

Kingston Single Malt Society

www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com

A social club for the appreciation of Single Malt Whisky since 1998
JANUARY 25th, 2021 VOLUME 12; NUMBER 7



This evening's
menu celebrating
the
262nd Anniversary
of
Robbie Burns
Birthday

MENU

Ode to the Haggis & Pre-Dinner Toast

1st Nosing: KILCHOMAN 7 YO PX SHERRY FINISH
(introduced by: Gavin Wood)

Soup: Smoked Haddock & Potato Soup

2nd Nosing: KILCHOMAN AM BURACH
(introduced by: Bill Gorham)

Appetizer: Seared Salmon, Buttered Leeks and Wild Flower Honey

3rd Nosing: KILCHOMAN MACHIR BAY
(introduced by: Conrad Falkson)

4th Nosing: KILCHOMAN 100% ISLAY 2020 10th EDITION

(introduced by: Chantaille Buczynski)

Entrée: Deconstructed Scotch Pie with Neeps & Tatties

5th Nosing: KILCHOMAN FINO SHERRY CASK
(introduced by: Christine Wasson)

Dessert: Dundee cake with marmalade

6th Nosing: KILCHOMAN LOCH GORM 2020
(introduced by: Gordon Hagar)

COST OF THE MALTS

KILCHOMAN 7 YEAR OLD PX SHERRY FINISH CASK

LCBO 839214 | 700 mL bottle **Price \$183.95** Spirits,
Whisky/Whiskey 56.7% Alcohol/Vol.

KILCHOMAN AM BURACH LCBO 825200 | 700 mL bottle
Price \$135.95 Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 58.3% Alcohol/Vol.

KILCHOMAN MACHIR BAY CASK STRENGTH LCBO
837812 | 700 mL bottle **Price \$125.95** Spirits,
Whisky/Whiskey 58.6% Alcohol/Vol.

KILCHOMAN 100% ISLAY 2020 10th EDITION LCBO
752955 | 700 mL bottle **Price \$160.95** Spirits,
Whisky/Whiskey 50.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**KILCHOMAN FINO SHERRY CASK MATURED 2020
RELEASE** LCBO 839397 | 700 mL bottle **Price \$160.95**
Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 46.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**KILCHOMAN LOCH GORM 2020 RELEASE ISLAY
SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY** LCBO 825200 | 700 mL
bottle **Price \$175.95** Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 46.0%
Alcohol/Vol.

NOVEMBER - KSMS Financial Statement

(Money from 40 November attendees @ \$80) = \$3200.00
November dinner 40 persons = \$55.00/ea = \$2200.00
(Money remaining for buying Single Malt) = \$1000.00
Cost of Single Malts: = \$886.74
Cost of Pours per Person = \$22.16
KSMS Monthly operational balance = (-\$113.26)
Cost per person 26 attendees (All inclusive) = \$77.17

Upcoming Dinner Dates

February 22nd, 2021 - Robbie Burns / Valentine / Kilchoman
Friday February 26th, 2021 - Macallan Special Editions No. 1-6
March 15th, 2021 - Dutch / Highlands
Friday March 26th, 2021 - Glenallachie Night
April 12th, 2021 - Arran / North Highlands
Friday April 23rd, 2021 - Bladnoch Dinner
May 17th, 2021 - Campbeltown
June 28th, 2021 - Speyside / Islands / Islay
July 19th, 2021 - "M&M" Night
Friday August 27th 2021 - 14th Annual Premium Night
September 20th, 2021 - Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /
Highlands / Islands / Islay
October 18th, 2021 - Speyside / Highlands
November 15th, 2021 - Speyside
December 6th 2021 - Christmas Dinner

Explain about ... Burns Night

<http://whiskyforeveryone.blogspot.com/2010/01/explain-about-burns-night.html>

Burns Night is an annual festival that celebrates the life and works of Scottish poet and lyricist Robert Burns (also known as Rabbie to his friends) and has a strong association with whisky. Burns is widely regarded as Scotland's national poet and the festival has become Scotland's unofficial national day. It is celebrated on January 25th, the date of Burns' birth. Burns Night has a rich heritage in Scottish culture and combines two of the nation's favourite pastimes, eating and drinking whisky, with the legendary poetry of Robert Burns.

Robert Burns was born in 1759 in the small town of Alloway, Ayrshire. The town is located two miles (3km) to the south of Ayr in the Lowland region of Scotland. The house where he was born is now the Burns Cottage Museum. Burns was tutored mostly by his father for his early education before starting formal schooling in 1772. His first attempt at poetry was in 1774 - it was entitled *O, Once I Lov'd A Bonnie Lass* and was inspired by his first love. He went on to write hundreds of poems and songs including famous works such as *Tam O'Shanter*, *My Love Is Like A Red, Red Rose* and *Auld Lang Syne*,

which is traditionally sung around the English speaking world on New Year's Eve.

As time passed and Burns' work became more renowned, so did his reputation for liking whisky and women. His heavy drinking and adultery gained him notoriety and scorn within literary circles, although the quality and output of his works remained consistently high. His first illegitimate child was born in 1785 and he went on to father 12 children with four different women (although these totals are believed to both be higher!). He died on July 21 1796, aged just 37, of rheumatic fever that is believed to have been accelerated by a degenerative heart condition from his childhood. His final child was born two days later, on the day that he was buried with full civic and military honours. Burns' grave stands in a graveyard in Dumfries.

So how did Burns Night begin and what does it involve? It is believed that the first Burns Night took place over 200 years ago in 1801. This is less than five years after Burns' death and was celebrated by a group of scholars who were fans of his works. In the early days, it was seen as the perfect platform to celebrate Scotland and being Scottish, incorporating Burns' poetry, Scottish food (most notably haggis, neeps and tatties) and copious amounts of whisky. The popularity and celebrations grew year on year until we have the Burns Night that we know today.

The modern Burns Night supper has evolved over time but remains quintessentially (some would say, stereotypically) Scottish. The core of the supper is the haggis (a mixture of offal, cereal grains, oatmeal, herbs and spices wrapped in the lining of a sheep's stomach) and this is served with neeps and tatties (turnip/swede and potato). This can be preceded by a soup based starter - the three most common are Scotch Broth (a thick soup that contains barley and anything else that you may have), Cullen Skink (a fish based chowder) or Cock-a-leekie soup (the clue is in the name - it's chicken and leeks, then prunes are added). Dessert can take any form (if you have space or haven't had a heart attack by this point!), with cheese, Cranachan (whipped cream, whisky, raspberries and oatmeal) or Cloutie Dumpling (a cake made with dried fruit, condensed milk, spices and golden syrup, then cooked in a cloth or *clout* in Gaelic) being the most popular. These are traditionally accompanied by whisky at every opportunity.

The main ceremonial part involves the reading of *Address To A Haggis* - a poem written by Robert Burns to celebrate Scotland and its national food. The haggis is bought in and placed on a table and then the reader performs the poem to the haggis and the crowd. This can be accompanied by bagpipes at larger events (as seen in the image, left). The final act of the poem is to slash the stomach membrane of the haggis to reveal its contents and for the reader to down a dram of whisky (occasionally, another dram can be poured over the steaming haggis). Then the rule is to toast the haggis, have a fun evening and drink whisky!

Other Burns Night facts ...

- * Approximately 15 million people worldwide annually celebrate Burns Night.
- * There are statues of Robert Burns in Central Park, New York and at Poet's Corner in Hyde Park, London.
- * It is estimated that 70% of the UK's annual haggis consumption happens on or around Burns Night.
- * Burns Night contributes a staggering £150 million to the Scottish economy each year.
- * The poetry of Robert Burns have been translated in to almost every known language and have been used in the works of legendary figures such as Jimmy Hendrix and The Beatles.

Glenmorangie Has A New Whisky Finished In Ex-Spanish Sweet Wine Casks

By [Allyson Nichols](#) / December 14, 2020

Glenmorangie recently sought to bring the taste of Spain to all whisky lovers alike with one of their newest releases: a sweet and rich small-batch Highland single malt Scotch finished in casks that once housed sweet, fortified wines made in the area surrounding southern Spain's ancient city of Malaga.

Glenmorangie Malaga Cask Finish is a 12-year-old limited edition that, according to tasting notes from the brand, brings an explosion of flavors from the south of Spain, including sultanas, raisins, dates, tangy mandarin orange, milk chocolate, honey and brown sugar, as well as hints of citrus. Spices such as cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and sweet star anise also arise in the syrupy liquid, allowing the mixture to give off a mellow fragrance and chestnut color.



Glenmorangie Malaga Cask Finish (image via Glenmorangie)

After being softened for eight years in bourbon casks, the whisky is further casked in Malaga 'dulce' wine casks (which once contained wines at the sweeter end of Malaga's range) for four years, combining the flavors from southern Spain wines with "the creamy and fruity tastes" of Glenmorangie. The idea came from the distillery's Director of Whisky Creation Dr. Bill Lumsden, who hand-selected each cask to be bottled for this special "Distillery's Barrel Select Release."

Lumsden found himself captivated by the intense sweetness of the wines of Malaga and began to dream of lacing their delicate taste with that of Glenmorangie's creaminess. He said of this [in a prepared statement](#) that "the honeyed aromas and fruity, chocolatey tastes of Glenmorangie Malaga Cask Finish take me straight to the sun-kissed south of Spain, where Malaga's famed fortified wines are made. By finishing our soft, creamy whisky in Malaga 'dulce' casks, we've created an indulgently sweet and rich small-batch single malt.

"Our Barrel Select Release is delicious treat for whisky lovers old and new." Glenmorangie Malaga Cask Finish prices around £75, or around \$100 USD, and is available now. It is bottled at 47.3% ABV.

Whisky Reviews: The GlenDronach 15 Year Old, 21 Year Old

By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / December 8, 2020

Editor's Note: These whiskies were provided to us as review samples by The GlenDronach/Brown-Forman. This in no way, per [our editorial policies](#), influenced the final outcome of this review. It should also be noted that by clicking the buy links towards the bottom of this review our site receives a small referral payment which helps to support, but not influence, our editorial and other costs.

The GlenDronach, like many Scottish distilleries, has seen its ups and downs in its near 200 years. The distillery, founded in 1826, was one of the first licensed distilleries in Scotland. Distillery workers and their families lived on site at the Glen House, which is supposedly [haunted by a Spanish lady who travelled over in a sherry cask](#). Hopefully not the cask to age the first batch of The GlenDronach single malt.

Before 1996, when the distillery was mothballed, it changed ownership many times. The GlenDronach distillery laid dormant for six years until it went into full production again in 2002. The distillery continued changing ownership from Allied Distillers to Chivas Brothers to BenRiach until finally landing at Brown-Forman in 2016.

Alas, The GlenDronach Distillery ceased production of its [15-year-old whisky](#) in 2015. As a fan favourite, it was discontinued to supply constraints...that is until now. The [15-year-old now goes by the Revival](#) and continues to represent The GlenDronach's signature style. For 15 years, the single malt whisky sits in Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry casks from the Andalucia region in Spain. The GlenDronach Parliament 21 Year Old has remained in their permanent line-up. Where a colony of crows in called a "murder," a colony of rooks is called a "parliament." Rooks nest in the trees overlooking The GlenDronach Distillery, and they have inspired the name for the rich 21-year-old expression.

It's been awhile since we have reviewed The GlenDronach 15 Year Old, and [The GlenDronach 21 Year Old](#). Keep in mind, this is the first time we are reviewing the 15-year-old expression since it was discontinued and rebranded as the "Revival," so let's see how they taste.



The GlenDronach 15 Year Old Revival (image via Brown-Forman)
Tasting Notes: The GlenDronach Revival 15 Year Old

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: 46% ABV. Highland single malt matured for 15 years in fine Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry casks from Andalucia. 750ml ~\$90.
Appearance: Tarnished brass with glints of pinot noir.
Nose: Cherry, bold fig, and raising combine with the malt to make it feel like Italian Christmas fruit cake. There is some espresso and cocoa nib on the back end. It's fruity, with a mixture of orange zest and cherry. With a little marzipan on the finish, it reminds me of orange and cranberry biscotti.
Palate: The mouthfeel is silky. My favourite not in a scotch is a cigar ash taste with a hint of leather and boy does this dram deliver. The malted barley doesn't overpower, and neither does the oak. For this whisky, it is about balance, and you can't have any flavor without the other. The leather that finishes it off mingles with dried oak from a campfire to give you a familiarity and nostalgia.
Final Thoughts: Oooooo. The GlenDronach 15 Year Old is a straight up representation of the distillery. One you nose and taste it, you'll realize why it had a cult following and couldn't keep up with demand. You get the sherry, but most importantly, you get a specimen that shows off the patience of maturity. Buy it, although I don't want you to so that I can keep it all to myself.
Overall, it is a pivotal classic expression from The GlenDronach that makes its way into my top five scotches. It is just that good. For me to give the score below, you know that it is a perfect dram of whisky.
Score: 5/5
Tasting Notes: The GlenDronach Parliament 21 Year Old

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: 48% ABV. Highland single malt matured for 21 years in a combination of Oloroso and Pedro Ximénez sherry casks. 750ml ~\$150.
Appearance: Polish mahogany.
Nose: At the beginning, almond but not in a marzipan sort of way comes in like a fresh made macron. It reminds me of a wet leaf pile trying to burn.
Palate: The mouthfeel starts of dry and acrid, but it's a mixture of oak types creating this sensation. Black peppercorn heightens the palate before moving forward to make way for bold roast espresso beans. The finale comes off with a bright burst of citrus zest. It still retains a bitter quality from the espresso, but the finish ends with cocoa nibs lingering on the tongue.
Final Thoughts: While I thought it was tasty, the dryness and woodiness just took it down a notch. Maybe if the age was 18 years or even 20 years. Still good, but the 15-year-old, and other expressions outrank in terms of flavor. It is warm, and the afterglow even sneaks up on you. However, while I say it is warm, it is from the spice on the profile.
Score: 4/5

Whisky Reviews: Kilchoman 100% Islay 10th Edition, Small Batch #3

By [Jason Marshall](#) / December 8, 2020

Editor's Note: These whiskies were provided to us as review samples by Kilchoman/ImpEx Beverages. This in no way, per [our editorial policies](#), influenced the final outcome of this review. It should also be noted that by clicking the buy links towards the bottom of this review our site receives a small referral payment which helps to support, but not influence, our editorial and other costs.
Traditions and routines are ideals that aid us in our personal identity and help to connect and understand one another. As we come to the time of year that is usually replete with long established customs of togetherness and celebration, we have to pause and be reminded that we are currently in a time of caution and prudence. As with many other challenges that this particular year has

brought to us, we may have to adjust our usual habits and imagine new ways to celebrate.

When Kilchoman came into the Scottish distilling scene 15 years ago, they were entering an industry that could not have been more steeped in tradition. In fact, they were the first new Scotch distillery on Islay in over a hundred years. So, how could they stand out and create their own identity in a region that has established status? They looked to the past, present, and future and started their own traditions.

Kilchoman has done an amazing job of championing the merits of young whisky. The first Kilchoman single malt was released in 2009 at three years old. With that success, they looked to the past and revitalized the once common practice of farm scale distilling. Just like 200 years ago, they grow, malt, and peat their own barley, and also all distilling, maturation, and bottling is all done within the farm distillery limits. The intended experience is to transport the imbiber to the midst of their barley fields as you sip.

The two expressions I'm reviewing here – Kilchoman 100% Islay 10th Edition and Kilchoman Small Batch #3, represent stylistically different approaches to the same end result referenced previously. The 100% Islay is distilled from barley entirely grown on Islay, while the Small Batch showcases their cask maturation program. For the latter this vatting combines ex-bourbon barrel and ex-sherry cask matured at 46% ABV, as well as one Ruby Port Cask at cask strength.



Kilchoman 100% Islay 10th Edition (image via Kilchoman)

BUY NOW

Tasting Notes: Kilchoman 100% Islay 10th Edition
Vital Stats: Made 100% malted barley taken from their 2007, 2009, and 2010 harvest. Matured in 39 bourbon barrels and 2 oloroso sherry butts for a minimum of nine years. 12,400 bottles released globally, bottled at 50% ABV and pricing around £75, or about \$100 USD.
Appearance: Very light. Straw colored. Good viscosity in the glass.
Nose: Faint smoke, citrus, green tea.
Palate: Green apples, pears, and a wisp of smoke.
Final Thoughts: Tremendously approachable and full of character. Reminds me of the sun finally coming out on a rainy day.
Score: 4/5

BUY NOW

Tasting Notes: Kilchoman Small Batch #3
Vital Stats: 100% malted barley Limited Edition Release exclusive to the U.S. The final blend is comprised of 50% Ruby Port Cask, 47% Bourbon Barrel, and 3% Sherry Cask. Very limited release. Price will vary. 48.9% ABV.
Appearance: Clear with a Rose' tint. Wide tears on the glass.
Nose: Plum and dried fruit forward. Faint smoke at the end.
Palate: Red berries, stewed prune and spice.
Final Thoughts: Very big fortified wine influence on this one. Similar to sangria with a touch of smoke. Not what you would expect from an Islay Single Malt, but enjoyable.
Score: 3.5/5

Scotland's Upcoming Wolfcraig Distillery Has Some Big Plans In The Works

By [Robert Ham](#) / December 11, 2020

The team behind the planned Wolfcraig Distillery in Scotland have already made a lot of noise about their plans to, [as their website puts it](#), "disrupt the traditional distillery model." But the team behind this new venture, including former Whyte & Mackay chairman Michael Lunn and three Masters of the

Quaich, has recently revealed some exciting news that bodes well for their immediate future.

One of the biggest announcements was the appointing of Richard Paterson as Wolfcraig's Master Blender. Nicknamed "The Nose" for his skills at sniffing out the progress of his creations, Paterson has been in the whisky business for over five decades, much of it working with Whyte & Mackay. According to the press release announcing his new appointment, he will continue to work with Whyte & Mackay even as he helps Wolfcraig get off the ground.



A rendering of the planned Wolfcraig Distillery (image via Wolfcraig)

"This will be an opportunity for me to use all the knowledge I have learned over 55 years in the business to create a truly exceptional Highland Single Malt, one that can be enjoyed the world over," Paterson said [in a prepared statement](#).

The reveal of this new hire came soon after news broke of the plans Wolfcraig had submitted for the construction of their distillery and tourist attraction in the city of Stirling. The building, which will cost an estimated £15 million, will include the distillery, a family-friendly interactive visitor's center, private tasting room, and a restaurant and bar.

"Our distillery will encourage visitors and tourists to spend more time in and around Stirling, helping to boost both the local and national economies," said Michael Lunn, [in a prepared statement](#). "In addition to producing a premium Highland Single Malt, we want to offer a state-of-the-art immersive experience for people of all ages and knowledge levels. Our research indicates the distillery could attract around 90,000 visitors in its first year given its proximity to Glasgow and Edinburgh."

As part of their plans for this new distillery, which is expected to produce about 1.5 million liters of spirits each year, Wolfcraig has set an objective to be carbon-free and will be working to ensure that all byproducts of their creations will be sustainably recycled.

Construction for the new space is set to begin in spring of 2021 in hopes of opening its doors to the public in summer of 2022.

Provenance will be the first in The Glenturret by Lalique series, followed by Prowess and Passion - the three pillars which govern the distillery's operations, known as 'The Glenturret Trinity'.

The collaborative project - instigated by Silvio Denz, chairman and CEO of Lalique, The Glenturret's new owner - is designed to represent the coming together of the two brands, both of which have long-standing heritage and passion for their craft.

On the design of the decanters, Marc Larminaux said: "Highest-quality barley is the starting point for The Glenturret. Fields of barley slowing swaying in the soft breeze and the early morning light are truly a beautiful, mesmerising sight. The barley is represented through a glittering clear and frosted finish on the motif, hand-carved into the crystal by Lalique craftsmen."

John Laurie, managing director at The Glenturret, said: "2020 has been a challenging year for all, but also a very exciting year for us. We recently introduced a fresh visual brand identity as well as six new expressions, hand-crafted by our incredible team at the distillery in Crieff. Adding The Glenturret Provenance is an important milestone for us - this is a whisky to be savoured slowly, which fits in perfectly with our distillation process as we still do everything here by hand."

In creating the new expression, The Glenturret took inspiration from three historical figures: Rene Lalique, hailed as one of the greatest glass masters of the 20th century; Elizabeth Philips, owner of 'Hosh Mill' (later to be renamed The Glenturret) and very likely the first female distiller; and James Farlie, who brought The Glenturret back into production in 1957 after it had lain dormant for more than 30 years.

John Laurie continued: "The Glenturret Provenance is all about reflecting on time, memories of place and people gone before. The Glenturret reaches back in history to 1763 and Lalique to 1888 - in our busy modern world we seldom take time to stop, to think, to drift, to remember and to discover."

The Glenturret Provenance is available from www.theglenturret.com priced at £9,800.

9 December 2020 - Bethany Whymark

DISTILLER'S SCOTCH WHISKY GIFT GUIDE 2020

by [Stephanie Moreno](#) - December 3, 2020

With December in full swing, it's time to offer you our Gift Guides for 2020. In case you missed it, we published our [American Whiskey Gift Guide 2020](#) last week so make sure to check that out if you're in the market for whiskeys from the US. Even though this year presented its set of challenges, releasing great whiskeys was not one of them.

And while picking a favorite spirits category is akin to picking a favorite child, I must admit that Scotch whisky holds a special place in my heart. As a result, that makes this particular gift guide even tougher to create. But choose I did. These Scotch whiskeys were selected for their value as well as their flavor profiles and individuality. As an added bonus, many of these Scotch whiskeys are around the \$100 mark so you won't be breaking the bank with most of these bottles. And there's something for everyone here, even if you think you don't like Scotch whisky.

There are whiskies here that are great for mixing and others which are best to enjoy on their own. And like the Scotch whisky category itself, there are peated and unpeated whiskies represented here. Some have unique finishes and others are more traditional. Nevertheless, they are each worthy to be given as a gift this year. Additionally, most of these will be available globally so you shouldn't have much trouble tracking these bottles down. Presented from lowest to highest SRPs, here's Distiller's Scotch Whisky Gift Guide 2020!

[THE GLENLIVET CARIBBEAN RESERVE](#)

The Glenlivet Caribbean Reserve was released this past spring as a no-age-statement release. The Speyside single malt finishes its maturation in ex-Caribbean rum barrels sourced from Jamaica. It is bottled at 40% ABV.

The rum barrel finishing definitely makes a presence on the nose, but it's more of a background note than hitting you on the fore. Malty notes play well with the orange, coconut, and a slight char smoke. Fruity and sweet with that rum back note, the finish is a bit on the short side. But while Caribbean Reserve is present, it's pleasant. One doesn't usually think of a single malt Scotch whisky with tropical drinks, but it works surprisingly well with fruit juice cocktails. Try this in a Whisky Sour. Great value and glad to see a brand having some fun (especially this year)!

Flavor Profile: Fruity & Sweet

SRP: \$35



The Glenturret unveils first release in Lalique collaboration series

The Glenturret has revealed the first limited-edition single malt release in its new collaborative series with Lalique.

Following the brand's relaunch this autumn, the Scottish distillery has released The Glenturret Provenance. Each of the 320 units is presented in a French crystal decanter designed by Marc Larminaux, artistic and creative director at Lalique.

The whisky, crafted by whisky maker Bob Dalgarno, is drawn from three casks filled in 1987 and was bottled on 4 December 2020, as it celebrated its 33rd birthday. It is bottled at cask strength of 43.7% ABV, is natural in colour and non-chill filtered.



The Glenlivet Caribbean Reserve /Photo Credit: The Glenlivet

HIGHLAND PARK CASK STRENGTH EDITION NO. 1

This single malt is the first of an expected series from the Orkney Islands brand. Highland Park Master Whisky Maker Gordon Motion selected and then married the casks for this batch which includes single malts of various ages. The casks featured in this batch are predominantly American oak sherry-seasoned casks. Batch No. 1 was released globally as of September 2020 and is bottled at 63.3% ABV.

The peat is moderate on the palate with a bit of spice and moss. Fruit surrounds the dram, primarily citrus and orchard fruits. Despite the proof, the dram has plenty to show without adding water. However if you do, you'll bring out more spice on the nose and a little chocolate. The finish is bittersweet and tangy with a mix of fruit, moss and peat. It's a nice bang for your buck!

