

Kingston Single Malt Society

www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com

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

June 24th, 2019 VOLUME 11; NUMBER 12



WHISKY



MENU

1st course: Mediterranean Salad with Patchwork Garden Greens, Chick Peas, Jalapeno, Olives Radish, Tomato, Cucumber, Goat's Feta, Red Wine and Pomegranate Vinaigrette

2nd course: Mussels, Pancetta, Fennel, Garlic, Parsley, Chili, Wine, Fresh Tomato

3rd Course - Main course:
Grilled Salmon,

Braised Cranberry Beans, Asparagus, Micro Greens Or Grilled Sirloin of Beef, Smashed Brown Butter Mini Potatoes, Green Beans, Crispy Fried Onions, House Made Steak Sauce

4th Course - Dessert Trio:
**Lemon / Lime Mousse
Chocolate Pecan Squares
Strawberry Shortcake**

Upcoming Dinner Dates

July 22nd, 2019 - World Whisk(e)y Night - Matt Jones
Friday August 23rd 2019 - 12th Annual Premium Night
September 23rd, 2019 - Distell Tasting -
Tobermory / Ledaig / Bunnhabhain - Mike Brisebois
October 28th, 2019 - Glenrothes / Highland Park - Cameron Millar
November 18th, 2019 - Islands / Islay
December 9th 2019 - Christmas Dinner -
Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /
Highlands / Islands / Islay
January 20th, 2020 - Robbie Burns Dinner
February 17th, 2020 - Islay
March 16th, 2020 - Irish / Speyside / Highlands

April 20th, 2020 - Speyside
May 25th, 2020 - Campbeltown / Islands / Islay
June 22nd, 2020 - BBQ (Final Exam)
July 20th, 2020 - Bourbon & American Whiskey
Friday August 28th 2020 - 13th Annual Premium Night
September 21st, 2020 - Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /
Highlands / Islands / Islay
October 20th, 2020 - Speyside / Highlands
November 16th, 2020 - Speyside
December 14th 2020 - Christmas Dinner

Explain about ... Scotland's whisky regions

Lowlands

Nowadays, only a handful of distilleries occupy the region known as the Lowlands yet the style of whisky they produce remains quite distinct. The Lowlands are known for their delicate whiskies with floral, herbaceous and fruity characters. Notes of citrus, hay, cereal, caramel, and spices make them a lovely introduction to Scottish single malts.

Highlands

This expansive territory that extends north of Glasgow and Edinburgh to Scotland's northernmost reaches counts several dozens of distilleries and as many varieties of whiskies. It is thus somewhat difficult to define a predominant style for all distilleries. However, most of their whiskies are characterized by robust aromas of caramel, malt, molasses, vanilla, spices, and wood. Some distilleries also produce peaty and smoky whiskies.

Speyside

This small region tucked away in the Highlands includes forty or so of the most famous Scottish distilleries. This large concentration of distilleries is often attributed to the exceptional quality of the water and the abundance of natural resources. Speyside prides itself on making Scotland's most elegant and classic whiskies, dominated by aromas of honey, pear and candied fruit with hints of vanilla and flowers.

Highlands

Often associated with the Highlands, distilleries located in the isles off the western coast of Scotland nevertheless produce their own unmistakable style of whisky. The isle of Islay has eight distilleries, the isles of Jura, Arran, Mull, and Skye each count their own distillery whereas the Orkney Islands are home to two. Whiskies distilled in the isles often present notes of iodine and smoke with fruity and spicy aromas.

Islay

The small island of Islay boasts its very own whisky-producing region where it plays host to as many as eight distilleries scattered across an area covering barely 600 km². These distilleries include some of Scotland's most famous whose their notoriety comes from the strong smoky, peaty and sometimes iodized character of their whiskies. Their authenticity and inimitable style explain why so many whisky connoisseurs sing their praises.

Campbeltown

The city of Campbeltown was once an important distillation hub but most of the producers have since closed their doors. Nevertheless, Campbeltown maintains a distinct production region whose activity is assured by the Springbank distillery, which markets three kinds of Scotch whiskies under different names: Springback, a slightly smoky and iodized Scotch; Hazelburn, a rather light and fragrant Scotch; and Longrow, an intensely peaty Scotch.

MAY - KSMS Financial Statement

(Money from 42 May attendees @ \$70) = \$2940.00
May dinner 41 persons = \$45.00/ea = \$1845.00
(Money remaining for buying Single Malt) = \$1095.00

Cost of Single Malts: = \$1312.40
 Cost of Pours per Person = \$31.25
 KSMS Monthly operational balance = (-\$217.40)
 Cost per person 60 attendees (All inclusive) = \$75.18

Top Tips for Visiting a Scotch Distillery

SEPTEMBER 20, 2018 | JONNY MCCORMICK – <http://whiskyadvocate.com>



Many distillery tours, including those offered at Glenmorangie, let visitors get up close and personal with the equipment. For the casual drinker and collector alike, it's high time to visit one of Scotland's many distilleries. More than 70 Scotch whisky distilleries now offer visitor tours—some even give you a choice of four or five different experiences. So many tours, so little time! Don't panic: it may seem bewildering at first, but there are key strategies to making the most of your visit.

If it's your first time touring a scotch distillery, let your favorite dram guide your choice of where to visit. Nothing beats that incredible feeling of standing in the place where the whisky you first fell in love with was made.

Note that most distillery tours follow a similar formula, with a guide leading you through the steps of the whisky-making process (prepare ahead of time by brushing up on the basics of [how whisky is made](#)).

You'll see the mill, [mashtun](#), [washbacks](#), [stills](#), plus a [warehouse](#) if you're lucky—and then round off your trip with a tasting of the whisky. If you're a seasoned distillery visitor, scroll down for advice about getting more from your tour, as well as how to handle the designated driving, whether to bring the kids along, and what to do if you're visiting during the distillery's silent season.

PLAN AHEAD

Fifty years ago, [Glenfiddich](#) was the first distillery in Scotland to open its doors to visitors, but today your choices are much greater—both in number of distilleries and the types of tours you can experience.

Glenfiddich, for example, offers the opportunity to fill a bottle straight from a cask in the warehouse, or even to blend your own version of its 15 year old Solera whisky. Other distilleries provide tours at multiple levels, such as introductory, expert, or VIP, that offer similarly special experiences.

Around two million people visit a Scotch whisky distillery every year and spaces on in-depth tours can fill up quickly during peak season. If you have your heart set on a specific experience, phone in advance or book online to reserve your place. Standard tours cost as little as \$8-\$13 and will last at least 45-60 minutes, while the top connoisseur tours may last half a day and cost up to \$250. Some distilleries are open seven days a week, while others are more restricted; opening hours tend to be shorter during the winter months, so check ahead. Tours are conducted in English, but the most popular distillery visitor centers also offer tours in a variety of languages including Spanish, French, German, and Japanese.

Dress appropriately for the time of year: stillrooms can be extremely warm when distillation is taking place, but outside it is Scotland, so be prepared to encounter sun, rain, wind, or snow, sometimes all within the same day! Wear sneakers or walking shoes for comfort: you may need to climb steep stairs and stand on industrial open mesh steel flooring. Production areas of many distilleries are not wheelchair accessible, though access is improving. It's uncommon for old distillery buildings to have elevators between floors, so contact the visitor center if you require extra assistance.

THE END OF TOUR TASTING

Just seeing the whisky production process is exciting enough, but there's one more thing to look forward to: the complimentary whisky tasting at the end of your tour. The size and number of [drams](#) poured will vary, but expect a third- to a half-ounce pour per whisky. If you've opted for a more expensive tour, the whiskies are likely to be rare or limited-edition expressions.

If it's your first-ever tasting, read up about [tasting etiquette](#). No matter how curious you are, be patient and don't swallow the whisky right away. Listen and learn: your guide will walk you through the different stages of whisky appreciation and will point out the key flavors in each dram.

WHAT TO BUY

After fully immersing yourself in the wonders of the distillery, you will be gently ushered into the shop while still under the seductive spell of the golden whisky on your palate. An immaculate display of bottles will be there for you to browse, along with accessories, keepsakes, and tchotchkes. In many cases, your tour ticket entitles you to a discount—so how could you possibly resist?



Glenfiddich Distillery

The perfect bottle is up to you—but bear in mind that distillery shops can feature rare expressions not sold elsewhere. If you're into collecting, or want a memorable souvenir to savor later, concentrate on these. But keep a few important guidelines in mind to determine just how special that distillery-exclusive bottle is:

- Ask how it differs from the standard expression.
- Look for an age statement or vintage—these are often different from what is available elsewhere.
- Note its maturation: was it bourbon or sherry cask-matured or [finished](#)?
- Check if it is bottled at cask strength, rather than a standard strength of 40%-46% ABV.
- Register if it is from a single cask or if it's a numbered bottle, indicators of rarity.
- Think about how much space is left in your luggage. It can be easy to over-buy when every bottle is exciting.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a sample before going to the cash register. You should know if what you're buying tastes good to you!

In addition, some distilleries are owned by independent bottlers such as [Edradour \(Signatory\)](#), [Ardnamurchan \(Adelphi\)](#), and [Kingsbarns \(Wemyss Malts\)](#); spend time browsing their shelves, as they offer the additional opportunity to buy single cask independent bottlings.

Many distilleries allow you to hand-fill and label your own bottle straight from the cask, an opportunity you won't want to miss: after all, you don't get to do that every day.

The voice of reason can be hard to hear in the excitement of the visit, but be aware: not all distillery exclusives are special, and they can be expensive. Decide for yourself if the object of your desire is a good value, especially considering whether you are buying to consume, [collect](#), or [sell at auction](#).

TIPS FOR THE SEASONED VISITOR

If you've been visiting distilleries for years and can recite the guide's spiel in your sleep, it's okay to skip the tour. Many distilleries will allow you to book just a tasting. Get your nose into the whisky with a tutored flight of three or four drams, or sit down to a [whisky and chocolate pairing](#). In Glenfiddich's Maltbarn restaurant, you can order limited editions like Glenfiddich 50 year old by the dram, or sample a whisky flight from the venue's unbeatable range.

Distilleries are also a great place to grab a bite to eat, especially those located in out-of-the-way areas with few restaurants nearby. Among others, Ardbeg, [Isle of Harris](#), Macallan, and [Kilchoman](#) have excellent cafés where you can tuck into a delicious meal.

Once you've crossed a few distilleries off your list, start getting choosy, and make your visits an [adventure](#). Distilleries such as Edradour and [Strathisla](#) are among the most handsome in Scotland, while the journey to many others will take you through some of the most spectacular parts of the Scottish landscape and coastline.

Hit the road early to get on the first tour of the day when group sizes are smaller and you can get more flexibility out of your tour. Or set an educational challenge: try to see a distillery with floor maltings such as [Bowmore](#), [Balvenie](#), and [Highland Park](#), or [worm tubs](#) like at [Glenkinchie](#), [Oban](#), and [Dalwhinnie](#). Wherever you go, pay attention to the [still shape, size, and lyne arm configuration](#) to deduce the [style of spirit being produced](#).

Up the quality of the standard experience with an extended connoisseur's tour: you might find yourself digging peat, trekking to the water source, taking a personal tour with the distillery manager, or drawing whisky by [valinch](#) from special casks deep inside the warehouse.

Visit parts of Scotland during festival time, and you'll be treated to special tours, legendary tastings, and access to distilleries normally closed to the public. Some of the country's biggest festivals are the [Spirit of Speyside Festival](#) and [Feis Ile](#) on Islay; they're popular events, so be ready when tickets go on sale.



Macallan Distillery

THE DESIGNATED DRIVER

Legal levels of blood alcohol concentration for drivers are [lower in Scotland](#) than the U.S. and any other part of the UK (50 mg. of alcohol per 100 ml. of blood—a BAC of .05%). Don't risk it—don't even try. Distillery staff won't serve the designated driver, but here's a tip: many visitor centers, like [Laphroaig](#), will give drivers a 50-ml miniature of whisky at the end of the tour to enjoy later, so nobody feels left out at the tasting. Bonus: this is a much better deal than the 10-ml. pour everyone else is enjoying.

WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

While many distilleries accept children over the age of eight on the tour, some distilleries do not allow entry to anyone under 18 years old. Young children are not allowed into production areas for safety reasons: a distillery is an industrial site with scalding hot metal surfaces, chemical hazards, flammable and explosive vapors, carbon dioxide fumes, loud noises, and traffic dangers from heavy trucks driving around the site. Safety at whisky distilleries is taken very seriously.

If the whole family isn't into scotch, be kind, and don't march them into distilleries on every day of your vacation. Resentful partners, grumpy teenagers, and bored kids will distract you from enjoying your visit, so mix it up and plan some other activities with them. Explore an ancient castle, climb a mountain, track down your ancestors, canoe across a loch, or go mountain biking through a forest.

PICS OR IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

Many distilleries have fantastic props that make great photo opportunities, such as classic distillery signage, pyramids of painted casks, vintage delivery wagons, and old copper pot stills. Get creative and have fun!

Some distilleries prevent visitors from taking photos inside production areas, while others prohibit photography only in the still house and occasionally the mill; they note this is for safety reasons due to the potential risk of explosion. If you're planning on drone photography, ask permission before taking flight; many distilleries prohibit drones.

Of course you'll want to Insta-brag about your great visit: don't forget to tag the distillery (and Whisky Advocate). Bear in mind that cell reception may be spotty in remote areas.

VISITING DURING SILENT SEASON

Every scotch distillery ceases production for a few weeks a year, usually in the summer. This is called [silent season](#), and it can be a great opportunity to get up close and personal with the distillery apparatus. Scrutinize the mechanism of rakes inside a mash tun, appreciate the massive depth of an empty washback, stand in the middle of the kiln, and pop your head through the manhole cover of a copper pot still to peek inside.

Sometimes, distilleries undergo repairs or other major building work during silent season, and this can understandably detract from the tour you were expecting. Don't be afraid to change your plans and visit a different distillery instead.

Whatever you decide to do, visiting Scotland to enjoy its whisky riches is a rewarding and life-changing experience for a whisky lover. If you're looking for tips on where to visit and what to do (besides distillery tours), be sure to explore our [Travel](#) page.

STOP DRINKING WHISKY LIKE A COWBOY

16 April 2019 by Richard Paterson

After all that time spent gently maturing in cask, whisky deserves more consideration and respect than being swiftly shot back, says Richard Paterson, blender for Whyte & Mackay, Dalmore and Jura. Slow down and take your time.



Time well spent: Paterson scorns the way television characters shoot their whisky

Probably my biggest pet hate is seeing people drinking whisky like a bunch of cowboys in a saloon. They are completely missing the quality by just swallowing it back and not taking the time to hold the whisky on their tongue and

reverse what it is they are actually drinking.

It happens all the time at whisky festivals. There was one that I remember in New York, where this guy came up to me and asked: 'What's your most expensive whisky?' He went straight for a [Dalmore](#) 25-year-old and knocked it back.

'What d'you think you're doing?' I asked.

'What d'you mean?' he replied, so I slapped him on the face.

It wasn't hard and it was almost comic, but I had a serious point to make about showing some respect for the product.

My basic rule of thumb is to give a whisky at least the same amount of time on the tongue in seconds as its age in years on the label. There was another festival in South Africa I went to, where I eventually persuaded this guy to hold a 22-year-old whisky in his mouth for 22 seconds.

'Now I understand what you mean,' he said, and then burst into tears.

'Why are you crying?' I asked.

'Because I'm thinking of all those whiskies that I've been knocking back that I never gave the time to.'

I have seen it at private dinners on many occasions. Instead of savouring whiskies, especially if they are old and rare, people are swallowing them straight down as though they were drinking a shot of Tequila.

It may be ok for an unaged white spirit like gin, but when it comes to a whisky that is 15, 20 or more years old, you would think that the packaging and price would say to people: 'Come on guys, you're paying all this money, really savour every moment of it.'

While in bars, how many people have you ever seen take their first drink and actually hold it in their mouth? Practically no-one. It is the same with good food and wine or a fine cigar. We need to slow down, relax and appreciate what we're eating, drinking or smoking.

After a day's work, however hard it has been, I want to come home and pour myself a dram to savour and relax over. But on TV shows like [Coronation Street](#), you will invariably see people in pubs knocking back Scotch whisky as if they were in those cowboy films where 'real men' toss down their drinks in a shot.

You could also blame the tradition of having a whisky chaser in the pub. Quite often, especially in Glasgow, you would hear people saying: 'Let's have a pint of beer and a chaser to put the icing on the cake.' Clearly, they're going to be downing the Scotch in one.

Today there are bars like the Bon Accord or The Pot Still in Glasgow, whose customers do like to linger over their whiskies. Of course, there are rougher pubs where I probably wouldn't sit swirling a glass and nosing a dram, but once it is in your mouth no-one can see what you're doing, so it's not about showing off to anyone.

If I saw a stranger in a bar who was knocking back a whisky that deserved time, I would introduce myself and then ask them about it: 'Did you get this? Or did you get that?' Obviously, you have to judge their body language, and I would do it discreetly and respectfully.



Considered approach: Take time to think about the whisky's flavours and aromas

If you knock it back, you just get the effect of the alcohol.

What you are missing is an appreciation of the age of the whisky, and all those different notes of vanilla, honey, spice and so on, that have been meticulously blended together.

Then there are all those other flavours in the background. It is not just about that initial hit, it is the second taste that is the most important thing. There is also the texture and body of the whisky to assess, and the aftertaste as you finally swallow it down the throat.

The trick is to hold the whisky in the middle of the tongue and then let it slip to the sides and underneath before bringing it back up. By now the whisky will have warmed up and settled down and the tongue will be really saturated with the taste of the whisky.

I always urge people to be inquisitive and ask questions of a single malt while it is still in their mouth, such as: 'Can you really taste whether it's a Highland or an Islay?', 'can you taste all those Sherry notes that it claims to have?' and 'would a little water help to open it up?'

But an expensive whisky will also ask questions of you. Have you really bought it to appreciate its flavours? Or is it more about showing off to people, and saying: 'Look what I've got?'

If you do want to get the most out of a dram, remember to give it a second for every year – and then a moment longer – before swallowing it. It takes time to produce good whisky, so take the time to enjoy it.

GlenDronach debuts Sherry- and Port-influenced whisky

13th May, 2019 by Owen Bellwood - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

Highland Scotch whisky brand The GlenDronach has launched its second travel retail-exclusive bottling, a 16-year-old single malt aged in ex-Port and ex-Sherry casks.



GlenDronach Boynsmill Aged 16 Years is the brand's second TR-exclusive release

The GlenDronach Boynsmill Aged 16 Years is made with whisky that has undergone maturation in pedro ximénez and oloroso Sherry casks from Andalucía, Spain, and Port casks from the Douro Valley, Portugal. Master blender Rachel Barrie said: "The GlenDronach Boynsmill Aged 16 Years celebrates the rich heritage of The GlenDronach, with a small number of casks hand-selected to showcase its robust and complex Highland character.

"I hope whisky travellers will enjoy this rare opportunity to savour the depth of a truly old-style Highland single malt."

Barrie described the new whisky as "a complex and supremely balanced single malt" with notes of plum pudding, apricot brandy, nutmeg and quince.

On the palate, GlenDronach Boynsmill Aged 16 Years has flavours of fruitcake, dried apricots and walnuts with a "richly satisfying velvet finish".

Bottled at 46% abv and non-chill-filtered, the new whisky will be available in select duty free outlets this month, with an RRP of US\$115.

Whisky sales set to reach £2.44bn in UK by 2022

12th June, 2019 by Melita Kiely

The whisky category will be worth £2.44 billion (US\$3.11bn) in the UK by 2022, the first Edrington-Beam Suntory UK Whisky Yearbook has forecast.

