottles five single cask whiskies

23rd July, 2020 by Melita Kiely

Highland distiller Loch Lomond has created a range of five single cask Scotch whiskies to celebrate the European Tour's UK Swing 2020 golf tournament.



*The Loch Lomond Exclusive Casks range comprises five whiskies*  
The official spirit of The Open golf championship agreed a partnership with the European Tour earlier this year, and as such the new range has been dubbed 'the spirit of the tour'. Each whisky in the Loch Lomond Exclusive Casks range celebrates one of the five venues that will host the six-week-long European Tour's UK Swing after the regular season was suspended. John Grieve, chief marketing officer at Loch Lomond Whiskies, said: "We are very proud to be the 'spirit of the tour', supporting the European Tour with its new initiative.

"As one of the most internationally recognised golf events in the world, we're looking forward to sharing our range of single malts, dedicated to each event venue in the tour, with golf and whisky fans alike."

The whiskies were selected by master blender Michael Henry. Each one has been finished in a different style of oak cask and the series includes two heavily-peated whiskies.

The Hero Open Exclusive Single Cask (57.7% ABV) celebrates the event at the Forest of Arden and was finished in a Sauternes wine cask.

The English Championship Exclusive Single Cask (57.7% ABV) marks the event at Hanbury Manor and was finished in a rum barrel.

The Betfred British Masters (57.4% ABV) bottling was created to celebrate the Close House event and was aged in a first-fill Limousin oak cask.

The Wales Open and Celtic Classic Exclusive Single Cask (58.2% ABV) was bottled to mark the events taking place at the Celtic Manor and was matured in an oloroso Sherry cask.

The UK Championship Exclusive Single Cask (57.7% ABV) completes the range and celebrates the event at The Belfry. It was aged in a Tawny Port cask.

The number of bottles of each expression will differ, but more than 1,700 bottles will be available across the UK and Europe priced at RRP £90 (US\$115) per bottle.

The launch is being supported by several marketing initiatives. One is 'Pick the Pin', which encourages fans to select the pin location on a selected hole on each day of the event to encourage them to be 'there in spirit'.

Furthermore, Loch Lomond Whiskies will support the launch with its 'Golf for Good' initiative, which will aim to reward local community heroes, such as front line workers.



Barrels stacked at Ben Nevis Distillery for whisky aging process in Fort William, Scotland. (Photo ... [+]

VW PICS/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

[Pappy Van Winkle](#), [Port Ellen](#), [Yamazaki](#), [The Macallan](#). If you're even an occasional whiskey consumer you're well aware of the names. And if you're a full-blown connoisseur you curse the fact that you can't find them on shelves anymore. The mainstreaming of brown spirits across all categories—bourbon, rye, scotch, Irish, Japanese—is one of the 21st Century's great commercial success stories. But it's not all (four) roses. Unfortunately, all that precious liquid takes time to mature. In the whiskey business that means supply effectively lags demand by several years—sometimes several decades.

To put it another way: no distillery in the late '90s was laying down the liquid necessary to satisfy the voracious thirst of today. So now there just aren't enough bottles to go around. In the immediate future the cultish brands mentioned above will only become scarcer; even more tightly allocated. But there's a silver lining. While the hoarded masses reflexively gravitate towards the hype, like tourists to Times Square, they're leaving some sensational liquids untouched on the shelf.

For every bottle of 'Pappy 15', there's a bourbon of comparable quality that costs a tenth as much. It may even be collecting dust as you read this. The experts know that. And now, so do you. Below, the industry's top-selling authors reveal a bar-full of underrated gems. Just try not to spill their secrets.