Flavor Profile: Fruity & Sweet

SRP: \$90



Highland Park Cask Strength Edition No. 1 /Photo Credit: Highland Park

GLENDRONACH PORT WOOD

Port Wood, crafted by Master Blender Dr. Rachel Barrie, is a single malt which initially ages in Pedro Ximénez and oloroso sherry casks. Then the whisky is finished in port casks for three years for a total of 10 years of maturation. It's bottled without chill filtration or added color at 46% ABV. Port Wood was first released in the UK in June 2019, but the US finally got its hands on the release in November 2020.

GlenDronach specializes in sherry cask aging and with the port wood finish, the fruity notes are intensified. You get more of the raisins and other dried fruits along with a mix of bright cherry and orange zest here. Just a rich and fruity experience for a not so large price point. Serve with dessert or a nightcap.

Flavor Profile: Fruity & Rich

SRP: \$90



GlenDronach Port Wood /Photo Credit: GlenDronach

COMPASS BOX PEAT MONSTER ARCANIA

Compass Box Peat Monster Arcana is one of the bottlings released by the brand to celebrate its 20th anniversary. The blend includes: Talisker single malt matured in refill hogshead (72.9%), Miltonduff single malt matured in first-fill bourbon (10.6%), Ardbeg single malt matured in re-charred barrels (6.9%) and Compass Box Peat Monster at cask strength matured for over 2 years in refill custom French oak barrels with a heavy toast (9.6%). Incidentally, this is the first Compass Box whisky to include peated whiskies which were experimentally matured in the brand's custom French oak barrels.

As you can expect from a product called Peat Monster, the peat shines here with a smoked meat quality as well as tar and iodine. There's also a fair amount of fruit and vanilla which gives some sweetness to the whisky as well as dark chocolate and menthol. The whisky is full-bodied. Meanwhile, the finish comes back around with the smoke and toasted barrel spices. It's a solid dram you that you can pair with foods such as smoked fish or meats or even chocolate desserts.

Flavor Profile: Smoky & Oily

SRP: \$95



Compass Box Peat Monster Arcana /Photo Credit: Compass Box

GLENDRONACH A TALE OF CAKE

A Tale of Cake is a limited-edition whisky created by Dr. Bill Lumsden, Glenmorangie's director of whisky creation. The single malt first ages in former bourbon casks before finishing maturation in ex-Tokaji wine casks. In short, Tokaji is a dessert wine from Hungary which is made using noble rot grapes. These grapes provide for a sweet, honeyed flavor in the wine. The aroma is of medium intensity with toasted malt notes, cinnamon, Granny Smith apples and a dollop of honey. The tartness and the spiciness found on the palate help to cut the dram from being overly sweet. In fact, there's a little bitter note there too. Overall, a pleasant experience with a decent proof makes this a good one to have for an after-dinner dram. Serve with a slice of cake if you like, but you would also do well to pair this with a cheese like Taleggio or Manchego.

Flavor Profile: Sweet & Fruity

SRP: \$99



Glenmorangie A Tale of Cake /Photo Credit: Glenmorangie

LAPHROAIG CAIRDEAS 2020 PORT & WINE CASKS

Laphroaig Cairdeas 2020 Port & Wine Casks is a no-age-statement release. Typically, the Cairdeas releases coincide with the Fèis Ìle (Islay Fest), but of course, this year's event was cancelled due to COVID-19. This 2020 release is a marriage of classic Laphroaig whisky rested in second-fill Ruby Port "barriques" along with whisky double matured in ex-bourbon barrels followed by ex-red wine casks.

The port and wine casks bring a lovely berry flavor to the classic Laphroaig taste. These fruity flavors are in no way capable of overpowering the smoky, iodine notes in the whisky, but bring an accent to the dram. It's a full bodied whisky with moderate sweet malty notes in the mid-palate. Expect a smoky and sweet finish that's perfect for a cold night in.

Flavor Profile: Smoky & Sweet
SRP: \$100



Laphroaig Cairdeas 2020 Port & Wine Casks

THE MACALLAN DOUBLE CASK 15 YEAR

The Macallan Double Cask 15 Year was added to the brand's portfolio globally in July 2020 along with Double Cask 18 Year. The Double Cask series features single malt whiskies which mature in both sherry-seasoned American oak and European oak casks. After 15 years in the respective casks, the whiskies are blended and bottled at 43% ABV.

The aroma shows a robust malty note, dried fruits (figs, raisins, orange peel), and mild aromas of vanilla and caramel. As you taste, the Macallan Double Cask 15 Year reveals a tangy, spicy profile. Then more dried fruits appear along with a moderate oak flavor. There's a good length to the finish which displays a nice nutty and dark chocolate quality. The American oak casks here give the whisky a bright and lively tone, which is a good thing. And while the [12 Year](#) and [18 Year](#) versions are fine whiskies, the 15 Year version is my Goldilocks pick — for me, it just hits all the right spots.

Flavor Profile: Fruity & Sweet
SRP: \$135



The Macallan Double Cask 15 Year /Photo Credit: The Macallan

ARBEG BLAACK

Arbeg Blaack is named to celebrate the so-called "black sheep" members of the committee which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2020. This bottling marks the first time that the distillery has matured its whisky in pinot noir casks from New Zealand. Ardbeg released two versions of the whisky: a committee release version is bottled at 50.7% ABV and a version sold at 46% ABV. Either version will make a fine purchase.

Of course, it wouldn't be Ardbeg without hitting you over the head with peat, tar, iodine and savory smoked meats. But amidst all this, there's a bit of baked apple and brûléed sugar as well. These notes continue on the palate along with seaweed and rubber. Overall it's just a really fun ride discovering all the notes in the dram. The finish leaves you with the peat flavors and a desire to go back in for another sip. All in all, it's not a baaad way to spend the evening.

Flavor Profile: Peaty & Spicy
SRP: \$145



Arbeg Blaack /Photo Credit: Ardbeg

THE BALVENIE TUN 1509 BATCH 7

The Balvenie Tun 1509 is a limited-edition series which features single malts selected and blended by Malt Master David Stewart. These whiskies are then allowed to mature further in the distillery's Warehouse 24 in a large vat dubbed Tun 1509. For Batch 7, Stewart married 21 "rare and precious casks" for 3 months in the Tun. These casks held single malts which matured in three different barrel types: refill sherry hogsheads, ex-bourbon American oak, and Doublewood refill sherry butts (used to finish Doublewood and then refilled with new-make and aged whiskies).

There's no need to wait for a special occasion; when you pour yourself a glass, that becomes the special occasion. The nose and palate fill with dried fruits (cherries, oranges, apples, figs), sweet cream, vanilla and holiday spices. There's also a nice toasted malt note present on the nose as well. Not to mention the finish is like an everlasting gobstopper. It's just a fantastic whisky from beginning to end. Treat yo self!

Flavor Profile: Sweet & Rich
SRP: \$410



The Balvenie Tun 1509 Batch 7 /Photo Credit: The Balvenie

BRUICHLADDICH BLACK ART 1994 8.1 EDITION 26 YEAR

This edition is the eighth Black Art release and the fourth by current Master Distiller Adam Hannett. Distilled in 1994, this is an unpeated single malt aged for 26 years in a variety of undisclosed casks. Only Hannett knows the exact recipe. Matured entirely on Islay, this is bottled at cask strength of 45.1% ABV without added color or chill-filtration. This release is a limited-edition of 12,000 bottles worldwide.

The aroma is filled with fruits; particularly peaches, pears and orange peel. There's also a nice toasted cereal aroma and milk chocolate. As you taste you'll find the whisky to be creamy and a little slick. More of the fruit flavors come through again, but there's a mild cinnamon spiced note as well as vanilla. The whisky is on the sweet side with just a touch of bitterness. It would be the perfect pick to end a meal and have either as dessert or paired with cheesecake or a fruit trifle.

Flavor Profile: Fruity & Sweet
SRP: \$450



Bruichladdich Black Art 1994 8.1 Edition 26 Year

Kilchoman Fino 2020 & Machir Bay Cask Strength Festive Edition

[JASONNOVEMBER 26, 2020](#)



The distant and calming shores of Islay seem more out of reach than ever before. A natural buffer that has kept this island and many others around the coastline of Scotland, a little safer from the turbulence of COVID-19.

The surge in whisky tourism that has grown tremendously over the years, has been brought to a sudden and violent halt, with only locals, or those braving travelling internally within the UK, making the trek to distilleries. That is prior to *Lockdown version 2.0* was installed with a few hiccups. When I visited Talisker a couple of months ago, there were no distillery tours and only a couple of visitors were permitted into the shop at each time. Subject to temperature scans and handwashing. The landscape of tourism, for now, has changed, with our friends at the [Scotch Whisky Association](#), commenting: 'Tourism is a vital industry for Scotland, and it's been one of the sectors hardest hit by the coronavirus. Scotch Whisky tourism is an important part of this, with more than 2 million visitors now coming to our distillery visitor

centres around Scotland every year. We have a very direct interest in how tourism recovers – for our companies, since many smaller distilleries rely on tourism for over half of their income, and also for the hotels, restaurants, pubs and other attractions that whisky distilleries work alongside locally.'

There are specific pages for most distilleries and [their plans](#) are available including [Kilchoman](#), last updated in July. I do wonder how current these are overall? Misinformation during this pandemic is a concern and so is the management and release of accurate information.

Generally, there's a difficult balancing act at play in 2020. The distilleries that rely to a greater extent on footfall into their shops, cafes and tours. The impact on the surrounding economy; no better underlined than the island economies of Scotland that rely so heavily on tourism. Take the Isle of Skye for instance, where [unemployment has increased](#) by 421% and food poverty is a real concern.

What we have noticed is that the distilleries that are smaller in size and possibly family or independently owned, have been able to react and diversify from their original plans for this year. You can think of the Diageo or Chivas plants as being supertankers and distilleries such as Dornoch, Kilchoman etc. mere paddleboats. Yet they've been able to change course and react to the situation.

For Kilchoman, we've seen a variety of online tastings being organised this year and a resemblance of thinking outside of the box – whilst shipping things in boxes. Since 2011, they've been able to bottle their releases onsite which gives them a certain flexibility and control. An accessible convenience that must be jealously eyed by independents or other distilleries that are patiently waiting their turn on the conveyor belts at bottling halls. Facilities that are now musical chairs of bottles and potential releases; each eager to break out into the world and onto the retail stage.

As such we have 2 recent Kilchoman releases today. Dispatched from the relative sanctuary of Islay, where there have been only a handful of cases last time we checked. These are available from a variety of retailers, so it pays to shop around. On paper at least, we like the idea of a cask strength festive release. Something we could all do with to see off this year!

Kilchoman Fino Sherry Cask Matured 2020 Release – review
Bottled at 46% strength and using 2014 and 2016 distillations, this has been fully matured in 11 fresh and 1 refill Fino sherry butts from Bodega Miguel Martin. Available from a variety of retailers including Master of Malt for [£74.95](#), The Whisky Exchange for [£73.75](#).

Colour: a light honey.

On the nose: an accessible layer of peat greets us, saline-like with a touch of medicinal. Warmed salted peanuts, Weetabix defines the cereals, crystallised ginger and some honey. A well-worn threadbare leather, 5-spice, broken pebbles underline a mineral aspect. The Fino doesn't dominate and allows the coastal element to showcase itself as well. Adding water has a variable effect, washing out some character but unlocking olives, crackers and synthetic vanilla.

In the mouth: again, the peat welcomes us in, but doesn't grab us by the neck. There's a woolly jumper of comfort offered by the Fino. Some wet tweed and a touch of rubber on the finish. It is very gentle and effortless overall. Some golden syrup, salty midway, red apples with malted milk and chocolate. Water is best avoided as it becomes ashy, with limescale and drying in parts.

Score: 6/10



Kilchoman Machir Bay Cask Strength Festive Edition – review
Bottled at 58.6% strength, this is a limited edition to wash away 2020. Available from a variety of retailers including Master of Malt for [£54.95](#), The Whisky Exchange for [£51.95](#).

Colour: muggy water.

On the nose: surprisingly mellow, white pepper with some table salt. Dulce, cabbage water, green pears and a twist of lime. Almost eucalyptus in places with sawdust as well. Water unlocks fir trees, vanilla and more cream.

In the mouth: odd in a way, as the peat is there alright, but it feels as if there's something in between the palate and its full effect. Maybe we're all too used to living behind masks and perspex nowadays? Hard to explain, muffled or even muzzled, I suppose is the best description. Kiwi fruit, lime juice and a pleasing oily texture. Good quality cider vinegar, apples and grapefruit. Adding water I felt wasn't hugely beneficial.

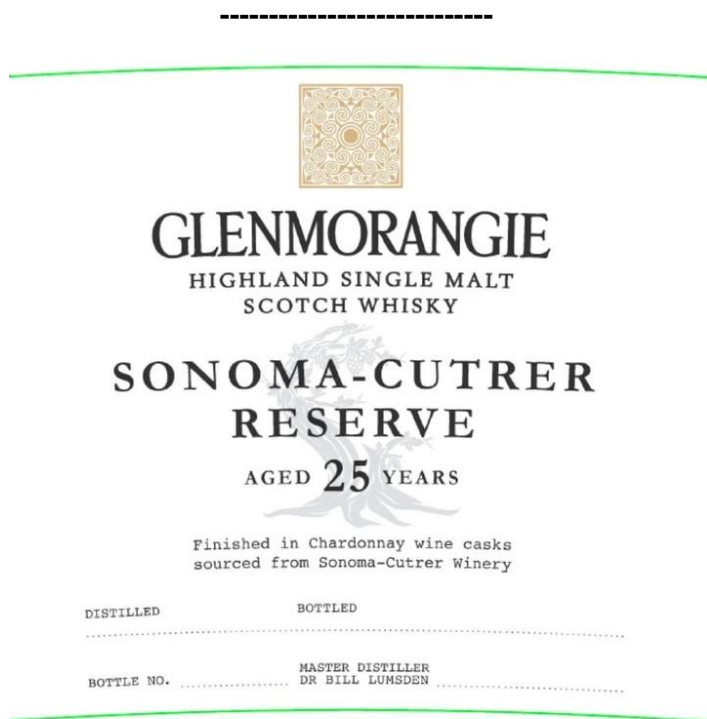
Score: 6/10

Conclusions

Both of these are solid enough whiskies but I was expecting a bit more from each of them. The Fino has some enjoyable complexity on the nose and is a little more pedestrian on the palate. If you like the sherry style of Fino and a bottle that you can reach for and enjoy without too much effort, then it is for you. Ideally, a bottling of 50% strength might have given us a wee bit more to appreciate.

The cask strength festive bottling lacks the drama and vigour that comes with such an abv level. Even the peat felt a little dampened down as if the embers and earthy tones had been smothered in an attempt to put out the raging beast. I was left feeling that Caol Ila does a better job of cask strength, but at least this is better than the feeble [Ardbeg Wee Beastie](#), which is a pantomime of a whisky.

Neither release represents the best of Kilchoman, either in single cask form or within their core range. At times, I do wonder whether we're going to see releases into 2021 that attempt to fill the revenue gap around footfall, shop sales and such like? You cannot criticise such a move in reality, given the times we're in. I'd like to see more deviations from the norm; give us something wacky and dangerous. Neither of these excels on that front and each falls into a *Steady Eddie* sense of reliability. It is a close call with the Fino just having the edge.



Glenmorangie Sonoma-Cutrer Reserve is a highland single malt Scotch whisky that has been aged for 25 years and finished in Chardonnay wine casks sourced from Sonoma-Cutrer Winery.

GLENMORANGIE SONOMA-CUTRER RESERVE 25 YEAR

Glenmorangie is known for single malt finished in specialty barrels such as sherry, port, and Sauternes among many others. However this appears to be the first chardonnay finish for the brand.

What We Know:

The single malt is "long finished" in chardonnay casks from celebrated Sonoma Valley winery, Sonoma-Cutrer. Aged for 25 years, it is bottled without chill-filtration at 50.4% ABV.

DISTILLER'S THANKSGIVING WEEK ROUNDUP – NOVEMBER 26, 2020

by [Stephanie Moreno](#) - November 26, 2020

The winter holidays are right around the corner along with Distiller's holiday gift guides. But before we release our gift picks, we've got a few new releases to share first. With the Thanksgiving holiday, there weren't as many new releases as in the past few weeks. There were a few new whiskey announcements, however, that we couldn't wait until next week to share. For starters, Islay favorite Ardbeg revealed plans for a new addition to its portfolio: Ardbeg 25 Year. This bottling will mark the oldest release in the brand's current range of single malt whiskies. Also announced this week was a new 15 Year Single Barrel from George Dickel which can be purchased by the bottle or the barrel, if you're so inclined.

Moving on to other spirits categories, there's a new limited edition tequila from Código 1530 named in honor of American country music legend George Strait, the brand's co-founder. The King of Country actually selected the barrels himself. Next, Maison Ferrand, maker of Plantation Rum and Ferrand Cognac, revealed plans for a new aging cellar... that floats! We've got the details for these releases and more for you below. Let's get to Distiller's Thanksgiving Week Roundup for November 26, 2020!

ARDBEG 25 YEAR TO ARRIVE IN THE US IN EARLY 2021

[Ardbeg 25 Year](#) is a new permanent addition to the brand's portfolio. It contains whisky distilled in the 1990s when very little whisky was being produced before the distillery closed again in 1991. Full time production resumed in 1997 after The Glenmorangie Company purchased the distillery. "After a quarter of a century in the cask, you'd be forgiven for imagining that Ardbeg 25 Year would have lost some of the hallmark Ardbeg smoky punch," said Ardbeg Whisky Creator Dr. Bill Lumsden. "I can assure you it hasn't. And yet there's also a remarkable complexity and elegance to this whisky that I find utterly captivating. It's unmistakably Ardbeg, but unlike any Ardbeg you've tasted before."



Ardbeg 25 Year

Ardbeg 25 Year is bottled at 46% ABV without [chill-filtration](#). It's presented in a gun-metal bottle coupled with a presentation box wrapped with a unique metal "cage", a modern take on the brand's knotwork design. Only a few countries will see this release in late 2020, but a global launch is expected in early 2021 with the US getting its allotment in January. SRP \$850.

GEORGE DICKEL INTRODUCES 15 YEAR SINGLE BARREL

This [15 year-old Tennessee whisky](#) from George Dickel hails from one single barrel. As is the nature with single barrel releases, the proof and taste will vary from barrel to barrel. The proof for this bottling ranges from 40% ABV to as high as 52.3% ABV. It is minimally filtered with little water added. This single barrel release is available by the bottle or by the barrel.

Folks or businesses that do buy the barrel can pick the highest proof options that were matured on the top tiers of the warehouse. Additionally they can add custom branding or messages to the bottle. Available initially in CA, DE, FL, GA, TN, and TX as of November 2020 with more markets to follow in January 2021. SRP \$59.99.



**George Dickel Tennessee Single Barrel 15 Year
FIRST COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOWMORE AND ASTON MARTIN
REVEALED**

[Black Bowmore DB5 1964](#) is the first collaboration between Bowmore Distillery and luxury British sports car maker Aston Martin. It was distilled on November 5, 1964 and was part of the first distillation after the distillery added a new boiler to the distillery that year. This new boiler allowed them to move from coal fire to steam. This year also is notable for the Aston Martin DB5, as it was featured in the 1964 James Bond film "Goldfinger." The bottle was crafted by Scottish glass studio Glasstorm which designed the bottle to be a replica of an Aston Martin DB5 piston.

The single malt was aged for 31 years in a Williams & Humbert oloroso sherry butt. Just 25 bottles were produced and availability is set to begin in late autumn 2020. SRP \$65,000.



Black Bowmore DB5 1964 / Source: Ardbeg

MAISON FERRAND ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF BARGE 166

This week, Maison Ferrand disclosed details for its upcoming launch of the world's first floating aging cellar. The brand restored a 1948 Freycinet barge, Barge 166, and have equipped it to house 1,500 30-liter barrels. This floating cellar is scheduled to drop its anchor in the Seine at Issy-les-Moulineaux in Spring 2021. Here, Maison Ferrand plans to study the continuous movement on water called dynamic aging.

In addition to aging rum and cognac casks, the brand will also welcome other producers to age their spirits on Barge 166. In particular, Swedish distillery Mackmyra will be invited on board to age some casks of whisky. Furthermore, Maison Ferrand will offer to the public an opportunity to purchase and select a type of barrel of [Plantation Rum](#) or [Ferrand Cognac](#) to age. They will be invited to visit the barge and decide when to bottle it with the guidance of Margaux Lespinasse, Maison Ferrand Private Casks Manager. Please note that this program is very much dependent on local liquor laws.

If you'd like to keep updated with the Barge, you can follow [Maison Ferrand](#).



Maison Ferrand BARGE 166 / Source: Maison Ferrand

REDBREAST LAUNCHES LIMITED EDITION BIRD FEEDER IN TIME FOR WINTER

In a partnership with [BirdLife International](#), Redbreast announced a limited edition Project Wingman Bird Feeder Bottle. This limited edition bottle comes equipped with a copper whiskey casing that transforms into a bird feeder. The single pot still brand will donate €15 for every limited edition [Redbreast 12 Year](#) sold to the organization.

"After much anticipation, we are extremely excited to launch the beautifully crafted whiskey casing that has been specially designed to double up as a bird feeder. We worked closely with BirdLife International to ensure the bird feeder honors our mission of helping to protect not only Robins, but all common birds, as we move into the colder months and food begins to become scarce. We are thrilled to provide this at no additional cost to Redbreast fans across the globe and simultaneously further support the work of BirdLife International by donating €15 for each limited edition bottle sold", explains Laura Hanratty, Head of Prestige and Speciality Brands at Irish Distillers.

This edition is limited to 2,000 bottles and is available for pre-order from the [Redbreast website](#) for €60/~\$71 for a limited time. The next opportunity to purchase a bottle is 9am GMT on November 30th, and again on December 7th.



Redbreast Project Wingman Bird Feeder Bottle / Source: Redbreast

TIDBITS FROM AROUND THE SPIRITS WORLD

Let's take a quick look at what else is going on around the world this week ...

TATTERSALL RELEASES TWO BOTTLED IN BOND BOURBONS

This week, Tattersall Distilling Co. released two Bottled in Bond bourbons marking the first bonded spirits to be released in Minnesota since Prohibition. Each release is made using local grains and aged in Minnesota white oak barrels for between 4-5 years. Both the [Wheated Bourbon](#) and [High-Rye Bourbon Bottled in Bond](#) bottles are available in limited quantities throughout Minnesota as of November 2020. SRP for each \$49.99.



Tattersall Releases Two Bottled in Bond Bourbons / Source: Tattersall Distilling

CÓDIGO 1530 EXTRA AÑEJO GEORGE STRAIT ORIGEN

This [limited edition extra añejo tequila](#) is bottled from six French oak barrels which held Napa cabernet sauvignon wine. The barrels were selected by Código Tequila co-founder and country legend George Strait himself. Only 1,200 bottles were produced and are available as of November 2020. SRP \$349.99.



Código 1530 Extra Añejo George Strait Origen

CUTWATER TEQUILA AÑEJO

This [añejo tequila](#) is made in collaboration with Cutwater Spirits based in San Diego and the Orendain Distillery (NOM 1110) based in Jalisco, Mexico. Cutwater Master Distiller Yuseff Cherney oversees production in Jalisco where there's a dedicated area for Cutwater Tequila production. Using 100% blue weber agave, the añejo expression spends just over a year in former Cutwater whiskey barrels in Jalisco. SRP \$49.99.



Cutwater Tequila Añejo / Source: Cutwater Tequila

Want to know what other Distiller users around the world think of Ardbeg 25 Year when they get their hands on a bottle?
With Distiller, you'll always know what's in the bottle before you spend a cent. Rate, Review, and Discover spirits. Head on over to [Distiller](#), or download the app for [iOS](#) and [Android](#) today!
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Scotland's Glasgow Distillery Debuts A New Peated Single Malt

By [Hannah Kanik](#) / December 3, 2020

Scotland's Glasgow Distillery recently launched its latest release — the Glasgow 1770 Peated Rich & Smoky single malt whisky. This malt is created from malted barley that's been smoked with a heather-rich peat of the Scottish Highlands, combined with Loch Katrine water and then distilled in traditional copper pot stills. The result is said to be a spirit with soft and smoky notes. This is Glasgow's second peated single malt, following Peated Release No. 1. Glasgow 1770 Peated Rich & Smoky has been matured in virgin oak and finished in Pedro Ximenez sherry casks, compared to the inaugural Peated release that was matured in first-fill ex-sherry casks and finished in virgin oak. *Glasgow 1770 Peated Rich & Smoky (image via Glasgow Distillery)* Official tasting notes indicate that, on the nose, the latest Glasgow 1770 Peated "offers sweet smoke and rich toffee with notes of vibrant vanilla, dried dark fruits and cracked black peppercorn spice with subtle hints of flamed orange.