The report aims to become a "vital resource" into the trends in the UK whisky market and act as a "comprehensive guide to the key shifts" in the category.

The inaugural report predicts that whisky will grow by £138.78 million (US\$176.78m) to reach £2.44bn in value in the next three years – a 6% increase. The category was worth £2.31bn (US\$2.94bn) in 2018.

In volume terms, the report has predicted a 2.7% increase in volume sales by 2022, up 201,000 8.4-litre cases from 7.44m in 2018 to reach 7.65m.

The data has been based on CGA and Nielsen sales figures for 2018, and IWSR growth forecasts for 2019 and 2022.

Mark Riley, managing director of Edrington-Beam Suntory UK, said:

"Whisky is one of the most diverse and dynamic of the spirits categories. Our forecast is that it is also one that will see growth over the next three years.

"Bartenders and retailers tell us that whisky is a key focus for them, with plans to invest in broadening their knowledge and range, ensuring they can accommodate the increasing appetite for the spirit from consumers in both on- and off-trade.

"We would like the Edrington-Beam Suntory UK Whisky Yearbook to become a vital resource to track the changes as they happen and to look at the underlying trends in the category – both as a way to understand the market today and to forecast what is to come – as well as to offer insight into how we navigate the challenges and opportunities presented to us."

Breaking down the category, the Edrington-Beam Suntory UK Yearbook highlighted single malt Scotch whisky as a "principle driver" of the forecasted growth. Single malt Scotch alone is expected to increase in value from £394m (US\$502m) in 2018 to £439m (US\$559m) in 2022.

The company attributed this growth to new "accessibly priced" single malts and a smaller price gap between blends and single malts, encouraging blended Scotch drinkers to "trade up".

Sub-categories set to soar

American whiskey is also forecast to grow in the UK, with sales expected to reach £742m (US\$946m) by 2022, up from £688m (US\$877m) in 2018.

The burgeoning Irish whiskey sector is also forecast to grow by £28.5m (US\$36.3m) to reach £163.9m (US\$208.9m) by 2022.

Single grain whiskies have also been forecast to deliver growth by 2022, almost doubling sales to £42.1m (US\$53.7m).

Japanese whisky, [which has been faced with stock shortages](#) due to the growing global demand, is predicted to see value sales rise to £11.7m (US\$14.9m) by 2022 – a 44% increase from 2018.

Furthermore, Canadian whisky is expected to be worth £9m (US\$11.5m) by 2022.

Riley added: "Irish and single grain whiskies have been a real success stories over the past 12 months – sharing rapid growth on an already strong base of both volume and value in the market. We expect both to play a greater role in shaping the wider market in the coming years.

"The supply challenges that have arguably held back growth in Japanese and Canadian whiskies have eased. While there remains a challenge securing enough liquid from leading brands from both nations to satisfy UK demand, there is far greater supply forecast and we predict we will see growth as a result."

FÈIS ÌLE 2019

03 June 2019 by Felipe Schrieberg

New features including an indie bottlers 'mini festival', an enhanced focus on cocktails plus 'the best year yet' for exclusive festival whiskies made Fèis Ìle 2019 one of the most popular so far. Felipe Schrieberg reports.



Destination Islay: Visitors flock from around the world to the island's distilleries for Fèis Ìle (Photo: Rebecca Sneddon)

Fèis Ìle veteran Shan Bhatti was third in line in the infamous [Bowmore](#) queue at this year's annual Islay festival. For the last few years, whisky lovers like him have camped overnight outside the distillery, hours before it opens, eager to buy of a bottle of its exclusive, limited festival release. Though Bhatti doesn't mind the wait that others would perhaps find gruelling in Islay's cold winds. 'It's not a chore being in the queue, it represents what the Islay Fèis spirit is about,' he said. 'We're sitting in line, but we're also meeting new people, enjoying the company of old friends, sharing great whisky with each other, and at the end we get the bonus of getting hold of a great bottle.'

Indeed, enjoying great whisky in a beautiful corner of the world, surrounded by old friends and new, forms the core of Islay's popular Festival of Music and Malt, celebrating the whisky produced by its 10 (including [Jura](#)) distilleries over a nine-day period. Featuring masterclasses, tasting events, live music, and plenty of phenomenal single malt whisky, 2019's edition of the festival (24 May-1 June) packed more events than ever into its schedule.

The community of regulars happily enjoyed their annual reunions on their favourite place on earth, while the beauty of the island, the generosity of the distillery staff and camaraderie of their fellow whisky enthusiasts blew newbies away. Each distillery offered warehouse tastings that showcased whiskies that wouldn't be found anywhere else, as well as more expensive VIP tastings and dinners hosted by industry celebrities, which served more rare and pricier offerings. It was also agreed by many festival veterans that this year's overall crop of [Fèis-exclusive whisky releases](#) was the best in many years.



Whisky maestro: Adam Hannett's annual Bruichladdich masterclass always proves a big draw (Photo: Feis Ile/ Ben Shakespeare)

Within the panoply of tasting events available, two particular masterclasses stood out. To celebrate the release of its [12-year-old Octomore Event Horizon Fèis bottle](#), Bruichladdich head distiller Adam Hannett served six unique [Octomores](#) in a selection that was as punishing as it was delightfully rewarding, including older versions of the Octomore 08.3 (known as the [peatiest whisky ever made](#)) and the 04.2 Comus, as well as a brutal three-year-old aged in virgin oak that divided opinion in the room with its oaky profile. The event may have the right to claim the title of 'peatiest masterclass ever', and veteran peatheads were heard muttering 'that was a LOT of Octomore...' as they emerged from [Bruichladdich's](#) Warehouse 12 into the sun and shuffled back over to the distillery courtyard.

The other was the session with [Kilchoman](#) owner Anthony Wills and [Scotchwhisky.com](#) contributing editor Dave Broom. Over small measures of new make spirit, the class drove home the effect of yeast on flavour. Four new makes were served, made with the exact same barley, fermentation, and distillation specifications, but featuring different strains of yeast: Mauri, Kerry M, Kerry MX, and a 50/50 combination of the Mauri and Kerry MX. The differences in flavour were blatantly clear across the spirits, with attendees evenly spread in voting for their favourite expression before enjoying a range of single cask selections.

For Wills, yeast represents an [important new area of innovation](#) for the industry and for Kilchoman itself. 'What we showed [in our masterclass] demonstrates hugely that different characters can come from using different yeasts,' he said. 'It's a subject that hasn't really been touched on by the industry and I would like to explore this a little bit more. We are currently using Mauri yeast but we're now looking at Kerry M and Kerry MX and other yeast varieties to see what other flavour characteristics come through, and what works well for us.'



Caribbean vibe: Ardbeg put on a tropical carnival in honour of its first rum-finished whisky, Ardbeg Drum (Photo: Feis Ile/ Ben Shakespeare)

This year also saw a number of special new additions to the programme. The inaugural Indie Whisky Fèis Ìle, a 'festival-within-a-festival' of independent bottlers showcasing their wares – organised by Dramfool and featuring [Wemyss Malts](#), [Elixir Distillers](#) and That Boutique-y Whisky Company among others – offered an excellent new way for guests to enjoy Islay whiskies while discovering boutique bottlers that deserve more attention for their work.

Most prominently, Islay's newest distillery, [Ardnahoe](#), celebrated its first Fèis with an ambitious programme of tastings while showcasing the most impressive selection of whiskies in a distillery shop on the island (all bottled by Ardnahoe's owner, [Hunter Laing](#)). Ardnahoe also featured a small but healthy selection of rums, introducing the opportunity to enjoy a different kind of aged spirit on Islay. Also notable was its advance screening of whisky documentary *The Water of Life*, which will next be shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival in June, representing whisky's latest foray onto viewing screens.

Ardnahoe visitor centre manager Paul Graham was pleased with how the day went and pledged to keep a high standard for future years. 'There's some lessons learned that we'll apply for next year, but you have to feel your way into Fèis, and to put something on as big as this is huge for us,' he said. 'So for next year, look out. We'll be even bigger and better.' Another major feature shared across all the distilleries was the introduction or expansion of cocktail bar programmes, featuring creations showcasing Islay's whiskies. [Lagavulin](#) continued its push to popularise the Smokey Cokey (Lagavulin 16 and cola) with [Diageo](#) brand ambassador Colin Dunn leading eager crowds in its accompanying song and dance to the tune of the *Hokey Cokey*. The cocktail bar also added a

scoop of vanilla ice cream into the mix, jokingly referred to as the 'smokey cokey floaty'. [Ardbeg](#) meanwhile served a popular whisky-based fruit punch as part of its carnival-themed open day, which featured music by a steel drum band.



Patiently waiting: Crowds queued for some time for Caol Ila's festival bottlings (Photo: Feis Ile/ Ben Shakespeare)

Yet this year's festival was not without blemishes. Last year's stunning weather didn't make a return, though certainly a bullet was dodged as rain only affected three of the open days instead of the entire festival as originally forecast. Kilchoman, with its rig of multiple gazebos, was the only distillery that put serious thought into its rain plan, while some visitors to Lagavulin and [Bunnahabhain](#) left frustrated after a short visit spent getting soaked in the main courtyard. Ardnahoe's outdoor live music programme was also hampered by the rain, as represented by the single, soaked yet committed audience member listening to folk band [Dallahan's](#) last set.

There were also more hours-long queues to get Fèis bottles than in previous years. Sale points staffed by only two people with faulty card-processing systems created delays and angry customers at Bowmore, [Caol Ila](#) and Ardnahoe. Bunnahabhain created another overnight camping situation by announcing in advance a limited-edition release of 120 bottles that could only be purchased during the open day. A large line also made its way around Bruichladdich on the Monday of the festival as a new Valinch release was rapidly swept up by eager fans. However, a more positive trend emerged with this year's Fèis crowd. It was palpably younger, with more women attending classes as well. It's a positive sign that various campaigns appealing to younger drinkers might be paying off. In any case, there's no denying that Fèis Ile remains one of the world's best whisky festivals, creating a unique immersion into the world of whisky that can't be replicated anywhere else.

THE RISE OF THE WHISKY TRAIL

11 June 2019 by Kirsten Amor

With whisky tourism at an all-time high, Scotland's distilleries are banding together to create dram-packed regional itineraries for the curious tourist. Kirsten Amor explores why this community spirit is good news for both the industry and whisky lovers alike.



Speyside sojourn: Visitors on the Malt Whisky Trail can view Glen Grant's cooling pond

It took whisky writer [Alfred Barnard](#) two years to visit all the distilleries in Scotland, Ireland and England for his book, *The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom*. Had the 19th century writer attempted his journey today he may have found the experience a whole lot easier thanks to an emerging travel trend making the Scotch whisky landscape simpler to navigate.

As Scotch whisky increases in popularity worldwide, a growing number of people are flocking to its distilleries to discover the process behind the spirit. In 2017 the Scotch Whisky Association reported a record 1.9 million visits to whisky distilleries, an 11.4% year-on-year increase. Visitor centres and tours are now seen as an essential feature for most distilleries, with many new operations building them into the heart of their business plans, while established distilleries invest heavily in improving their offering. [Diageo](#), Scotland's largest whisky producer, has [pledged to pump £150m](#) into improving the visitor experience across its distilleries.

Aside from unprecedented investment in creating 'world-class' visitor centres, to make the most of this growing interest in Scotch, distilleries are setting competition aside and joining forces to create a dram-packed offering to entice travellers: the whisky trail.

'I remember when I first started, I was told I wouldn't be able to get all nine brand partners on the same poster; but the industry has recognised the importance of collaboration between brands,' says James Johnston, chairman of the [Malt Whisky Trail](#) (MWT). The route encompasses eight distilleries and a cooperage in Moray on Speyside, and was the first whisky trail to be established in Scotland in the 1950s. Today, distilleries are one of the most popular tourist attractions in Moray – of the 806,190 visitors to the region in 2017, three out of every five visited a distillery.

These trails offer tourists, many of whom may not have a pre-existing interest in whisky, an opportunity to explore and discover more about the spirit along a signposted route.

'Most people who say they don't like Scotch become fascinated with the production and genesis of whisky,' explains Johnston. 'You can't do much about people's palates, but you can give them the opportunity to expand their minds and tastes.'

Whisky trails also provide an opportunity for the more initiated to discover new distilleries they may have otherwise overlooked.

'There is malt whisky out there for everyone, and once you find one you like, you start to wonder if there's another one you might like,' Johnston adds. 'We have a culture where exploration is easy, and people are wondering about what they might miss.'

'Distilleries bring a mixture of cinema and products, and allow customers a safe space to explore these options.'

Some whisky producers in Scotland's more remote areas have realised the potential for creating a small, regional whisky trail to entice tourists visiting nearby popular attractions.

'Raasay is an island off an island, and we were aware that our challenge was getting people to come visit from Skye,' says [Alasdair Day](#), co-founder of [R&B Distillers](#), which opened the [first legal whisky distillery](#) on the island of Raasay in the Hebrides in 2017.



Side trip: Isle of Raasay distillery hopes to attract tourists from nearby Skye

Skye's pastel-popping coastal villages and striking landscapes attract an average of 500,000 sightseers a year, with around [71,000 of those visiting](#) the island's [Talisker](#) distillery. The success of Skye's tourism industry inspired Day to partner with other distilleries in the Hebrides to

promote their own attractions. In August 2018 the [Hebridean Whisky Trail](#), consisting of Talisker, [Torabhaig](#), [Isle of Raasay](#) and [Isle of Harris](#) distilleries, was born.

‘The idea for the trail came out of a discussion between ourselves and Talisker originally,’ Day says. ‘Obviously Skye is very busy in the peak season with visitors, and we were talking to them about that, and how many visitors they get each year, to learn for our own distilleries.’

‘This trail helps promote areas tourists might not necessarily think to visit,’ Day explains further. ‘It’s one of those things where if people are coming to Skye and it’s raining and they can’t hike the Cuillins, they might instead choose to come visit the islands.’

Raasay’s relative proximity to Skye means it can be visited as part of a day trip. Ferry services from Sconser on Skye’s east coast to Raasay take less than 30 minutes, with the distillery only a 10-minute walk from the terminal. Those wishing to take in Isle of Harris distillery can take a 90-minute ferry from Uig on Skye into Tarbert (timetable subject to change), with picturesque views of the distillery on approach, although with no return ferry on the same day, booking a hotel in advance is advisable.

While the Hebridean and Malt Whisky Trails are both self-guided, other routes accommodate time-strapped travellers by combining multiple distilleries into single-day packages, with transport and food included. Paul Graham, visitor centre operations manager for Islay’s [Ardnahoe](#) distillery, created the North Islay Whisky Tour with [Caol Ila](#) and [Bunnahabhain](#) distilleries, and Stuart Doyle from Islay Taxis. The package includes pick up and transportation throughout the day between the three distilleries. Tour tickets for Bunnahabhain’s Warehouse No.9 tour, and Caol Ila’s chocolate and whisky pairing tour, are included alongside lunch, and a tour and tasting at Ardnahoe. Graham explains how this approach enables visitors to enjoy all whisky has to offer, sans stress. ‘They can experience the products of the distilleries without worrying about driving,’ he says.

‘At Ardnahoe they are getting a personalised tour along with food which we feel, as responsible licence holders, is sensible after consuming alcohol early in the day. We wanted to raise awareness of our distilleries and provide something unique to visitors.’

Ardnahoe only [opened its doors in April 2019](#), while its partners are also aiming to attract more visitors by improving their facilities.

Bunnahabhain is currently undergoing a [£10.5m refurbishment program to transform](#) it into a ‘world-class whisky destination’, while Caol Ila is preparing to [overhaul its visitor experience](#) with the installation of a bar with views of the Sound of Islay, and a footbridge leading to the roof of its warehouse.

‘We are the newest distillery on Islay, and we wanted to raise awareness and drive footfall by providing something unique; the easiest way was to engage with our local partners,’ explains Graham.

Other distilleries are expanding on this collaborative approach and taking it beyond the remit of Scotch to explore a variety of food and drink options their neighbours have to offer. In 2018 [Glasgow](#) distillery, which also produces Makar gin, partnered with brewer Tennents to create a joint tour package offered on the first Saturday of each month – with transport included.



City tour: Learn about gin and whisky at Glasgow distillery before a Tennants brewery visit

‘It’s great working with people from different backgrounds and it’s been a great educational experience for us,’ explains Sebastian Bunford-Jones, marketing manager for Glasgow distillery. ‘You’re missing out on the potential to create something special if you only stay within your industry.’

‘People enjoy seeing the beer side and the whisky side, and seeing the similarities and differences; the package offers visitors to the city the whole “Glasgow drinks experience”.’

Glasgow is currently one of two distilleries in the city that welcomes visitors, alongside [Clydeside](#) which opened its doors to visitors in November 2017. Yet with [Douglas Laing](#) preparing to build [Clutha distillery](#) on the south bank of the Clyde, might there be an opportunity for Glasgow to establish an official whisky trail of its own in the future? Regardless of length or format, the underlying attraction of whisky trails resides in their ability make Scotch whisky’s heritage, history and character accessible to a wide range of people.

‘What separates whisky from other alcohols is it has a story behind it, and a community behind that barrel,’ says the Malt Whisky Trail’s Johnston. ‘It represents a character.’

If you’re considering a visit to Scotland, the following whisky trails offer something for everyone, from novice to connoisseur:



THE MALT WHISKY TRAIL

Scotland’s original whisky trail winds for 74 miles through the heart of Speyside, with stops at Benromach, The Glenlivet, Cardhu, Glenfiddich, Glen Grant, Glen Moray and Strathisla, the historic distillery Dallas Dhu, and the Speyside Cooperage.

Given the Malt Whisky Trail’s length, visitors can also take the opportunity to explore more than just whisky in this rural pocket of Scotland. Side-attractions include wildlife-watching centres, adventure sports venues and restaurants showcasing the Speyside region’s gastronomic fare.

While this self-guided route can be completed independently, several companies offer transport and tour packages for a fee. Full details can be found on the [Malt Whisky Trail website](#).



HEBRIDEAN WHISKY TRAIL

This 115-mile trail enables whisky enthusiasts to island-hop their way around Skye, Raasay and Harris to explore four of the Hebrides’ newest and most established distilleries.

The self-guided route takes in Talisker and Torabhaig distilleries on Skye, before whisky wayfarers can board CalMac ferry services to reach Isle of Raasay and Isle of Harris distilleries.

The [Hebridean Whisky Trail](#) can be completed in one circuit or amalgamated with other activities into smaller day trips.



NORTH ISLAY WHISKY TOUR

For tourists short on time, the [North Islay Whisky Tour](#) combines visits to the island's north-eastern distilleries of Bunnahabhain, Ardnahoe and Caol Ila in one day.

The tours enable visitors to understand the wide variety of whiskies produced on Islay; from the maritime and citrusy Caol Ila, to Bunnahabhain's peated and unpeated single malts. At Ardnahoe visitors can sample its Islay Journey blend, while its bar stocks single malts from across Scotland. All three distilleries offer beautiful outlooks of the Paps of Jura mountain range – it's up to you to decide which view is best.

Distillery tour tickets, mini-bus transportation for the day, and lunch are all provided in the package, which means everyone on the tour can relax and enjoy a dram.



GLASGOW DISTILLERY AND TENNENTS TOUR
[Glasgow distillery](#) and Tennents offer visitors a day out that combines tour tickets, transport and tastings of beer, whisky and gin. The package offers visitors the opportunity to visit one of Scotland's newer distilleries, which is

usually open only for private tours, and explore the Wellpark Brewery with Tennants, which has been churning out beers for 450 years.