[Glen Scotia — Double Cask \(\\$52\)](#)



Double Cask Single Malt Scotch Whisky

GLEN SCOTIA

PROMOTED

Civic Nation BRANDVOICE | Paid Program

Connecting Music's Future With Today's Leaders

Grads of Life BRANDVOICE | Paid Program

Why Investing In Jobs For Young People Can Boost Economic Recovery

UNICEF USA BRANDVOICE | Paid Program

Using Data, Science And The Media To Fight A Pandemic

"Those looking for a genuine example of unique regionality in Scotch need to explore Campbeltown's Glen Scotia. It tends to be overlooked in favour of Springbank, but tastes like no other whisky I've ever tried. Think huge maritime/coastal notes: sea spray, lobster pots and some soft, medicinal peat and you're halfway there, heading off on the beautiful drive down the Kintyre Peninsula." - Neil Ridley, author of [World of Whisky](#).

[Speyburn — 10 Year Single Malt Scotch Whisky \(\\$34\)](#)

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## The World's Most Underrated Whiskies— According To The Experts

[Brad Japhe](#) Contributor



#### Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky Aged 10 Years SPEYBURN

"I do not contribute to these stories any more. I've seen too many whiskeys soar in price or disappear after appearing on them, and I won't have anything more to do with them. No slam on you, it's the crazed hoarders. Weller, Heaven Hill Bonded 6, Old Grand-Dad, Elijah Craig, Redbreast, Glenrothes, Highland Park, everything Japanese! Okay, I actually think Speyburn 10 is underrated—but no one will ever believe that." - Lew Bryson, author of [Whiskey Master Class](#).  
[Evan Williams — Bottled in Bond \(\\$12\)](#)

"I have been a longtime drinker of this, because it's so damn inexpensive and always available. Last year, I did a blind tasting where I put it in a flight with other inexpensive bourbons and that beautiful, nutmeg-drenched \$12 bottle won pretty handily." - Fred Minnick, author of [Bourbon Curious](#).  
[Oppidan — Smoke + Sea \(\\$40\)](#)



#### Smoke + Sea Straight Bourbon OPPIDAN

"It's a weird little whiskey, a bourbon finished in Islay Scotch casks, so it's sort of sweet, sort of smoky, sort of saline. It doesn't fit neatly into any category, but deserves more love. It would make a wild Penicillin." - Kara Newman, author of [Cocktails With A Twist](#).  
[Akashi — White Oak \(\\$47\)](#)



#### Japanese Blended Whisky AKASHI

"There are a lot of new distilleries in Japan, but the most underrated one, in my opinion, is Eigashima Distillery (who bottle their single malt expressions under the Akashi brand), and they're hardly new-kids-on-the-block. In fact, they got their whisky license 101 years ago - yes, that's before Yamazaki Distillery! They make whisky as a side business, during the hot summer months, when they're not busy making sake and their whisky is very characterful, which is a turn off to some people. It's not clean, delicate, harmonious but rough, dirty and funky. The analogy is not perfect but they're kind of the Japanese equivalent of Springbank. There's no hype - of their own making or consumer-created - but their whisky is never boring and it's (still) relatively easy to find, which is not something you can say of most Japanese whiskies." - Stefan Van Eycken, author of [Whisky Rising](#).  
[Belle Meade — Sherry Cask Finished Bourbon \(\\$86\)](#)



#### Sherry Cask Finished Bourbon BELLE MEADE

"Belle Meade doesn't get as much attention as so many whiskey brands out there, but the distillery is producing incredible juice. I'm partial to the sherry barrel expression because I love spirits with nutty, umami notes." - Kat Odell, author of [Day Drinking](#).  
[Old Forester — 1920 Prohibition Style Bourbon \(\\$60\)](#)





**Old Forester 1920 Kentucky Straight Bourbon  
BROWN FORMAN**

“Old Forester 1920 is, for lack of a better word, a ‘shelf turd’—meaning, it’s always in your liquor store, always on the shelf. It’s also a Brown Forman product (the same makers of Jack Daniels) which means most self-described whiskey snobs think they’re too good for it. But those people care about hype and not quality. Damn if 1920 is not one of the richest, most nuanced and complex, and downright delicious bourbons out there. It is absolutely better than many of the ‘allocated’ products you’ll never see on shelves—including the brand’s own limited edition Birthday Bourbon.” - Aaron

Goldfarb author of [Hacking Whiskey](#).