"Tobacco leaf and rich dark toffee dominate the palate with a background of sweet soft peat and gentle earthy undertones. The finish is incredibly smooth with notes of salted caramel, liquorice, and lingering spice."

Peated Release No. 1 has picked up a round of awards since being released, including Best Lowland Single Malt at the International Whisky Awards. "We would like to encourage those who have tried our inaugural release to share their thoughts on our new peated release," said the distillery team [in a prepared statement](#). "We'd love consumers to taste both iterations side by side and let us know what they think."

The Glasgow 1770 Peated Rich & Smoky is bottled at 46% alcohol by volume, is non-chill filtered and natural in color. It's available at a suggested retail price of £49, or around \$70 USD.

Nestle set to release KitKat that's been aged in Scottish whisky cask from Islay

The chocolate for the KitKat has been made using cacao nibs aged for 180 days in barrels once used for aging Islay Scotch whisky.



The new KitKats are described as having a "delicate aroma and taste of whisky". (Image: Nestle Japan)

Join thousands of others who have signed up to the weekly Scotland Now newsletter for the latest Scottish heritage and culture news. When you subscribe we will use the information you provide to send you these newsletters. Sometimes they'll include recommendations for other related newsletters or services we offer. Our [Privacy Notice](#) explains more about how we use your data, and your rights. You can unsubscribe at any time. Combining [whisky](#) and [chocolate](#) was always going to a winner. And Nestlé Japan has done just that with their latest release. The country is known for their love of wacky KitKat flavours, and now the firm behind the brand has just created one made from chocolate that has been aged in Scotch whisky barrels for 180 days.



The new whisky-aged KitKat. (Image: Nestle Japan)

Not content with just any flavour, renowned Japanese patissier Yasumasa Takagi used whisky casks from Islay - known for their smoky and medicinal notes of peat.

The biscuit, dubbed 'Whisky Barrel Aged', is part of the high-end KitKat Chocolatory boutique range.

The chocolate for the KitKat has been made using cacao nibs aged for 180 days in barrels once used for aging Scotch whisky from the famous island. Each cask is then manually rotated once a week to ensure all the cacao nibs inside come into contact with the barrel.

The cacao has been chosen for its mellowness to ensure the peat flavours shine through.

Each bar will go on sale for ¥300 JPY (approximately £2.15) at KitKat Chocolatory boutiques across Japan this month.

The premium KitKat is described as having a "delicate aroma and taste of whisky" with a deep and rich body.

Even the packaging has been designed to enhance the premium feel, with an aesthetic designed to give off a "feeling of relaxation."

sometimes the packaging plays a big part, from hand-crafted ceramic bottles to exquisite crystal decanters housed in fetching wooden boxes. Sure, there are [plenty of great spirits to be had for less you can give](#), but if you're looking for some truly over-the-top bottles to gift this year, we've got you covered with this curation of classics and new releases.

Louis XIII Cognac



Photo: Courtesy of Louis XIII

[Louis XIII](#) is produced by the Remy Martin cognac house, but this luxury spirit soars far beyond the regular lineup, which is already quite good. Over 1,200 eaux-de-vis from Grande Champagne are blended together in a bottle of Louis XIII, all of which have been aged in French limousin oak. The brand's focus is more on the legacy of its cellar masters than an age statement, but the cognac in the blend is typically said to be somewhere between 40 and 100 years old. The resulting spirit is luscious, with notes of ripe fruit, candied citrus, vanilla, oak and spice. A special cognac like this surely should come in a decanter that lives up to the quality of the liquid within, so the bottle is made of hand-crafted crystal. The neck contains 20-karat gold and the stopper is embedded with a chip that gives you access to the Louis XIII Society where you'll find exclusive content online. Louis XIII is truly a classic in the world of luxury spirits.

[BUY NOW: \\$4,100](#)

DECEMBER 9, 2020

From Pappy Van Winkle to The Macallan, 11 Ultra-Premium Spirits Worth Shelling Out for This Season

Bank-bruising bottles from some of the world's best distilleries.

By [JEREMY REPANICH](#)



Photo: Courtesy of Maison Ferrand

There's a whole world of ultra-premium and extremely expensive spirits out there, and for those who can afford these bottles the holiday season is a great time to go hunting. There are really rare luxury releases in most spirits categories, including [cognac](#), scotch, bourbon, [tequila](#) and even [rum](#). What makes these bottles so pricey? It's often due to how limited the releases are. Perhaps it's the literal last drops from a single vintage, or maybe the liquid consists of a blend that includes liquid that was distilled decades ago. And

Pappy Van Winkle 15



Courtesy of the Van Winkle family

By now you are certainly well aware of the legendary [Pappy Van Winkle](#). This wheated bourbon, distilled at Buffalo Trace (although the older bottles out there may still contain Stitzel-Weller produced whiskey), is as well known for its fame as it is for its quality. Of course, you can find cheaper bottles out there that have a similar flavor profile, like WL Weller (although this isn't so cheap anymore) or even, arguably, Maker's Mark. But these are much younger bourbons, so for those who insist on the real deal be prepared to pay a premium. There are expressions ranging from 10 to 23 years of age, the latter of which has as many fans as it does detractors because of how oaky it is. The best bottle in the lineup is probably Pappy 15, which hits the sweet spot as far as aging and combines intensely fruity notes with sweet flavors of caramel and vanilla into an excellent (and expensive) drinking experience. Any of the Pappy expressions can be tough to find online, but if you're in New York, you can currently get the [15](#) and [Old Rip 10 Year](#) delivered to your door same day.

[BUY NOW: \\$1,521](#)

Black Bowmore DB5 1964



Photo: Courtesy of Beam Suntory

Classic [whisky](#) and vintage cars have come together for this latest release in the Black [Bowmore](#) series of ultra-aged, ultra-expensive [single malt](#) whisky. Distilled in 1964, the whisky was aged for 31 years in a first-fill Oloroso sherry butt. It's full of tropical fruit, maraschino cherry, chocolate and spice notes, but is not overly oaky for a whisky this old. Aston Martin launched its DB5 the year before this whisky was born and it has become an iconic automobile in the years following, even appearing in the James Bond film *Goldfinger*. Each bottle (there are only 25) was hand-made by a Scottish glass studio, includes a real Aston Martin piston in the design and comes housed in a bespoke case made from calfskin. This is one of the most expensive bottles of whisky you can find right now, so interested parties should contact the distillery directly.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Patrón en Lalique: Serie 2



[Patrón](#) is known as one of the world's best-selling ultra-premium tequila brands, but there are some expressions available that put an even higher premium on that premium. Patrón en Lalique: Serie 2 is a decadent extra-anejo tequila meant for contemplative sipping. It's aged for eight years in a combination of French oak casks, sherry butts and American oak barrels. This extended maturation period in different types of wood puts this tequila on par with a fine single malt or cognac. While the earthy notes of agave are still present, a myriad of rich, syrupy, chocolatey flavors mingle together into a completely unique flavor profile. The bottle is made of beautiful Lalique crystal and comes housed inside a wooden box that spins open, ensuring a showstopping presentation.

[BUY NOW: \\$7,500](#)

Ferrand Cognac Legendaire



Photo: Courtesy of Maison Ferrand

This new cognac from French producer [Maison Ferrand](#) is special in a few regards. First of all, this limited release (500 bottles annually) is made up of a blend of eaux-de-vis, some of which date back nearly 100 years aging in the cellars beneath the manor. The blend is then finished in what is called a Zebra barrel, in which some oak staves have been replaced with new ones to impart

a dose of tannins and other flavors to the cognac that would not ordinarily be there. As expected with a luxury spirit like this, the presentation is stunning. The decanter was made by French crystal maker Waltersperger and it comes housed in a wooden box with a whimsical hand door knocker springing from the front. Look for notes of baking spice, blackberry, anise, cocoa and vanilla in every sip.

[BUY NOW: \\$2,282](#)

Fettercairn 46 Year Old



Photo: courtesy Fettercairn

[Fettercairn](#) is a Highland distillery with a long history dating back to the first half of the 19th century, though the general public might not be so familiar with the name. The core lineup consists of whiskies aging from 12 to 50 years old, but now a 46-year-old whisky has joined the family. It was distilled on May 8th, 1973 and aged for most of its time in ex-bourbon barrels, with four years spent in 40-year-old Tawny port pipes as well. This infused the vanilla and oak top flavors with notes of tropical fruit, coffee and a touch of licorice on the palate. The whisky was bottled at 42.5 percent ABV with no chill filtration or color added.

[BUY NOW: \\$9,155](#)

Black Tot British Last Consignment



Photo: Courtesy of Black Tot

Rum does not generally achieve the same soaring price range as whiskey or cognac, even when it's been aged for decades. There are exceptions, however, like this rare expression from [Black Tot](#). What makes this rum so unique is that it's an historical artifact of sorts, the last available liquid from the British Royal Navy's stocks that remained untouched for 40 years in stone flagons. Since then, it has occasionally seen the inside of a glass for royal occasions, but Black Tot has obtained this storied liquid and bottled it at 95 proof, which the brand says is very close to "the original Navy issuing strength." Take a sip and let this rummy time machine transport you back to the days of British naval bicorn hats.

[BUY NOW: \\$856](#)

The Dalmore Rare and Aged



Photo: courtesy The Dalmore

[The Dalmore](#) is no stranger to expensive whisky releases, but this trio of ultra-aged single malts truly lives up to the name Rare & Aged—it's released in very limited quantities and it's really old. The collection is as follows: a 35-year-old aged in bourbon, sherry and port barrels; a 40-year-old aged in bourbon, sherry and first-fill bourbon barrels; and a 45-year-old aged in bourbon, vintage port pipes and first-fill bourbon barrels. These are all delicious whiskies with varying degrees of tropical fruits, cinnamon and vanilla on the palate. The best thing about them is that, surprisingly given their age, they do not taste overly tannic or oaky.

[BUY NOW: \\$4,964 \(FOR THE 35\)](#)

Clase Azul Ultra



Photo: Courtesy of Clase Azul

As the tequila category continues to grow, especially in the ultra-premium sector, luxury brands continue to pop up. One of the first to claim this ground is [Clase Azul](#), which launched in the late '90s and hit its stride as a luxury release a decade later. What makes this tequila so expensive? The packaging definitely plays a big role here, as each expression comes in a handmade painted ceramic decanter. The Ultra expression bottle includes platinum, sterling silver and 24-carat gold as well, making this a great choice to upcycle for another use such as a lamp (something the brand strongly encourages). As for the liquid, this extra-anejo tequila is aged for five years in ex-sherry casks, infusing the earthy, vegetal agave notes with layers of fig, dried cherry and spice.

[BUY NOW: \\$1,700](#)

The Macallan Fine & Rare: 1993 Edition



Photo: Courtesy of Macallan

[The Macallan's](#) Fine & Rare collection contains some of the most expensive vintage-dated single malts you can find that are not for sale at auction. These whiskies are hard to obtain and coveted by collectors when they do manage to score a bottle. The most recent release is the 1993 edition, aged in sherry casks (as nearly all Macallan is) for 27 years and is bottled at 50.2 percent ABV. Expect to find notes of chocolate, cinnamon, ginger and leather. And yes, expensive whisky like this is bound to sit on a collector's shelf for many years, but if you have the means why not buy one bottle to save and one to sip. After all, you can't enjoy whisky unless you actually pour a dram.

Interested buyers should contact the distillery at inquiries.us@themacallan.com.

[LEARN MORE \\$1,700](#)

Whiskey Review: Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon

By [John Dover](#) / December 10, 2020

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

[Old Forester](#) has a long tradition as one of the standout names in American whiskey and bourbon reaching back to 1870 when Gavin Brown, a former pharmaceuticals salesman, bottled his first barrels of bourbon. As an homage, [Brown Forman master distiller Chris Morris](#) has teamed up with [master taster, Jackie Zykan](#) to craft the Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon.

My sample, taken from [batch 3 of 3 of the anniversary distillation](#), allows for the flavors of the past to mingle with the innovations that have come since. I have gone on at length in other reviews about my appreciation for tradition and the discipline shaped from building off of the crafting process. In this case, I believe the past processes and recipes that built the Old Forester brand might have been better off left in the safe, while instead taking the time to craft a more unique, and nuanced bourbon with an eye on where the company wants to go vs. where they came from.

I did appreciate the attention and detail spent on crafting these 150-year anniversary batches, in that they consist "of 150 barrels chosen specially by Chris, made from wood seasoned 150 days. Jackie then personally tasted and batched all 150 barrels into three very distinct flavor profiles and proof points showcasing the taste variations among barrels depending on where they rest in the Old Forester barrelhouses." These details are fun and show the dedication to putting forth an interesting product, but I wish it hit more of the marks that I look for in a fine sipper.

Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon (Image via Brown-Forman)

Tasting Notes: Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon (Batch 3)

Vital Stats: Bottled at 126.8 proof, this unfiltered bourbon was pulled from the third of three batches. Priced at around \$150 per 750 ml bottle.

Appearance: The color in the glass is of rich maple syrup with a viscosity that coats evenly as you swirl.

Nose: There is a sour note that might take you by surprise with its briny nature. Once that settles into the nose you will pick up some butterscotch, raisin and the more traditional vanilla and oak characteristics as well.

Palate: The bourbon hits the tongue with a bright front and a bit of a medicinal twang for the first few sips. The sweetness is reminiscent of light brown sugar until the flavor of butterscotch pudding jumps in. The heat hits after a second and is a bit sharp but does not hold on too long. The sweeter notes take center stage moving forward.

With ice, it smooths out a bit but still has the medicinal aftertaste and has a bit of white bread flavor on the end.

The Takeaway

Summary

The Old Forester diehards will probably dig into this anniversary edition with optimism and intrigue at sampling the past that helped to shape this brand into what it is today. My palate was not blown away by the medicinal notes and sour aftertaste. Not every family legacy can charm the cold heart of a pessimistic critic, and this whisky is my shining example of that.

2.5 User Rating 5 (1 vote)

The 9 Best Cheap Scotches to Drink in 2020

Smoky peats, single malts, and blended scotches on a budget.

Written by - [Betsy Andrews](#) - Published 12/09/20

Our editors independently research, test, and recommend the best products; you can learn more about our [review process here](#). We may receive commissions on purchases made from our chosen links.

It's isn't necessary to dig deep in your pockets for a loveable whisky, says Flavien Desoblin, owner of New York's [Brandy Library](#) and [Cooper & Oak](#).

"Sipping was once elevated to a much higher price tag, but distilleries have realized that they need to put forward affordable [entry-level scotches](#)."

Nowadays, there are so many good ones available that bottles with lower age statements—scotches aged 12, 10 or even less—are "good even though they're young," he says. Scotches like these, which generally clock in around \$50, are great for both mixing and sipping neat, on the rocks, with a bit of water or soda, or any way you want. At these prices, such drams are "the perfect new standard for every day," says Desoblin.

What should you look for in a great, everyday scotch? Layered nuance, says Crystal Chasse, beverage director of New York's [Talk Story Rooftop](#). "The beginning, mid-palate, and finish will all have their own expressions, taking you on some sort of journey." Here are our expert picks of the best cheap scotches to drink right now.

Best Overall: Johnnie Walker Black Label 12 Year Old

"At the end of the day, there's a reason why this whisky is number one," says Desoblin. "People just seem to long for it." Johnnie Walker Black Label is created using nearly 40 single malt and grain whiskies sourced from all over Scotland, each aged for at least 12 years. The world's best-selling scotch whisky, first created by grocer John Walker in the 1820s, is "a solid blended dram and a sure value," says Desoblin. It starts off round and soft, as he describes it, but it evolves into a richer, smoke-backed mid-palate with orange and bitter chocolate notes and a significantly long finish.

Best for Sipping: Glenfarclas 10 Year Old Single Malt

This scotch from Glenfarclas, a sixth-generation family distillery in Speyside, is “a benchmark for the entry-level sip,” says Desoblin. It’s aged exclusively in second- and third-fill oloroso sherry butts, so “its rich character is already showing at just 10 years old,” he notes.

A wonderful aperitif, it offers plenty of dried fruit flavors from the sherry [casks](#), along with cake spices, vanilla and a pear-like sweetness. Its straw-like hue belies its depth, yet its richness is balanced by its silky body. A smoky scotch can overwhelm your palate, but this lithe dram will do just the opposite, whetting your appetite for the meal ahead.

Best for Cocktails: Bowmore 12 Year Old Single Malt

With [scotch cocktails](#), says Chasse, you want to feel like you’re enhancing the spirit with other ingredients, but you don’t want those ingredients to overwhelm the whisky. “Bowmore has the right amount of smoke, with sweetness and layering, so whatever other flavors you’re pairing it with [will] have enough to bounce off,” she says. “Tropical fruit, vanilla, plenty of black pepper and other spices—all of these things it delivers are very easy to incorporate with other flavors in a cocktail.”

Nevertheless, it’s particularly great with a classic cocktail that’s not too fussy, like a “wintery and warm” [Rob Roy](#). “You don’t need a lot of extra ingredients because you’re getting all that flavor from [the] spirit itself,” says Chasse.

Best Single Malt: The Balvenie 12 Year Old DoubleWood

As with a lot of spirits, says Chasse, the lower-priced expression exemplifies a brand. This 12-year-old entry scotch speaks to “the heart and soul” of its distillery, she says. “The vanilla and cinnamon spice that come through are so indicative of Balvenie.” But its special double-wood [aging](#), first in former bourbon barrels made of American oak and then in first-fill oloroso sherry butts, add unique layers of flavor. Its roundness is abetted by “those nice, raisinated notes” from the fortified wine, yet it’s balanced enough that it’s not overly sweet. All in all, it’s a lot of scotch for the price.

Best Blended: Dewar’s 12 Year Old Blended

Age statements are somewhat of a rarity in blended scotches, and for those of us who’ve put single malts on a pedestal, the age statement on this one might seem presumptuous. “But this is a great example of a blended scotch that can stand up to a single malt,” says Chasse.

A blend of single malt and grain whiskies, Dewar’s 12 Year Old Whisky is aged in both oak and sherry barrels, providing rich nuances of honey and vanilla. “It’s not on the smokey side,” says Chasse, “and that gives it an approachability that makes it a great scotch to get people into the category.”

Best Smoky: Laphroaig 10 Year Old Islay Single Malt

“I personally love peaty scotches,” says Chasse, “because they are so indicative of utilizing local ingredients and making a spirit in a specific place.” They speak of the terroir of the Scottish bogs, where the peat burns to make the fire that dries malted or sprouted grain.

In Laphroaig, peat flavor is at the forefront. “I can imagine being on a blustery field the moment I pick up the glass,” says Chasse. Although smoke is prominent, it’s not overpowering, and that’s what makes the scotch so good. “Anything that’s one note is not interesting,” she says. But from the peat to the vanilla and oak notes to the fruity backbone, “this takes the imbibor on a journey.”

Best Highlands: Glenmorangie Original 10 Year Old Single Malt

“It’s very difficult to put a regional taste difference on scotch whisky anymore,” says Desoblin. The distinctions were first codified through blenders, who used them to map out their range of choices when mixing malts from different places. But the truth is, “when it comes to their own single malts, distilleries do what they want,” explains Desoblin. So, he argues, it’s hard to say what a Highland scotch is nowadays.

Still, Desoblin has his favorites. For the Highlands, he says, “Whenever I’m presented with the original Glenmorangie 10-year-old scotch, I’m a happy camper.” Light and easy with some character and nothing harsh to it, this scotch goes down nicely with vanilla, caramel, butterscotch and citrus notes.

Best Speyside: Glenfiddich 12 Year Old Single Malt

In 1886, founder William Grant, his seven sons, and two daughters built the stone edifice of Glenfiddich by hand. The distillery that opened on Christmas in 1887 has had a long run defining the particular style of its native [Speyside](#): “fresh and fruity,” as Chasse describes it, “with orchard fruits—apple and Asian pear—and a touch of oak.”

It’s beautiful and approachable like a good Speyside should be, but that doesn’t mean it lacks oomph. Even for drinkers who like more fiery drams, this one has “enough of a backbone that if you do want to mix it in a cocktail, you definitely could,” and still have satisfying scotch flavors come through.

Best Islay: Ardbeg 10 Year Old Single Malt

“If you’re going [Islay](#), go big or go home” is Chasse’s philosophy. So don’t be fooled by the light golden color of Ardbeg’s 10-year-old single malt, a “great example of Islay scotch.” As soon as you get it near your nose, she says, you get “all the flavors of the island,” the menthol notes of the peat, the brine of the ocean, and the smoke that incorporates it all.

“It works so well though, in reality, it isn’t a heavy scotch,” says Chasse. “When you’re sipping on it, it’s light and easy to drink, so its body balances out to the boldness of the flavor in a really nice way that gets you going back sip after sip after sip.”

Why Investing In Cask Whiskey May Be A Smart Move

By [Katy Spratte Joyce](#) / December 10, 2020

Did you know that whiskey can be more than just your favorite beverage?

Besides winding down with a glass at the end of the day, this dark and delicious drink might actually belong in your investment portfolio as well. We chatted recently with Jay Bradley, founder of the UK-based [Whiskey & Wealth Club](#), to learn more.

Bradley explained that now is the time to invest in cask whiskey, particularly due to the volatility in financial markets from the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic. “We have seen an increased appetite from private investors and funds. Cask whiskey investment is increasing in popularity as investors look to hedge against inflation and the uncertainties of the markets,” he shared.

So why is this nontraditional avenue a good idea? We all know that producing whiskey is a capital and labor intensive process, as distilleries can’t profit from whiskey for years due to the long aging guidelines. “To help cover these costs and raise capital, distilleries will allow private investors to purchase these aging casks through exclusive brokers like Whiskey & Wealth Club,” Bradley expanded.



Some of the casks at Bowmore (image via Bowmore)

Whiskey must be aged, ideally between five to ten years, during which its value increases exponentially. The businessman stated that, “During this time, casks are stored in a fully insured government bonded warehouse with the insurance on each 200-litre cask of whiskey increasing year on year in line with the value. The ownership and titles are held by the investor as the asset owner, who can then decide their exit strategy after their casks have matured.” Exit strategies can include selling to private collectors or investors, bottling and labeling it yourself, selling at a whiskey auction, or selling to an existing brand.

To further break it down, whiskey’s value is largely determined by its age. So the older it is, the greater value it has. As a result, any stock that is purchased as an investment will rise as the whiskey matures. “Ireland’s largest distiller, which produces the world-famous Jameson brand, tracks the increase on its maturing stock at 18% per annum,” shared Bradley.

Another clear sign that cask whiskey investment could be a lucrative opportunity is the fact that globally, the demand for whiskey aka liquid gold is on the rise. [Forecasts show](#) that demand will continue to grow, with a particular focus on emerging markets in Africa and Asia. No pun intended, but Bradley explained that “The whiskey market is extremely liquid, should investors wish, they could sell in a shorter time. Buyers are always looking to secure already mature stock, whether these be fellow investors or labelling companies.”

Additionally, the Whiskey & Wealth team has been hearing from distilleries across the board that they are planning price increases of up to 20% in the coming months, making now a good time to secure wealth in cask whiskey. Worldwide, whiskey sales are rising, with market values on the up. Irish whiskey for example is the fastest growing premium spirit in the world. (This is according to the IWSR global benchmark for spirit data, IWSR, which shows exports have grown [by 300% in the last decade](#), with the US market for Irish whiskey worth \$1bn alone.) Scotch whisky, however, has the largest market share and remains the most valuable. It currently accounts for over 20% of the UK’s total food and drinks exports. Its export value rose [by 10.8%](#) in the last year alone, shared Bradley.

Whiskey has always been an alternative investment opportunity, though in the past, it was more of a niche market focused on private collections and experts selecting especially rare bottles. Bradley opined that this all began to change in the weeks and months leading up to the 2008 financial crisis. He stated that at that time, “There was an upward trend of high and ultra-high net worth individuals hedging their bets against markets which were set to implode”. While those investments ultimately proved to be valuable, it was a high entry costly exercise reserved for those who had the connections to purchase casks directly from distilleries and could afford to invest this way. These days, Whiskey & Wealth Club bridges the gap between investors and distillers, making the market more accessible to private investors with ultra-wholesale rates due to purchasing power and economies of scale. “Our wealth advisors support a range of clients from those looking to diversify their portfolio through to people investing for their retirement,” said Bradley. The founder

also shared that with the recent shocks to financial markets, the appetite for cask whiskey investment has grown once again. This is likely due to its asset backed nature, removing its susceptibility to economic downturn, whether regional or global, such as the current pandemic. Overall, the value of whiskey as an investment has risen significantly over the last decade. In fact, according to Whiskey & Wealth founder Bradley, whisk(e)y has fast become one of the most popular alternative investment opportunities, with rare whisky topping the [Knight Frank](#) Luxury Investment Index. According to the 2020 index, the value of whisky has risen by 564% in the last 10 years. By comparison, the value of classic cars rose by 194%, fine art by 141% and wine by 120%. Unlike rare whisky, the value of cask whiskey is tied to its age rather than the markets, making it appealing to investors in the current climate.