FÈIS ÌLE 2019 OFFICIAL BOTTLINGS

31 May 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)



Dave Broom does a roundup of (most) of this year's official Fèis Ìle bottlings (some were sold out before he could grab 'em). The conclusion? This has been a stellar year. It's interesting, or just plain weird, how the whiskies move from lighter to heavier in alphabetical order. There are nods of similarity between the many variations on smoke, oils, resinous elements, sweetness and fruit, yet they all retain their individuality.

Ardbeg sets the tempo for this week's tastings with its non-age-statement single malt, Drum. Having been finished in ex-rum casks from

the Americas, the expression stays in keeping with its Caribbean theme with elements of bananas, coconut and smoke.

The youngest of Bowmore's 2019 festival releases is a 15-year-old whisky aged in ex-Bourbon casks (the other was a 23-year-old Sherry cask), with salty aromas that combine with tropical fruits and citric qualities to create a 'summery' dram.

Heading to north Islay, this time for Bunnahabhain's 2001 Sauternes cask finish. Sweet and rich, ripe fruits bring a lushness that cannot be tempered, even with the addition of water. It was one of three festival releases from the distillery, alongside a 1988 Champagne cask finish and 2008 Moine (peated) whisky finished in French oak – neither of which Broom was able to taste.

Having spent 22 years maturing in Sherry-treated American oak hogsheads, Caol Ila's festival release offers complex yet balanced layers of oilskins, blue fruits, peat and mint. 'At £130 it is a steal,' says Broom. A sweet shop meets a chef's kitchen with Kilchoman's festival release, a vatting of a 2007 ex-Bourbon cask and 2008 ex-oloroso Sherry butt. Notes of burnt rosemary and thyme mingle with strawberry Haribo and foam bananas to create a soft, understated dram.

Things take a heavy turn with Lagavulin's expression, a 19-year-old whisky with weighty layers of dark fruits, peat bonfire and liquorice that lead to a long, smouldering finish.

Bottled exclusively for the Friends of Laphroaig collective, the 2019 Laphroaig Càirdeas expression is a 'triple-matured' oily and resinous whisky, softened only by its green elements of eucalyptus and chypre. Bruichladdich brings the first batch of 2019 Fèis Ìle tastings to a

'massive' close, with the oldest Octomore released by the distillery – Event Horizon. With smoke balancing a strong Sherried influence, this is not a dram for the faint-hearted, says Broom.

The playlist kicks off with Love and Santana on the beach, dallies a while with Zappa, chills with Shabaka Hutchings and Jon Hassell before taking a heavier turn with Cream, Zeppelin and finally the imploding weight of King Crimson.

- ARDBEG DRUM

SCORE

86

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

46%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky



REGION

Islay

FLAVOUR CAMP

Smoky & Peaty

NOSE

This is the standard bottling rather than the Committee release, which was [reviewed in Batch 190](#). It shares its stronger brother's piney opening – Christmas trees and juniper. The hint of vetiver is also retained. If anything, the rum accents are increased, with riper banana, apricot and coconut coming through. The smoke is integrated and (relatively) subtle.

PALATE

A gentle and soft start lulls you into a false sense of security, even at the mid-palate, although there is a more noticeable tickle of smoke. The flavours are all soft fruits (fruit salad now), touches of creamy vanilla and some lime. Then it starts to do that Ardbeg thing where the smoke asserts itself and the energy starts to build, the phenols increasing in power as they spread out. Never however does it dominate; there's just a shift in focus.

FINISH

Now, along with the sooty smoke, there's an unusual hint of damp (peated) barley.

CONCLUSION

Relaxing and summery. A Piña Colada by a beach bonfire. Job done, I'd say.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Along the beach, through the palm trees, [She Comes In Colours](#).

Available to buy from [The Whisky Exchange](#) and [Master of Malt](#). It may also be stocked by these [other retailers](#).

BOWMORE 15 YEARS OLD, FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

87

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

51.7%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

3,000 bottles

FLAVOUR CAMP

Smoky & Peaty

NOSE

An interesting one. Light in colour, and very pure and mineral-like to start. Gentle smoke, salt and chalk, then drying smoked (Hebridean) salt. There is also a wisp of delicate florals (artificial rose) and a fresh, zesty, lemony citric quality. It's rather discreet. A little softer with water, with added notes of new book smells and touches of pineapple.

PALATE

It starts very juicy and creamy with some of Bowmore's distinctly tropical fruits in there: mango especially, though this is still on the quiet side. Halfway through, things change significantly and become more saline. This then seems to reverse the flow, sweeping forward along with the smoke. Water accentuates the whisky's sweetness and its citric nature; now things have moved to yuzu and grapefruit.

FINISH

Salty, with a bracing, clean acidity.

CONCLUSION

All ex-Bourbon cask. A subtle and pure Bowmore with low wood impact.

A summery companion to the Ardbeg.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

On the shores of Loch Indaal, the band plays a [Samba Pa Ti](#).

BUNNAHABHAIN 2001 SAUTERNES CASK FINISH, FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

86

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

54.2%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

1,118 bottles

FLAVOUR CAMP

Fruity & Spicy

NOSE

You might pick up a tiny struck match on the opening but this flashes off, leaving a vinous quality with thick, baked fruits, some honeycomb, citronella, peaches (in syrup) and also a surprising smoked meat note. This then

sinks into clotted cream dribbled with orange Muscat and some sour cherry, adding a little bite.

PALATE

As the nose suggests this is concentrated, sweet and rich, with those ripe fruits lying heavily on the tongue. More apricots now, with a balancing crunch of cereal towards the back. Water does nothing to alter this overall lushness.

FINISH

Long, clinging and sweet. Light ginger.

CONCLUSION

The five years spent in Sauternes casks ('Is that a finish or secondary maturation?' asks Pedantic Ed.) has added extra sweetness and richness without making things too cloying.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Heavy [Peaches En Regalia](#).

CAOL ILA 22 YEARS OLD, FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

92

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

54.8%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

3,000 bottles

FLAVOUR CAMP

Smoky & Peaty

NOSE

Immediately complex, rich and decadent. Very oily as well, like sea-wet oilskins. This maritime edge then starts to give way to sweet spices (cassia and mace), some applewood, a surprising (for Caol Ila) mintiness, then Szechuan pepper, before sweet, ripe blue fruits emerge alongside agave syrup, castor oil and layers of peat.

Highly complex.

PALATE

Elegantly unfolds itself across the tongue, starting with heavy, rich fruits, some of the oiliness and a little prickle of spice. Everything seems to coalesce in the centre of the tongue before the smoke starts to peel off. The effect is like sitting on the beach in the sunshine eating ripe, dark fruits, then a cooling salt-laden breeze comes in. Water adds a light menthol touch, along with some juniper and more overt smokiness.

FINISH

Long, gentle and complex.

CONCLUSION

In what is a great year for the bottlings this one, for me at least, had the greatest balance and complexity – and at £130 it is a steal.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

The sensation of a [Star Exploding In Slow Motion](#).

KILCHOMAN FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

89

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

54.4%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

939

FLAVOUR CAMP

Smoky & Peaty

NOSE

This is very Kilchoman in its understated quality and, like the Caol Ila, there's a light mintiness to begin with. This then moves further down the herbal route – there's an almost garrigue-like quality to it, like thyme and rosemary to the fire. The smoke seems quite subtle, hanging like a soft cloud above it all. In time you get hints of seashore before a dried fruit funkiness snaps you back into focus. Things never

become too heavy or wood-dominant. When water is added more peat is released, along with peppermint.

PALATE

Kilchoman often has flavours that take you back to a sweet shop. Here it's strawberry Haribo and foam bananas. As these start to melt there's some crème brûlée elements, some tangerine and a touch of clove.

There's an overall suppleness to the delivery while the smoke is beautifully integrated. It starts to break free and becomes more defined when water is added.

FINISH

Long and gentle.

CONCLUSION

A soft and refined dram, resulting from a vatting of a first-fill ex-Bourbon barrel and an ex-oloroso Sherry cask.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Calmly watching the [Light On Water](#).

LAGAVULIN 19 YEARS OLD, FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

90

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

53.8%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

6,000 bottles

FLAVOUR CAMP

Smoky & Peaty

NOSE

Now things begin to take a more distinctly heavy turn – but without losing the harmonising sweetness which is vital in a balanced, smoky whisky. This starts off with classic Lagavulin rough shag mixed with bog myrtle, the green notes of bay laurels and the pine elements in Lapsang Souchong tea. Alongside this is a rich and robust plummy character; some chocolate ganache with black cherry. The smoke rumbles away, rolling

inexorably forward – especially after water is added. Dense, rich and concentrated.

PALATE

As you might expect from that nose, this is thickly layered and highly complex. It clings to the tongue, with the dark fruits building in weight and silkiness as it reaches the centre, tendrils of scented smoke winding out, adding another layer of complexity. There's a drier edge now – the ashes of a peat bonfire on the beach along with some seaweed, that bay laurel element, sloe, liquorice and date.

FINISH

There's a spark at the back of the throat, which sets the fires burning. You could add water to soften this down or simply let it smoulder into a long finish.

CONCLUSION

A turbo-charged distiller's edition. This has sweetness and smoke, but also an extra layer of richness and complexity. A classic, big-boned Laga'.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

A [Strange Brew](#).

LAPHROAIG CÀIRDEAS, FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

89

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

51.4%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

36,000 bottles

FLAVOUR CAMP

Smoky & Peaty

NOSE

They keep on getting bigger. This cannot be described as a shy Laphroaig. Instead it is hugely oily and very resinous (shades of the Ardbeg and a hint of what's to come with the Octomore) with some moss and green fig. There's just sufficient vanilla (and salted

caramel) to add a soft pause, before you are tangled up in kelp and tarry ropes.

PALATE

Thick and textured; it seems to stick your lips together. There's an almost brutal power to it before those green elements kick in, adding extra eucalyptus and chypre. The resinous wood is retained, but now it's smouldering. That in turn is balanced by super-ripe black fruits. The robust phenols then emerge, with tar and bitumen.

FINISH

A roiling mass of peat.

CONCLUSION

This cask strength version of Three Wood (ex-Bourbon, ex-oloroso Sherry and new oak quarter casks) is classic old Laphroaig: unafraid and uncompromising. That's how we like 'em.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

All opposition is [Trampled Underfoot](#).

OCTOMORE EVENT HORIZON, FÈIS ÌLE 2019

SCORE

91

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND

£ £ £ £ £

ABV

55.7%

PRODUCTION TYPE

Single malt whisky

REGION

Islay

AVAILABILITY

2,000 bottles

FLAVOUR CAMP

Fruity & Spicy

NOSE

If you thought the last pair were big, be prepared. Instantaneously massively concentrated and liquorous, with exotic wood resin (that redwood forest note) and added sumptuous layers of black fruits (fresh, cooked and dried). The smoke is scented and somehow sweeter. In time there is a hint of horse stable, then the honeyed wildness of creeping thistle, before things take a distinctly savoury

turn: bacon and sundried tomato, soy sauce, rowan berry, tar and leather. Almost overwhelming.

PALATE

Massive, powerful and rooty, with those super-ripe black fruits, more dark chocolate, espresso and (once more) a thick and clinging oiliness. The smoke manages to balance what could be a ponderous overkill of Pedro Ximénez and oloroso Sherry. It becomes reminiscent of the sootiness of a Rhone Syrah, with some fruit jelly and the savouriness intact – as is the exotic wood. Water makes things chewy, as finally the peat oils ooze out along the tongue...

FINISH

...and down the throat. Becomes massively phenolic.

CONCLUSION

A beast of a dram and though not one for the faint-hearted, for me it's another must-have in a truly great year.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

[Starless](#) and Bible-black.

WHISKY NEVER STANDS STILL ON ISLAY

05 June 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)



They nip your head. Midges, that is. As does whisky come to think of it, should it be taken in less-than-responsible quantities. Not that anyone at [Fèis Ìle](#) would ever dream of doing that. The midges would be the only thing to blame for any ache in the bonce.

Anyway, we were all suffering from the latter having descended or maybe sneaked into (it was slightly vague) the back of [Caol Ila](#) at the precise moment that light misty rain (aka smirr) began to form around us. What had been set up as a garden with idyllic views over the sound where we could relax with a couple of [Highballs](#) was now revealed to be

the nexus point of the island's midge breeding grounds. We all sped off, sharpish, up the hill to the house.

It was all slightly reminiscent of my youth. West coast evenings would always culminate by being crammed into someone's front room, music playing, whisky bottles being passed around among friends, strangers and hangers-on from the pub. Your role would shift: sometimes you'd be the host, other times the one kidnapped from the pub. No-one cared. All that mattered was the chat, the songs and the drink. Outside the midges would be raging at not getting their dinner.

This was much the same, albeit with considerably better food. Or to be precise... food. The noise level rose along with the laughter and conversations, in which whisky played a tangential role, simply existing as the glue which brought this random group together. Just as it is meant to be. Maybe there should be a warning on the label: 'might cause hilarity and new friendships'.

The reason for the gathering might have been the launch of a new whisky by Atom Brands called Aerolite Lyndsay. If this was the case it was achieved very subtly, which might have been part of a very cunning plan, because at [Kilchoman](#) the next day, folks who had been in the house were still trying to make sense of what precisely had happened. People who weren't there were pretending they'd attended, making it the Fèis equivalent of the Sex Pistols at Manchester Lesser Free Trade Hall in 1976. I'll write more on the whisky later this week, but I can say that, on the night, it was very toothsome indeed.



Whisky pilgrimage: A lone walker heads toward Kilchoman distillery to pay his respects

The following morning, heading back from the Kilchoman graveyard after paying my respects to the Beatons' cross I began following a lone figure, bare-headed, wearing trainers and a thin jacket, walking down the middle of the road through the steadily falling rain towards the distillery. The loneliness of the long-distance whisky lover answering the call of the dram. We walked together, him from the coastguard cottages, me a blow-in, chatting about life and whisky, and weather.

The big warehouse at Kilchoman where [Anthony Wills](#) held his masterclass was dry however. It kicked off with four new makes, followed by five single cask samples. Each of the new makes had been fermented with a [different yeast](#) (barley variety, ferment time and distillation were the same for all). Each was distinct from the other: Mauri was clean and creamy; Kerry M drier, with more smoke; Kerry MX was fruitier, while an MX/Mauri blend had the greatest complexity.

The cask samples looked at the character differences between Kilchoman's own malted barley (fresh, light smoke) compared to [Port Ellen's](#) (phenolic) as well as the [influence of the different cask types](#) (ex-Bourbon, ex-Madeira, American oak, ex-Sherry hoggie and ex-European Sherry butt).

We talked of the fluctuations and different spins, discussing everything from the origins of foam bananas to how Sherry butts seem to push phenols. Geeks in sweetie shops swathed in smoke. The talk in the class (and after) was about how, while a signature distillery character is paramount, it doesn't mean things are set in amber. Kilchoman is looking forward in a host of new ways while remaining true to itself. Sheltering in the marquees in the courtyard, the hardcore whisky enthusiasts were enjoying themselves. Adverse conditions seem to bring out the best in them: there were drams, cocktails, the new, hugely-improved Islay Ales and music. What's a bit of rain anyway? Some were still applying cream to the sunburn they'd got while waiting in queues at Caol Ila and [Laphroaig](#) two days earlier. Who cares if the plane didn't leave (or indeed arrive) for two days? There was whisky to be drunk and people to see.

The midges began nipping away once again. No-one seemed overly concerned. Peaty whisky is a great repellent, so they say. Maybe if you drink just enough (in a responsible fashion of course) you simply don't notice them.

By the time I'd reached [Bunnahabhain](#), there were already folk queuing for the Champagne cask bottling, which wasn't even being released until the following morning. Some, it transpired, had been there since the day before, which is either dedication or madness. Maybe a bit of both. Perhaps they'd heard that it was a one-off, as the Scotch Whisky Association had gently pointed out to the distiller that as there is no such thing as a 'Champagne cask' (*) the label was misleading. An easy mistake, and one which will add an extra level of interest whenever a bottle is brought out to share.

*Though the still wine may be fermented in cask, it only becomes Champagne by being given a secondary fermentation in bottle.



Time of change: Bunnahabhain's £10.5 million facelift is well underway (Photo: Rebecca Sneddon)

Songs were ringing inside Warehouse No. 9, courtesy of David Brodie, ex-bank manager, publican, hotel owner and now all-round entertainer and tour guide at Bunna' as we ran through a set of three single casks (and the Moine French oak) comparing the same oak type with unpeated and peated whiskies, before tasting three more from different Sherry types. Oh, and the excellent Sauternes cask finish [[reviewed among this year's official Fèis Ile releases](#)]. I have a distinct feeling we ended up talking more about Sherry than whisky. But hey, that's the way that conversation works, isn't it?

The village of Bunnahabhain has gone, warehouses have been flattened and [a new distillery complex is beginning to emerge](#). For all the talk of continuity and consistency, the truth is that Islay never stays still. It is as multifaceted as its weather, and its whiskies reflect it.

I thought back to the lone pilgrim trudging up the road. In his heart was hope. He knew things would change for the better. If Islay is the first place to get rain, it's therefore the first place to get the sunshine.

NEW SCOTCH RULES AIM TO ADD 'FLEXIBILITY'

14 June 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

EXCLUSIVE: Scotch whisky producers are now free to use a wider variety of casks for maturation, including ex-Tequila and Calvados casks, following a change to the law.

The amendment to the Scotch Whisky Technical File, revealed exclusively to [Scotchwhisky.com](#) by the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), gives specific guidance on which casks can be used to mature or 'finish' Scotch whisky, with new text as follows:

'The spirit must be matured in new oak casks and/or in oak casks which have only been used to mature wine (still or fortified) and/or beer/ale and/or spirits with the exception of:

- *wine, beer/ale or spirits produced from, or made with, stone fruits*
- *beer/ale to which fruit, flavouring or sweetening has been added after fermentation*
- *spirits to which fruit, flavouring or sweetening has been added after distillation*

and where such previous maturation is part of the traditional processes for those wines, beers/ales or spirits.

Regardless of the type of cask used, the resulting product must have the traditional colour, taste and aroma characteristics of Scotch Whisky.'

The amendment has been lodged with the European Commission by the UK's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) following public consultation, and is now law.

In practice, the new rules mean that distillers can now mature Scotch whisky in a much wider variety of casks, including those previously used to age agave spirits (including Tequila and mezcal), Calvados, barrel-aged cachaça, shochu and baijiu, as well as some other fruit spirits.

The changes also open up the possibility of maturing Scotch in casks previously used for barrel-aged gin, as long as stone fruits do not feature in the list of botanical ingredients – although the SWA says 'a number of tests' need to be applied to individual products, with guidance offered on a case-by-case basis.

However, the rules do not allow the use of ex-cider casks, despite the launch of [a cider cask-finished single malt](#) by Speyside single malt [Glen Moray](#) in October last year.

Previously, the rules did not forbid the use of specific casks, but the SWA's legal team advised distillers to use casks with 'sufficient evidence of traditional use' within the industry – such as ex-Sherry and ex-Bourbon casks.

In January 2018, a report by *The Wall Street Journal* claimed that [Diageo](#), the world's biggest Scotch whisky producer, [had formed a 'secret task force'](#) to explore possible changes to Scotch's strict production rules, including 'finishing' Scotch whisky in casks previously used to mature Don Julio Tequila, which the company owns. At the time, the plans were said to have been rebuffed by the SWA.

Most distillers remain supportive of Scotch whisky's strict production regulations, but some have privately expressed concerns recently that the tight rules governing cask maturation in particular might be putting Scotch at a commercial disadvantage to rival whisky categories.