[Glengoyne — 18 Year Single Malt Scotch Whisky \(\\$160\)](#)



**Great King St. Blended Scotch Whisky  
COMPASS BOX**

“Never underestimate the value of a good Scotch blend. This one ticks off all the boxes: it sips elegantly neat, tastes great in a highball and plays well with juices and other cocktail modifiers.” - Amanda

Schuster, author of [New York Cocktails](#).

[Evan Williams — Black Label \(\\$14\)](#)



**18 Years Single Malt Scotch  
GLENGOYNE**

“Maybe one of the best price/value deals in the Scotch repertoire. 100% sherry barrel matured, not a trace of peat and at 18yrs, it maintains a richness and balance of flavors. A secret dram for the sherry fix when I need it. Makes the ‘all Scotch is peaty’ myth stand in the corner with a dunce hat.” - Robin Robinson, author of [The](#)

[Complete Whiskey Course](#).

[Compass Box — Great King Street Blended Scotch Whisky \(\\$60\)](#)



**Black Label Extra Aged Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey  
EVAN WILLIAMS**

“Evan Williams Black Label is everything that bourbon is supposed to be. It’s 86 proof, it’s got a little spice to it, while still having that rounded bourbon feel. And here’s the secret: bourbon’s not supposed to be expensive, dude. Great neat, on the rocks, or as a shot, and a workhouse in cocktails. And a 750ml bottle will set you back \$15-ish or less.” - John McCarthy and Carey Jones, co-authors of [Be Your Own](#)

[Bartender](#).

[The Salviante — DoubleWood 12 Year Old \(\\$69\)](#)



The Balvenie Doublewood Single Malt Scotch Whisky  
WILLIAM GRANT AND SONS  
"This is one of my all-time favorite whiskies, and one that I don't see getting the love it deserves. [David Stewart](#) is a legend who's been at Balvenie for nearly 60 years. He routinely cites this expression as his all-time favorite. And it's usually only around \$60 a bottle. Best Scotch value going, in my opinion." - Dan Dunn, author of [American Wino](#).

## Membership and Dinner prices for 2020-2021

Membership Fee:	\$50 (singles) \$75 (couples)
One Time Initiation Fee:	\$15
Standard Dinner Fee:	\$80 (member) \$85 (non-member)
Christmas Dinner Fee:	\$80 (member) \$85 (non-member)
Robbie Burns Dinner Fee:	\$80 (member) \$85 (non-member)
June BBQ Dinner Fee:	\$80 (member) \$80 (non-member)

### Reservation policy

- The agreement with the Kitchen's requires that we provide seven (7) business days notice for them to guarantee accommodation for our requested numbers. To accommodate the Kitchen's needs and meet our contractual obligation with them; our members are requested to respond to the emailed invitation seven (7) 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 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 dinner date as an example:
- Dinner invitations will be sent out Friday August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. Please respond to me ([rdifazio04@gmail.com](mailto:rdifazio04@gmail.com)). 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).
- Unless otherwise stated accommodation at the dinner will be guaranteed for all members who respond by Friday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 @ 6pm.
- Once the RSVP date has been achieved I will e-mail a spreadsheet informing everyone of their status and amount due.

### Cancellation policy

- Using the same example as above, anyone who cancels anytime prior to Friday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 @ 6pm will be removed from the list.
- Anyone canceling between Friday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 @ 6pm and Monday September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 will be expected to pay for the cost of the dinner and scotch (\$70). 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 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 dinner without having cancelled and been successfully replaced will be expected to pay the full cost (\$70). A member will be responsible for their guest's cancellation (\$80).

- If a member asks to be included at the dinner between Friday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 @ 6pm and Monday September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, their name will be placed on a wait-list and be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.

### Assigned / Reserved Seating

- Assigned Seating will be offered for the 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.

### Dinner Payments

- Please consider sending your payment by e-transfer prior to the dinner. The password will be "KSMS", 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.

### 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

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