It's clear that investing in cask whiskey could be an interesting portfolio expansion opportunity for whiskey lovers looking to reap the rewards of this growing industry.

Best single malt whiskies

Decanter recommends a selection of top single malts to try
[Richard Woodard](#) December 12, 2020



The simple definition of a single malt whisky – the product of one distillery in a specified location – disguises the rich diversity and complexity of a drink that now spans the world.

Most people hear 'single malt' and think 'Scotland', where the multiplicity of distilleries and production techniques has taken the simple legal recipe of water, malted barley and yeast (nothing else can be added), and elevated into, at its best, an art form.

But, for all its scale, Scotland doesn't have a monopoly on the creation of single malt whiskies, and distillers all over the planet are now examining and deconstructing single malt to come up with a new world of flavour that's also a hugely rewarding one to explore. Here are eight single malts from Scotland, Ireland, England and the US.

Top single malt whiskies to try

Bushmills 2001 Feuillet Cask (Causeway Collection)

The first in a new series of ultra-limited bottlings from the Antrim distillery, this spent its last two years or so in a small Burgundy feuillet cask. Layers of warmly spiced dried fruit, then dessert apple and ripe red fruits, with a touch of black banana on the finish. It's cask strength, but easily smooth enough to cope. Alc 49%

Clynelish 14 Year Old

Whisky lovers tend to fall into two camps: those who love Clynelish, and those who are yet to try it. This classic core expression is a great place to start, offering a masterclass in complexity and balance that showcases the Highland distillery's ripe citrus fruit, distinctive waxy quality, light spice and just the merest whisper of smoke. Alc 46%

Cotswolds Sherry Cask

This is the latest terrific offering from the Cotswolds Distillery in Stourton, which makes excellent gin, as well as hugely promising young whiskies using locally grown, floor-malted barley. This is fully Sherry-matured and, while a little shy on the nose, is hugely expressive on the palate, with plum, damson, plush leather and warming nutmeg. Alc 57.4%

Craigellachie 13 Year Old

If you find a lot of modern whisky rather too smooth and polite, Craigellachie could be the antidote. Famously sulphurous off the still, mature Craig keeps some of that struck match/cordite character, but always counterbalanced by a perfumed fruitiness that brings pineapple and baked apple to mind. Distinctive, but balanced. Alc 46%

Highland Park 18 Year Old Viking Pride

What makes a whisky great? Complexity, character, balance. Longevity too – more than 20 years after its launch, this remains exceptional thanks to its restrained smoke, wonderful fragrance of fruit and flowers, and sumptuous combination of heather honey and vanilla fudge. Tasting it again is like a warm hug from an old friend. Alc 43%

Kilchoman Fino Sherry Cask

Kilchoman was the first new distillery I visited, but its inclusion here has nothing to do with sentiment. This is the latest of a consistently fine series of releases from the Islay 'farm distillery', and shows its trademark savoury, maritime smoke couched in beautiful floral and citrus aromas, with a touch of green apple. Perfumed and elegant. Alc 46%

The Glenlivet 12 Year Old Illicit Still

The Glenlivet competes with Glenfiddich for the title of best-selling malt whisky on the planet, but don't let its ubiquity put you off. This cracking new expression is a great introduction to the Glenlivet spirit character: stewed apples melting into candied pineapple with a drop of water, white flower scents and mint Toffos on the finish. The higher abv adds some grip. Alc 48%

Westland Garryana 2019 Release

In the Pacific Northwest, Westland is on a mission to investigate all the whiskey possibilities of provenance and raw materials, with this cult bottling an exploration of the unique qualities of local oak species *quercus garryana*. Youth is no hindrance to its hugely complex mix of red fruit, spice, smoke and dark chocolate, underscored by drier cereal and oak notes. Alc 50%



LAGAVULIN/LAPHROAIG/THE DALMORE/ISTOCK/UPROXX

LIFE

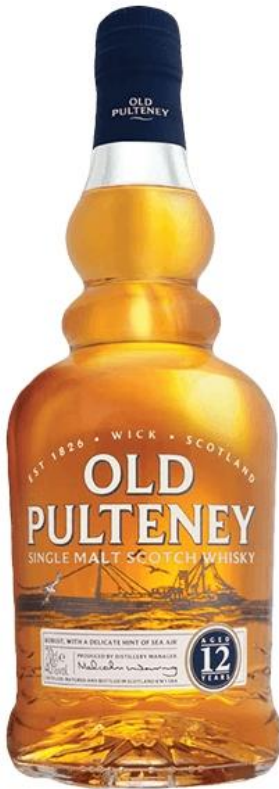
A Whisky Writer Names The Best Bottles Of Single Malt Scotch He's Ever Tasted

[CHRISTOPHER OSBURN](#) [TWITTER](#) DECEMBER 15, 2020

Christopher Osburn has spent the past fifteen years in search of "the best" — or at least his very favorite — sips of whisk(e)y on earth. He's enjoyed more drams than his doctor would dare feel comfortable with, traveled to over 20 countries testing local spirits, visited more than 50 distilleries around the globe, and amassed a [collection of bottles](#) that occupies his entire basement. In this series, he cracks open his worn "tasting diary" and shares its contents with the masses.

Here at Uproxx, we write about [bourbon](#) quite a bit. Some might say [too much](#). Alas, those people are fools. We have no plans for stopping in 2021. [We love the corn-based whiskey style](#) in all of its caramel sweet, toasted oak, and vanilla-butter glory. We sip it [neat, on the rocks](#), and in [our favorite cocktails](#). But while we represent hard for bourbon, there's another style that our team loves with a similar (if not even greater) passion. That is [single malt Scotch](#). A mini-primer before we dive too deep: To be called a [single malt scotch whisky](#), the juice must be produced at a single distillery, made using only malted barley in the mash bill (hence the phrase "single malt"), distilled in pot stills, and aged for a minimum of three years in oak barrels. Those are the basics, but from there the nuances and permutations are endless. Scotland is currently home to over 130 distilleries. And while there are scores of well-known blended scotch whiskies like Johnnie Walker, Dewar's, and Famous Grouse on the market, there are actually more single malts (with new expressions launching weekly). More even than I could have ever sampled. Though, God knows I've tried my best. Below you'll find a list of the 30 best single malt [scotch whiskies](#) I've ever tasted. I even ranked them for you. If I missed one of your favorite expressions, instead of roasting me into oblivion on Twitter, just assume I haven't tried it yet. I also didn't include ridiculously expensive bottles, though

I've been privileged to sip a fair few. Drop a comment to tell me where I messed up and which expressions I have to try before 2021's list rolls around.
30) Old Pulteney 12



OLD PULTENEY

ABV: 46%

Price: [\\$38.99](#)

The Story:

Old Pulteney 12 is aged in air-dried, hand-picked ex-bourbon barrels for over a decade. The result is a unique, slightly salty, mildly spicy, well-rounded bargain bottle of scotch that belongs in your liquor cabinet.

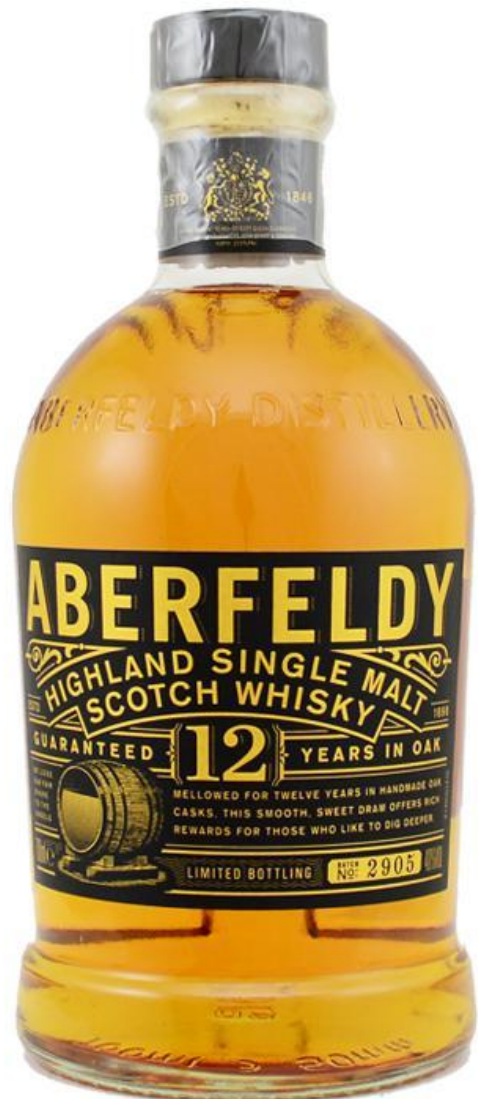
Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find hints of sweet honey, salted caramel, and subtle cinnamon. The first sip is full of sweet cream, rich brown sugar, salty ocean brine, and just a hint of baking spices. The finish is long, warming, and ends with more sugary sweetness.

Bottom Line:

If you're a beginner or someone looking to restock your bar on the cheap, you can't do much better than Old Pulteney 12.

29) Aberfeldy 12



ABERFELDY

ABV: 40%

Price: [\\$44.99](#)

The Story:

One of the best whiskies for scotch novices, Aberfeldy 12 is well known as the base for many of Dewar's blended whiskies. Made in limited quantities, this whisky was aged for 12 years in oak casks. The result is a remarkably smooth whisky with hints of clover honey, vanilla, and charred oak.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find hints of creamy vanilla, dried fruits, and rich coffee. The first sip yields flavors of floral heather, sweet honey, caramelized sugar, and just a wisp of smoke. The finish is long, warming, and ends with a nice hint of candied orange peel.

Bottom Line:

If you're new to scotch, you should definitely pick up a bottle of Aberfeldy 12. It's one of the best gateway bottles I can imagine.

28) Caol Ila 12



CAOL ILA

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$65.99](#)

The Story:

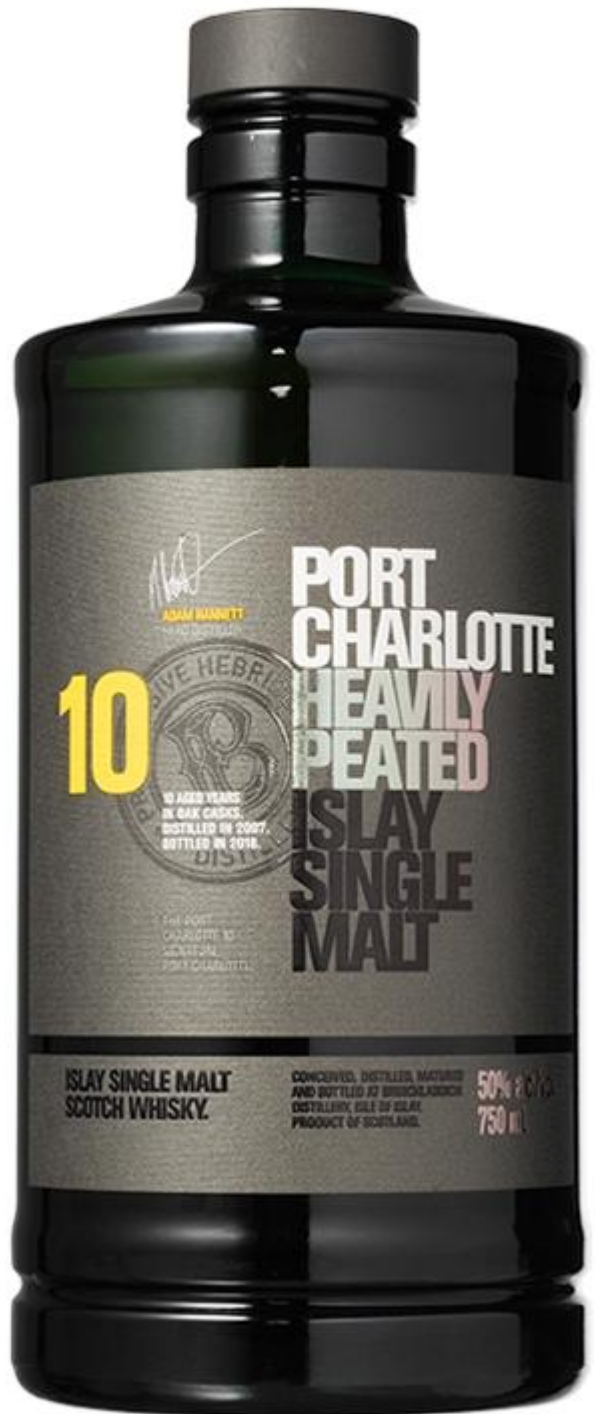
Another great entry-level bottle, Caol Ila 12 was first launched back in 2002. It's known for its soft, mellow, light nature with just a kiss of smoke. A great bottle for both Scotch novices and Islay beginners.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find hints of herbaceous mint, dried orange peels, tobacco, and a nice smoky backbone. The first sip is filled with sugary vanilla, charred oak, sweet caramel, and more subtle peat smoke. The finish is long, spicy, and smoky.

Bottom Line:

While this is a great gateway into Islay single malts, it's also a bottle you'll want to keep on your shelf for years to come.



BRUICHLADDICH

ABV: 50%

Price: [\\$76.99](#)

The Story:

This is definitely not a scotch for peat-smoked novices. It's like a campfire in a glass and certainly isn't for everyone. Named for the town of Port Charlotte on the island of Islay, this 10-year-old single malt is sure to be beloved by fans of smoky whiskies.

Tasting Notes:

This supremely complex whisky starts with a nose of ocean brine, peat smoke, cinnamon, and chocolate fudge. The first sip is filled with sweet honey, subtle citrus, buttery vanilla, and a rich, smoky backbone. The finish is long, full of pleasing heat, and ends in a final flourish of peat smoke.

Bottom Line:

This super smoky whisky should be enjoyed slowly in a Glencairn glass. Take time with it to pick out all the various flavors as they come along with the smoke.
26) Glenfiddich 12



GLENFIDDICH

ABV: 40%

Price: [\\$49.09](#)

The Story:

Glenfiddich 12 is a special bottle. Not only is it one of the best beginner bottles of scotch, but it's also one of the best always have on hand. (There's a reason it's one of the most popular bottles in the world.)

Though it's not reaching for the same heights as a high-end pick, this is a fairly complex, perfectly-balanced, and relatively nuanced expression. It matures in American oak and European oak sherry casks for 12 years before being rested in oak marrying tuns.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is full of dried fruits, sweet vanilla, and crème brûlée. The first sip is full of toasted oak, brown sugar, buttery cream, and shortbread cookies. The finish is long, mellow, and ends with a final hint of caramelized sugar.

Bottom Line:

While this isn't a crazy expensive bottle, it's definitely worthy of praise. It's supremely mellow, soft, and perfect for sharing drams with close friends.

25) The Macallan 12 Double Cask



THE

MACALLAN

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$58.99](#)

The Story:

The Macallan is one of the biggest names in the world of Scotch. Its Double Cask 12 Year was aged for over a decade in sherry seasoned American as well as European oak casks. The result is a highly complex, unique whisky you won't soon forget.

Tasting Notes:

Give this whisky a nice nosing before you take your first sip and you'll be treated to the scents of fudge, sweet sherry, and dried cherries. The first sip is filled with almond cookies, candied orange peel, sweet sugary, vanilla, and lemon zest. The finish is medium, warm, and ends with sweet chocolate and cinnamon spice.

Bottom Line:

This whisky was painstakingly produced and should be enjoyed with the same respect. Drink it neat or open up the flavors with a few drops of water.



ANCNOC

ABV: 40%

Price: [\\$56.99](#)**The Story:**

If you've never heard of AnCnoc, that's likely because Knockdhu Distillery changed its whiskies to this moniker to avoid confusion with Knockando Distillery. Name aside, this 12-year-old whisky has won numerous awards for its sherried, rich flavor.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is filled with sweet clover honey, dried orange peels, and rich vanilla. The first sip brings you hints of dried fruits, brown sugar, toffee, and subtle spicy cinnamon. The finish is long, pleasingly warm, and ends with a nice hint of spice.

Bottom Line:

AnCnoc 12 is the kind of whiskey you tell your friends about. Grab two bottles and share one with a pal over the holiday. They'll be pretty happy you did.



AUCHTENTOSHAN

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$69.99](#)**The Story:**

This highly complex lowland single malt was made using three different kinds of wood for aging (hence the name). First is Pedro Ximénez Sherry casks to give the whisky extra sweetness. The next is ex-bourbon casks to add some bold, rich flavor notes. The last is Oloroso sherry butts for sweetness to round it all out.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find obvious aromas of sweet sherry, sticky toffee, and dried cherries. The first sip is full of cocoa, subtle cinnamon, creamy vanilla, and caramelized sugar. The finish is long, warming, and well balanced with a nice combination of dark chocolate and sweet fruits.

Bottom Line:

This unique offering from Auchentoshan should be sipped neat out of a Glencairn glass while you sit in front of a warming fireplace. Let the heat from the fire and the flavors of the whiskey warm you up inside and out.

22) Bruichladdich The Classic Laddie



BRUICHLADDICH

ABV: 50%

Price: [\\$54.99](#)

The Story:

While Bruichladdich is known for its heavily peat-smoked whiskies, The Classic Laddie isn't peaty at all and that's the point. Aged in a combination of American and French oak barrels, it's mellow, rich, and filled with flavors like honey, vanilla, and caramel.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, this whisky is full of hints of toasted wood, chocolate, dried fruits, and sweet honey. The first sip is heavy on raisins, more chocolate, caramelized sugar, and sweet cinnamon. The finish is long, warming, and ends with the flavor of shortbread cookies.

Bottom Line:

When you're done drinking smoke bombs like Octomore, crack open a bottle of this very reasonably priced whisky and enjoy the nuanced, smoke-free flavors.

21) GlenDronach 12



GLENDRONACH

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$56.99](#)

The Story:

Sometimes GlenDronach gets overlooked in favor of some of the more well-known Highland distilleries. But you'd be missing out if you didn't give this award-winning whisky a try. Instead of finishing in sherry butts, GlenDronach 12 ages for 12 years in sherry casks before finishing in American oak barrels.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is full of hints of spicy cinnamon, sweet sherry, dried fruits, and caramel. Sipping it yields flavors of buttery caramel, dried orange peel, sweet chocolate, and almond cookies. The finish is medium in length, warm, and ends with hints of molasses and toffee.

Bottom Line:

If you're a fan of the flavors of whisky and sherry melding together in perfect harmony then this is the single malt for you.

20) The Balvenie DoubleWood 12



THE BALVENIE

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$53.99](#)

The Story:

There's a reason The Balvenie has been releasing its 12-year-old Doublewood for the last twenty-seven years. The whisky first spends 12 years in a combination of ex-bourbon oak casks and hogsheads before being aged for nine more months in Oloroso sherry butts.

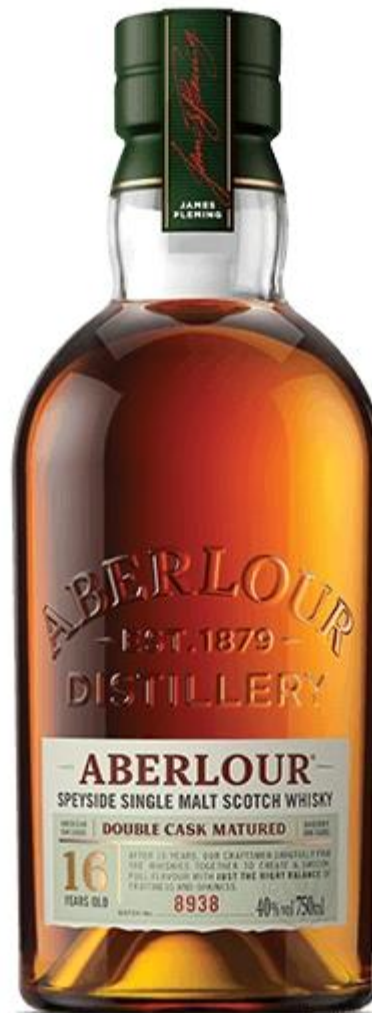
Tasting Notes:

The nose is filled with hints of raisins, dried apricots, sherry, and clover honey. The first sip keys in on almonds, spicy cinnamon, more sherry sweetness, and buttery caramel. The finish is long, filled with pleasing warmth, and ends with a final sweet, sugary flourish.

Bottom Line:

Take a look around your local liquor store and you'll see a few brands touting "double oak" or "triple oak." This is one of the best among them.

19) Aberlour 16



ABERLOUR

ABV: 40%

Price: [\\$79.99](#)

The Story:

This double casked whisky was aged for sixteen years in a combination of American oak casks and sherry butts. The result is a mature, easy sipping whisky that's perfectly balanced between spicy and sweet.

Tasting Notes:

A nose of almond cookies, nutty sweetness, and caramel starts your journey. Your palate is immersed in hints of spicy cinnamon, charred oak, buttery vanilla, and various holiday spices. The finish is long, warming, and ends with a nice hint of caramel sweetness at the very end.

Bottom Line:

The warming, subtly spicy whisky is well-suited for cold-weather sipping. Pour yourself a dram and warm up on the cold days yet to come.

18) The Balvenie Caribbean Cask



THE

BALVENIE

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$76.99](#)

The Story:

A favorite of drinkers and bartenders alike, this limited-edition expression is aged for fourteen years in oak casks before finishing in rum casks. The result is a very unique, well-balanced whisky that appeals to both rum and Scotch fans.

Tasting Notes:

Unsurprisingly, the first aromas you're treated to are those of tropical fruits, dried apricots, and sweet caramel. The first sip yields hints of buttery vanilla, candy apples, orange zest, and just a flicker of cinnamon spice. The finish is long, filled with heat, and ends with sweet, toasted vanilla beans.

Bottom Line:

If you can find a bottle of this limited-edition expression, buy it. You'll get to enjoy a truly special bottle. Enjoy it neat and imagine sitting with your feet in the sand in a tropical paradise instead of waiting out what is likely to be a long winter.

17) Glenmorangie Nectar d'Or



GLENMORANGIE

ABV: 46%

Price: [\\$71.99](#)

The Story:

If you're going to take your first dip into the Scotch world, you should definitely grab a bottle of Glenmorangie The Original 10 Year. After you've tried that, work your way up to the indulgent Nectar d'Or. First aged for ten years in ex-bourbon barrels, it's finished for two more years in Sauternes wine casks.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, this whisky is full of pleasing aromas like buttery vanilla, maple syrup, and citrus. Take a sip and you'll be treated to candied orange peel, sticky toffee pudding, and rich vanilla. The finish is medium, warming, and ends with a nice mix of sweet and baking spice.

Bottom Line:

While you can enjoy this whisky any time, it's best enjoyed after a heavy meal or accompanying a rich dessert. Basically, it's perfect for the holidays.

16) Dalwhinnie 15



DALWHINNIE

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$69.99](#)

The Story:

This Highland whisky is well known for its well-rounded, soft, sweet, honeyed flavor. Highly awarded, it was aged for 15 years in oak casks. You'd be hard-pressed to find a better sipping Scotch for the price.

Tasting Notes:

You'll find aromas of sticky toffee, caramel apples, sweet vanilla custard, and just a hint of smoke. On the palate, you'll find nutty sweetness followed by velvety vanilla and clover honey. The finish is medium, warming, and ends with hints of almond cookies and subtle smoke.

Bottom Line:

Savor this bottle. It's exceptional and should be enjoyed neat in a Glencairn glass. Maybe buy an extra bottle to ensure you don't run out.

15) Laphroaig Triple Wood



LAPHROAIG

ABV: 48%

Price: [\\$67.99](#)

The Story:

This highly regarded whisky was aged in three different types of wood (hence the triple wood moniker). The three casks are American oak, 19th-century quarter casks, and Oloroso sherry butts.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is complex with hints of brown sugar, charred oak, sweet vanilla, and walnuts. The first sip is full of the medicinal qualities Laphroaig drinkers know and love. This is followed by hints of sticky toffee pudding, sweet sherry, dried fruits, and a nice kick of peat smoke. The finish is long, warm, and filled with smoke.