'This amendment provides clarity and some additional flexibility on the range of casks in which Scotch whisky can be matured,' said Karen Betts, SWA chief executive.

'The change is consistent with Scotch whisky's heritage and traditions, and strengthens our foundations into the future.'

SWA director of legal affairs Alan Park added: 'A wide range of wine, beer and spirit casks have been used over the years to mature Scotch whisky, and clarity about what is allowed under the law should be provided in the Scotch Whisky Technical File.'

'The amendment is consistent with the continued use of all those categories of casks where there is evidence of longstanding traditional use in the industry.'

'But it will also create more flexibility, particularly in the range of spirits casks which can be used, subject to a number of safeguards which protect the reputation of Scotch whisky.'

Jura unveils Tide and Time 21yo single malts

13th May, 2019 by Melita Kiely - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

Single malt whisky producer Jura has launched two 21-year-old expressions to celebrate the distillery's island home, called Tide and Time.



Jura Tide and Time celebrate the island distillery's provenance

Jura 21 Year Old Time is a global travel retail-exclusive that has been matured in American white oak ex-Bourbon barrels before being finished in ex-peated malt casks.

The whisky is said to have citrus, grassy notes combined with a salted peat smoke edge. Jura Time will be released in small batches, with each

bottle detailing the year of bottling to indicate the "subtle variations" in the batches as they are put together each year.

Bottled at 47.2% abv, Jura Time has an RRP of £150 (US\$195).

Jura 21 Year Old Tide, bottled at 46.7% abv, will be made available in domestic markets.

Richard Trimby, global travel retail director, Whyte & Mackay, said: "The worldwide relaunch of Jura in global travel retail has driven significant commercial success with momentum building in all key regions globally. "The addition of the new Jura 21 Year Old Time reinforces our commitment to offering our customers prestige and limited whiskies of outstanding quality to drive penetration and spend in travel retail stores."

Jura launched a [new core range of whiskies last year](#), adding a smoky flavour profile to the brand.

Pulteney Distillery



When you think of the great coastal distilleries that play on their maritime location, the usual suspects typically include the likes of Talisker, Lagavulin, Bunnahabhain, even Highland Park. One distillery that particularly plays on its maritime theme somehow manages to continue sailing under the radar: Pulteney Distillery. It's well known to those who know it well.

Pulteney is located in the town of Wick, right up in the north-east corner of Scotland's mainland – in fact, John O'Groats is just a further 22km north. Wick was a major herring port in the 19th century and Pulteney Distillery was established in 1826 to cash in on the thousands of sailors, fishermen, and associated trades that descended on the town each season. (At its peak, the town played host to over 500 coopers who worked feverishly to produce the barrels for the herring's storage and transportation.) The distillery experienced mixed fortunes and changes in ownership, particularly once the herring had been fished out and the industry died away. It is one of the few Scottish distilleries to suffer the ignominy of being closed due to the temperance movement – Wick was a "dry town" from 1922 until 1947 and the distillery was closed from 1926 until 1951.



Pulteney's production buildings

Visitors to the distillery who've toured *other* distilleries will agree that Pulteney is a quirky set up, to say the least. A tour through the production area takes you on a twisting, twirling path between different buildings, a resulting outcome of both the small, tight space it was originally established in, together with the previous refurbishments undertaken in the 1950's. The stills themselves are particularly unique, unlike any other pair in Scotland: The wash still is bulbous and squat

with its head cut off (presumably to fit within what was once a much lower roof) whilst the spirit still has a unique 180° U-shaped bend at its head before passing through a purifier.



The flat-topped wash still



The inverted head at the top of the spirit still. Pulteney is one of the few distilleries left to still use wormtub condensers and these, combined with the stills that induce high reflux, produce a particularly oily and weighty spirit. With the warehouses sitting just 300m from the North Sea, it is no surprise that the resulting whisky has a notably maritime character.



Inside the tunroom.



Inside one of the warehouses, located just a few hundred metres from the North Sea.

At the time of Whisky & Wisdom's visit, the distillery was on a five day week, equating to a production output of around 1.3M LPA. The 5.1 tonne mashtun takes 6.5 hours for each mash, with 14 mashes running each week. The distillery is currently using Concerto barley – there was a brief trial with Chronicle, but the results evidently “weren't good”. Each mash produces 23,500L of wort although, interestingly, each charge of the washbacks requires only two-thirds of this. There are six reasonably new stainless steel washbacks, plus an older washback that was installed in 1983. Fermentation is already at a longer-than-most 63 hours for the “shorts”, and then 110 hours for the “longs” over the weekend. Another little quirk of Pulteney is that the washbacks have enough headspace to absorb the rising fermentation foam, and so there are no switchers or surfactants here.

The distillery has some reasonably green credentials these days – they switched off the oil gas five years ago and now use a biomass burner. Steam from the distillery feeds one of the local suburbs (via district heating), and the distillation effluent is spread to the land, which is a win-win, noting that the land is naturally deficient in copper.



The run through the wash still takes 4.5 hours, and the spirit still is seven hours – three of which are collecting the middle cut. For those who like the numbers, the wash still is charged with 17,500L; the spirit still with 13,500L, and 2,000L is what is finally collected. The average strength of the spirit collected is 68% ABV, and all spirit is filled into cask at still strength. There are five warehouses and roughly 25,000 casks on site.



The blackened old wall of the kiln, which was decommissioned in 1926. Linkwood has the legend of the dents in the stills and the spider webs that couldn't be disturbed, and Pulteney has its own version: The kiln here was decommissioned in 1926, but two walls – still blackened by the years of fire – are exposed on the warehouse side, and there is indeed still a distinct and noticeable smokiness in the air. The sherry butts all sit at this end of the warehouse, with the belief that the charred air and atmosphere has a unique influence on the maturing spirit at this end of the building.



The sherry butts maturing in the “smoky” corner of the warehouse. The distillery employs 12 people (including the Visitor Centre staff) and receives 15,000 visitors each year. No mean feat for what is, ultimately, one of Scotland’s smaller and lesser known distilleries, not to mention in a geographic region far removed from the usual areas that enjoy whisky tourism.



Pulteney has been in the hands of Inver House since 1995 and they’ve quietly been building the brand over the years. Bottled under the name “Old Pulteney” and bearing the moniker “The Maritime Malt”, its 12yo and 17yo releases have been cult favourites amongst those in the know, although the 17yo was recently discontinued as the distillery balances its stocks and projections. Like so many other brands, the core range has expanded in recent times, and now boasts a NAS, 12, 15, 18, and 25yo. There’s also a range of limited-edition vintage releases, plus the obligatory travel retail exclusives. You can check out the full range [here](#).



Distillery Manager, Malcolm Waring, alongside the spirit safe. Malcolm Waring, the distillery’s Manager, has been in the game for nearly forty years, with six years spent at stablemate Knockdhu and the rest at Pulteney! Needless to say, he has a strong passion for the distillery, but also the industry and the local area.



The cosy lounge inside the Visitor’s Centre.

If you are able to get to this corner of Scotland, the distillery has a wonderfully cosy and welcoming visitor centre, complete with lounge, and there’s plenty of other attractions and sights in the area to justify the journey this far north. If you’re a fan of seafood, no visit to this region is complete without dining at [The Captain’s Galley](#) – one of Great Britain’s finest seafood restaurants. It’s up at Scrabster, just a 35 minute drive further north and – by happy coincidence – the same port where the ferry to Orkney departs, for those visiting Highland Park. Cheers, AD

Balvenie Stories launches worldwide

21st May, 2019 by Melita Kiely

Speyside distillery The Balvenie has launched a new collection of whiskies inspired by stories of “endeavour, craft and unexpected twists”.



The Balvenie Stories comprises three whiskies aged 12, 14 and 26 years. Comprising three single malts, The Balvenie Stories range includes 12-year-old The Sweet Toast of American Oak, 14-year-old The Week of Peat, and 26-year-old A Day of Dark Barley.

Each expression has been designed to communicate the stories of the workers at the Dufftown distillery, such as apprentice malt master Kelsey McKechnie’s use of Kentucky virgin oak to create a fruitier Balvenie whisky; former distillery manager Ian Millar introducing smoke from Speyside peat; or malt master David Stewart MBE using an “unusually brittle” barley.

Stewart said: “Stories are the lifeblood of The Balvenie distillery. They make up the fabric of who we are and what we do. “The Balvenie Stories collection tells these tales in liquid form, giving whisky drinkers across the globe a special glimpse into the unique and very human nature of how we produce our whisky.

“Each expression in the collection reflects this by telling its own story via first-hand accounts and recollections of the many people involved.” The range is available to purchase now globally. The Sweet Toast of American Oak has been bottled at 43% abv and carries an RRP of £45 (US\$57). It is said to have notes of candied orange and lemon peel, vanilla toffee and butterscotch, with layers of blossom honey, melted brown sugar and oak spices.

The Week of Peat has an abv of 48.3% and will be available for RRP £65 (US\$83) per bottle. It is said to be a “classic” Balvenie whisky, with notes of honey, vanilla, citrus and a “delicate” smokiness. It is an “evolution” of [The Balvenie Peat Week Aged 14 Years](#), which was launched in 2017.

Meanwhile, A Day of Dark Barley has been bottled at 47.8% abv and will cost RRP £600 (US\$762). It is the product of Stewart and his malt men experimenting with heavily roasted dark barley in 1992. The liquid was first released in 2006 as 14-year-old Balvenie Roasted Malt. Tasting notes for A Day of Dark Barley include toffee sweetness, orange peel, oak vanilla, cinnamon and ginger spices. The Balvenie book Furthermore, The Balvenie will launch a book, called *Pursuit – The Balvenie Stories Collection*, in autumn this year. Edited by award-winning author and journalist Alex Preston, the book will be published by Canongate. It will contain a series of fiction and non-fiction short stories from writers worldwide, including Lawrence Osborne and Max Porter. Further details about the book will be revealed closer to its launch date.

BALVENIE STORIES RANGE TELLS WHISKY TALES

21 May 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Balvenie is to release a new range of single malt whiskies inspired by tales of 'character, endeavour and craft' from the Speyside distillery.



Triple tales: The Balvenie Stories range draws on events and characters from the distillery's past and present (Photo: @frombarreltobottle)

The Balvenie Stories range will launch this month with three whiskies: The Sweet Toast of American Oak, The Week of Peat and A Day of Dark Barley, with each whisky presented in a carton detailing the story behind its creation.

The Sweet Toast of American Oak is an expression created by apprentice malt master [Kelsey McKechnie](#) with guidance from Balvenie malt master [David Stewart](#).

The whisky is matured primarily in ex-Bourbon barrels for 12 years before being finished for three months in bespoke virgin American oak casks sourced from Kelvin Cooperage in Kentucky.

The cooperage gave the casks a long, slow toast for 20 minutes, before sending them on to the distillery in Speyside for an additional toast to 'bring out as much flavour as possible'.

Bottled at 43% abv, the whisky is described as having 'even stronger, sweeter coconut and warm honey' notes than Balvenie's classic character.

A Week of Peat is a reincarnation of [Balvenie Peat Week](#), a 14-year-old, heavily-peated malt which was launched globally in October 2017.

While the recipe remains the same, the 48.3% abv expression, which has notes of 'gentle sweet peat smoke, citrus flavours, oaky vanilla and blossom honey', has been renamed to fit into the new Balvenie Stories collection.

In 2001, then distillery manager Ian Millar installed a peat burner on the side of the kiln, which [Balvenie](#) has used for one week each year to produce peated malt.

'In a way the week of peat was nothing new,' he said in the detailed story on Week of Peat's packaging.

'In fact, arguably, it's the only week of the year we make whisky the way it used to be made – using smoke from a heavily-peated furnace, like in the very old days when every farm burned peat from the land (and made whisky in a pot over the fire, it's worth remembering).'

The Day of Dark Barley is a sister bottling to Balvenie 14 Year Old Roasted Malt, a whisky released in 2006 that contains a percentage of dark roasted chocolate malt.

The new 26-year-old whisky is bottled at 47.8% abv, and is said to have flavours of 'toffee sweetness, some citrusy notes of tangy orange peel, followed by oak vanilla and a touch of cinnamon and ginger spices at the end'.

Its name, and packaging, recounts the day the order of dark roasted barley arrived at the distillery from Simpsons maltings in 1992, catching staff unawares.

Robbie Gormley, Balvenie's maltman, recalled: 'We weren't ready for it yet, so finding a place to store it was tricky. In the end the only place was the barley loft, which caused quite a commotion when it came time to carry every single sack back down again.'



Scotch stories: The new range showcases a different aspect of Balvenie's character

David Stewart, Balvenie malt master, said: 'Stories are the lifeblood of the Balvenie distillery. They make up the fabric of who we are and what we do.'

'The Balvenie Stories collection tells these tales in liquid form, giving whisky drinkers across the globe a special glimpse into the unique and very human nature of how we produce our whisky.'

'Each expression in the collection reflects this by telling its own story via first-hand accounts and recollections of the many people involved.' All three expressions are available globally from May, for £45 for The Sweet Toast of American Oak, £65 for A Week of Peat, and £600 for The Day of Dark Barley.

Further whiskies are expected to be released as part of the Balvenie Stories range in the coming years.

An accompanying book titled *Pursuit – The Balvenie Stories Collection*, will be released in the autumn featuring a series of fiction and non-fiction short stories from a collection of writers including Lawrence Osbourne and Max Porter.

WHISKY IS A WHOLE SENSORY EXPERIENCE

22 May 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)

'I use the [Dewar's](#) to clean the shoes,' Shingo tells me. We are standing next to the shoeshine stand on the staircase outside his bar, Sip. I suspect that sentence needs to be dissected. There's just too much weirdness going on.

Shingo Gokan is a bartender who has worked in New York and Shanghai and now has his own joint, SG Club, in a surprisingly chilled part of the Shibuya district of Tokyo. The club, like a great cocktail, comes in three parts. At street level is Guzzle, a laid-back, busy, pub-style drinking den. Downstairs is Sip, a speakeasy-style den for the cocktail aficionado – there's cunningly crafted whisky drinks galore in both places. On the first floor there's a private members' cigar lounge (there's also a secret 'ninja space', but if I told you its location I'd have to kill you). I suspect that doesn't fully explain why there's a shoeshine stand.



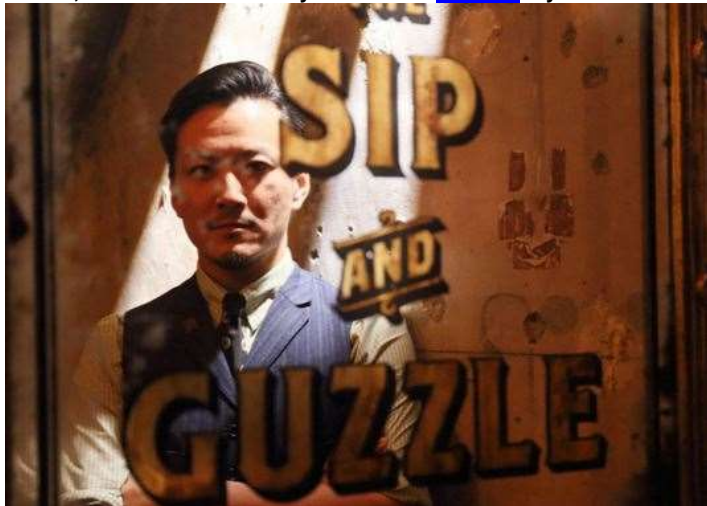
Cultural exchange: Japan sent a delegation of samurai to New York in 1860

'I heard a story that when Japan was opening up to the West in the mid-19th century, some samurai went on an official visit to New

York,' Shingo continues. 'It turns out they stayed close to where Jerry Thomas (author of the first cocktail book) had his bar. I wondered if they visited it and brought some of the ideas back to Japan.' So, the whole of the club is an imagining of what a Japanese-influenced American bar of the 1860s might have looked like... or maybe it's an American-influenced Japanese bar. Hard to tell when things blur. Anyway, it's not beyond the realms of fantasy to believe that a samurai might have decided to hang up his sword and start slinging drinks instead – though it's unlikely that he would have turned a margarita into a clear drink which tastes like Riesling... No, I'm not going to explain that one.

It seems like an outlandish story, but in 1860 a delegation of 70 samurai left Edo to travel to New York. It's claimed that they were the first such group to leave Japan for 200 years. While it's unclear what they drank, or whether they frequented Jerry Thomas' bar, it was noted that they were prodigious shoppers.

Oh... the Dewar's. Before Shingo gets a visit from an irate rep, let me tell you it's there as a finish for the shoes, just to give them a bit of a sparkle. You can also get it in a slightly more conventional manner in Guzzle, infused with Earl Grey and served [Highball](#)-style.



Gokan's gaff: Shingo opened Tokyo's American-influenced SG Club in 2018

SG Club is an example of how different elements influence each other. In the bars, it is how design sets the mood and tells a story, but we can go deeper. Over the past couple of weeks, first in Elgin, and now in Tokyo, I've been doing blind tastings where drams are first tasted neat, and then re-tasted with one (or in Tokyo's case two) pieces of music (much like the sensory evaluation sessions held in [Scotchwhisky.com's Future Trends Lab at The Whisky Show](#) last year).

The remarkable thing is the manner in which the taste of the whisky changes, often dramatically, when music is included.

Take [Kilchoman's](#) smoke. In Tokyo we tasted it, and then I played an ambient piano piece by Virginia Astley. The smoke went and the sweetness was lifted further into focus. This then bled into a piece by John Surman, all multi-tracked bass and baritone saxophone. The smoke suddenly surged forward once again, more intensely than when we'd tasted the whisky in silence.

It shows how it is wrong to believe that our senses exist separately from each other. Instead they are all constantly influencing each other: colour affects taste, as does shape... and sound. High tones accentuate sweetness, and low tones heaviness, while tempo will affect feel and where the flavours concentrate themselves.



Heightened experience: Using all of your senses can draw out different flavours in whisky

(Photo: [Sascha Wenninger](#); CC BY-SA 2.0)

Music doesn't add flavour; rather it acts as an aid to reveal elements which

might have been hidden, accentuating some flavours or textures, adding new layers of complexity. It's a dramatic introduction to the cross-modal world, often showing what lies beneath, where the connections are. We tend to see flavour as fixed, whereas the truth is that it is malleable, at the whim of our senses and suggestibilities.

It is another facet of the blurring of boundaries that Shingo is trying to achieve at SG. Are you in Japan or America? The 21st century or 19th? How does the decor and the lighting change your mood? Does that drink taste different in the three bars – or outside in the street? Would sipping it on the shoeshine stand trigger different flavours? Only one way to find out.

THE GLENLIVET IS GIVEN 'BOLD' REDESIGN

21 May 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

The Glenlivet has given its range a 'bold' redesign in order to 'embrace the next generation of single malt drinkers'.



Next generation: The Glenlivet's new look includes colour-coded labels
The Speyside distillery has introduced a new look across its entire core range, which consists of The Glenlivet Founders Reserve, [Captain's Reserve](#), 12-, 15- and 18-year-old single malts.

Most noticeably the 12-year-old, which was [reintroduced to global markets in 2018](#) following a period of stock shortages, has switched its green glass bottle for a clear one.

Each bottle is now colour-coded to 'help it stand out', while a curved label has been added for consistency across the range.

The Glenlivet 18 Year Old will have its label printed directly onto the bottle.

Miriam Eceolaza, marketing director for [The Glenlivet](#), said: 'The Glenlivet packaging update isn't about changing our whiskies, because we know they are great.

'It's about creating new designs that beautifully reflect the brand's rich history, while showcasing our contemporary approach and vision.