Bottom Line:

You better enjoy smoky whisky if you crack open a bottle of this. But on top of peat smoke, this is a great whisky for fans of sherried Scotches (of which I am clearly one).

14) Glenlivet 18



GLENLIVET

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$129.99](#)

The Story:

Glenlivet is one of the biggest names in the Scotch world for a reason. If you've already tried the less mature offerings, make sure to purchase a bottle of Glenlivet 18. This complex, unique whisky is made with a combination of American as well as European oak casks.

Tasting Notes:

When nosing, you'll be met with scents of charred oak, walnuts, clover honey, and caramelized sugar. The first sip is filled with mint, brown sugar, candied orange peel, and licorice. The finish is long, full of warmth, and ends in a subtle hint of cinnamon spice.

Bottom Line:

This whisky isn't cheap and should be treated with care. It's a special bottle to be enjoyed on special occasions, neat.

13) Oban 18



OBAN

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$174.99](#)

The Story:

This 18-year-old single malt from Oban has won numerous awards over the years and for good reason. It's a perfect balance of pleasing peat smoke, charred oak, and sweet vanilla flavors.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is filled with classic peat smoke, bananas foster, and brown sugar. The first sip yields smoky malts, salted caramel, and subtle cooking spices. The finish is long, warm, and ends with hints of brown sugar, cocoa, and more smoke.

Bottom Line:

If you're not yet ready for the smoke bombs of Islay, Oban 18 is for you. It's a great combination of sweet and smoky and deserves to be enjoyed neat.

12) The Dalmore Cigar Malt



THE

DALMORE

ABV: 44%

Price: [\\$189.99](#)

The Story:

There's a reason The Dalmore is such a popular whisky brand. It's constantly cranking out award-winning expressions. This includes Cigar Malt, a 10-year-old single malt that was designed to be enjoyed with a rich cigar. It was matured in ex-bourbon barrels, 10-year-old Matusalem sherry butts, and then cabernet sauvignon casks.

Tasting Notes:

Aromas of spicy cinnamon, sweet vanilla, and dried fruit fill your nostrils. The palate is loaded to the tipping point with hints of sticky toffee, creamy vanilla, brown sugar, and dried orange peels. The finish is long, warming, and ends with a final puff of caramelized sugar.

Bottom Line:

Like the name suggests, enjoy a dram of this special whisky with a fine cigar. If you don't smoke, that's okay. It's still tasty as hell.

11) The Glenrothes 18



THE

GLENROTHES

ABV: 40%

Price: [\\$139.99](#)

The Story:

This Speyside single malt was matured for 18 full years in sherry seasoned oak barrels. The result is a truly indulgent, rich, sweet, complex whisky that's well worth its price tag. It's highly awarded and just as highly sippable.

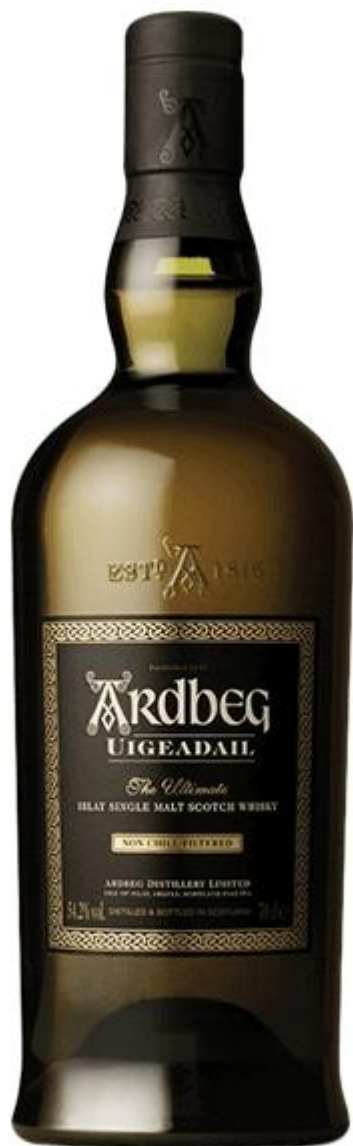
Tasting Notes:

Nosing this whisky will bring you aromas of dried orange peel, shortbread, and brown sugar. One the sip, you'll find flavors of caramel apples, candied fruits, sweet vanilla, and charred oak. The finish is long, warm, and ends with a nice kick of cracked black pepper.

Bottom Line:

Chances are, you paid a lot for a bottle of The Glenrothes 18. It's a really great whisky and should be enjoyed on a special occasion or holiday. I can think of a great one coming up!

10) Ardbeg Uigeadail



ARBEG

ABV: 54.2%

Price: [\\$74.99](#)

The Story:

You might not be able to pronounce it and that's okay. You only need to be able to point at the bottle and then pour yourself a dram of this whisky made by blending Ardbeg aged in ex-bourbon casks and sherry butts.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is filled with dried fruit, ocean brine, creamy vanilla, and nice peat smoke. The first sip is filled with hints of clover honey, caramelized sugar, almonds, and even richer woodsmoke. The finish is long, full of warmth, and ends with a final note of salty peat smoke.

Bottom Line:

Even if you're nowhere near a large body of body, taking a sip of this unique whisky will make you feel like you're standing on the shores of Islay, skin kissed by the salty sea mist.

9) The Glenlivet Nàdurra Oloroso



THE GLENLIVET

ABV: 60.7%

Price: [\\$81.99](#)

The Story:

This is a whisky for fans of sherry rested or matured Scotch as well as high proof whisky. This non-chill filtered cask strength whisky is aged in first-fill Oloroso sherry butters from Jerez, Spain (and an area where most Scotch distilleries get their sherry casks).

Tasting Notes:

The first aromas you'll be met with are those of dried cherries, sweet cinnamon, and rich caramel. The first sip is filled with dried orange peels, cocoa powers, clover honey, dried apricots, and creamy vanilla. The finish is long, full of pleasing heat, and ends with a final flourish of sweet, dried fruits.

Bottom Line:

The way you might sip a well-made sherry after a heavy meal, so should The Glenlivet Nàdurra Oloroso be enjoyed as an after-dinner digestif.

8) Bunnahabhain 18



BUNNAHABHAIN

ABV: 46.3%

Price: [\\$149.99](#)

The Story:

When it comes to Islay malts, sometimes Bunnahabhain doesn't get talked about as much as Bruichladdich, Lagavulin, and Ardbeg. But it's non-chill filtered 18-year-old offering is unpeated and a perfect respite for the smoke bombs that call the island home.

Tasting Notes:

Scents of subtle brine, caramelized sugar, and holiday spices will fill your nostrils. When you take a sip, the flavors of salted caramel, rich walnuts, cinnamon, and creamy vanilla are prevalent. The finish is very long, warm, and ends with a nice balance of sweetness and salt.

Bottom Line:

If you're already a fan of the other Islay malts, grab a bottle of Bunnahabhain 18 to temper the smoky flavors of those other whiskies. You'll be happy you did.

7) Ardbeg Corryvreckan



ARBEG

ABV: 57.1%

Price: [\\$89.99](#)

The Story:

Winner of the world's best single malt back in 2010, this briny, subtly salty, peat-smoked offering is pretty much the epitome of Islay in a glass. It's definitely not for drinkers who prefer their whisky un-peated though, as the smoke and brine are fairly prevalent.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find subtle herbal notes along with sweet vanilla, charred oak, and a nice dose of smoke. On the palate, you'll be met with candied orange peels, honey, buttery caramel, sticky toffee pudding, and even more peaty smoke. The finish is long, warming, and ends with a mix of salted caramel and pure campfire flavors.

Bottom Line:

This is the perfect whisky for fans of Islay malts. It's filled with medicinal, salty, and smoky notes that will definitely check all of the important "peated scotch" boxes.

6) Glenmorangie Signet



GLENMORANGIE

ABV: 46%

Price: [\\$249](#)

The Story:

If you don't have a ton of cash, you can pick up the delicious and recently released Glenmorangie Cake. If you're willing to spend a little more, grab a bottle of Signet. A combination of the distillery's oldest and rarest whiskies are aged in specially created casks (up to 40 years old).

Tasting Notes:

Your nostrils will be filled with hints of orange, cocoa powder, and almond cookies. The first sip offers up buttercream, spicy ginger, sweet cinnamon, and brown sugar. The finish is medium in length, lingering, and ends with a final hint of buttery caramel.

Bottom Line:

This is the epitome of a dessert whisky. Pair this with a rich dessert or use it as a digestif after a heavy, wintry meal.

5) Highland Park 18



HIGHLAND

PARK

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$159.99](#)

The Story:

One of the most awarded whiskies in the world, Highland Park 18 is made up of whiskies aged in first-fill sherry seasoned European and American oak casks. The result is a truly unique, memorable flavor profile.

Tasting Notes:

Your nose will be met with aromas of sweet honey, dried cherries, and subtle peat smoke. The first sip is filled with sticky toffee pudding, molasses, chocolate, subtle cinnamon, and more peat. The finish is long, warming, and ends with a healthy combination of caramelized sugar and smoky peat.

Bottom Line:

This is a must-have bottle for Scotch fans who enjoy just the right amount of peat smoke — balanced by brown sugar and vanilla sweetness.

4) GlenFarclas 17



GLENFARCLAS

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$104.99](#)

The Story:

This complex, nuanced whisky was aged for a shade under two decades and was created for the travel retail market. If you can find it, grab a bottle, the liquid inside is worth way more than the price.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find hints of buttercream, dried cherries, subtle peat smoke, and rich toffee. The palate is full of flavors of sweet treacle, wintry spices, sherry, and spicy cinnamon. The finish long, warming, and filled with equal measures of spice and smoke.

Bottom Line:

This is a sought-after bottle that should be enjoyed as such. Crack it open, pour yourself a dram, and take your time with it.

3) Lagavulin 16



LAGAVULIN

ABV: 43%

Price: [\\$74.99](#)

The Story:

This award-winning single malt is one of the most popular bottles in the world for a reason. Aged for sixteen years, this complex, bold whisky is a magical combination of sherry sweetness and potent peat smoke.

Tasting Notes:

There's a heavy herbal, tea-like presence on the nose, as well as sweet, dried fruits, vanilla, and a nice dose of peat smoke. The palate is full of sherry sweetness, buttery caramel, and a lot of pleasing campfire smoke. The finish is long, full of rich spices, vanilla, and ends with more smoky peat.

Bottom Line:

This is one of the bottles that every fan of peat-smoked whisky should own. Seriously, you should *always* have a bottle of Lagavulin 16 on hand. You never know when Nick Offerman might drop by.

2.) Ledaig 18 Oloroso Sherry Cask



LED AIG

ABV: 46.3%
Price: [\\$129.99](#)
The Story:

This limited-edition offering really shows just what aging in sherry butts can do for a whisky. This superb whisky is aged first in American oak casks before finishing in Spanish sherry butts. It's a magical combination of peated smoky goodness and sweet sherry.

Tasting Notes:

The nose is a cacophony of peat smoke, sweet sherry, caramelized sugar, and sweet, toasted vanilla. The first sip offers dried orange peels, subtle peat smoke, nutty sweetness, shortbread, and just a hint of peppery spice. The finish is medium, warming, and ends with a final kick of sweet caramel and subtle citrus.

Bottom Line:

If you can manage to find a bottle of this limited-edition bottle, buy one. It's a great example of non-Islay distilleries peat smoking their malts with great results.

1) The Dalmore 18



THE DALMORE

ABV: 43%
Price: [\\$229](#)
The Story:

Any whisky from The Dalmore is pretty much a slam dunk. But for the price, you can't get much better than The Dalmore 18. Aged in American oak cask for fourteen years before being matured for three more years in Spanish sherry butts, this is the epitome of indulgence in a glass.

Tasting Notes:

On the nose, you'll find hints of dried orange peels, sweet cream, subtle spice, and caramelized sugar. The first sip teases out flavors of dark chocolate, dried fruits, sweet sherry, and subtle cracked black pepper. The finish is medium, warm, and ends with a pleasing flavor of almond cookies.

Bottom Line:

If you have the cash, by all means buy a bottle of The Dalmore 30 or 35. But for a lot less money you can sip on the elegance that is The Dalmore 18. Savor it. After all, you're talking about my personal favorite scotch on earth.

Why Investing In Cask Whiskey May Be A Smart Move

By [Katy Spratte Joyce](#) / December 10, 2020

Did you know that whiskey can be more than just your favorite beverage? Besides winding down with a glass at the end of the day, this dark and delicious drink might actually belong in your investment portfolio as well. We chatted recently with Jay Bradley, founder of the UK-based [Whiskey & Wealth Club](#), to learn more.

Bradley explained that now is the time to invest in cask whiskey, particularly due to the volatility in financial markets from the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic. "We have seen an increased appetite from private investors and funds. Cask whiskey investment is increasing in popularity as investors look to hedge against inflation and the uncertainties of the markets," he shared.

So why is this nontraditional avenue a good idea? We all know that producing whiskey is a capital and labor intensive process, as distilleries can't profit from whiskey for years due to the long aging guidelines. "To help cover these costs and raise capital, distilleries will allow private investors to purchase these aging casks through exclusive brokers like Whiskey & Wealth Club," Bradley expanded.

Whiskey must be aged, ideally between five to ten years, during which its value increases exponentially. The businessman stated that, "During this time, casks are stored in a fully insured government bonded warehouse with the insurance on each 200-litre cask of whiskey increasing year on year in line with the value. The ownership and titles are held by the investor as the asset owner, who can then decide their exit strategy after their casks have matured." Exit strategies can include selling to private collectors or investors, bottling and labeling it yourself, selling at a whiskey auction, or selling to an existing brand.

To further break it down, whiskey's value is largely determined by its age. So the older it is, the greater value it has. As a result, any stock that is purchased as an investment will rise as the whiskey matures. "Ireland's largest distiller, which produces the world-famous Jameson brand, tracks the increase on its maturing stock at 18% per annum," shared Bradley. Another clear sign that cask whiskey investment could be a lucrative opportunity is the fact that globally, the demand for whiskey aka liquid gold is on the rise. [Forecasts show](#) that demand will continue to grow, with a particular focus on emerging markets in Africa and Asia. No pun intended, but Bradley explained that "The whiskey market is extremely liquid, should investors wish, they could sell in a shorter time. Buyers are always looking to secure already mature stock, whether these be fellow investors or labelling companies."

Additionally, the Whiskey & Wealth team has been hearing from distilleries across the board that they are planning price increases of up to 20% in the coming months, making now a good time to secure wealth in cask whiskey. Worldwide, whiskey sales are rising, with market values on the up. Irish whiskey for example is the fastest growing premium spirit in the world. (This is according to the IWSR global benchmark for spirit data, IWSR, which shows exports have grown [by 300% in the last decade](#), with the US market for Irish whiskey worth \$1bn alone.) Scotch whisky, however, has the largest market share and remains the most valuable. It currently accounts for over 20% of the UK's total food and drinks exports. Its export value rose [by 10.8%](#) in the last year alone, shared Bradley.

Whiskey has always been an alternative investment opportunity, though in the past, it was more of a niche market focused on private collections and experts selecting especially rare bottles. Bradley opined that this all began to change in the weeks and months leading up to the 2008 financial crisis. He stated that at that time, "There was an upward trend of high and ultra-high net worth individuals hedging their bets against markets which were set to implode". While those investments ultimately proved to be valuable, it was a high entry costly exercise reserved for those who had the connections to purchase casks directly from distilleries and could afford to invest this way. These days, Whiskey & Wealth Club bridges the gap between investors and distillers, making the market more accessible to private investors with ultra-wholesale rates due to purchasing power and economies of scale. "Our wealth advisors support a range of clients from those looking to diversify their portfolio through to people investing for their retirement," said Bradley. The founder also shared that with the recent shocks to financial markets, the appetite for cask whiskey investment has grown once again. This is likely due to its asset backed nature, removing its susceptibility to economic downturn, whether regional or global, such as the current pandemic. Overall, the value of whiskey as an investment has risen significantly over the last decade. In fact, according to Whiskey & Wealth founder Bradley, whiskey has fast become one of the most popular alternative investment opportunities, with rare whisky topping the [Knight Frank](#) Luxury Investment Index. According to the 2020 index, the value of whisky has risen by 564% in the last 10 years. By comparison, the value of classic cars rose by 194%, fine art by 141% and wine by 120%. Unlike rare whisky, the value of cask whiskey is tied to its age rather than the markets, making it appealing to investors in the current climate.

It's clear that investing in cask whiskey could be an interesting portfolio expansion opportunity for whiskey lovers looking to reap the rewards of this growing industry.



Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon (Image via Brown-Forman)

Tasting Notes: Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon (Batch 3)

Vital Stats: Bottled at 126.8 proof, this unfiltered bourbon was pulled from the third of three batches. Priced at around \$150 per 750 ml bottle.

Appearance: The color in the glass is of rich maple syrup with a viscosity that coats evenly as you swirl.

Nose: There is a sour note that might take you by surprise with its briny nature. Once that settles into the nose you will pick up some butterscotch, raisin and the more traditional vanilla and oak characteristics as well.

Palate: The bourbon hits the tongue with a bright front and a bit of a medicinal twang for the first few sips. The sweetness is reminiscent of light brown sugar until the flavor of butterscotch pudding jumps in. The heat hits after a second and is a bit sharp but does not hold on too long. The sweeter notes take center stage moving forward.

With ice, it smooths out a bit but still has the medicinal aftertaste and has a bit of white bread flavor on the end.

The Takeaway

Summary

The Old Forester diehards will probably dig into this anniversary edition with optimism and intrigue at sampling the past that helped to shape this brand into what it is today. My palate was not blown away by the medicinal notes and sour aftertaste. Not every family legacy can charm the cold heart of a pessimistic critic, and this whisky is my shining example of that.

2.5

User Rating 2.88 (8 votes)

Whisky Reviews: The GlenDronach 15 Year Old, 21 Year Old

By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / December 8, 2020

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

The GlenDronach, like many Scottish distilleries, has seen its ups and downs in its near 200 years. The distillery, founded in 1826, was one of the first licensed distilleries in Scotland. Distillery workers and their families lived on site at the Glen House, which is supposedly [haunted by a Spanish lady who travelled over in a sherry cask](#). Hopefully not the cask to age the first batch of The GlenDronach single malt.

Before 1996, when the distillery was mothballed, it changed ownership many times. The GlenDronach distillery laid dormant for six years until it went into full production again in 2002. The distillery continued changing ownership from Allied Distillers to Chivas Brothers to BenRiach until finally landing at Brown-Forman in 2016.

Alas, The GlenDronach Distillery ceased production of its [15-year-old whisky](#) in 2015. As a fan favourite, it was discontinued to supply constraints...that is until now. The [15-year-old now goes by the Revival](#) and continues to represent The GlenDronach's signature style. For 15 years, the single malt whisky sits in Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry casks from the Andalucía region in Spain. The GlenDronach Parliament 21 Year Old has remained in their permanent line-up. Where a colony of crows in called a "murder," a colony of rooks is called a "parliament." Rooks nest in the trees overlooking The GlenDronach Distillery, and they have inspired the name for the rich 21-year-old expression.

It's been awhile since we have reviewed The GlenDronach 15 Year Old, and [The GlenDronach 21 Year Old](#). Keep in mind, this is the first time we are reviewing the 15-year-old expression since it was discontinued and rebranded as the "Revival," so let's see how they taste.

Whiskey Review: Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon

By [John Dover](#) / December 10, 2020

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

[Old Forester](#) has a long tradition as one of the standout names in American whiskey and bourbon reaching back to 1870 when Gavin Brown, a former pharmaceuticals salesman, bottled his first barrels of bourbon. As an homage, [Brown Forman master distiller Chris Morris](#) has teamed up with [master taster, Jackie Zykan](#) to craft the Old Forester 150th Anniversary Bourbon.

My sample, taken from [batch 3 of 3 of the anniversary distillation](#), allows for the flavors of the past to mingle with the innovations that have come since. I have gone on at length in other reviews about my appreciation for tradition and the discipline shaped from building off of the crafting process. In this case, I believe the past processes and recipes that built the Old Forester brand might have been better off left in the safe, while instead taking the time to craft a more unique, and nuanced bourbon with an eye on where the company wants to go vs. where they came from.

I did appreciate the attention and detail spent on crafting these 150-year anniversary batches, in that they consist "of 150 barrels chosen specially by Chris, made from wood seasoned 150 days. Jackie then personally tasted and batched all 150 barrels into three very distinct flavor profiles and proof points showcasing the taste variations among barrels depending on where they rest in the Old Forester barrelhouses." These details are fun and show the dedication to putting forth an interesting product, but I wish it hit more of the marks that I look for in a fine sipper.



The GlenDronach 15 Year Old Revival (image via Brown-Forman)
Tasting Notes: The GlenDronach Revival 15 Year Old



Vital Stats: 46% ABV. Highland single malt matured for 15 years in fine Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry casks from Andalucia. 750ml ~\$90.
Appearance: Tarnished brass with glints of pinot noir.
Nose: Cherry, bold fig, and raising combine with the malt to make it feel like Italian Christmas fruit cake. There is some espresso and cocoa nib on the back end. It's fruity, with a mixture of orange zest and cherry. With a little marzipan on the finish, it reminds me of orange and cranberry biscotti.
Palate: The mouthfeel is silky. My favourite not in a scotch is a cigar ash taste with a hint of leather and boy does this dram deliver. The malted barley doesn't overpower, and neither does the oak. For this whisky, it is about balance, and you can't have any flavor without the other. The leather that finishes it off mingles with dried oak from a campfire to give you a familiarity and nostalgia.
Final Thoughts: Oooooo. The GlenDronach 15 Year Old is a straight up representation of the distillery. One you nose and taste it, you'll realize why it had a cult following and couldn't keep up with demand. You get the sherry, but most importantly, you get a specimen that shows off the patience of maturity. Buy it, although I don't want you to so that I can keep it all to myself. Overall, it is a pivotal classic expression from The GlenDronach that makes its way into my top five scotches. It is just that good. For me to give the score below, you know that it is a perfect dram of whisky.

Score: 5/5

Tasting Notes: The GlenDronach Parliament 21 Year Old



Vital Stats: 48% ABV. Highland single malt matured for 21 years in a combination of Oloroso and Pedro Ximénez sherry casks. 750ml ~\$150.
Appearance: Polish mahogany.
Nose: At the beginning, almond but not in a marzipan sort of way comes in like a fresh made macron. It reminds me of a wet leaf pile trying to burn.
Palate: The mouthfeel starts of dry and acrid, but it's a mixture of oak types creating this sensation. Black peppercorn heightens the palate before moving forward to make way for bold roast espresso beans. The finale comes off with a bright burst of citrus zest. It still retains a bitter quality from the espresso, but the finish ends with cocoa nibs lingering on the tongue.
Final Thoughts: While I thought it was tasty, the dryness and woodiness just took it down a notch. Maybe if the age was 18 years or even 20 years. Still good, but the 15-year-old, and other expressions outrank in terms of flavor. It is warm, and the afterglow even sneaks up on you. However, while I say it is warm, it is from the spice on the profile.

Score: 4/5

since then, twice earning World Whisky of the Year honors and even launching some of their whisky into space.

The 46% ABV, Ardbeg 25 Years Old arrives in a gun metal bottle, packaged in a metal case that the distillery says features "a modern take on the classic Ardbeg knotwork, and symbolic of the untamed complexity of this extraordinary whisky." Official tasting notes are below from the brand.

- Color: Bright Amber
- Aroma: A pungent burst of smoked cream, peppermint and toffee, with Ardbeg's classic fennel and pine resin. Distant earthy bonfires mix with herbal and fruity (banana and tropical) notes, along with fragrant candle wax.
- Taste: An extremely vibrant, hot peppery mouthfeel leads into a burst of sherbet lemon sweetness (candied apples, pears and orange), hints of carbolc soap and tar, more creamy toffee, aniseed and chilli pepper.
- Finish: A long, mellow, lingering aftertaste, with lots of cream, fudge and delicate antiseptic notes.

Johnnie Blonde whisky taps into long drinks

16th December, 2020 by Nicola Carruthers

Diageo has unveiled a 'sweeter' Johnnie Walker Scotch whisky designed to be mixed in a bid to attract new consumers.



Johnnie Blonde whisky is made for mixing with lemonade, cola or ginger

The new Johnnie Walker Blonde expression is made using wheat and fruity malt whiskies. Matured in sweet American oak, the resulting whisky is said to be 'full of bright, vibrant flavour' with notes of toffee, caramel and fresh fruit. The blended Scotch was launched to appeal to both current and new whisky drinkers.