'We hope that the modern, yet timeless new look will appeal to our existing drinkers, but also invite those who are yet to discover single malt Scotch into the fold.'

The newly designed range is being introduced to the US in May before being rolled out globally.

The Glenlivet claimed the redesign is the 'latest major change' in its aim to 'open up the category to a new generation of whisky drinkers'.

OUR MUST-TRY HIGHLAND SINGLE MALTS

MAY 14, 2019 - <https://distiller.com/lists/our-must-try-highland-single-malts>

The Highlands encompass most of Scotland with single malts varying in both style and flavor. Typically, peat smoke is not a huge factor, but there are exceptions. Here are a few must-try single malts to get you acquainted with the region!

12 OBAN DISTILLERS EDITION; 86 - SWEET & RICH

Montilla wines are produced similar to their neighbors in Jerez where Sherry wines are made, but instead of using mostly Palomino grapes, they typically use Pedro Ximenez. A Fino is the style of wine in use here which represent some of the driest wines made in the world and are generally delicate, nutty, and tangy. This is the type of cask that the Oban Distillers Edition is finished in.

11 LOCH LOMOND INCHMURRIN 12 YEAR

Single malts that have aged at least 12 years in American bourbon, re-fill, and re-charred oak barrels are expertly married together to produce this Inchmurrin bottling. It's produced at Loch Lomond Distillery in the Highlands, named after a nearby lake and the distillery's main water source. Inchmurrin 12 Year is part of the Loch Lomond Island Collection, along with their Medeira Wood Finish and 18 Year expressions. Non-chill-filtered, it's been bottled at 46% ABV.

10 GLENGOYNE 12 YEAR; 88 - SWEET & RICH

Glengoyne distillery prides itself on having the "slowest distillation process in Scotland," with 6 years of seasoning their own oak casks before aging. They also completely air dry their own barley instead of using peat. The name "Glen Guin" translates to "herd of wild geese," referring to the distillery's surroundings. Non chill-filtered.

9 TOMATIN 18 YEAR; 88 - FLORAL & FRUITY

This distillery has 12 working stills and produces five million liters annually making it one of the largest single malt producers in Scotland. Back in the 1950's, however, they had expanded to a whopping 23 stills and by the 1970's produced twelve million liters per year which is more than current day leading producer Glenfiddich and their ten million liters. Enough trivia and onto the 18 year bottling; this is matured in refill American oak barrels for 18 years and then placed in Oloroso sherry casks for a time prior to bottling.

8 GLEN GARIOCH 12 YEAR; 89 - FRUITY & SWEET

Located in the Highlands, Glen Garioch is the most easterly distillery in Scotland. Formerly a tannery and then a brewery before converting to a distillery in 1797, this is a boutique distillery producing about 100 casks per week. Glen Garioch was used in blends such as Vat 69, Bell's, and in the liqueur Drambuie before being released as a single malt in 1972.

Note: Pronounced [glen gee-ree]

7 GLENMORANGIE ALLTA; 89 - SPICY

Glenmorangie Allta -- "wild" in Scots Gaelic -- was created using a wild yeast (*Saccharomyces diaemath*) that was discovered on the Cadboll barley grown near the distillery. Using this yeast in the whisky making process, it was then aged in ex-bourbon barrels, many second-fill. Bottled unchillfiltered at 51.2% ABV. This is the 10th bottling in the Private Edition series. Available February 2019.

6 CLYNELISH 14 YEAR; 89 - FRUITY & SWEET

An oft overlooked gem in the Diageo "Classic Malt Whiskies" collection, this Highland malt is produced on the northeast coast of Scotland in the town of Brora. Brora is also the name of a now closed distillery, which, incidentally, was formally the location of the original Clynelish Distillery. This is a peated whisky, but far less so than the Brora bottlings.

5 GLENCADAM THE RE-AWAKENING 13 YEAR; 90 - BRINY

This was released in July 2017 from the Angus Dundee Distillers group as a limited edition bottling from the Glencadam Distillery. This Highland distillery was mothballed (fell dormant) in 2000 and re-opened three years later. This bottling is a result of the distillery's "reawakening". As is standard with their releases, this single malt is not chill-filtered and has no added coloring. 6000 bottles were produced and are individually numbered.

4 DALMORE CIGAR MALT RESERVE; 90 - FRUITY & SWEET

The Dalmore Cigar Malt Reserve is an aromatic, full-bodied expression intended to be paired with fine cigars. It is produced at the centuries old Dalmore Distillery located on the northern shores of the Firth of Cromarty, deep in the Scottish Highlands. Dalmore Cigar Malt Reserve is a beautiful marriage of single malt stocks aged in American white oak ex-bourbon casks, 30 year old Matusalem oloroso sherry butts and premier cru Cabernet Sauvignon wine barrique before being bottled at 88 proof.

3 ROYAL BRACKLA 16 YEAR; 90 - FLORAL

Royal Brackla 16 is the middle child of three Royal Brackla single malts released in 2015. The distillery's famed heritage includes receiving a Royal Warrant of Appointment in 1835 from King William IV. Production includes a lengthy fermentation period of 80 hours, tall stills set to run slowly, and after initial oak maturation finishes its aging in oloroso sherry butts.

2 DALWHINNIE 15 YEAR; 91 - SWEET & RICH

Located in the Highlands where it is quite remote and windy, the Dalwhinnie Distillery is a distillery that doesn't quite get the press it deserves. It is a whisky that displays classic Highland malt qualities of honey and heather. This is one of the original six distilleries in Diageo's Classic Malts range and they release very few distillery bottlings.

1 GLENDRONACH ORIGINAL 12 YEAR; 91 - FRUITY & VANILLA

As the color likely gave away, this whisky is matured in ex-sherry casks; in this case, it is a combination of Oloroso and Pedro Ximenez (aka PX) sherry. In 2005, this distillery finally changed from heating the stills with direct coal fire to an indirect heat source (steam). Direct fire creates hot

spots and tends to provide a toffee/caramel roasted quality to the whisky. We await the results of the change in future bottlings.

FAVORITE CAMPBELTOWN SINGLE MALT WHISKIES

<https://distiller.com/lists/favorite-campbeltown-single-malt-whiskies>

Campbeltown is a small whisky region in Scotland, home to just three distilleries (once more than 30). However, the styles vary from light and grassy to peaty and robust. These favorites will get you versed in the whiskies from the region.

10 - GLEN SCOTIA DOUBLE CASK SINGLE MALT; 81 - BRINY & SALTY

A recent expression from the new redesigned range of Glen Scotia, one of the few remaining Campbeltown distilleries. This single malt was first matured in bourbon barrels, before being finished in Pedro Ximenez sherry casks and bottled at 92 proof.

9 - HAZELBURN 10 YEAR; 82 - FRUITY & SWEET

Springbank Distillery in Campbeltown produces 3 distinct labels of single malt: Springbank, Hazelburn, and Longrow. Being one of the few family-owned distilleries left in Scotland allows them to experiment with different casks, methods of distillation, and levels of peating. Hazelburn is triple-distilled and unpeated (the malt is air dried); Springbank is 2.5 times distilled and lightly peated; and Longrow is twice-distilled and heavily peated. After maturing ten years in ex-bourbon casks, this expression gets bottled at 46% ABV.

8 - KILKERRAN WORK IN PROGRESS #7 SHERRY WOOD; 87 - FULL BODIED & RICH

Opened in 2004, Glengyle Distillery set to the task of waiting 12 years for its flagship whisky to mature. In the meantime, it released several "Work in Progress" whiskies. Matured in sherry oak casks, the single malt whisky is not chill-filtered and has no added color. This lightly peated whisky was released in 2015 with 12,000 bottles available worldwide.

7 - KILKERRAN WORK IN PROGRESS #7 BOURBON WOOD 87 - FRUITY & FULL BODIED

Glengyle Distillery opened in 2004, over 125 years after it was initially founded by William Mitchell in 1872. Its history is colorful one, involving ownership changes, ceased whisky production, and multiple attempts by investors to re-open the distillery. This eventually became reality when it was purchased by Hedley Wright, great-great nephew of Mitchell himself. While the distillery waits 12 years for its flagship whisky to mature, it has been releasing a line of "Work in Progress" whiskies. This bourbon-matured expression is the second half of their WIP #7 release; the first half being a sherry-matured single malt. Released in 2015, it is also bottled at cask-strength.

6 - GLEN SCOTIA VICTORIANA; 90 - SWEET & FULL BODIED

Victoriana is a non-age statement (NAS) Scotch from one of the last three remaining Campbeltown distilleries. It was introduced in 2015 as part of the distillery's international rebranding. The casks were selected from its reserve cellar (to have one is considered a very Victorian value - hence the name) for their individual characteristics, then married together in a barrel that's been given a heavy char. It's bottled without chill-filtration.

5 - SPRINGBANK 12 YEAR CASK STRENGTH; 90 - RICH & FULL BODIED

A semi-annual release from the Springbank Distillery, one of the last family-owned distilleries in Scotland. Beginning in 2010, Springbank began releasing two vatting per year of a twelve-year-old cask strength malt, aged in a combination of ex-bourbon and ex-sherry casks at around a 60:40 or 70:30 ratio (depends on the vatting). The distillery releases one in Winter/Spring and one in Summer/Fall. Whisky nerds and Springbank-lovers keep track of the different batches by the ABV, which varies slightly with each new iteration. As with all Springbank products, this malt is non-chill filtered, and it contains no added coloring.

4 - LONGROW 18 YEAR 90 - SMOKY & RICH

Longrow is a peated range of whiskies that has been distilled at Springbank since 1973. Springbank boasts a long history and pride in still conducting 100% of their production on site. Double-distilled and aged in ex-bourbon and ex-sherry barrels. These bottles show that peated whiskies can be made outside of Islay. Bottled at 92 proof with no coloring.

3 - SPRINGBANK 15 YEAR 90- FLORAL & FRUITY

Perhaps because Springbank Distillery is family owned rather than being in the hands of a large corporation, they can be a bit more experimental. This distillery employs three different recipes and ergo three different names of single malts: Hazelburn, Longrow, and Springbank. They vary in the number of times they are distilled and the different levels of peat for their malts. Springbank is distilled 2 1/2 times and is lightly peated.

2 - KILKERRAN 12 YEAR 92 - RICH

Released in August 2016, Kilkerran 12 Year is the highly anticipated flagship whisky from Mitchell's Glengyle Distillery in Campbeltown. Since Hedley Wright, great-great nephew of Mitchell himself re-opened the distillery in 2004, they've been releasing experimental "Work in Progress" whiskies while waiting for this one to mature. Lightly peated and double-distilled, 70% of the single malt aged in first-fill ex-bourbon casks and the remaining 30% matured in sherry. Non-chill-filtered without added coloring, it is bottled at 46% ABV.

1 - GLEN SCOTIA 15 YEAR 93 - FULL BODIED & RICH

Campbeltown was once considered the "whisky making capitol" of Scotland with 28 distilleries. Of those 28, only 3, including Glen Scotia remain. Though they no longer malt their own barley, they source it to very specific details, using longer fermentation and vatting methods than in the old days. Released in 2015 as part of the brand's relaunch, this Scotch was matured for 15 years in ex-bourbon barrels before bottling.

HOW TO BUY A WHISKY CASK

14 May 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

If you're looking to acquire your own cask of whisky, there's plenty of choice out there but, as ever, the devil is in the detail. Richard Woodard investigates.



All your own: The newly operational Lagg distillery is one of many to offer casks for sale

The frustrating thing about new whisky distilleries is that everyone has to wait so long for the mature product to appear. That means owners potentially not getting a return on their investment for a decade or

more; and drinkers waiting just as long to taste the whisky.

Cask purchase schemes can help to ease the pain on both sides.

Distillers get a nice chunk of cash flow to keep the bankers happy, while their customers can secure themselves a ready supply of mature whisky in the years to come, charting the evolution of the spirit along the way. Typically, by purchasing early and in large quantities, they're saving money too.

No shock, then, that so many distillery start-ups offer some form of cask purchase scheme to private buyers. But, with prices varying hugely and each scheme including subtly different benefits, how do you know which one to choose? And what is the real cost of cask ownership?

In its simplest form, a cask purchase scheme is exactly that: you contract to pay an agreed sum to buy a cask, which is then left to mature for a set period before bottling. Your outlay is split between the initial purchase price, covering ownership, warehousing and insurance, and the final bill when the cask is released – duty at the prevailing rate, plus VAT (if you're buying within the UK) and bottling costs.

But, as ever, the devil is in the detail. Does that initial purchase price include visiting your cask at the distillery? Does it cover the cost of samples as your whisky matures? Do you have to pay for bottling? What additional benefits are included?

Then there's the whisky and the cask: do you have a choice of distillate (eg peated/unpeated; double- or triple-distilled)? Can you choose cask type and size? Is there any flexibility in terms of maturation period?

Let's take [InchDairnie](#) as an example. The Fife distillery offers one of the most expensive schemes out there, with the 2019 release, limited to only 30 casks, set at £8,500 each.

In return, you get a unique seasonal distillate that is one of the building blocks of the InchDairnie single malt, matured in a specific cask (in 2019, it's spring distillate in a first-fill ex-Bourbon barrel; in 2020, summer, in an ex-Rioja wine cask).

You also get to visit the distillery, which isn't open to the public, on the day your personally stencilled cask is filled, along with lunch in the

boardroom, a tour, a nosing/tasting of the various distillates, two 10cl samples a year (one to drink, one to keep) and a small display cabinet in which to house them.

Over the 12-year maturation period of your cask, you can visit the distillery three times with friends (six people in total), see your cask and have lunch. Bottling, with bespoke labels, is included and, once the cask is released and all duty and VAT paid, the InchDairnie team will come to your chosen venue for a personal nosing and tasting of your whisky. You also get to keep your stencilled cask end.

'It's not just a cask purchase,' says InchDairnie MD Ian Palmer. 'It's about building long-term relationships with individuals and small groups of people. It's all about building our brand through working with individuals who are enthusiastic, and we want to share that with people.' InchDairnie is only one example of the ways in which distilleries are tailoring these schemes to the wishes of individuals. The purchasers of 100 of the first casks [filled by Holyrood distillery in Edinburgh](#) can tweak barley roasting times, yeast, 'distillation approach' and cask type following a 'flavour consultation' with head distiller Jack Mayo and co-founder David Robertson.

The scheme offered by [Borders](#) distillery is at the less expensive end of the spectrum (£1,995 initial outlay), but purchasers still get to choose from five cask types (first-fill Bourbon, refill Bourbon, rye, European wine, rum) and can specify a fill date, as long as it's not a Sunday. They also get to track the maturation of their cask via a smartphone app, can visit it annually, and receive six free distillery tour tickets.

Meanwhile, [Isle of Arran Distillers'](#) new [Lagg](#) distillery offers membership of the Lagg Cask Society with an initial cost of £6,000 per cask, but also offers a bottle drawn from Lagg's first cask, invitation to the annual Lagg Cask Society Day, overnight stay with dinner at the Lagg Hotel, a place on the distillery Wall of Fame, free distillery tours with 10% discount off whisky purchases, and a golf pass.

The message is to look beyond the headline price to consider additional benefits, extra costs and to pick apart the detail of those inevitable Ts & Cs.

'Be very clear as to why you are buying the cask,' says Isle of Arran Distillers MD [Euan Mitchell](#). 'If it is a financial investment, be very aware that whisky values can go down as well as up.'

'Also, a barrel of whisky will normally provide over 200 bottles after 10 years' maturation – what is your plan for the stock? Be very aware of the duty and VAT implications of the cask purchase as well – the initial purchase price is just part of the equation.'

As cask purchases become more popular and increasingly diverse, Ian Palmer believes a little more transparency wouldn't go amiss. 'Owning a cask is a great experience for the enthusiast and I don't want to see that shut down,' he says.

'But it would be good to have some industry-wide guidance to make sure that's all kept right – just a little bit of clarity.' For instance, he points out, the whisky drawn from a cask is strictly for the purchaser's personal use, or gifting; you can't sell it on. But if someone makes multiple cask purchases, how realistic is that?

'Do your due diligence,' adds [John Fordyce](#), director and co-founder, Borders distillery. 'I know it's a fun purchase, but it's a fun purchase that has to be taken seriously. The compliance requirements are strict, so you want to approach it in a sensible and serious fashion.'

SELECTED CASK PURCHASE SCHEMES

This is a simplified guide to some of the cask purchase schemes on offer. Contact the distillery and visit its website for further details, including those vital terms and conditions.

Estimated final bottle prices have been calculated using today's UK rates of excise duty – £28.74 per litre of pure alcohol, or £9.24 per 70cl bottle at 46% abv – but this is likely to be materially higher in, say, 10 years' time. Also included is UK VAT at 20%. Overseas purchases will incur local tax liabilities instead. You may also have to pay extra for shipping.

ARDNAMURCHAN PRIVATE CASKS

A 'small number' of casks are released each year on a first come, first served basis. These include peated or unpeated spirit filled into ex-Bourbon barrels (190 litres); American or Spanish oak ex-Sherry hogsheads (250l); or American or Spanish oak ex-Sherry butts (500l). Initial purchase price: £2,400-6,600, including 10 years' storage/insurance

Bottling cost included?: Yes

Can you visit your cask?: Yes, by prior arrangement

Samples available?: Yes, additional fee

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv): £22.50-25.00

BORDERS PRIVATE WHISKY CASKS – 1837

The Borders is the first whisky distillery to open in the Scottish Borders since 1837 – hence the scheme's name, and the release of 1,837 casks for private purchase.

Five cask types – first-fill Bourbon, refill Bourbon, rye, European wine, rum – are available, along with the option to specify filling date (Sundays excluded).

Initial purchase price: £1,995, including 10 years' storage/insurance

Bottling cost included?: Yes

Can you visit your cask?: Yes, by prior arrangement

Samples available?: Yes, additional fee

Other benefits?: Yearly update via 1837 app; six free distillery tour tickets per year; exclusive merchandise

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv): £19-20

GLASGOW DISTILLERY CASK CLUB

Glasgow offers three distillate types – unpeated, unpeated triple-distilled and peated – in 200-litre ex-Bourbon casks.

Initial purchase price: £3,125-3,750, including five years' storage/insurance

Bottling cost included?: No

Can you visit your cask?: Yes, by prior arrangement

Samples available?: Yes

Other benefits?: Cask ownership certificate; distillery visits, tastings and tours on request

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv; excludes bottling): £24.50-27.15

INCHDAIRNIE CASK OWNER'S CLUB

The Fife distillery releases only 30 casks a year for private sales and specifies a minimum 12 years' maturation, but includes a package of additional benefits in the deal.

Each year focuses on a different seasonal distillate and cask type, as follows:

- 2019: Spring distillate, first-fill Bourbon barrel (200 litres)
- 2020: Summer distillate, Rioja wine cask (225 litres)
- 2021: Autumn distillate, Tuscan wine cask (225 litres)
- 2022: Winter distillate, first-fill oloroso Sherry cask (225 litres)
- 2023: Kinglassie peated malt, first-fill Bourbon barrel (200 litres)

Initial purchase price: £8,500, including 12 years' storage/insurance

Bottling cost included?: Yes

Can you visit your cask?: Yes

Samples available?: Yes, 2x10cl/year included plus display cabinet

Other benefits: See cask filled at distillery, including tour, tasting, lunch; further distillery visits/lunch with group of friends; final tasting at venue of your choice; cask-end stencil

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv): £41-44

LAGG CASK SOCIETY

Isle of Arran Distillers will only release 700 casks of peated spirit for private purchase from its newly opened distillery at Lagg, in the south of the island, during the first 10 years of its operation.

Initial purchase price: £6,000, including minimum 10 years' storage/insurance

Bottling cost included?: No

Can you visit your cask?: Yes, by prior arrangement

Samples available?: Yes, 50cl per year, additional fee

Other benefits: Bottle drawn from Cask No 1; invitation to annual Lagg Cask Society Day; overnight stay with dinner at Lagg Hotel; name on distillery Wall of Fame; free distillery tours; 10% discount on whisky purchases; Arran Golf Pass

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv): £36.80

LINDORES ABBEY CASK OWNERSHIP

[Lindores Abbey](#) offers a wide array of cask types, from smaller firkins and quarter-casks up to Sherry butts and Port pipes. There are also two payment options, including one with a reduced one-off payment where Lindores retains two-thirds of the whisky.

Initial purchase price: From £1,100, excluding warehousing costs

Bottling cost included?: No

Can you visit your cask?: Yes

Samples available?: Yes, on VIP access days

Other benefits: Certificate of ownership; name on distillery wall plaque; visit distillery to fill cask and have lunch; annual visit on VIP access days; advance notification of special bottlings; exclusive events

Estimated total cost (70cl, cask strength): £38.60

NCN'EAN EARLY CASK OFFER

West coast distillery [Ncn'ean](#) is offering only 60 of its early casks for purchase, with the option of ex-Bourbon or STR (shaved, toasted, recharred) ex-wine casks.

While five years' maturation is included in the basic package, this can be extended to 10 years, which involves the creation of a distinctive

distillate with different mashing, yeast and cut points. You can also see your cask filled at the distillery.

Initial purchase price: £3,000-3,900 (five years); £3,500-4,400 (10 years); including storage/insurance

Bottling cost included?: No

Can you visit your cask?: Yes

Samples available?: Yes, 1x10cl sample/year

Other benefits: Name on cask; certificate of ownership; open invitation to visit distillery

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv; after five years): £27-29

RAASAY DISTILLERY CASKS

The island distillery of [Raasay](#) offers two types of cask – a conventional, ex-American whiskey barrel, and [a small, 30-litre ex-Speyside whisky cask](#) yielding about 40 bottles after the minimum legal maturation period of three years. Peated spirit will be available later in 2019.

Initial purchase price: £999 (30-litre casks); £5,000 (ex-American whiskey barrels), including storage/insurance for three and 10 years respectively

Bottling cost included?: No

Can you visit your cask?: Yes, at special events

Samples available?: Yes, at special events

Estimated total cost (70cl, 46% abv): £50 (30-litre cask); £45.50 (barrel)

LAPHROAIG REVEALS 2019 CÀIRDEAS EDITION

14 May 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Laphroaig distillery has revealed its 2019 Càirdeas release, a bottling reserved exclusively for its Friends of Laphroaig collective.



Friendly malt: Laphroaig Càirdeas 2019 is exclusively for the distillery's membership society

Càirdeas Triple Wood Cask Strength is an exclusive bottling launched to celebrate the Friends of Laphroaig, as well as the annual Fèis Ile festival on Islay, which runs this year from 24 May-1 June.

[Laphroaig](#) releases a new Càirdeas bottling – meaning friendship in Gaelic – each year.

The 2019 edition, of which 36,000 bottles have

been produced, has been matured in ex-Bourbon barrels, before maturation in quarter casks and ex-oloroso European oak Sherry casks. Bottled at a cask strength of 51.4% abv without chill filtration, the whisky is said to contain notes of 'rich toffee, dates, maple syrup, praline and crème caramel.

John Campbell, Laphroaig distillery manager, said: 'Our friends are very important to us at Laphroaig.

'It's a polarising whisky, so it means a great deal that our fans remain loyal to our liquid and continue to push for newer expressions. Friends of Laphroaig gives us a great opportunity to engage with our supporters and give back to them with this exclusive Càirdeas whisky.'

Càirdeas 2019 is now exclusively available for Friends of the Laphroaig to purchase online for £77 per 70cl bottle, although several bottles will be available to distillery visitors during Fèis Ile.

The [2017 Càirdeas edition](#) was a 15-year-old matured in first-fill ex-Bourbon casks and bottled at 43% abv.

The [2018 edition](#) was a no-age-statement malt matured in first-fill Bourbon casks before a second maturation in fino Sherry hogsheads.

THE TOP PEATY ISLAY SINGLE MALTS UNDER \$100

<https://distiller.com/lists/the-top-peaty-islay-single-malts-under-100>

Islay (EYE-la) is a true bucket list destination for fans of peaty single malts. But, if you can't make it to the isle in person, you can take a trip to Islay one sip at a time. Just pick up one of our favorite peaty bottles, each available for \$100 or less.

12 - KILCHOMAN 100% ISLAY 8TH EDITION; 86- PEATY

The 100% Islay series from Kilchoman is made using Optic barley harvested on the isle. The peat level here is ~ 20ppm versus the brand's standard 50ppm offerings. Unlike previous editions, this is matured in oloroso sherry butts in addition to ex-bourbon barrels. This no-age statement single malt has no color added and is non-chillfiltered. Bottled at 50% ABV, this is a limited edition release which yielded 12,000 bottles. Kilchoman 100% Islay 8th Edition is available beginning fall 2018.

11 - BOWMORE 15 YEAR; 86 - RICH & FRUITY

Fans of sherried scotch and you wine lovers out there, step right up! Bowmore 15 Year is a whisky aged in a combination of ex-bourbon and

sherry casks, but it's the portion of the whisky that gets aged the final 3 years in 1st fill sherry casks that really give this whisky that deep rich color and fruity taste. Note: Formerly called Bowmore Darkest 15 Year.

10 - LAPHROAIG QUARTER CASK; 87 - OILY & PEATY

Harking back to the days of the 19th century, this bottling takes 5-11 year old aged whisky into smaller casks only 125 liters large (a quarter of a Sherry cask). This was the size that two men could carry to market for sale back in the day. Giving more surface area to the amount of liquid in the barrel brings out more vanilla and oily notes from the wood.

9- ARDBEG AN Oa; 88 - RICH & FULL BODIED

An Oa (pronounced an oh) is a peated Islay single malt comprised of whiskies that were aged in several types of casks of including Pedro Ximenez, virgin oak, and ex-bourbon. These whiskies were then married together in a large French oak vat in Ardbeg's Gathering Room. The whisky is named for the Mull of Oa located on the Oa peninsula. This is the most southwesterly point of Islay. This Ardbeg release marks the first permanent addition to their portfolio in close to ten years. Bottled at 46.6% ABV, this is non chill-filtered. Released September 2017.

8 - LAGAVULIN 9 YEAR (GAME OF THRONES-HOUSE LANNISTER)

88 - OILY

Lagavulin 9 Year House Lannister is one of eight single malts Scotch whiskies made to commemorate the eighth and final season of Game of Thrones. Set to hit shelves in the fall of 2018, this Islay single malt was aged 9 years and bears the sigil for House Lannister--a golden lion.

7 - CAOL ILA DISTILLERS EDITION; 90 - FRUITY & RICH

Not to bore you with the technical data of Moscatel sherry wine, but what is important to note is the taste profile of the wine so you can have an idea of why your beloved Caol Ila is showing you a softer, more delicate side. Moscatel is sweet, honeyed, and often showing tastes of peaches, apricots, and oranges and is rarely bottled on its own.

6 - PORT CHARLOTTE ISLAY BARLEY 2011; 90 - PEATY & RICH

Port Charlotte Islay Barley 2011 is made using barley grown on three Islay farms: Dunlossit, Kilchiaran, and Sunderland. In addition, it is made from two different barley varieties, Oxbridge & Publican. Distilled in 2011, the barley is malted and peated to a level of 40ppm. The single malt matures in a combination of casks: 75% in 1st fill American whiskey casks and 25% in 2nd fill wine casks. Bottled at 50% ABV.

5 - BUNNAHABHAIN CEÒBANACH; 90 - SMOKY & SWEET

The barley used to make Bunnahabhain Scotch has not been peat-dried since 1963 (any effects of peat flavor come from the local water used to make it, which naturally runs through the peat bogs on its journey to the distillery). Ceòbanach, which is Scots Gaelic for "smoky mist" is the first release to be made with Islay-grown, peat-dried barley since the 1960s. Fun fact: the stills used to process it are kept separate from the other stills at Bunnahabhain so as not to affect the other releases. Though without a formal age statement, it is the product of 10 years of work from Master Distiller Ian MacMillan, released un-chill filtered.

4 - PORT CHARLOTTE 10 YEAR; 91 - PEATY & RICH

Port Charlotte 10 Year is a permanent addition to Bruichladdich's portfolio and replaces the multi-vintage Scottish Barley bottling. Made using 100% Scottish barley from the Inverness Shire region. This 10 year old bottling matures in a variety of casks: 65% in 1st fill American whiskey, 10% in 2nd fill American whiskey, and 25% in 2nd fill French wine casks. Port Charlotte bottlings are the heavily peated single malt line distilled at Bruichladdich with the barley peated to 40ppm. Bottled at 50% ABV, it is non-chillfiltered and has no color added. Available beginning May 2018.

3 - LAGAVULIN 16 YEAR; 92 - FULL BODIED & PEATY

Though not officially (read, legally) established until 1816, there are records that date distillation here going back to 1742. Malted barley produced just a hop, skip, and a jump away at neighboring Port Ellen is utilized. Everything is long at this distillery: fermentation, distillation, and maturation. Good things do indeed come to those that wait. Bottled at 43% ABV after 16 years in oak barrels.

2 - ARDBEG UIGEADAIL; 93 - FRUITY & RICH

A dark, mysterious place; or you can say Uigeadail [Oog-a-dal]. Fun to say and even more fun to drink. Made with some young and some very old oloroso sherry aged whisky then blended with Ardbeg 10 year. Bottled at cask strength.

1 - LAPHROAIG 10 YEAR; 96 - PEATY & VANILLA

Far from a shrinking violet, Laphroaig 10 Year is loud and proud, get used to it. They have managed to produce a whisky showcasing the sights and aromas of the island. The peat, burned to dry the malt, is abundantly clear as is the seaweed found lapping the shores just steps from the distillery. That sweet salty sea air found on Islay is woven throughout their whiskies. NOTE: This is sold at 40% abv or 43% abv depending on your market.

OUR FAVORITE WHISKEYS AGED IN RED WINE BARRELS

Whiskey is often aged in used wine barrels, but usually that wine is sherry. But red wine barrels are quickly becoming a new favorite to mature whiskey in, at least in part. Here are a few to check out!

JUN 15, 2019

12 - DALMORE CIGAR MALT RESERVE; FRUITY & SWEET

The Dalmore Cigar Malt Reserve is an aromatic, full-bodied expression intended to be paired with fine cigars. It is produced at the centuries old Dalmore Distillery located on the northern shores of the Firth of Cromarty, deep in the Scottish Highlands. Dalmore Cigar Malt Reserve is a beautiful marriage of single malt stocks aged in American white oak ex-bourbon casks, 30 year old Matusalem oloroso sherry butts and premier cru Cabernet Sauvignon wine barrique before being bottled at 88 proof.

11 - GLENFIDDICH AGE OF DISCOVERY RED WINE CASK 19 YEAR; FRUITY & RICH

This travel retail exclusive is the third entry in Glenfiddich's Age of Discovery line, celebrating famous routes and explorers. Here it's the journey of the HMS Beagle that is being saluted, and its most famous passenger, Charles Darwin. The single malt spends a portion of its time maturing in red wine barrels from South America.

10 - LONGROW RED 11 YEAR PINOT NOIR CASK MATURED

Longrow Red is a limited edition released annually with a different red wine cask finish. Pinot Noir Cask Matured was first matured in ex-bourbon for 8 years and then spent its final 3 years aging in refill pinot noir barriques. Bottled at 53.1% ABV.

9 - GREEN SPOT CHATEAU MONTELENA SINGLE POT STILL; FRUITY & TART

This bottling marks the second release in the Wine Geese series following their Château Léoville Barton bottling which was released in 2015. This single pot still whiskey matures initially in ex-bourbon and sherry casks. The whiskey finishes its maturation in former zinfandel wine barrels from Chateau Montelena located in Napa Valley, California. This whiskey is non chill-filtered and bottled at 46% ABV.

8 - WAYNE GRETZKY NO. 99 RED CASK WHISKY; FRUITY & RICH

The Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery has recently drafted distilling to its lineup. The first release is this small batch Canadian whisky blended by Master Distiller, Joshua Beach. Aged rye, malted rye and corn whiskies were individually mashed, fermented and distilled, then brought in house to be finished in the wineries red wine casks. Availability limited to Canada and, as of February 2018, the Chicago, Illinois area and Missouri.

7 - BUNNAHABHAIN 2008 MÒINE BORDEAUX RED WINE CASK MATURED; FULL BODIED & RICH

Bunnahabhain 2008 Mòine Bordeaux Red Wine Cask Matured is was fully matured in Bordeaux red wine casks rather than just being finished in them. The single malt was aged for nearly 10 years before bottling in 2018. Mòine is Scots Gaelic for "peated" so expect this to be smokier than the brand's standard offerings. Bottled at a cask strength of 58.1% ABV without added color or chill-filtration.

6 - COTSWOLDS SINGLE MALT; SWEET

Not only is this the first single malt from the Cotswolds Distillery, it is the first one from the Cotswolds area in south central England. It is made from 100% floor-malted barley which also hails from the Cotswolds. The variety and farm it comes from is listed on the label. The whisky is distilled in a pair of pot-stills named Mary and Janis. It is aged just over three years in first-fill Kentucky ex-bourbon barrels and reconditioned American oak red wine barrels which have been shaved, toasted, and re-charred. No color added and un-chillfiltered. Bottled at 46% ABV.

5 - BOWMORE 26 YEAR WINE MATURED; RICH & FULL BODIED

Released as part of Bowmore's Vintner's Trilogy, this 26 year-old single malt aged in Bowmore's No. 1 Vaults in two types of barrels. For the first 13 years, it matured in ex-bourbon barrels. The whisky then transferred to former wine barriques for the last 13 years. Bottled at a cask-strength of 48.7% ABV, it is available beginning October 2017.

4 - YELLOWSTONE KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON FINISHED in #3 CHAR WINE CASKS (2018 LIMITED EDITION); VANILLA & SWEET

This limited edition release is made from Kentucky straight bourbon ranging from 4-12 years of age. Included in the bottling is Limestone Branch Distillery's own distillate made with heirloom white corn. The bourbon initially ages in new, charred oak barrels and is then transferred to char #3 wine casks for finishing. Bottled at 101 proof, there were 12,000 bottles produced. Available beginning October 2018.

3 - STARWARD NOVA SINGLE MALT

Starward Nova is a single malt made from 100% Australian malted barley. It fully matures in uncharred wine barrels which held Australian

wines such as shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, and pinot noir. As of May 2019, this product is now available in the US.

2 - BARDSTOWN BOURBON COMPANY PHIFER PAVITT RESERVE BOURBON; RICH & FULL BODIED

This Phifer Pavitt Reserve Bourbon is the first release for Bardstown Bourbon Company (BBCo) under the brand's Collaborative Series. They partnered with Napa Valley's Phifer Pavitt Winery who supplied the cabernet sauvignon wine barrels for the bourbon to finish its aging in. BBCo took 9 year-old Tennessee straight bourbon and aged the whisky in these French oak wine barrels for 19 months further. This limited edition release is available spring 2019.

1 - JEFFERSON'S RESERVE PRITCHARD HILL CABERNET CASK FINISH Jefferson's Reserve Pritchard Hill Cabernet Cask Finish Bourbon is aged initially in new American oak barrels. It then finishes its maturation in French oak casks from Napa Valley's Chappellet Winery previously used its renowned cabernet sauvignon wine. The bourbon is bottled at 45.1% ABV.

A rant: Is this whisky worth it?

<https://www.whiskyandwisdom.com/is-this-whisky-worth-it/>

Drinkers today have many tools and resources at their disposal to both share and advance their knowledge of whisky. Social media has its many pros and cons, but one of the pros is that, courtesy of Twitter or Facebook, you can ask a question about a whisky and, within minutes, you'll have people from around the globe giving answers and opinions. Many such questions and forums are productive. For example, for those needing to confirm a piece of trivia, you can ask "How many distilleries still use traditional wormtubs?" and the whisky community will come to your rescue with the necessary answer. Or you can ask, "What are the dates for next year's Feis Ile?" and your diary will quickly know the score. However, not all questions and discussions advance the cause....

A discussion that frequently pops up in whisky circles is the relative cost and "worth" of a particular bottling. A new release might appear on the market, or a whisky will be offered "on special" at some outlet, and some members of the whisky community instantly jump online and ask, "Is it worth it?" It's something that's a regular feature on several whisky Facebook groups and, to be honest, it's a tired and increasingly frustrating thing to observe.

To put this in context for you: Assume a distillery, let's call it *Glen Bagpipe*, puts out a new whisky called *Ruanishla*, which is gaelic for "cunning marketing ploy". It doesn't have an age statement, and it's being retailed at \$119. You'll instantly see a pic of it on the Facebook whisky group with the inevitable question from some punter asking, "Should I buy this?" or "Is it worth it?". The replies that then get posted will follow an inevitable and familiar pattern: (i) Relative price comparisons will be made to Glen Bagpipe's 10yo expression which is cheaper at \$99; (ii) Someone will point out that *Ruanishla* is only £45 in the UK, bitch about our local taxes, and then ask what charges they'll be hit with by Customs if they import it themselves from overseas; (iii) Someone else will chime in with a lament that Glen Bagpipe used to cost only \$55 back in 2002 when the barley used to be hand-massaged daily and the warehousemen used to read Robert Burns' poems aloud to the casks as they matured in the warehouse. And, finally, (iv) some Helpful Henry will state that they've never actually tried Glen Bagpipe, but they reckon Glen Sporrán "tastes really smooth" and feel they've advanced the conversation. And, sadly, everyone will miss the point. It *should* go without saying, but *worth* is a subjective principle. The whisky may cost \$119, but it will be worth *more* than that to an avid collector of Glen Bagpipe. And it will be worth *less* than that to someone who's never enjoyed Glen Bagpipe's other releases and thus has a negative opinion of the brand. Similarly, \$119 may be a large amount of money and an expensive purchase to one person, yet it might be loose change to another. Discussing the *worth* of a whisky is a meaningless exercise, and the original poster will be left with a minefield of ultimately unhelpful responses to try and navigate through. So let's bring it back to flavour and start asking the right questions. For example, is it a good example of Glen Bagpipe and does it reflect the house style? Does *Ruanishla* taste similar to the 10yo or is it a completely different taste experience? Have they used different casks or a different finishing regime? Has it been bottled at a different ABV and thus has a different texture and mouthfeel? Is it a limited edition release or has it now joined the core-range in the portfolio? *These* are the questions that define the whisky and give the consumer meaningful information to assist in deciding whether or not to buy it. There is so much drivel and nonsense said about whisky these days, it seems many people have forgotten to simply drink it and enjoy it.

Now, some readers will have got to this point and will be indignantly thinking, "But surely one's enjoyment or assessment of a whisky is a function of how much they paid for it?" If you thought the whisky was good value, is that not an assessment of its *worth*? You'll see this issue play out with comments made along the lines of, "I thought this whisky was good for \$100 but I wouldn't pay \$200 for it." Suddenly, the whisky's flavour is being pinned to its price tag. Which, if you think about it, is an odd concept. Your tastebuds either enjoyed the whisky or they didn't. How can a whisky be good and taste nice at one price point, but suddenly no longer taste nice at a different price point? Again, the argument has resolved back to the matter of *worth* which, as we've already discussed, will be different for everyone.