Diageo said the way drinks are being consumed is evolving, with consumers socialising earlier or in more relaxed spaces, and sipping long drinks slowly. As such, Johnnie Blonde is 'made for this occasion' as it can be consumed in long serves, including mixing it with lemonade, cola or ginger. Michael Ward, head of innovation at Diageo, said: "Johnnie Walker has always been built on progress, on a desire to constantly push boundaries and explore new flavours, experiences and serves. Johnnie Blonde is borne out of that same philosophy."

Johnnie Walker Blonde will debut in select pilot cities across the world, including Monterey, Mexico; Curitiba, Brazil; Bangkok, Thailand; Sofia, Bulgaria; and Houston, US; as well as in Germany through a number of partners. It will launch in March 2021, priced at RRP US\$24.99. This is not the first time Diageo has created a 'sweeter' Scotch whisky. In 2018, the firm released a "[more delicate, slightly sweeter](#)" variant of its Singleton single malt.

Ardbeg Brings A 25 Year Old Scotch Whisky To Its Permanent Single Malt Range

By [Robert Ham](#) / December 16, 2020

Fans of Ardbeg, the single malt Scotch whisky distillery located on the remote island of Islay that celebrated its 205th birthday this year, will soon get a taste of the company's past. January of 2021 sees the worldwide release of Ardbeg 25 Years Old, a single malt that is the oldest whisky to be part of their core range.

"After a quarter of a century in the cask, you'd be forgiven for imagining that Ardbeg 25 Years Old would have lost some of the hallmark Ardbeg smoky punch. I can assure you it hasn't," Ardbeg's whisky creator Dr. Bill Lumsden said, [in a prepared statement](#). "And yet there's also a remarkable complexity and elegance to this whisky that I find utterly captivating. It's unmistakably Ardbeg, but unlike any Ardbeg you've tasted before."

The spirit was first distilled during a particular dark time in Ardbeg's history, being bottled from rare casks filled during the 1990s. After two acquisitions by larger firms and a huge drop in sales, the distillery was forced to close in 1991. It wasn't until six years later that Ardbeg reopened and they were able to return to producing whisky at full capacity. The distillery has only thrived

Whisky Reviews:

BenRiach "The Original Ten" and "The Twelve"

REVIEWSCOTCH

By Talia Gragg / December 19, 2020

Editor's Note: These whiskies were provided to us as review samples by BenRiach/Brown-Forman. This in no way, per our editorial policies, influenced the final outcome of this review. It should also be noted that by clicking the buy links in this article our site receives a small referral payment which helps to support, but not influence, our editorial and other costs.

Much of BenRiach's history has been spent silent – but they continue to come back, most recently with a roar and an outpouring of expressions.

Closely linked to Longmorn throughout its history, BenRiach (Benriach at the time) and Longmorn were both created by John Duff & Company, in 1897 and 1893 respectively. Unlike its neighbor, BenRiach only made it to 1900 before spirit production halted. The distillery continued its classic floor maltings in order to provide malt for Longmorn, which kept BenRiach in "mothball" state

as opposed to fully silent, which was an integral aspect of keeping the distillery from falling into ruin, allowing for the thriving business it is today.

And thriving is an understatement. With the Brown-Foreman acquisition of three distilleries in 2017 (including The Glendronach and Glenglassaugh) came the appointment of long-time Master Blender Rachel Barrie. Barrie is both a Keeper of the Quaich and a member of the Whisky Hall of Fame. In other words, a whisky rockstar and well-suited to this project.

Barrie has overseen production at all the new Brown-Foreman distilleries – including the BenRiach relaunch this September. BenRiach has some unique elements to their whisky-making process. They've tweaked distillation to add a wash, a seemingly minor addition that contributes to the whisky's sweetness.

A more major stand-out is their smoky line. Speyside in general has opted for unpeated barley for the vast majority of their products. While several Highland and Speyside regions release peated expressions from time to time, BenRiach's commitment to an annual smoky line is an exception to the norm.

BenRiach's long, if fairly quiet history, has left them with a goldmine of casks to choose from. Even with that, they continuously import more as part of their "eclectic cask" maturation. All of their whiskies spend time in first-fill Bourbon barrels before moving on to their respective eclectic barrels, including lesser seen finishes such as Marsala and Jamaican Rum.

BenRiach is silent no longer, and if its popularity is any indicator, it won't be again. This relaunch is a chance to continue its achievements with new ownership and vision, a natural function of the whisky world. As for what I'm reviewing here, both of the expressions in this round up are on the unpeated barley side.



BenRiach The Original Ten (image via Brown-Forman)

Tasting Notes: BenRiach The Original Ten Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky

Vital Stats: 43% ABV, 86 proof, 10 years old, three cask maturation: Bourbon, Sherry, Virgin Oak, 100% single malt scotch whisky, 750ml \$53.

Appearance: Champagne with a touch of peachiness

Nose: Juicy peaches right away mellow into cereal grains, but also the fresh loveliness of baked goods. The finish has the brightness of strawberry and the tartness of raspberry.

Palate: The body is light all the way through. Just a touch of that fruit up front, bright, juicy peach and red grapefruit. This warms and sweetens to the back palate with note of red wine and cocoa.

Score: 4/5



Tasting Notes: BenRiach "The Twelve" 12 Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky

Vital Stats: 46% ABV, 92 proof, 12 years old, three cask matured: Sherry, Bourbon, Port, 100% single malt scotch whisky, 750ml \$54.

Appearance: About a shade darker than the Original Ten, leaning peachier

Nose: Cereal grains sweeten into mellow dried fruit, the less sweet apricot and raisin, finishing with a touch of sugary prune.

Palate: That dried fruit starts you off here, becoming richer and warmer into very dark chocolate. A burst of juicy fruit comes out like a sneaker wave, like peach lemonade. The back palate is pleasantly dry, and has a wisp of vegetal smoke.

Score: 4/5

Final Thoughts: These great scotch distilleries are capable of a great range of flavors, even under the 15 year age mark, and these still stand out. The Original Ten has more flavor upfront and clearly, while The Twelve has similar flavors but deeper and richer. BenRiach is known for a touch of smoke across even their unpeated expressions. I didn't get any of that from the Original 10, but it came through in The Twelve.

Whisky Review: BenRiach The Smoky Ten and The Smoky Twelve

By [Talia Gragg](#) / December 20, 2020

Editor's Note: These whiskies were provided to us as review samples by BenRiach/Brown-Forman. This in no way, per [our editorial policies](#), influenced the final outcome of this review. It should also be noted that by clicking the buy links in this article our site receives a small referral payment which helps to support, but not influence, our editorial and other costs.

Peat smoke is as classically – and importantly – Scotch as the very barley that it's made from. Despite most of the single malt Scotch on the market today being unpeated, the smoky taste of peat is what many people associate with Scotch.

First and foremost, [peat](#) is organic matter that has decayed, degraded and been pressurized into solid layers within [bogs](#). There are three peat levels in total, lightest at the top, becoming more solid and dense farther down. Peat is cut out in blocks and dried, then used as a fuel source for anything from heating to cooking to whisky-making.

Scotland, home of many bogs, has a great natural resource in peat. The initial use for peat in whisky was a practical one. After malting, barley needs to be dried before the next step.

This is where peat comes in. The peat is burned to create smoke underneath the malting floors to stop the germination. The influence of the smoke on the barley leaves that signature smokiness. Peat smoke was one of the only methods available to initial Scotch whisky makers.

The role of peat today is more about craft than necessity. Indirect heating is the main use of drying barley on the mainland. This method doesn't leave any flavor in the barley. Despite newer technology over the decades, most of the isles, particularly Islay, have remained true to the practice of kilning with peat smoke.

Not all peat is the same. The organic matter that decays influences the type of peat, and thus the flavor of it. The isles, with Islay being the biggest and most prominent peat producer, tend to have more heather and low-lying plant life. This results in the biggest and boldest peat flavors.

Highland peat is lighter than its Islay counterpart. The region has more forests and consequently has peat made of tree roots and hardier plant life. Many peated whisky distillers, both within and without Scotland, source their peat from both regions for more available flavor profiles.

[BenRiach](#) only peats malt for a short period each year, in what they call "Smoke Season." They source all of their peat from the Highland and Speyside regions. Their peated expressions consist of both peated and unpeated malt. This smoky line tends a little sweeter than the average peated expression. This is due to both the Highland peat, and BenRiach's process. Differences in distillation and eclectic cask maturation lead to sweeter whiskies. These whiskies are a real treat – sweet, smoky, and unique.



BenRiach "The Smoky Ten" (image via Brown-Forman)

Tasting Notes: BenRiach "The Smoky Ten" 10 Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: 46% ABV, 92 proof, 10 years old, 100% single malt scotch whisky, three cask matured: Bourbon, Jamaican Rum, Toasted Virgin Oak, 750ml \$55.
Appearance: Champagne with a touch of preachiness
Nose: Boot leather right always mellows into saline, then finishes in burnt sugar and sweet cream.
Palate: Very fresh up front, with melon notes. This dries out as the smoke picks up then leads into crisp apples, before becoming baking spice on the back palate.
Score: 3.5/5

Tasting Notes: BenRiach "The Smoky Twelve" 12 Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky



BUY NOW

Vital Stats: 46% ABV, 92 proof, 12 years old, 100% single malt scotch whisky, Three cask matured: Bourbon, Sherry, Marsala Wine, 750ml \$54.
Appearance: Very similar to the Smokey Ten, but warmer
Nose: Orange marmalade right away, this bouquet is very deep. The jamminess dries into tobacco and a hint of vanilla.
Palate: The smoke hits a little less singularly, blending into the dry spiciness on the palate as well as the very long dark chocolate finish. I don't pick up a lot of distinct notes, yet it remains immensely complex.
Score: 5/5
Final Thoughts: First off, The Smoky Twelve. My heart. I don't typically tend toward peated whiskies, so I was completely taken aback when an annual line 12-year whisky came across like this. It's delicate, complicated, and the smoke seems to tie the spirit together as opposed to being its own profile. I'm shocked.
The Smokey Ten was lovely too. I felt that it had a good, natural flow, and all of the flavors melded. I liked it even more with two drops of water, which brought out some undertones. In no way was it abrasive, however, and smoke lovers would do better to drink it straight.

Highland Park 12 Comparison

[JOHNDECEMBER 16, 2020](#)

It's been a while since there's been a review of [Highland Park](#) (HP) on Malt. I can understand my co-contributors' lack of trying, as Edrington has made most (if not all) of their original bottlings dubious for the well-informed drinker. In fact, the five most recent HP reviews have all been from [Jason](#). What a brave soul.
I'm one of those who believe that fancy packaging usually means the producer is trying to make the customer pay more attention to the packaging than to the product itself. The "bigger the car the smaller the penis" comes to mind. A lot of brands, especially liquor brands, often employ this technique, though exceptions exist like Compass Box. A more learned drinker who chooses quality over prestige will see through these charades. Sadly, this tactic works

most of the time. A lot of us, regardless of how often we drink, want to have bottles to show off on our shelves or when we are out drinking.
As one who is cynical towards the big boys, one brand I find extremely guilty of this is HP, with their Viking rebranding. I'm quite surprised they haven't hired Kathryn Winnick and/or Travis Fimmel to help with the marketing. Michael Jackson once claimed this single malt to be the greatest all-rounder in the world of malt whisky. The previous iteration of the HP 12 was one of my favorite single malts when I was very new to getting serious with whisky. Based on memory, I thought this showed a great balance of peat, sherry and highland-ish flavors. I quite loved the HP 18, too, so I used to agree with MJ's statement. If he were alive today and saw what Edrington has done with the brand, though, I bet he would take back his praise. Edrington broke and sold HP's soul.
I'm not going to waste anymore time on this. Viking Honour (VH)? I don't see the honour in parading the diluted and chopped-up corpse of this formerly quality single malt, so I'm going to compare the previous iteration of Highland Park 12 with the Highland Park 12 Viking Honour. It isn't a perfect comparison, though, as the previous iteration has a higher ABV.



Highland Park 12 – review

This old style distillery bottling is available from SharedPour for [\\$79.99](#).
Color: honey.

On the nose: Hot and peppery. I get weak scents of toffee, mocha and chocolate with a very quick appearance of sulfur. Slightly stronger scents of honey, orange peel, orange jelly, vanilla and cinnamon come through next. The bitter scents like cloves and burnt caramel appear at the end.
In the mouth: I get a quick taste of sulfur followed by lingering pepperiness, orange peels, cloves and cinnamon. Amidst the bitter notes are patiently alternating undertones of toffee, butterscotch, mocha and chocolate. Bits of sulfur appear again, followed by undertones of sultanas and burnt caramel.
Score: 6/10



Highland Park 12 Viking Honour – review

Color: honey.

On the nose: I get a weak scent of peat and something leathery, dry and floral. Would this be heather? They're followed by mild scents of apples, sandpapered wood, starfruit, pears and dried apricots. There are mild scents of sulfur; next, undertones of cloves, toffee, honey and banana syrup. After that, everything suddenly falls off.

In the mouth: Unlike on the nose, I instantly get sulfur. It is mild and lasts the whole time but tones down throughout the tasting. There's a mix: mild notes of sultanas, banana syrup, apple juice, honey and muscovado syrup. This combination lasts until the end, where it suddenly gets peppery. After those come undertones of cloves, toffee, milk chocolate, butterscotch and mocha.

Score: 5/10

Conclusions

For a spirit with sherry influence in it, I'm happy that the sulfur notes are negligible in both versions, for me at least. Even so, the VH is more sulphury. The VH has also retained some of the all-roundedness from its previous iteration. Still, the flavors, layers and coherence are all more pronounced in the old version, though this difference can be chalked up to the difference in proofs.

I find the peat flavors in the new version stronger, while there are sherry flavors in the HP 12. I guess this is due to the lesser availability of quality sherry casks. As a result, the recipe of the blend has most likely changed. I think the bitter caramel notes in the old version are the remnants of the smoke and peat flavor after years of being open. It could also be that my senses, being more used to higher ABV and more full-bodied spirits, just can't pick up these weak flavors anymore.

Is it still worth paying for the contemporary HPs? I'm 50/50 on this. On one hand, it's good for new drinkers to try, as it offers a different style, and it's not outrageously priced. On the other hand, there are other whiskeys or spirits in the same or with a similar price point to try.

Overall, I think, contemporary HPs would get a better rep if they were all bottled at 46%. Being bottled at 40% mutes the different layers and all-roundedness HP has. I do wish more drinkers would call out Edrington so they'd improve the quality of their new releases.

The new Highland Park 12 VH currently sells for [£32.95](#) on The Whisky Exchange, [£29.95](#) at Master of Malt but I acquired samples of the whisky via sample swap. I bought the HP 12 from HiTime Wines for somewhere between \$35 and \$40 a few years ago.

GlenDronach Distillery Announces 18th Batch Of Limited Release Cask Bottlings

By [Robert Ham](#) / December 21, 2020

The GlenDronach, the well loved, sherry cask-focused single malt distillery from Scotland's East Highland Hills, recently announced the release of the 18th batch of their Cask Bottling collection.

These rare items were chosen by Dr. Rachel Barrie, GlenDronach's Master Blender, and feature single malt Scotch whisky that is as old as 30 years and as young as 11 years. All have been bottled directly from the casks without chill filtration.



The GlenDronach Cask Bottling Batch 18 (image via Brown-Forman)

"The GlenDronach Cask Bottling Batch 18 is a celebration of the distillery's time-honoured mastery and a showcase of the finest of what this richly-sherried Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky has to offer," Dr. Barrie said, [in a prepared statement](#). "This long standing, much loved release is a focal point to each year, demonstrating the exquisite character of our whiskies, through these exceptional casks which I have carefully hand-selected. Each cask individually explores the sophistication, powerful intricacy and rich layers of Spanish sherry cask maturation found in every expression of The GlenDronach."

The casks themselves represent a range of expressions, from 500 litre puncheons that once housed Pedro Ximénez sherry to larger port pipes (usually 650 litres) and smaller sherry butts (often less than 500 litres). And, not surprisingly, the official tasting notes, as outlined below for each bottle, vary as a result. (ABVs also vary from 48% to 61.9%.)

Limited edition bottles are already available at some specialist retailers in Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. U.S. drinkers will have their crack at only a handful of them in 2021 as GlenDronach is sending four casks across the pond. Prices in general vary from £97 to £861, depending on age and cask type.

European Allocated Casks: 2091, 648, 4363, 7411, 5897, 7006, 7276
2009 CASK 2091

- Aged 10 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Copper Gold
- Nose: Crystallised orange melds with dark fruitcake, hazelnut and raisin, topped with marzipan and ginger.
- Palate: Fruitcake filled with toasted raisin, orange peel and almond develops into lingering gingerbread and ground nutmeg. ABV: 61.9%
- Bottles: 692

2008 CASK 648

- Aged 11 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Polished Brass
- Nose: Mocha chocolate and clotted cream with fig, date, candied grape and apricot.
- Palate: Sweet and richly fruity with plum, apricot and bramble jam, and lingering hints of grape and crystallised ginger. ABV: 61%
- Bottles: 682

1994 CASK 4363

- Aged 26 Years
- Cask Type: OLOROSO PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Treacle

- Nose: Walnut and aromatic musk interwoven with earthy bramble and ginger emerge through resinous oak, leather and tobacco.
- Palate: Rich dark fruits and mellow spices unfold with almond and walnut oil, finishing with mandarin and waxed yellow plum. ABV: 52.8%
- Bottles: 692

1992 CASK 7411

- Aged 27 Years
- Cask Type: OLOROSO PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Treacle
- Nose: Sherry soaked raisin, toffee and sultana pudding, with blackberry preserve, antique leather and cedar cigar box. Palate: Stewed plum, apricot purée and sultana cake with orange caramel brittle, treacle and clove.
- ABV: 53.2%
- Bottles: 658

1992 CASK 5897

- Aged 27 Years
- Cask Type: PORT PIPE
- Appearance: Deep Auburn
- Nose: Elegant Victoria plum, date and bramble preserve with waxed orange, rose honey and ginger-spiced dark chocolate. Palate: Sultana and walnut cake laced with lemon, ginger and nutmeg, interwoven with the lingering finish of dark chocolate orange.
- ABV: 48%
- Bottles: 853

1993 CASK 7276

- Aged 27 Years
- Cask Type: OLOROSO PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Mahogany
- Nose: An exquisite balance of plum, sweet date and cherry cake, with mulled wine, spiced orange and antique walnut. Palate: Plum, maraschino cherry and prune interweave with mandarin and pomelo, finishing with dark chocolate, sultana and spice.
- ABV: 53.7%
- Bottles: 699

1990 CASK 7006

- Aged 30 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Tawny Brown
- Nose: Exquisite layers of dark chocolate, maraschino cherry and the finest Italian leather with bramble rose. Palate: Blackberry jam and cherry chocolate with yellow plum, spiced cocoa and a lingering mineral finesse. ABV: 51.4%
- Bottles: 402

APAC/Canada/IMEA Allocated Casks: 2039, 8558, 7465, 6049, 6735, 336, 9333

2009 CASK 2039

- Aged 11 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Brass
- Nose: Blackcurrant and chocolate covered gooseberry with oak resin and larchwood.
- Palate: Bramble preserve with blood orange, velvety oak tannin and lingering spiced plum sweetness. ABV: 59.3%
- Bottles: 728

2008 CASK 8558

- Aged 12 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Polished Copper
- Nose: Golden fruit marmalade and toffee nut brittle, with chestnut and cranberry infused with aniseed, clove and date oil. Palate: Rich malt and raisin with honeyed treacle and blackberry syrup, with the lingering finish of fennel and liquorice root. ABV: 59.4%
- Bottles: 710

1994 CASK 7465

- Aged 26 Years
- Cask Type: Oloroso Puncheon
- Appearance: Burnished Gold

- Nose: Rounded and rich treacle toffee, sherry and butterscotch, with orange peel and baked apple. Palate: Stewed apple and candied grape with mocha, treacle and lingering baked orange.

- ABV: 51.4%

- Bottles: 676

1992 CASK 6049

- Aged 27 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Burnished Ruby
- Nose: Dark chocolate coated cherry and Victoria plum, with layers of toasted winter spice, angelica, walnut and mint. Palate: A swathe of silk velvet carries cherry and plum dusted with cocoa, becoming earthy bramble vine and lingering white truffle.
- ABV: 49.2%
- Bottles: 694

1993 CASK 6735

- Aged 27 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Dark Mahogany
- Nose: Plum and blackberry liqueur with chocolate and hazelnut praline, and the warmth of freshly baked gingerbread. Palate: Spiced fruitcake with treacle and angelica crescendos to demerara sugar, star anise and lingering espresso cream. ABV: 51.6%
- Bottles: 694

1992 CASK 336

- Aged 28 Years
- Cask Type: OLOROSO BUTT
- Appearance: Dark Bronze
- Nose: Stewed orange and plum with eucalyptus, leather, ripe apricot and golden fruit.
- Palate: Black cherry cake, clove and raisin, with a lingering orange marmalade and a velvet toasted oak finish. ABV: 57.1%
- Bottles: 494

1990 CASK 9333

- Aged 30 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ BUTT
- Appearance: Mahogany
- Nose: Exquisite balance of stone fruit, mandarin and roast chestnut with chocolate, red grape and rose pepper. Palate: Toffee orange and silken red grape, with cherry, chocolate and lingering chestnut oak.
- ABV: 50.5%
- Bottles: 696

USA Allocated Casks (Available from 2021): 3017, 1928, 5287, 7102
2008 CASK 3017

- Aged 12 Years
- Cask Type: OLOROSO PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Warm Autumn Gold
- Nose: Candied fruit, spiced vanilla and sandalwood with caramelised sultana and mixed nuts.
- Palate: Honeyed mead and orange marmalade on toast with ground nutmeg, ginger and lingering dark vanilla. ABV: 59.8%

- Bottles: 628

2005 CASK 1928

- Aged 14 Years
- Cask Type: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Honeyed Gold
- Nose: Sweet ginger, morello cherry and cinnamon spice with mocha, wild raspberry and mint.
- Palate: Seville orange, blackberry and cherry cake, with gingerbread, sweet malt spice and dark chocolate mint. ABV: 58%
- Bottles: 612

1994 CASK 5287

- Aged 26 Years
- Cask Type: Port Pipe
- Appearance: Chestnut Gold
- Nose: Highland toffee and walnut with dark chocolate truffle and the seductive scent of an earthen floored warehouse. Palate: Walnut and black truffle with lingering toffee, cocoa and dark bramble fruit.
- ABV : 51.3% Bottles: 638

1993 CASK 7102

- Aged 27 Years
- Cask Type: OLOROSO PUNCHEON
- Appearance: Treacle
- Nose: Spiced bramble and toasted cinnamon with dark vanilla, walnut and the subtle fragrance of Oloroso cream sherry. Palate: Morello cherry, mixed spice and raisin with lingering treacle, date and ginger fruitcake
- ABV: 51.4%
- Bottles: 633

Glen Scotia Recently Unveiled A Whisky With A Sherry Double Cask Finish

By [Allyson Nichols](#) / December 24, 2020

The historic Campbeltown Scotch whisky distillery Glen Scotia recently announced the release of a new limited-edition 11-year-old single malt Scotch whisky.

Matured in first-fill bourbon barrels, the Glen Scotia Sherry Double Cask Finish (54.1% ABV) was finished in a combination of hand-selected Pedro Ximenez and Oloroso hogshead sherry casks for 10 months, before being married back together in bourbon casks. The whisky was then bottled as cask strength.



Glen Scotia Sherry Double Cask Finish (image via Glen Scotia)

Presented in a black and gold gift carton, the Sherry Double Cask Finish has official tasting notes that make mention of cinnamon, vanilla, salted butter, raisins, sultana, nutmeg and subtle spicy notes. Aromas of spiced rum, toffee and plums can also be found in the drink, as well as a nutty and dry finish. When the Glen Scotia distillery opened in 1832, Campbeltown was known to Victorians as the 'Whisky Capital of the Scotland' and was home to more than 30 distilleries. Glen Scotia is one of only three distilleries to remain. The Sherry Double Cask Whisky pays homage to Victorian history and style. "I'm very proud of The Glen Scotia Sherry Double Cask," said Glen Scotia Master Distiller, Iain McAlister, [in a prepared statement](#). "This is the first single malt that we've produced that uses a combination of two sherry casks, and the results are stunning. This limited edition single malt really showcases our signature Glen Scotia style, and paired with casks that were readily available in the town during the Victorian era truly makes it a whisky made by history. "The combination of the sherry and bourbon casks create a delicious, warming flavour that evokes all the traditional scents and tastes of Christmas, making it the perfect dram to enjoy with friends during the festive season, or a lovely gift for someone special."