Equating a whisky's quality to its price tag is a slippery slope, and we'll save that rant for another day. For now, suffice it to say that people should understand and appreciate that an \$800 whisky isn't necessarily going to taste ten times better than an \$80 whisky. The law of diminishing returns kicks in pretty quickly with whisky.

So if you can't make decisions for yourself and feel the need to jump online and ask the whisky community whether or not you should buy a particular bottle of whisky, do yourself a favour and ask the right question(s) to begin with. You'll find it's worth it.

Cheers,
AD

THE WHISKY WORLD IS CHANGING

29 May 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)

My life isn't all swish launches and whisky festivals, you know. There's a business to consider, which is how I ended up being invited to Edinburgh for the Scotch Whisky Association's (SWA) annual Members Day. The theme this year was 'The Changing World of Whisky'. As the SWA's chief executive [Karen Betts](#) said in her keynote address, 'Scotch whisky is the world's number one internationally traded spirit, and more Scotch is enjoyed worldwide than American, Irish and Canadian whiskies combined.' But that world is changing rapidly. Let's put this in some sort of context. In 1870, the world of aged spirits had four major players: Cognac, and Irish, Scotch and American whiskies. By 1900, the global battle was between the last three. By 1921, only Scotch was left and it remained that way for the rest of the century. Okay, American whiskey came back post-war, but never forget that Canadian whisky still outsold Bourbon in the United States until the end of the century.



Top dram: Will Scotch continue to be the most popular whisky in the future?

Since then, the whisky world has changed utterly. It's worth remembering that Japan only started to export in any volume in 2000. At that point there were three whiskey distilleries in Ireland. Now there are 35, while there are 20 in England and... well, I could go on. All of that has happened in the last decade. The century of Scotch is over, as is its hegemony. To paraphrase Judy Garland: 'Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore' (though we perhaps should be aware of what is going on there).

As the SWA's chairman Peter Gordon said in his opening remarks, 'Whisky across the world has seen an increase in activity, but Scotch's share has fallen... We have real and capable competitors across the world, and while I remain optimistic, there are headwinds to overcome.'

His cautious warning underpinned Betts' vision of the state of Scotch in 2050, and the multifarious ways in which the SWA would be involved (something which I think isn't as well-publicised as it should be): [climate change](#) and the aim for the industry to be carbon neutral, free trade, training and skills, taxation, [gender balance](#) and diversity, packaging, transportation, farming, social responsibility and... yes... [Brexit](#), which might just be sorted by then. Her belief is that 'Scotch will remain the world's pre-eminent whisky... its global competitors... will have done their best to knock us off our perch in the intervening years. But they will not have succeeded. Because Scotch whisky's consistency, quality, diversity and authenticity, alongside its heritage and its stories, will win the day.'



Industry rebirth: New Irish whiskey distillers, such as Killowen, are opening

There is no reason to doubt this, but without wishing to diminish the importance of all of the elements in Betts' perceptive analysis, for any of it to happen depends on the quality of the spirit and the ability of the industry to change with the times.

Whisky is a long-term industry where innovation, by necessity, takes time. Scotch, however, is having to learn how to be nimble and meet challenges it has never encountered before.

'Our industry is good at change,' Betts added, 'and remarkably resilient in finding balance between continuity and change... By 2050 we will have innovated in our products, so too will we have innovated in the way that we make Scotch.'

This is no time for complacency and seeking comfort in the mistaken belief that just because Scotch is the biggest player it is automatically the best. It's pretty easy to be the biggest and best in a field of one. Those days have gone.

For Scotch to retain its pre-eminent position it is important to understand the difference between pride and arrogance. The SWA has realised this; what about all of its members?



Star spirit: Japanese whisky continues to enjoy a surge in popularity

Delivering Betts' vision will necessitate hard work and open minds. It will mean all of the industry understanding that Scotch's competitors are every bit as obsessive about quality as it is. It involves tasting these new rivals and discovering why a new consumer might be excited by the [new wave of Irish](#), Danish, Aussie or American whiskies. Whether their industries are smaller than Scotch is immaterial. How good is the juice,

and what can Scotch do to compete, without losing its own identity? Those who don't see the need for change are the ones who will suffer. As the world of whisky evolves so too will people's idea of what whisky is in terms of flavour, production, sustainability, occasion and method of consumption. That will mean that definitions will inevitably have to shift, another facet of Betts' innovations in the way in which Scotch is made. The arrival of a multiplicity of new, small, independent distillers also means that the SWA itself will have to change in order to accommodate their thinking, and understand their challenges – and I'd argue that it is best for all Scotch firms to be inside the tent (as the saying goes). As Betts said, '2050 isn't far away.'

SCOTCH FERMENTATION: HOW FLAVOR IS REALLY BUILT

by [Thijs Klaverstijn](#) - June 12, 2019

There's always much ado about the ingredients of Scotch whisky. In whisky marketing, barley is often emphasized. Brands remind us of this core element with sweeping shots of fields of golden barley, swaying in the wind. It makes for beautiful imagery, as do shots of *burns* (stream or small river) meandering their way through the Scottish countryside. Indeed, water is another important ingredient of whisky, and all too eagerly talked about by distilleries as a way to highlight their uniqueness.

That's not to say water and barley are not important. They have to be, as whisky essentially only consists of three ingredients. It is that third ingredient however, that rarely gets the attention it deserves: yeast. Yeast is one of the core catalysts in the creation of flavor. The fermentation stage of the whisky production process is the foundation upon which all else is built.



Cardhu Distillery / Photo Credit: Cardhu

THE BASICS

Fermentation is used in the creation of all of your favorite drinks, from beer and wine, all the way to brandy, tequila, and rum. Simply put, fermentation is the stage in spirit production where alcohol is created. Before fermentation, what whisky distilleries basically do is create an extremely sugary, grainy water, which they call wort. Yeast is then added to the wort, in order to convert fermentable sugars into alcohol. Distilleries all have their own fermentation regime. Some might opt for a short fermenting period, as alcohol production dramatically declines after about 48 hours, when most of the yeast dies out. What you're left with is basically a strong beer (roughly 7 or 8 percent alcohol), without the hops. Others will opt for a longer fermentation, sometimes over a hundred hours. Not much alcohol is produced in those latter stages, but new heights of aromatic complexity can be reached.

WOOD OR STEEL

Wooden washbacks—the vessels in which fermentation takes place—made from Oregon pine not only look impressive, but they also ooze tradition and alter the entire look of a tun room. Steel washbacks just don't have the same transformative visual effect. Ultimately, though, the difference in appearance between the two types is not very significant.



What is significant is the difference between fermentation in wood or steel. Wooden washbacks have an insulating quality, protecting the fermentation from the cold, which sometimes comes in handy in winter. The most important difference between the two is this: steel is more easily cleaned and requires less maintenance, while wood harbors certain bacteria that have their own profound influence on flavor creation. In the end it is not so much a question of which type of washback is better; it is a matter of which a distiller prefers.

HOW FLAVOR IS CREATED

Important chunks of flavor in the soon-to-be-whisky are created during fermentation. There are lots of variables at play here, all with a potentially major impact on the final flavor profile of the whisky. The microclimate inside the distillery, the temperature of the fermentation, the amount and type of yeast used, the length of the fermentation; they all affect the end result.

While fermentation is in essence all about alcohol creation, an important byproduct is the formation of flavor compounds. Yeast basically eats the sugars that are part of the wort, breaking them down into alcohol and carbon dioxide. The yeast then transforms some of the alcohol into flavor compounds, like esters, renowned for contributing fruitiness.



Steel Washbacks at Tomatin / Photo Credit: Thijs Klaverstijn

In the latter stages of fermentation, when the yeast has quieted down, lactic acid bacteria become active. The chemical reactions ignited by these bacteria will lead to the creation of more esters, acids and long-chain alcohols. They are the compounds that will mostly survive the ensuing distillation, and interact with each other, the air and the wood once the new make spirit is filled into barrels.

NAME OF THE GAME

Fermentation is about so much more than creating alcohol. Obviously, without alcohol, there is no whisky. However, without all those flavor compounds generated during this important part of whisky production, you'd end up with an incredibly bland and unrecognizable product. Brands might not talk about it in their marketing, but distillers are acutely aware of the value of fermentation. When it comes to scotch fermentation, creating complexity is the name of the game.



The Mash Tun Bar at Blair Athol / Photo Credit: Blair Athol

Clynelish visitor centre upgrade gets green light

18th June, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Diageo has been granted planning permission to renovate the Clynelish Distillery visitor experience as part of its £150 million (US\$215m) investment in Scotch whisky tourism.



An artist's impression of the Clynelish Distillery visitor centre
In April this year, Johnnie Walker maker Diageo [lodged planning applications](#) to "transform" the visitor experiences at Cardhu and Clynelish.

Highland Council granted planning permission for the Clynelish site yesterday (17 June). Work will begin on the expansion in the "coming weeks".

The plans include a full upgrade of the distillery visitor experience with a new upper floor to tell the Clynelish story, as well as a bar and tasting area overlooking the Sutherland coast. The area surrounding the distillery will also benefit from enhanced landscaping.

Jacqueline James-Bow, Clynelish Distillery brand home manager, said: "This announcement is very exciting and we want to thank the Highland Council and all our neighbours for their continued support.

"This is an important step forward on our journey to transform the Clynelish visitor experience and everyone involved is very much looking forward to work getting underway."

The UK drinks group [announced its £150m investment plans last April](#).

Phased over three years, the funds will be used to build a new visitor attraction for Johnnie Walker in Edinburgh, and upgrade Diageo's 12 distillery visitor centres in Scotland.

Four distilleries – Cardhu, Clynelish, Glenkinchie and Caol Ila – will be "linked directly" to the Johnnie Walker venue in Edinburgh.

In April this year, Diageo was granted planning permission to [renovate Caol Ila's visitor centre](#).

The group [filed a planning application to transform 146 Princes Street in Edinburgh](#) into a seven-storey visitor centre for Johnnie Walker in February this year.

Clynelish Distillery shares its location with the Brora Distillery, which closed in 1983. Work has already begun to bring Brora back into production as part of Diageo's [separate £35m investment](#) that will also revive distilling at the Port Ellen Distillery on Islay.

GLENFIDDICH REVAMP TO 'ENTICE' NEW DRINKERS

18 June 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Glenfiddich has redesigned and renamed its core range of single malts in an effort to 'entice' new drinkers to Scotch whisky.



Shelf appeal: The newly-named Glenfiddich malts are designed to entice new whisky drinkers

The Speyside distillery's 12- and 15-year-old whiskies will be renamed 'Our Original Twelve' and 'Our Solera Fifteen', in what brand owner [William Grant & Sons](#) said is a nod to its original expression, and 'innovative' solera process.

The range has also been given a new look with a more prominent age statement and chiselled 'V' on the bottle, said to reflect Speyside's 'Valley of the Deer'.

The Scotch producer claimed its new bottle design for [Glenfiddich](#) 'creates standout', and will 'appeal to current drinkers as well as entice those around the world who are new to the brand and category'.

Claudia Falcone, Glenfiddich global brand director, said: 'We wanted to emphasise Glenfiddich's special provenance and unique heritage with this stylish new design, drawing cues from the special place where our liquid is produced.'

Glenfiddich's new bottles will be introduced to the UK and US from June 2019, with the new-look 'Small Batch 18 Year Old' released in 2020.

Its makeover follows that of [The Glenlivet](#), which [unveiled its own 'bold' redesign last month](#) to 'embrace the next generation of single malt drinkers'.

Glenfiddich and The Glenlivet are the world's two [biggest-selling Scotch single malt whiskies](#).

WHISKY'S IDENTITY LIES IN THE LANDSCAPE

19 June 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)

Maybe he was lost this time; perhaps he knew a shortcut he'd not told us about. I started to suspect the former. After all, he was new to this job and hadn't driven in this part of the world before, so it only seemed fair to give some advice – which he declined to take. His body language was sufficient in way of reply: 'I'm the driver,' it said. 'Let me do my job ferrying you from one distillery to the next. You just sit there.'



Old Man of Storr: Skye's rugged landscape is intrinsically linked to its whisky

We'd come in from the south the day before, the rain clouds seemingly unable to clear in the hills above Strome Ferry, leaving the west in sunshine. Down the hill to Auchtertyre, we went over the bridge and followed the long drag into [Skye's](#) once-molten heart. The talk of green grassiness, which had dominated the morning, was receding. This was a place of coast and ridge, whose roads had come to a sometimes awkward compromise with the sea, mountains and peat bog. Logic suggested that if we'd passed the turning to [Talisker](#) the previous night, we should retrace our route; but instead he headed north and west, towards Dunvegan. Isolated farmhouses and bed and breakfasts, rusted red roofs, and signs for crafts, and courses. Skye is nothing if not a place with enterprising souls.

To the north a sheer sea cliff, headlands and on the horizon, the Harris hills. Through Treaslane we went, and into Edinbane, then south to Heribost and around Loch Caroy. Steep valleys and encroaching moor, lambs clinging close to their mothers, a hen harrier, fishing boats in the loch, and white horses flicking off the water as the wind picked up.



Striking a balance: Can whisky bottles adequately reflect the spirit's origins?

Is it possible to capture all of that in a bottle? Can you do it by colour coding and [branding](#), font and followers, recipes and codes? Is Skye too hard to include, is it irrelevant to a world of price points, look and logos? There is a balance to be struck, I know. The [outside of the bottle matters](#), the cues and cunningly-coded signifiers are essential for success. But there is more to the whisky than the outside of the bottle.

There is always more. It is why some of us obsess about it. I look at the place names and wonder about Ose and Bracadale, Struan and Coillre. I remember asking Cailean MacLean once if anyone could really understand Skye unless they had Gaelic. He paused and said no, then told me the story behind the name of the peak opposite. Maybe it is never able to be fully known, but it shouldn't stop us trying.

There are clues in the names and the landscape, the stories, songs and dreams of the poets, singers and people, just as there are clues in the aromas and tastes which come in the glass. Comprehension comes not just from books but from the ground underfoot, or when the wind is on your face. You need to get out there and look at the landscape, rather than screens.



Faraway place: Not everyone can make the journey to Talisker distillery

We got to Talisker eventually and, inhaling when I stepped out of the bus, I remembered what my nephew had said to me the week before; of

how, when he'd stood here for the first time in eight years, the smell of the smoky mash and spirit immediately brought all the memories of our trip there back.

How, though, can you translate all of this sense of space, seaweed, gabbro, heather and fire that this place invests into the glass, unless you go there? Very few will be able to make that trip, which makes understanding the connections between the outside and the inside, the place and the distillery, the culture and the liquid inside the bottle, so vital. Fail to do that and you have nothing but a cipher. It might work for some spirits but not, I'd argue, for single malt. You need the story, the truth, the place. It all must be balanced.

Later, I looked at the map. It turned out he'd taken a long loop rather than the slightly more direct route. Still, what would have been missed if we'd gone that way? The detour is often a good thing. It helps to show you what is on the inside.

NEW SCOTCH RULES AIM TO ADD 'FLEXIBILITY'

14 June 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

EXCLUSIVE: Scotch whisky producers are now free to use a wider variety of casks for maturation, including ex-Tequila and Calvados casks, following a change to the law.



New rules: The regulation change will free distillers to use a broad range of casks

The amendment to the Scotch Whisky Technical File, revealed exclusively to [Scotchwhisky.com](#) by the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), gives specific guidance on which casks can be used to mature or 'finish' Scotch whisky, with new text as follows:

'The spirit must be matured in new oak casks and/or in oak casks which have only been used to mature wine (still or fortified) and/or beer/ale and/or spirits with the exception of:

- wine, beer/ale or spirits produced from, or made with, stone fruits
- beer/ale to which fruit, flavouring or sweetening has been added after fermentation
- spirits to which fruit, flavouring or sweetening has been added after distillation

and where such previous maturation is part of the traditional processes for those wines, beers/ales or spirits.

Regardless of the type of cask used, the resulting product must have the traditional colour, taste and aroma characteristics of Scotch Whisky.'

The amendment has been lodged with the European Commission by the UK's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) following public consultation, and is now law.

In practice, the new rules mean that distillers can now mature Scotch whisky in a much wider variety of casks, including those previously used to age agave spirits (including Tequila and mezcal), Calvados, barrel-aged cachaça, shochu and baijiu, as well as some other fruit spirits.

It had been thought that the changes would open up the possibility of maturing Scotch in casks previously used for barrel-aged gin, but the SWA has since clarified that gin would be excluded since barrel maturation is not a 'traditional' part of its production process.

The rules also do not allow the use of ex-cider casks, despite the launch of [a cider cask-finished single malt](#) by Speyside single malt [Glen Moray](#) in October last year.

Previously, the rules did not forbid the use of specific casks, but the SWA's legal team advised distillers to use casks with 'sufficient

evidence of traditional use' within the industry – such as ex-Sherry and ex-Bourbon casks.

In January 2018, a report by *The Wall Street Journal* claimed that [Diageo](#), the world's biggest Scotch whisky producer, [had formed a 'secret task force'](#) to explore possible changes to Scotch's strict production rules, including 'finishing' Scotch whisky in casks previously used to mature Don Julio Tequila, which the company owns. At the time, the plans were said to have been rebuffed by the SWA.

Most distillers remain supportive of Scotch whisky's strict production regulations, but some have privately expressed concerns recently that the tight rules governing cask maturation in particular might be putting Scotch at a commercial disadvantage to rival whisky categories.

'This amendment provides clarity and some additional flexibility on the range of casks in which Scotch whisky can be matured,' said Karen Betts, SWA chief executive.

'The change is consistent with Scotch whisky's heritage and traditions, and strengthens our foundations into the future.'

SWA director of legal affairs Alan Park added: 'A wide range of wine, beer and spirit casks have been used over the years to mature Scotch whisky, and clarity about what is allowed under the law should be provided in the Scotch Whisky Technical File.

'The amendment is consistent with the continued use of all those categories of casks where there is evidence of longstanding traditional use in the industry.

'But it will also create more flexibility, particularly in the range of spirits casks which can be used, subject to a number of safeguards which protect the reputation of Scotch whisky.'

SCOTCH WHISKY'S NEW RULES EXPLAINED

19 June 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

The decision to expand the range of casks used to mature Scotch whisky has been broadly welcomed by distillers, but there's plenty of devil in the detail. Richard Woodard reports.



New wood: But the new regulations offer distillers a qualified level of freedom

So strict are the rules governing the production of Scotch whisky that, when any kind of change comes, it attracts lots of attention and generates plenty of debate.

That's been the case since [Scotchwhisky.com](#) [exclusively revealed the news](#) of the expansion of the range of casks permitted to be used to mature Scotch, announced last week by the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA). In the days since the story broke, the reaction from the industry has been broadly positive.

'We strongly support the industry's decision to amend the Technical File,' says Jean-Christophe Coutures, chairman and CEO of [Chivas Brothers](#), the French-owned second-largest player in Scotch, behind [Diageo](#).

'This is a positive step which will allow producers to craft quality innovations which respond to consumer demand for new expressions of Scotch whisky, whilst respecting the long and rich traditions of the category.'

[Euan Mitchell](#), MD of [Isle of Arran Distillers](#), which recently opened [its new distillery at Lagg](#), agrees. 'In general I think this will be good for Scotch whisky as innovation can only help bring consumers to the category,' he says. 'We were in danger of being seen as old-fashioned by the rest of the whisky sector and spirits in general.'

The amendment is of obvious benefit to those pursuing experimental projects and techniques, such as [Whyte & Mackay's](#) (W&M) recently announced experimental arm, called [The Whisky Works](#).