The Sherry Double Cask Finish, with only 15,000 bottles available globally, is priced at £65 (around \$86 USD) and can be purchased from specialist and online whisky retailers.

[BOOZE](#) | DECEMBER 24, 2020 8:18 AM

The Best Scotch of 2020 Subverted Expectations

How expressions from Benriach and Aberlour both defied and embraced tradition



BY [KIRK MILLER](#)

Hello, Speyside.

Our two favorite Scotch releases both hail from the northeast of Scotland, where roughly 60% of that country's single malt whisky production takes place. No surprise there.

What is a surprise? Neither expression is what you would expect.

Our favorite Scotch this year is a tie this year between [Benriach's The Smoky Ten](#) and [Aberlour Single Malt Scotch A'bunadh Alba](#). Both fine distilleries, but what makes these two releases so special is how they went (pun intended) against the grain.

[Benriach](#) has been doing wonderful work under [the direction of Master Blender Rachel Barrie](#), who's helped the brand refine its core lineup ("It used to be like a box of chocolates; it was too confusing," she told us). The Smoky Ten was part of four revamped and redesigned releases that also included The Smoky Twelve, The Original Ten and The Original Twelve.



Benriach

The final results are great, but particularly in The Smoky Ten. "Sweetness with the smoke, can't think of another one from Speyside," Barrie told us, and she's right; as we noted in our review earlier this year, "Matured in bourbon, pot-still Jamaican Rum and medium-toasted virgin oak casks and coming in at 46% ABV, [it's] an unusual process for a peated whiskey. It's sweet — you'll get hints of vanilla. There's a fruity creaminess here as well, and then you have a modest smoke. Grilled pineapple is prevalent." It's a sweet, smoky barbecue. And it's delightful.



Aberlour
Meanwhile, [Aberlour](#) is a long-running Speyside single malt that *usually* lets its hooch double rest in Spanish sherry and American Oak casks for a minimum of a dozen years. I'm not always a fan of the sherry element — though the Aberlour 12 makes for an ideal Hot Toddy (more on this soon). With its new, non-age statement Alba release, however, the sherry isn't part of the formula. "We always knew our whisky only matured in American oak really stood up for itself," as Master Distiller [Graeme Cruickshank](#) told us. Ergo, a Scotch with sweetness and spice, plus a lot of orchard fruits (apples, pears, peaches) and plenty of vanilla influence from the oak. It's a Scotch that'll snag a few bourbon fans without losing its Speyside character.

A few other Scotch developments in 2020 that I enjoyed ...



Bruichladdich
Otomore Continues to Move Beyond the "World's Most Heavily Peated Scotch" Label
Bruichladdich's annual releases (they're at 11 now) still [bring the smoke but also land soft on the palate](#). The Islay distillery is also doing wonders showcasing *terroir*.



Dewar's
Blended Scotch Whiskies Got Their Due
Blended variations account for the [highest sales in the Scotch category](#); they're a mix of malt and grain whiskies sourced from different distilleries. But they rarely offer the same whisky-nerd appeal as a single malt,

which hails from a single distillery, utilizes pot-still distillation and is made from a mash of malted barley. So kudos to [Dewar's Double Double 32 Year Old](#), which won Whisky of the Year at the 2020 International Whisky Competition. It even bragged on the label it was "double double aged for ultimate smoothness" in a year when [smooth became a dirty word](#) (note: that article is great, though).



Virginia Distillery Co.
American Whiskey Makers Are Embracing Ideas from Scotland
"There's such tremendous variety in Scotch between single malts, vatted malts, blends and the like. Between that and the regional differences, the multitude of finishes, and, of course, peat, there is endless exploration," Pinhook's Owner/Master Taster Sean Josephs [told us](#) earlier this year when we asked a bunch of bourbon and American whiskey pros to tell us their thoughts on Scotch. One craft distillery that's embracing the ethos of Scotland but charting a uniquely American course? [Virginia Distilling Co.](#), which is making waves in the American Single Malt category but also has its Highland Whisky releases, which marry homegrown single malts with whisky sourced from Scotland — a hybrid then finished in an array of casks (port, cider, chardonnay, etc.). Speyside via stateside, I guess.

Whisky Review: Highland Park Cask Strength Release No.1

By [Faith Raspante](#) / December 25, 2020

Renowned Scotch maker [Highland Park](#) debuted earlier this year their first ever cask strength whisky. This release will be joined by other cask strength editions, each featuring unique flavor profiles, on an annual basis for the foreseeable future. This expression is matured for the most part in sherry seasoned American oak casks. Barrels of different ages were hand selected and married by Highland Park's Master Whisky Maker, Gordon Motion. Highland Park is the world's northern most single malt Scotch distillery. They are located in Kirkwall on the Orkney islands where the Atlantic meets the North Sea. There, the salty wind batters the islands with such frequency and force that trees cannot take root. Because there is a lack of tree life the peat that is burned to smoke the distillery's malted barley is comprised of densely compacted Scotch heather. The heathery peat is what gives Highland Park Scotch the harmonious balance of sweet and smokey for which they are known.

[Cask Strength No.1](#) will have more of this distinctive heather peat flavor than has ever been tasted. It is non [chill-filtered](#) to ensure that the natural flavor and color of the whisky is preserved in each dram. Many of us will enjoy this whisky straight up, regardless of the eye-popping 126.6 proof. Others will choose to dilute with a little water and both are just as the maker intended. Motion said in a statement when it was released that "a cask strength whisky is very much made the traditional way but it doesn't have to be enjoyed so. Its full flavor allows you the control to discover the taste and strength that appeals to your palate by adding ice or water according to your preference."



Highland Park Cask Strength Release No.1 (image via Highland Park)
Tasting Notes: Highland Park Cask Strength Release No.1
Vital Stats: This single malt Scotch whisky is 126.6 proof (63.3% ABV). No age is stated as it is blended from casks of varying maturity. \$90 per 750 ml bottle.
Appearance: The color is light gold.

Nose: The nose is toasty with brown sugar and peat. The fragrance of a lemony crepe topped with powdered sugar is followed by the faintest hint of ethanol.

Palate: There is quite a shock of hot pepper and nutmeg on the front that does not linger beyond the mid palate which is buttery and rich like a dark honey. Maple syrup is present with a little sea salt. Peat shines in the lengthy finish complimented by lemon zest.

The Takeaway: 4/5; Summary

This whisky delivers the structured flavor development that Highland Park is famous for. There is less peat than expected outside of the exaggerated finish but plenty to occupy the senses until it shows up. I appreciate the crescendo of flavors that arrive just after the first sip. All around this was an enjoyable Scotch and I did not mind the high proof.

<https://www.masterofmalt.com/blog/post/top-ten-scotch-whiskies-under-50.aspx>

Top ten: Scotch whiskies under £50

HENRY JEFFREYS

NOVEMBER 25, 2020 10:00 AM

From smoky single malts to the ultimate Highball blend, you don't have to spend a lot of money to get some seriously good Scotch whisky. Here are ten of our favourites.

We love whisky at Master of Malt. Which means that everyone in the office has strong opinions on the subject so it was tricky to narrow this list down to just ten bottles. People are going to be upset that we didn't include their favourite drams, especially [Talisker 10](#), [Laphroaig 10](#) or [Bowmore 12](#). But we thought it would be a good idea to include alongside the old favourites some lesser-known whiskies as well as expressions that are so well-known you probably don't notice them anymore. So without further ado, delay or general beating around the bush. Here are (some of) our favourite Scotch whiskies under £50. Tell us in the comments or on social why we should have included your dram of choice.



[Ardbeg Uigeadail](#)

Well, we had a bit of a discussion that got quite heated about which Ardbeg to include. The [Ten](#) would have been the obvious choice but instead we've gone with the spectacular Uigeadail (pronounced "Oog-a-dal") that melds the smoky lime-scented Ardbeg character with sweet sherry casks. And how! What does it taste like?

There's plenty of peat and smoke but it's all wrapped up in muscovado sugar, honey and espresso coffee. Rich and pungent, Uigeadail is quite an experience.



[Arran 10 Year Old](#)

This distillery was founded by former Chivas MD Harold Currie, the first on the isle of Arran on the West Coast since 1837. It might be the entry level whisky but this ten year old aged entirely in bourbon casks tastes pretty special, showing off the fruity, floral distillery character.

What does it taste like:

Nutty and biscuity with fresh apple and lemon fruit plus floral summer hedgerow and honey notes. It's packed full of character and really over delivers for the money.



[Balblair 12 Year Old](#)

Last year Balblair switched from vintage releases to a suitably impressive new range of age statements expressions. This is the baby of the bunch, aged in ex-bourbon and double-fired American oak casks, and it's superb.

What does it taste like?

The soft mango and peach distillery character really shines through, supported by spicy cedar and nutmeg, honey and barley. A great introduction to a great distillery.



[Compass Box Spice Tree](#)

Originally made with oak staves which attracted the ire of the SWA, Spice Tree is now aged in especially-made casks with new French oak heads. It's a stunning blend of Highland malts with the French oak adding masses of spice, hence the name.

What does it taste like?

Dried apricots, vanilla, cinnamon and toffee with pungent tobacco, cloves and pepper, it's not called Spice Tree for nothing. Long, complex and totally harmonious.



[Glenfarclas 10 Year Old](#)

Glenfarclas is one of the very few family-owned distilleries in Scotland. That combined with its excellent sherry-soaked Speyside drams is why it is one of the country's best-loved distilleries.

What does it taste like?

On the nose there's honey, toffee and Oloroso sherry. While the palate is full of baking spices with fruitcake, apples, nuts and even a little smoke.



[Glenmorangie 10 Year Old](#)

We love the whole Glenmorangie range but it's the 10 Year Old Original we keep coming back to. Entirely aged in ex-bourbon casks, it's smooth, sweet and fruity but deceptively complex. No drinks cupboard should be without a bottle.

What does it taste like?

Full of lemons, nectarines and apples with vanilla, digestive biscuits and gentle baking spices. And honey! Lots and lots of honey.



[J&B Rare](#)

J&B Rare is one of those whiskies so ubiquitous, you probably don't even notice it behind the bar. Which is a shame because this is probably the ultimate Highball whisky. Just blend with soda, ice and maybe a dash of orange bitters for a refreshing pre-dinner drink. One sip and you'll never go back to G&Ts.

What does it taste like?

Yes, it's light but there's depth here too with apple fruit joined by richer notes of malt, cedar, vanilla and walnut with a lift of orange zest. Perfect with soda.



[Johnnie Walker Green Label 15 Year Old](#)

Well, we had to include something from Johnnie Walker. But rather than the Red or Black, we've gone with Green Label, a spectacular 15 year old all malt blend that combines whiskies from around Scotland. One to offer to people who say they only drink single malts.

What does it taste like?

This is packed full of dark chocolate, oak spice, malty cereal notes, and coffee and walnut cake. An after-dinner whisky, if there ever was one.



[Kilkeran 12 Year Old](#)

In 2004, Springbank reopened Glengyle distillery taking the number of working distilleries in Campbeltown to three. But Glen Scotia owns the Glengyle brand which is why this whisky is called Kilkeran. The quality is exceptional for the money and this expression has become something of a cult.

What does it taste like?

It melds citrus, cherries and orange peel with creamy vanilla, honey and butterscotch, with a saline note running through it. If you love the oily Springbank style, then you'll adore this.



[Seaweed & Aeons & Digging & Fire 10 Year Old](#)

An Islay single malt from an undisclosed distillery. The name makes sense as soon as you take a sip, it's a smoky peaty Islay malt with 25% aged Oloroso sherry cask. This has proved an extremely popular malt with MoM customers. What does it taste like?

Does exactly what it says on the bottle: there's woodsmoke, seaweed and charred meat combined with sweet sherry notes, red apple and vanilla.

Whisky Review: Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Cardhu 11 Year Scotch Whisky

By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / December 28, 2020

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

The annual Diageo Special Releases always has a theme. However, the 2020 edition is the first time a theme has been repeated. Due to the popularity of the [2019 Rare By Nature collection](#), Diageo has released a part two. Master Blender, Dr. Craig Wilson was given this special opportunity for an encore to his carefully selected whiskies from 2019.

The [2020 Rare by Nature](#) has the same whiskies as the 2019 Special Releases for whisky lovers to compare. Dr. Wilson meticulously hand-selects each whisky to show another side of the distilleries chosen. The first whisky in the Rare by Nature editions comes from the Cardhu Distillery. While the 2019 edition of Cardhu is 14-years-old, the 2020 edition comes in at 11-years-old. Notorious whisky smugglers, John and Helen Cumming founded the Cardhu Distillery in 1811. The Speyside distillery is one of the most famous in the region. Cardhu's single malts are continuously sought after. However, most of the distillery's product ends up Johnnie Walker blends. In fact, John Walker & Sons purchased Cardhu for £20,500 in 1893.

Whisky drinkers, though, [owe their gratitude to Helen herself](#). She ran the distillery, and to evade tax collectors, she would pretend to be baking as she hid distillation equipment. Eventually, Cardhu became a legal operation following the Excise Act of 1823.

Let's see how the Rare by Nature encore of the Cardhu tastes.



Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Cardhu 11 Year Scotch Whisky (image via Diageo)

Tasting Notes: Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Cardhu 11 Year Scotch Whisky

Vital Stats: 56% ABV. Speyside single malt distilled in 2008; matured in refill, new, and ex-bourbon fresh-charred American oak hogsheads. 750ml \$113.

Appearance: Pale gold

Nose: I am hit with a mist of vanilla. Tobacco and sandalwood are at the forefront. The whisky comes off delicate. In the middle, the smell of shortbread cookies makes me want to procrastinate and bake. Lemongrass and barley fields also meld together.

Palate: It's not so hot at its natural cask strength. The mouthfeel is light, and again delicate. I get a big bunch of tobacco leaves with ash. Lemon drop candies, like the kind you would find in a dish at your grandma's, brightens up the dram. Light toasted oak fades in the background. French vanilla comes in waves, but is minimal.

The Takeaway Summary

The Cardhu this year for the Diageo Rare by Nature Special Releases collection is delightful. I thoroughly enjoy the nose on it. The tobacco on the palate is right up my alley. I wasn't sure how I felt about the age statement decreasing for this encore, but it shines. It is a more delicate whisky, but it is a Speyside. I recommend picking up a bottle if you can find it.

4.5 / 5 User Rating (votes)



Peat cuttings laid out at Hobbister Moor on Orkney for Highland Park
What is peat?

In simple terms, peat is partially-decayed organic material found in the ground. It is a combination of earth and old vegetation (i.e. grasses, reeds, lichens, shrubs) in wet boglands that slowly – over hundreds or thousands of years – compresses into a dense, clay-like mud. Think of it as pre-pubescent coal! There are very specific and certain conditions in the soil that are required for peat to form (as well as necessary climatic conditions), and so it is only found in a limited number of regions on the planet.



Peat being cut by hand. Photo courtesy Jeff J Mitchell, Getty Images
Cut from the ground by hand – usually no more than a metre or so from the surface and then allowed to dry out – peat is a slow-burning fuel that can be burned to give off heat. In the case of peats found in Scotland and Ireland, burning peat gives off a little bit of heat, and a lot of smoke.

If you're interested, you can also click [here](#) for an excellent, short little video by Laphroaig's distillery manager, John Campbell, as he demonstrates cutting the peat, and explains what makes Islay's peat – and particularly that of Laphroaig – unique.

What makes whisky peaty (and smoky)?

In order to make alcohol, you need water, yeast, and sugar. In the case of Scotch *malt whisky*, the sugar comes from a cereal grain, i.e. barley. But, unlike grapes and the making of wine and brandy (where the sugar is found naturally in the juice), we can't just squeeze a cereal grain to access the sugar. No, first, the barley needs to be malted. Malting is the process of converting starches in the grain into sugars, and this is done by steeping the barley in water to kick-start germination. Once germination is underway, the wet barley is laid out on a floor where the starches slowly convert to sugar to provide energy and sustenance for the growing plant. However, if germination was allowed to complete its course, the budding plant would consume its own sugar....which we don't want to happen! Germination is thus abruptly halted by drying the barley out. Traditionally in Scotland, the barley was dried over a fire fuelled with peat.

The complete guide to peat and peated whisky



Most whisky drinkers will remember and can pinpoint the first time they tasted a heavily peated whisky. Like a fork in the road, it was probably a "love it or hate it" moment....there is rarely middle ground or ambivalence when your tastebuds *first* encounter a truly peaty, medicinal, smoky whisky. But things change...

Would it be crude to suggest that Scotch whisky drinkers thus fall into three camps? There are those that *hate* peated whisky; those that *love* peated whisky; and those that are actively and earnestly transitioning at some point between those two responses. No matter where you sit on that three-pointed scale, this guide will assist you in understanding all the ins and outs of peat and the role it plays in Scotch whisky. So settle in with a dram of your favourite malt and let's cover some facts and dispel a few myths....



Barley being laid out on the maltings floor at Highland Park, where the starches begin to convert into sugars

As mentioned above, burning peat gives off heat, but also smoke. As the wet barley dried out, it would absorb the smoke from the burning peat, and thus “capture” its peaty, smoky characteristics. It’s essentially an infusion. Modern distillers thus design how peaty and smoky a whisky becomes by controlling how much peat smoke is used to dry out the barley. In order to produce the really peaty whiskies, they’ll burn lots of peat over a long period (say 20 hours); and if they want to make a whisky that is completely non-peated, they’ll simply dry the barley with hot air. You can see the difference in the two images below...



Anthracite (coal) being burned in the kiln at Balvenie. The coal gives off heat, but no smoke.



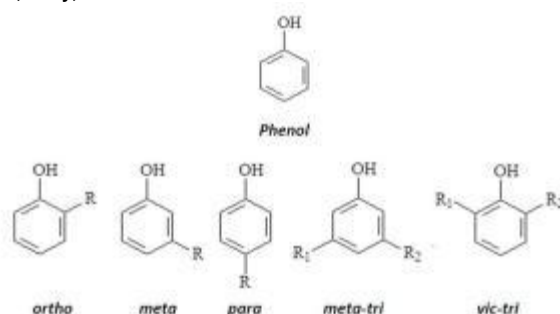
Peat burning in the kiln at Laphroaig, giving off smoke that is drawn up in to kiln floor above to “infuse” into the barley.

The myths and misunderstandings about smoke in whisky
Some creative story tellers and a few ill-informed brand ambassadors from years gone by would have you believe that your whisky is smoky due to *other* processes or features of whisky production, but they’re mostly furbies. Here are some common misconceptions:

- *Whisky is smoky due to Scotland's peaty water.* No, not quite. Whilst the water used in the production of Scotch whisky might pick up trace elements of peat as it runs over hillsides or rises through springs, these elements (i) don't really make it through the distillation process, and (ii) don't impart peaty/smoky aromas and flavours.
- *The smoke comes from charring the barrels that the whisky matures in.* No, not even close. Charring the barrels produces a layer of charcoal in the wood that acts as both a filter and a purifier for the maturing spirit – but in no way does it impart smoke into the spirit.

Are peat and smoke the same thing?

Actually, no! You can have a whisky that is peaty without being smoky, and you can have whiskies that display smokiness, yet without the accompanying traits of peat. Furthermore, there are some characteristics of peat/smoke that you can smell but can't taste, and the opposite is also true, i.e. a whisky might have burnt or smoky characteristics that you can taste but cannot smell. Smoke – as perceived in a whisky – is obviously associated with something that is *burnt* or *burning* – it is the byproduct of combustion. Peat, in contrast, is typically perceived as a more earthy and organic characteristic...it might display itself with traits of forest floors, potting mix, humus/compost, etc. And, in the case of peat that comes from more coastal locations (or areas that *once previously* were coastal or under sea), you'll also get those iodine-like, briny, maritime notes.



It all comes down to the chemical composition of the peat that is used when drying out the barley. The carbon compounds that form part of the combustible fuel in peat are called *phenols*. There are different sub-types of phenols, and they impart different characteristics to the barley – and, thus, the whisky. Without getting too scientific, examples of these different phenols include:

- Phenol – this is responsible for delivering the medicinal, iodine-like characteristics that are often described as or likened to antiseptic, TCP, etc.
- Guaiacol – this is responsible for burnt and smoky notes, but it's discernible in taste only.
- Syringol – also responsible for burnt and smoky notes, but discernible in aroma only.
- Cresol – this is responsible for the medicinal characteristics that are a bit more organic, i.e. earthy peat, tarriness, moss, and coal-tar notes.

Not surprisingly, the chemical composition of peat varies tremendously, depending on where it comes from. This is *one* of the reasons why peated whiskies from Scotland's mainland (e.g. Ardmor or Benromach) taste very different to the peated whiskies from Islay. Even the depth that the peat is retrieved from will have a bearing on the resulting flavour of the malt: Peat sitting one metre below the surface will have different characteristics to layers sitting two metres below the surface in the same dig. Distillers are very specific about the depth and character of their cut peat to ensure they get the right outcomes.



A peat cutting on Islay, roughly halfway between the villages of Bowmore and Port Ellen

What is "ppm" ?

Read anything about peated whiskies and it won't be too long until you encounter the letters *ppm*. It stands for *parts per million*, and it's the measuring stick for how much peat is in the barley after the malting process. As discussed above, the actual compounds that contribute to peatiness and smokiness in a whisky are *phenols* and we thus measure the phenols in parts per million. When whisky producers are aiming to produce a peaty/smoky whisky, they instruct or specify the *phenol levels* they desire in the malt. It's at this point we can start to make some generalisations about peating levels and begin to compare different whiskies. Each distillery obviously has a unique *house style* or flavour profile that it sets out to achieve, and thus they specify the peating levels that will deliver that profile.

Some distilleries aim for no peat whatsoever. (Glengoyne being a good example. Regular-make Bunnahabhain is another). The vast majority of Speyside/Highland distilleries specify "Highland peat", which weighs in with a peating level of 1-3ppm phenols. Most whisky drinkers will not discern peat or smoke at these levels, particularly if the sourced peat has a higher *syringol* content.

It is the island or coastal distilleries where things start to get more interesting. Talisker has a wonderful iodine, ozone-like character with its malt peated to around 14ppm. Similarly, Highland Park has an earthy, floral malt peated to 12-15ppm. (Highland Park is interesting in that it peats its own malt on site to around 40ppm, but then mixes this with malt from the mainland at 1-2ppm to achieve its final malt specification). The whiskies of Campbeltown typically exude a dirty, engine room-like peatiness, with Springbank peated to 12-15ppm, and Glen Scotia coming in at similar levels for its regular make. Arran and Jura both make heavily peated variants for small portions of the year. *Kilkeran* (distilled at Glengyle) has produced a diverse range of whiskies from medium to heavily-peated malt that typify the Campbeltown style.



Peat sitting and waiting outside the kiln at Springbank distillery. Note the smouldering peat and smoke inside the oven at the back.

But, of course, no comparison of peated whiskies will advance far without looking at the distilleries of Islay. Bowmore generally kicks things off with a relatively genteel 25ppm. Caol Ila, Laphroaig, and – these days – Lagavulin all feature malt peated to 35ppm. Bruichladdich's *Port Charlotte* variant is 40ppm, and Ardbeg is 50-55ppm. Kilchoman varies between 20 and 40ppm, depending on the particular campaign being produced, noting they produce their own malt on site, as well as using the same malt specified by and supplied to Ardbeg. No, we haven't forgotten Octomore...we'll come to that in a moment.

Why you shouldn't rely on ppm levels...

It's important to appreciate that the peating level, expressed in parts per million of phenols, is not the sole or governing factor that determines how peaty or smoky a whisky will be. It's not really a number you should hang your hat on if wanting to know how peaty a whisky is. As we've established already, a lot comes down to the chemical composition of the peat and where it comes from. As a great example, Kilchoman whisky peated to 20ppm phenols smells and tastes *significantly* smokier than, say, Benromach's peated release at 67ppm.

Secondly, distilleries have more tricks in their cupboard to shape a whisky's character than the initial phenol level in the malt. The nature of their fermentation; the shape of the still; and how quickly or slowly they run the wash and low-wines through the stills will have a tremendous influence on how much of the phenols are retained in the final spirit and subsequently put into barrel. Another critical factor is when the distiller takes the "cut". Most of the phenols come through in the late / final stages of the distillation run, and so a distiller can either capture or discard some of the phenols by designing when they stop collecting the "middle cut" and switch over to the feints.