Good news: Isle of Arran's Euan Mitchell is broadly supportive of the move

W&M whisky maker [Gregg Glass](#) says: 'For me, anything that opens up the possibilities for innovation and experimentation is a positive thing and, from my experience, some of these cask types have been used or experimented on in the past, and there's been some really interesting results.'

Also welcoming the decision, [Bruichladdich](#) communications manager Christy McFarlane says: 'The move shows a willingness to embrace change and evolve current legislation in a practical, non-disruptive manner while opening avenues for innovation.'

'We can only hope that this most recent development is a sign of progress which will influence other, more restricted areas of Scotch whisky regulation, particularly those we believe are not in the best interests of the consumer.'

For the moment, the changes are restricted to cask type, with the clarification announced by the SWA partly prompted by the sheer number of enquiries from distillers as to whether certain casks were permitted or not.

'I think the changes go far enough,' says Mitchell. 'We don't want to open the floodgates and sacrifice our history for short-term gains in popularity. The previous rules had a number of loopholes (yes to Australian Shiraz casks, but no to Calvados?), and these have been closed without pushing the door open too far.'



Great experimenter: Bruichladdich will keep pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable

'No sign of the Irn Bru finish – for now ... There will be some terrible examples of new cask finishes for sure, but it could also open a lot of new hearts and minds to Scotch.'

How will distillers respond in the short term? Arran has single malt maturing in ex-Calvados casks, while Coutures says Chivas has been 'experimenting with different finishes and flavours, and... targeting new drinking occasions'. There are already reports from Mexico of a new [Buchanan's](#) blended whisky finished in Don Julio Tequila casks, produced by Diageo, which owns both brands.

Meanwhile, McFarlane says: 'Since our renaissance, we've experimented with the weird and the wonderful and, regardless of whether we can legally label these "single malt Scotch", we'll continue to be driven by intrigue rather than law.'

But the SWA is keen to emphasise that the new regulation does not offer *carte blanche* for distillers to use whatever cask they like. For a

start, casks from anything 'produced from, or made with' stone fruits, such as plums or cherries, are excluded. This, says the SWA, is because of the 'particular risk their use could impart dominant flavours and aromas to the final spirit which would not be characteristic of Scotch whisky'.



Future finish?: There are already rumours of a Tequila-finished Buchanan's blend

Linked to this, the organisation adds that even casks not prohibited under the new law must meet two further conditions: 'Firstly, if there has been previous use of a cask for maturation, that maturation must have been part of the traditional process for the wine, beer/ale or spirit concerned,' says SWA director of legal affairs Alan Park. 'This will exclude, for example, spirits which are not matured as part of their traditional production process.'

This means that ex-cider, gin or baijiu casks are unlikely to be permitted, because cask maturation is not a 'traditional' part of their production. But there is a further caveat.

'Importantly, even if a cask does meet this requirement, all casks used must still result in a spirit which has the taste, aroma and colour generally found in Scotch whisky,' says Park.

This is the reason behind the exclusion of stone fruit-related casks, and will inform decisions on the suitability of new products going forward. For instance, finishing a Scotch whisky in an ex-mezcal cask for six months might be fine, but an extended maturation for, say, 12 years in the same cask might result in a product that cannot be called Scotch whisky because of how it looks, smells or tastes.

Park adds: 'If any company is considering using a cask which could be regarded as novel in the production of Scotch whisky, it is strongly recommended to contact the SWA's legal team. All such enquiries will be treated in the strictest confidence.'



No cider: This innovative product from Glen Moray falls foul of the new rules

While providing more freedom, the new rules leave, for example, [Glen Moray's](#) recently launched [Cider Cask Finish](#) out in the cold. It is understood that it was a limited edition product that has almost sold out and will not be repeated.

But distillery manager and master distiller [Graham Coull](#) has already shifted his sights. 'We welcome the opportunity to experiment with different cask types,' he says. 'Calvados is especially interesting and we will be working with Distillerie Busnel in Normandy to create new Glen Moray expressions in the future.'

Generally, the perception in the Scotch whisky industry is that the change to the rules will aid innovation in a competitive world, while preserving what makes Scotch whisky special. 'There is a huge amount of crossover in the spirits market, and this will help make and/or keep Scotch relevant,' says Mitchell.

Meanwhile, Glass adds: 'The world's changed, the world's shifted with smaller start-up distilleries in countries around the world experimenting with new types of finish and new cask for full maturation.'

'I think it's a positive step and it's probably another sign of an evolving tradition of innovation within what we've done as an industry over the years. The more that that can happen the better, but at the same time protecting the quality and the integrity of the whiskies themselves.'

FAKE WHISKY: HOW WORRIED SHOULD WE BE?

17 June 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

As whisky auction prices rise and the market expands, selling fake bottles has become a multi-million-pound industry – at least if some recent estimates are to be believed. But just how serious is the problem? Richard Woodard investigates.



Caveat emptor: Three of the fake whiskies recently sent for testing by Rare Whisky 101

It was, to say the least, an eye-catching claim: some £41 million-worth of the rare whisky in the world – equivalent to the entire UK whisky auction market in 2018 – is fake.

The estimate from whisky analyst and broker Rare Whisky 101 (RW101) was based on lab tests carried out on 55 bottles of Scotch whisky by the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC), of which 21 proved to be modern fakes, including all of those supposedly from 1900 or earlier.

RW101's findings were met with consternation and disbelief by many of those involved in whisky's secondary market, with questions raised over the methodology used and the supposedly 'random' selection of whiskies tested.

Six months on, RW101 director and co-founder [Andy Simpson](#) is unrepentant. 'I actually think we're undercalling this,' he says. 'We keep a record of all the fake stuff that we see, and we probably see more than every auctioneer in the world.'

RW101's discoveries include, in the past three years alone, some 294 counterfeit bottles with a combined value of £6.6m; two fake full sets of [Macallan](#) Fine & Rare over the last 12 months; at least five sets of 'suspect' pre-1900 bottles; and anecdotal evidence of pallet-loads of Macallan 30 Year Old blue label appearing in China.

Simpson is especially concerned about the new Macallan 30 fakes. 'They are different, very much starting to improve on the quality of the labels of the traditional blue label fakes,' he says. 'There is this idea that all fakes date from the 1990s-2000s and from Italy. That's nonsense – we think there's an ongoing programme of forgeries.'

While most auction houses would acknowledge that counterfeit bottles continue to be an issue, they are less convinced by RW101's claims over the scale of the problem. 'Like many people in the industry that we speak to, [we were] very surprised by the Rare Whisky 101 numbers,

percentages and scale,' says Dr Chris White, auctioneer at Edinburgh-based Royal Mile Whisky Auctions. 'That's not reflective of what we see in our auctions at all.'



Ongoing programme: Andy Simpson reckons the whisky fakers are still at work

He adds: 'There are instances where dubious bottles crop up – like Macallan or old [Ardbeg](#) from the very early 20th or 19th centuries. But, in terms of percentage of fakes that we see, it's nowhere near on the scale that RW101 are talking about.'

Similarly, Iain McClune, director at Whisky Auctioneer, feels the fakes problem is not 'getting any worse', adding: 'Since we began in 2013, we have sold nearly 200,000 lots and the number of counterfeit bottles amongst this is extremely low, with no real indication that it is getting any more widespread at the moment.'

Common sense would suggest that, with prices rising and the expanding secondary whisky market acquiring a global scale, it would be surprising if more fakes weren't appearing. Simpson cites the example of Macallan 30 Year Old blue label – worth £250 or so a decade ago, and now changing hands for £5,500. 'It's unsurprising that we're going to see more of these things being faked,' he says. 'I think it would be foolish to assume that it's not happening.'

But does that mean that the problem is getting worse? And is the changing nature of the secondary market, with the emergence of online auction houses, making everyone more aware of fakes when they do appear?

'The market has grown so, yes, the number of fakes might have grown,' says Isabel Graham-Yooll, auction director at Whisky.Auction. 'But has the proportion grown? There's more visibility of fakes and I think that's a really good thing, and it's down to these online auctions. Previously people were almost trading in secret.'



'No worse': Iain McClune sees no evidence that fakes are becoming more prevalent

Dr White agrees. 'It's being reported more, and more people know about it,' he says. 'The absolute problem remains the same, it's just in people's eyesight because of the online auction boom.'

The attitude, expertise and rigour of auction houses are all key factors to consider if collectors want to avoid buying a dud. 'Buy from trusted sellers,' advises Graham-Yooll. 'If it's a fake, they will deal with it. Before you buy at any auction, ask them: if I find out this is a fake, what will happen?'

Whisky.Auction and Whisky Auctioneer both have formal policies governing fake whiskies, employing a range of techniques, from physical bottle checks to external research, scientific testing and consulting with rare whisky experts, specialist collectors and the distillers themselves.

'A large number of fakes tend to have been identified previously, so they are well-known to us and we are able to block those entering the market,' says McClune. 'If it is a bottle that we still have questions about, then we are in regular communication with experts, distillery archives and others around the whisky world – and secondary market in particular – if we need other opinions.'

'We're also open to undertaking further measures, such as scientific testing or reaching out for testing samples/examples from distillery archives, should this be required.'

McClune cites a bottle of 'Private Stock Old [Glenlivet](#) Scotch' dating from the 1880s and featured in an auction in December 2018. Whisky Auctioneer worked with Simpson and whisky consultant and writer Angus MacRaild to authenticate the bottle, as well as carbon-dating the liquid through SUERC.

But, if someone trying to sell a fake is turned away from one auction house, there's nothing to stop them from trying again at another – and the democratisation of the online auction scene means that not everyone is necessarily as principled – or as skilled – at spotting a fake.



Due diligence: Whisky Auctioneer went to some lengths to authenticate this 1880s Glenlivet

'There are auction houses out there that perhaps aren't as stringent when it comes to analysing every bottle that comes in,' says Dr White. 'Whether that's because they're very small and need to go for every bit of commission, or it gets lost in a sea of bottles...'

'Because we're part of a larger company, we don't need to do either of those things, and we need to be very stringent about everything we see coming in. Others, though, might have the attitude of "put it in and sell it on, and then it becomes someone else's problem".'

If the role of auction houses in stopping fakes from entering the secondary market is obvious, the role of the distillers themselves is rather more opaque – not least because they are reluctant to discuss an issue that carries quite a reputational risk for their brands. They also tend, perhaps understandably, to be more concerned with the issue of high-volume, mainstream fakes posing a potential health hazard, rather than wealthy collectors being duped by the odd dodgy bottle.

[Diageo](#) says it takes a 'zero tolerance' approach to counterfeit, encouraging people to consult SUERC when necessary and adding: 'We have access to technology which can test for counterfeit and we will use that to defend our consumers and brands wherever necessary.'

The existence of a well-stocked archive is another benefit, the company says: 'Since the creation of The Diageo Archive in 1990, we are in a position to collect and catalogue specific bottlings directly from our production lines and are therefore building a very strong bank of authentic products for future generations to look back at.'

Meanwhile, Macallan head of brand development [Geoff Kirk](#) says the distillery 'does engage with specialist retailers and auction operators, when required, to ensure the consumers' best interests are at the forefront'.



Historic importance: Resources like The Diageo Archive are helpful for authentication

More broadly, some in the industry feel that the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), like the big distillers that fund it, has historically been more concerned with mass-market fakes, rather than those in the secondary market.

SWA director of strategy & communications Graeme Littlejohn points out that the organisation is engaged in about 60 legal actions on fakes at any given moment, in addition to the action taken by SWA member companies.

He adds: 'The popularity of Scotch has fuelled a growing secondary market, with old and rare whiskies sold at auction. Those who purchase rare whiskies should take reasonable steps to check the provenance of the product.'

Whatever action is taken by auction houses, distillers or other organisations to tackle the issue of fake whisky, the old adage of *caveat emptor* – buyer beware – remains as true and as relevant as ever. And linked to this is the need for improved knowledge and communication on the subject.

'There does still need to be education to the wider public,' says Dr White. 'The vast majority of people are still totally unaware of this secondary market, even if they know whisky, and go and buy whisky.' McClune agrees. 'Fundamentally, communication between those involved in the industry – from sellers, to auctioneers, collectors and experts, through to distilleries and brands – is really important to combating counterfeits.'

How much fake whisky is circulating in the secondary market right now? Nobody knows for sure. Is it an ongoing problem? Yes, it is – but shining a light on that problem in a measured and realistic fashion is one of the best ways of addressing it.

'We don't want people not to buy whisky at auction, but we just want people to be vigilant,' says Simpson. 'If you have to miss out on a few genuine bottles to avoid the fakes, then do it. Walk away. It's just not worth it.'

GLENDRONACH RELEASES PORT WOOD WHISKY

13 June 2019 by Kirsten Amor

Highland distillery GlenDronach has unveiled Port Wood, a limited release 10-year-old single malt.



Portuguese twist: GlenDronach Port Wood has been part-aged in Port pipes

The whisky was matured in a combination of ex-Pedro Ximénez and ex-oloroso Sherry casks, followed by a second maturation in ex-Port pipes sourced from the Douro valley of Portugal. The expression was bottled without chill filtration or added colouring at 46% abv.

[GlenDronach](#) master blender [Dr Rachel Barrie](#) described Port Wood as having 'waves of Victoria plum and top notes of cherry blossom' on the nose, 'blackberry and roasted apple crumble with freshly baked gingerbread' on the palate, and a 'richly fruity' finish.

She credited the maturation in Port pipes for giving the expression ‘a deep cherry wood colour’ and ‘enriching the layers of fruit’ in the whisky.

The distillery stated inspiration for the expression came from the historical import of casked Port into Scotland in the 19th century, during the time of GlenDronach’s founder, James Allardice.

GlenDronach Port Wood is available to purchase from specialist retailers at around £60 a bottle.

The expression joins [GlenDronach’s Master Vintage 1993 single malt](#), a 25-year-old whisky, in the distillery’s limited release collection. It follows the 2017 release of GlenDronach Peated Port Wood.

Edrington full-year revenue grows by 9%

20th June, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

The Macallan maker Edrington has reported a 9% increase in revenue to £679.8 million (US\$864.3m) for the year ending 31 March 2019, boosted by Scotch brands Highland Park and The Glenrothes, and Brugal rum.



The Macallan opened its new £140m distillery in Speyside last June Profit for the period increased by 4% to £91.6m (US\$116.5m), with “strong growth” from single malt Scotch whiskies Highland Park, The Glenrothes and blended malt whisky The Naked Grouse.

Edrington’s brand investment for the period grew 7% to £137.3m (US\$174.5m) while core contribution increased 6% to £231.8m (US\$409m).

The Macallan “consolidated its position as the world’s most valuable single malt”. In June 2018, the group [opened its new £140m \(US\\$188.4m\) distillery for The Macallan](#), which will increase the brand’s production by a third. Edrington has pledged an on-going £500m (US\$635.9m) investment in The Macallan, which in addition to the new distillery will be used for warehousing and Sherry cask sourcing.

Edrington said the “continued challenging trading environment for blended Scotch” resulted in a decline for Scotch brand The Famous Grouse. However, the brand “successfully increased market share” in key markets including the UK.

Brugal rum delivered double-digit growth in sales and contribution, due to the “success” of Edrington’s premium brand strategy in the rum’s home market, the Dominican Republic.

The Macallan owner added that it has “increased international reach” with the launch of its [own marketing and distribution unit](#) in Mexico.

In June 2018, Edrington announced plans to [sell Scotch brands Cutty Sark and Glenturret](#). French drinks group La Martiniquaise-Bardinet [purchased Cutty Sark blended Scotch](#) in November for an undisclosed sum.

In April this year, luxury goods company Lalique Group paid £15.5m (US\$20.2m) for a [50% stake in Glenturret Scotch whisky](#) as part of a joint venture with Swiss entrepreneur Hansjörg Wyss.

‘Strong international growth’

“A 9% rise in core revenue and 6% growth in core contribution is encouraging as it has been achieved against a backdrop of significantly increased brand investment, upgraded packaging and investment in capacity and capability,” said chief executive Scott McCroskie.

“In line with Edrington’s increased focus on super-premium spirits, exceptional proceeds of £124.2m were received last year from the sales of the Cutty Sark and Glenturret brands.

“The business has delivered strong international growth that reflects continuing consumer demand for our products, particularly in China, South East Asia and the USA, which is the world’s largest market for premium spirits.”

McCroskie also said the results “underline the strength of the business” under the helm of Edrington’s former chief executive Ian Curle, [who retired in March 2019](#).

“It is an honour to succeed him as leader of this unique company,” added McCroskie.

“I am proud of what we have already achieved, and I am certain that as we intensify the focus on our super-premium brands, we will deliver further success in the future.”

Edrington [entered the American whiskey category](#) in September last year with the purchase of a minority stake in Wyoming Whiskey.

Investment boosts Scotch whisky tourism

21st June, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Scotch whisky tourism reached record numbers in 2018 as two million people visited distilleries across Scotland.



Increased investment in Scotch whisky has helped to boost distillery visitor numbers

The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) compiled the figures as part of its annual survey, which found visitor numbers have risen to 2,004,745 – representing a 6.1% year-on-year rise.

The increase in visitor numbers at distilleries across Scotland represents a 56% growth in the popularity of Scotch distilleries since 2010.

Results from the SWA’s 2018 survey also revealed that spending at visitor centres was up by 12.2% to £68.3 million (US\$86.5m), with the average visitor spending £34 (US\$43) on each trip – a 5.8% year-on-year increase.

More than 20 different nationalities visited Scotch distilleries in 2018, with Germany and the US representing the largest number of visitors. The SWA also noted increased visits from France, Spain and the Netherlands, as well as India and China.

Collectively, Scotch whisky distilleries remain the third most visited attraction in its native country, after Edinburgh Castle and the National Museum of Scotland.

Karen Betts, chief executive of the SWA, said: “The growing number of visitors to distilleries reflects in part the growth in tourism in Scotland in general, and people coming to Scotland want to see our local crafts and sample our local food and drink.

“The growth in whisky tourism is also playing a crucial role in Scotland’s rural economy, with more stays at hotels, more bookings at restaurants, and more customers for local businesses, helping communities to grow and prosper.

“The industry has invested a great deal in creating fabulous visitor facilities. That investment has been fostered by the more stable tax environment created by recent freezes in excise duty.

“We hope the government will continue this policy, which has both boosted the revenues available to fund public services and helped the industry to continue to invest in world-class visitor attractions.”

Fiona Hyslop, cabinet secretary for culture, tourism and external affairs, added: “With investment across Scotland, from major firms such as Diageo in the [new Johnnie Walker experience](#) in Edinburgh, to [Rosebank in Falkirk](#) and [Brora in the Highlands](#), it’s a really exciting time for the whisky tourism sector.”

- To be fair to all we ask all our members to please refrain from wearing scented products and perfumes to our KSMS evenings.

Membership and Dinner prices for 2018-2019

Membership Fee:	\$50 (singles) \$75 (couples)
One Time Initiation Fee:	\$15
Standard Dinner Fee:	\$70 (member) \$80 (non-member)
Christmas Dinner Fee:	\$75 (member) \$75 (non-member)
Robbie Burns Dinner Fee:	\$75 (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 17th, 2018 dinner date as an example:
 - Dinner invitations will be sent out Friday August 24th, 2018. Please respond to me (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 7th, 2018 @ 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 7th, 2018 @ 6pm will be removed from the list.
- Anyone canceling between Friday September 7th, 2018 @ 6pm and Monday September 17th, 2018 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 17th, 2018 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 7th, 2018 @ 6pm and Monday September 17th, 2018, their name will be placed on a wait-list and be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.

Reserved Seating

- 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.

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.



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