The stillman checking when to take the cut at Lagavulin distillery

A great example of this is to compare Lagavulin and Caol Ila. The two distilleries both use identical malt from the same source and malting facility, peated to 35ppm. And yet, the whiskies produced at each distillery respectively have very different peaty/smoky profiles – all due to the different fermentations, still shapes, and distillation regimens. (Whisky & Wisdom has written about this in more detail previously – you can read that article [here](#). You might also be interested to learn that Lagavulin is not as peaty as it used to be! You can read more on that item [here](#)).



The same, identical peat – seen here being stockpiled at the Port Ellen maltings on Islay – is used at both Lagavulin and Caol Ila

This is also the reason why Bruichladdich's *Octomore* variant – famously peated to phenol ppm levels of 160 and higher – surprises many by being a far more refined, sweet, and cultured affair than the brutal ash tray they expect. Octomore employs an unusually long fermentation to produce a fruity wash, followed by a slow distillation that doesn't delve too deeply into the feinty end of the run. The result is a balanced dram, rather than an incinerator.

The impact of age: Older whisky will not be peatier whisky

As we've already established, the initial phenol levels in the malt will not carry through to the final spirit. Both fermentation and distillation will see the phenol levels reduce. The third influencing factor is age. Put simply, phenol levels reduce with maturation in the cask. The peatiest, smokiest commercially-available whiskies will typically be young, say six to eight years old. Whiskies matured to older ages – say 12 to 18 years – will obviously take on more cask influence and complexity, and hopefully become more refined and multi-dimensional. But the original peat and smoke will slowly diminish with time in the barrel. This is one reason why some whisky drinkers can occasionally be underwhelmed or even *disappointed* after shelling out a small fortune for an Islay whisky that's 25 or 30 years old, only to find that it's not the smoky beast they'd hoped for. (Of course, a well-produced and well-matured whisky aged to 25 or 30 years in a quality cask will offer plenty of other delicious and redeeming qualities).

Peated whiskies from the mainland

In the second half of the 20th century, a small number of mainland distilleries were distilling spirit from malt that was peated to slightly higher levels than the norm. Glen Garioch was a great example, although that stopped in 1995. Similarly, Ardmore has always been medium-peated at around 12-14ppm to suit its parent company's blending requirements, although more heavily peated runs are also undertaken on occasion. Loch Lomond distillery, responsible for producing 11 different styles of single malt, has several at the more peated end of the spectrum, with its Croftengea variant weighing in at around 40ppm.

However, for the most part – traditionally and historically – the *really* heavily peated whiskies came from Islay. Whilst *heavily* peated whisky was occasionally produced from mainland distilleries to suit blending needs or shortfalls in production (Brora being the prime example), they were sporadic, experimental, or makeshift campaigns at best. This started to change from the late 1990's onwards, due to (i) Islay's overall production levels being unable to keep pace with the industry's needs and forecasts, (ii) several companies

wanting to source peated whisky from within their own portfolio and facilities, rather than buy it from the companies that owned the Islay distilleries, and (iii) to market peated whisky to a fast-growing consumer base that was increasingly showing a love for peated single malts.

The once-rare prospect of a peated whisky from the mainland is now surprisingly common, and many distilleries offer a peated variant or expression in their commercial or official portfolio. Benriach was an early player when they released their *Curiositas*. Benromach turned heads a few years ago with its (very delicious) *Peat Smoke* release that was peated to 67ppm. Edradour produces a heavily peated variant under the name of *Ballechin*. Knockdhu (bottled as AnCnoc) has produced several peated variants since 2004. Similarly, Glenturret's peated variant is known as *Ruadh Maor*. The list goes on: Glendronach has produced peated spirit, as has Ailsa Bay, Balvenie, Allt'a Bhainne, and Glen Moray. Newer distilleries that have launched in just the last few years have had peated campaigns right from the start – Ardnamurchan and Glasgow being two good examples. However, it's important to realise that the vast majority of peated releases from the mainland smell and taste very different to their Islay counterparts. The reason, again, is geology and the chemical composition of the peat – the dry iodine and mossy tarriness that is front and centre of whiskies like Lagavulin, Laphroaig, and Ardbeg is rarely replicated on the mainland. Many of the peated whiskies from the mainland also lack the maritime characteristics and brininess of the Islay whiskies. Whether that's a good thing or bad thing is, of course, entirely subjective and up to you.

What about Ireland and Irish whiskey?

Ireland shares similar geological and climatic features with Scotland, and is thus also abundant with peat. Peat has long been a traditional fuel for villages and rural communities, and it would no doubt have been the traditional fuel for drying the barley before the commercial distillers adopted coal. Commentary varies from within and outwith the industry, but there's a commonly held suggestion that peated whiskey more-or-less disappeared from Ireland from the mid-to-late 19th century onwards, until being revived by the Cooley Distillery in the 1990's with its Connemara release.

Of course, it should also be appreciated that peated whisky and *traditional* Irish whiskey are actually somewhat conflicting or incompatible concepts! As we've discussed above, the phenolics come through in the late stages of the spirit run, and each distillation refines the spirit and removes the phenols. *Traditional* Irish whiskey is triple-distilled, and thus the impact of any peated malt will be tremendously reduced (if not nullified) by the end of the process. It is worth noting that Connemara is thus double-distilled.

Further reading...

If you've a particular interest in peat and some of the abovementioned distilleries, Whisky & Wisdom has written quite a number of articles over the years that address or expand on some of the items and whiskies explored above. For further reading you could check out....

[Lagavulin or Laphroaig – which is better?](#)

[Islay – Its distilleries and its whiskies](#)

[Port Ellen and dram envy](#)

[Age is just a number: The truth about young whisky](#)

[Benromach Distillery – Speyside's little jewel](#)

Cheers, AD



The minority sale will not impact availability of WhistlePig's whiskies in the U.S.

A VALUABLE PRIZE

A few years ago, a wave of craft distillery acquisitions saw international conglomerates snatch up whiskey makers across the U.S. Rémy Cointreau [took on Washington single malt distiller Westland](#) in 2016, the same year that West Virginia's Smooth Ambler Spirits [sold a majority stake](#) to Pernod Ricard and Constellation Brands paid a rumored \$160 million for Utah's High West. In 2017—the year Moët Hennessy bought Woodinville—Glenfiddich and Balvenie owner William Grant & Sons [purchased New York's Tuthilltown Distillery](#) (seven years after acquiring its Hudson whiskey brand) outright, and the following year Edrington Group, which owns Macallan, Highland Park, and Glenrothes, [took a minority stake](#) in Wyoming Whiskey. Numerous other transactions have taken place; *Whisky Advocate* keeps a [running list](#).

But the momentum for such big-ticket purchases has markedly slowed, as the conglomerates have largely filled gaps in their portfolios and as the asking prices for well-known craft distillers have likely risen. WhistlePig is a much more widely known and available whiskey than Woodinville, now and at the time of its sale to Moët Hennessy, and its valuation is surely far higher. It has, however, had its share of turbulence: In 2016, the producer's board of directors had a nasty feud with founder Raj Bhakta, eventually forcing him to depart the company.

Nevertheless, the whiskey has stayed the course, and WhistlePig master blender Pete Lynch has proven himself an able successor to Pickerell. There are no plans to change personnel or production at WhistlePig, and a company spokesperson says this deal will not impact U.S. availability. The distillery's barrel-finishing program is going strong, as Lynch [detailed in a recent interview](#), and creative releases like [HomeStock](#)—a crowd-sourced blend—and the latest [Boss Hog](#) show the breadth of WhistlePig's creativity. Moët Hennessy holds its producers to high standards; there's no questioning the quality of [Glenmorangie](#), [Ardbeg](#), and [Woodinville's](#) whiskies. Whatever comes next for WhistlePig under this new ownership structure, it will surely involve more great whiskey.

WhistlePig Sells Minority Stake to the Owner of Ardbeg and Glenmorangie

DECEMBER 16, 2020 | [SUSANNAH SKIVER BARTON](#)



Shoreham, Vermont-based WhistlePig Whiskey has sold a minority stake to spirits conglomerate Moët Hennessy, allowing it to expand its availability overseas.

Three years after it [purchased Washington's Woodinville Whiskey](#), luxury spirits conglomerate [Moët Hennessy](#) has taken a minority stake in Vermont-based [WhistlePig](#). The financial terms weren't disclosed. The deal will see WhistlePig's international standing increase significantly as Moët Hennessy assumes distribution of the whiskies outside of the U.S., with a goal of greatly expanding the brand's presence abroad.

The move has some synergies with Moët Hennessy's existing American whiskey distillery, Woodinville: Both it and WhistlePig were heavily influenced in their early years by legendary master distiller Dave Pickerell, who [passed away](#) in 2018. Before his death, in 2017, Pickerell confided to *Whisky Advocate* that he expected WhistlePig to be acquired sometime soon. Indeed, the brand and distillery would be a jewel in any portfolio, even one as high-end as Moët Hennessy's. But according to a WhistlePig spokesperson, the possibility of a full acquisition in the future is not on the table.

Whisky Reviews: Puni The Italian Malt Whisky

By [Melissa Jones](#) / December 28, 2020

Editor's Note: These whiskies were provided to us as review samples by Puni. This in no way, per [our editorial policies](#), influenced the final outcome of this review. It should also be noted that by clicking the buy links in this article our site receives a small referral payment which helps to support, but not influence, our editorial and other costs.

Puni [The Italian Malt Whisky](#) was [started in 2010](#) when the architect Albrecht Ebersperger [designed and built](#) the distillery to mimic the look of a barn window. It melds tradition with a modern, elegant aesthetic.

At the heart of the distillery in Glorenza, Italy, are two pot stills that came from Rothes, Scotland. They were installed under the supervision of Scottish industry experts. Puni was also [founded in an area](#) much like the Scottish Highlands and named after a pure alpine river nearby in the [Venosta Valley](#). Although the Puni name is not Gaelic like a Scottish distillery it is an ancient Raetic name that has a lot of local history.

[The whisky](#) is produced underground at the distillery site with the traditional Scottish stills and a very [scientific heating](#) and cooling system. "Instead of steam, overheated water is used to heat both stills. This makes it possible to control the temperatures very precisely during distillation and to be particularly careful when selecting only the best part of the spirit in the process." This scientific innovation will hopefully continue to set Puni apart from other whisky.

The warm summers and cold winters are a perfect place to accelerate the aging of whisky. In less than four years they were able to produce two unique products. And in another year they had two more in the collection.



The malt whiskies of Italy's Puni (image via Puni)

Tasting Notes: Gold Puni The Italian Malt Whisky

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: Pure alpine water and

100% malt distilled in original Scottish Pot stills. Made in Gloreza Italy. Non-chill filtered. Natural color. Aged five years. 86 proof. Ex-Bourbon casks. \$65.

Appearance: Thin and almost colorless like a white wine.

Nose: There's not an overpowering nose. It's not strong but subtle. There's umami and herbs like sage and brine.

Palate: To me this was a very nondescript whisky. It's light, thin, salty, and warm.

Score: 2.5/5

Thoughts: Gold reminds me of a summer day because it's warm and smooth.

The alcohol is not harsh. It's a bit thin and not very complex. This is similar to a Japanese whisky like Nikka Days. This would make a great mixer.

Tasting Notes: Sole Puni The Italian Malt Whisky

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: Pure alpine water and

100% malt distilled in original Scottish Pot stills. Made in Gloreza Italy. Non-chill filtered. Natural color. Aged four years. 92 proof. Ex-Bourbon and Pedro Ximénez Sherry casks. \$85.

Appearance: Thin with color of a faint gold.

Nose: The nose was very pleasant like a custard with a lot of vanilla and a little citrus.

Palate: A butter cookie comes to mind. It's a bit sweet like a bourbon with vanilla as the primary flavor coming through.

Score: 2.5/5

Thoughts: The flavors are subtle and buttery like a cookie but there's a bitter aftertaste. It becomes better the more you sip it. It sips cheaper than the price tag on the bottle.

Tasting Notes: Vina Puni The Italian Malt Whisky

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: Pure alpine water and

100% malt distilled in original Scottish Pot stills. Made in Gloreza Italy. Non-chill filtered. Natural color. Aged five years. 86 proof. Marsala Vergine casks. \$71.

Appearance: The darkest of the four whiskies with an amber hue. A bit thicker than the others.

Nose: Salty, syrup, and very wine forward. There were aged and overripe fruits like plum.

Palate: The mouthfeel was very heavy. It was very syrupy. The flavors were a lot like a whisky flavored with Port. The port really came through.

Score: 3/5

Thoughts: Vina seems more like a wine than a whisky. It tastes very much like port. The heavy port mouthfeel lingers on your tongue. It's like drinking wine with a little bourbon. This would be a great whisky for wine lovers.

Tasting Notes: Alba Puni The Italian Malt Whisky

BUY NOW

Vital Stats: Pure alpine water and

100% malt distilled in original Scottish Pot stills. Made in Gloreza Italy. Non-chill filtered. Natural color. Aged three years. 86 proof. Marsala & Islay Scotch casks. \$95.

Appearance: Old gold in color and a bit thin.

Nose: A campfire by the sea. There was heavy smoke, brine, and ocean tide.

Palate: The flavors of Alba came through as charcoal and peat. It was bitter and smoky like a campfire. There was a burnt pineapple aftertaste.

Score: 2/5

Thoughts: Alba reminded me a lot of the ocean at low tide while there's a campfire burning beside you. The finish is unlike anything I've ever tasted. It's a scotch imposter. It tasted like a scotch flavored Italian whisky. A good winter whisky.

Whisky Review: Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Cragganmore 20 Year Scotch Whisky

By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / December 29, 2020

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

The annual Diageo Special Releases always has a theme. However, the 2020 edition is the first time a theme has been repeated. Due to the popularity of the [2019 Rare By Nature collection](#), Diageo has released a part two. Master Blender, Dr. Craig Wilson was given this special opportunity for an encore to his carefully selected whiskies from 2019.

The [2020 Rare by Nature](#) has the same whiskies as the 2019 Special Releases for whisky lovers to compare. Dr. Wilson meticulously hand-selects each whisky to show another side of the distilleries chosen. The second whisky in the Rare by Nature editions I'm reviewing comes from the Cragganmore Distillery. While the 2019 edition of Cragganmore is 12-years-old, the 2020 year jumps eight years and is 20-years-old.

In 1869, John Smith convinced his landlord, Sir George Macpherson-Grant, to lease him the land to build a new distillery. Smith at the time was the former manager of Macallan, Glenlivet and Wishaw Distilleries. He was also the leaseholder of Glenfarclas Distillery at the time. [The new distillery Smith wanted to build next to the Strathspey railway line became Cragganmore.](#)

Almost 20 years later, Smith passed away and left the distillery to his family to run with Macpherson-Grant. The distillery continued to produce whisky for decades, but had to stop production during WWI. Ownership changed hands multiple times after 1923, and today we know that Diageo has lovingly kept Cragganmore going.

Let's see how the extra aging affected the Rare by Nature Special Release Cragganmore.

Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Cragganmore 20 Year Scotch Whisky (image via Diageo)

Tasting Notes: Rare by Nature Special Release Cragganmore 20 Year
Vital Stats: 55.8% ABV. Speyside single malt distilled in 1999. Matured in refill and freshly-charred casks. 750ml \$173.

Appearance: Fino sherry

Nose: At first, I shockingly got bubble gum. Not pink bubble gum, instead Wrigley's Juicy Fruit. I can distinguish so many fruits. The big ones that stand out are lemon peel, banana, and green apple. Mint sprigs sweep in. On the backend is the scent of croissants.

Palate: At its natural cask strength, the Cragganmore is a touch too hot. Alas, all the wonderful fruit on the nose is buried by oak. Lemon peel does pop out, but overall the dram is tannic and bitter like over-steeped tea. The finish is sprinkled with black pepper.

The Takeaway Summary

While the Rare by Nature Special Release Cragganmore 20 Year gave an enchanting nose, the palate was disheartening. I think the extra time in maturation did a disservice to the whisky. The oak drowns out any flavor except the lemon zest. Part of me wants to wear the Cragganmore 20 Year as a perfume. If you can try it, do so, maybe you'll like it more than I did.

3.5

Glen Scotia Has Introduced A Rare 30 Year Old Single Malt Release

By [Robert Ham](#) / December 29, 2020

On the same day that they recently announced [the release of their limited-edition Sherry Double Cask Finish Scotch whisky](#), Glen Scotia Distillery introduced an even rarer bottle: a 30-year-old Single Malt, available in a short run of just 500 bottles.

This 50.8% ABV addition to their range of single malts was created using a single distillation from 1989 that has been maturing in European Oak hogshead sherry casks, and is packaged in a gorgeous handmade case, made from sustainably sourced solid British oak.



Glen Scotia Aged 30 Years (image via Glen Scotia)

“The Glen Scotia 30 Year Old Single Malt is an exceptional new addition to Glen Scotia’s portfolio,” said master distiller Iain McAlister, [in a prepared statement](#). “The flavour profile is deep and distinguished, showcasing the complex flavours and maritime influence that Glen Scotia has become known for. Like our distillery, the Glen Scotia 30 Year Old is steeped in history and after three decades of maturation, I am proud to finally be able to unveil this new expression to the world.”

According to Glen Scotia, this non-chill filtered whisky presents an aroma of violet and lavender that evolves into green apple and spice. Its flavors offer up notes of candied lemon, cinnamon, ground ginger, dark chocolate, and coffee. The release of this 30-year-old single malt and their Sherry Double Cask Finish whisky caps off another impressive year for Glen Scotia. Through 2020, the Scottish distillers racked up a ton of awards, including four gold medals at this year’s International Spirits Challenge and a platinum award from the San Francisco World Spirits Challenge. One of only three distilleries remaining in the former whisky stronghold of Campbeltown, Glen Scotia also weathered the storms of the pandemic by shifting the programming for their hometown’s Campbeltown Malts Festival online, including virtual tours of their facilities and a virtual pub experience.

Glen Scotia’s 30-Year-Old is available to purchase from specialist retailers and retails for £850 (about \$1,141 USD).

Ultra Rare Glenraig Whisky Completes Gordon & Macphail’s 125th Anniversary Series

By [Hannah Kanik](#) / December 30, 2020

Gordon & Macphail recently revealed the last in its whisky series of four bottlings commemorating its 125th anniversary: The Gordon & MacPhail 1975 Glenraig from Glenburgie Distillery. Each of the four are from the last remaining casks from lost or closed distilleries, matured in Gordon & MacPhail’s famed warehouse.

The whisky was distilled in Lomond stills, which operated in Speyside’s Glenburgie Distillery before production stopped after 23 years of operation. Most of these Glenraig whiskies were destined for blended malts.



Gordon & MacPhail 1975 Glenraig from Glenburgie Distillery (image via Gordon & MacPhail)

For this particular release it was matured in a refill American hogshead cask, with its initial light and fruity new make spirit developing into what’s described as a warming, citrusy single malt with a delicate herbal edge. Only 110 bottles were created from what was laid down back in 1975 — each with an alcohol by volume of 54.2%.

“While it’s bittersweet to share the last remaining drops of these ultra-rare whiskies, they embody a fitting tribute to 125 years spent in pursuit of perfection,” Stephen Rankin, the company’s Director of Prestige, said, [in a prepared statement](#). “These four releases provide a personal legacy for all who have worked at Gordon & MacPhail over the decades culminating in these exquisite and unique drams found nowhere else.”

Gordon & MacPhail also recently launched a new film serialization that tells the company’s story of 125 years in the industry. The ‘Chapters’ series of five short films includes 20 contributors and whisky writer Charlie Maclean. [It can be viewed at the company’s website](#).

The Gordon & MacPhail 1975 Glenraig from Glenburgie Distillery is pricing at £1500, or around \$2,020 USD. You’ll find some official tasting notes below.

- **Aroma:** Fragrant honey and coconut with citrus blossom. Malted cereal notes and grapefruit come into play with soft ginger and subtle oak.
- **Taste:** rich nectarine flavors and white pepper, give way to refreshing lime zest, cocoa beans and crystallized violet. These are complemented by ripe apple and a soft herbal edge.
- **Finish:** medium-bodied with fresh citrus and lingering floral notes.

Tobermory Distillery Recently Released A Historically Inspired Rioja Cask Finish Whisky

By [Robert Ham](#) / December 31, 2020

Tobermory Distillery, one of the oldest distilleries in Scotland and the only whisky distillery on the Isle of Mull, is paying homage to its own storied history—and that of its island location—with the recent release of new entry into its Ledaig range: the Sinclair Series Rioja Cask Finish. The distiller’s first-ever non-aged statement has been made using heavily peated barley and matured in ex-bourbon casks before resting for 18 months in Spanish Rioja casks.

The choice of the latter casks are meant to hearken back to the tale of a galleon from a Spanish armada that sunk off the coast of Mull in the late 16th century. Some claim it was the San Juan de Sicilia, a troop vessel fleeing an English fleet; others say it was the Florencia, which was rumored to have been blown up in a dispute with local clans, taking with it hundreds of thousand of dollars worth of gold and other treasures. Whatever the case, it’s a wonderful legend baked deep into the heart of Mull’s history and that of Tobermory Distillery, which has been making single malt Scotch whisky on the island since 1798.



Ledaig Sinclair Series Rioja Cask Finish (image via Tobermory)

“Sitting alongside Ledaig 10 and 18-year-old, the Sinclair Series Rioja Cask Finish is inspired by Tobermory’s colourful past, nautical adventure and lost treasure,” Julieann Fernandez, Tobermory’s master blender, said in a prepared statement. “The smoky yet sweet expression is a fitting addition to the core Ledaig range, delivering the perfect marriage of peated flavours with fruity rioja sweetness and spice. Both of these expressions reflect the creativity and passion which we celebrate at Tobermory Distillery, crafting exceptional products which are an expression of the rich palate of our Hebridean home.”

The Rioja Cask Finish is also the first entry in Tobermory’s new Sinclair Series, a run of releases named after John Sinclair, a former kelp merchant who leased land on the Isle of Mull in 1797 and, within a year, had established a whisky distillery. Originally named Ledaig, for the land on which it was built, the distillery has seen its fortunes rise and fall over the past two centuries and was renamed after the island’s capital.

The 46.3% ABV Sinclair Series Rioja Cask Finish is available in various locations in the U.K. and Europe and retails for £36 (about \$49 USD). Official tasting notes below.

- **Colour:** Ruby red
- **Nose:** Notes of Turkish delight and rose petals balanced with candied fruits and grapes followed by rich leather and a beautiful peppery spice. A hint of chocolate comes through at the back.
- **Palate:** Creamy mouthfeel packed full of almonds, barley and sweet malt with notes of peppery Ledaig, which give way to black raspberries, sweet vanilla and cocoa interspersed with cinnamon spice and hints of freshly cut grass.
- **Finish:** Lingering smoky finish with red fruit and sea spray.

Glenmorangie Ten Years Old (2005)

[TAYLORJULY 10, 2020](#)



What's more original than The Original?

Whisky began, for me at least, with [Glenmorangie](#) Ten Years Old. Of course, I had tried whiskey and whisky before, but they were mostly mixed with Coke or consumed in a fashion where speed, not savoring, was emphasized. It was in St. Andrews' Central pub, perched on a stool covered in threadbare floral cloth of another era, that I took my first tentative steps toward what is now my abiding passion. Though I eventually branched out into different distilleries, regions, and countries, the genesis of my fascination with this elixir will always begin with the Sixteen Men of Tain.

My memories of Glenmorangie include not just the whisky, but the bottle and its label. The crimson text popped out against the yellowy-orange background. An aerial photograph of the distillery floated, cloud-like, in an oval with soft edges at the center of the presentation. Just underneath, the whisky's maturity was stated boldly, in black text: "TEN YEARS OLD." While whisky labels aren't typically in danger of winning any design awards, I always thought this had an outmoded beauty to it that was unique among its peers.

Time went on, as it does. Things changed, as they do. I departed Scotland in 2005 and returned to my homeland, bringing with me the occasional Scotticism as well as a more-than-occasional hankering for Scotch whisky. Glenmorangie, meanwhile, underwent its own changes. Owner LVMH redesigned the packaging for the ten year old expression, rechristening it "[The Original](#)" and reducing the prominence of the age statement. The bottle took on a curvaceous bulge around the shoulders, and gold foil accents were added to the label. Glenmorangie became a capital-B-"Brand," and bottles of The Original became staples at every bar, every duty free shop, and every supermarket.

I assiduously ignored Glenmorangie for more than a decade. Perhaps it was the ubiquity of the whisky, perhaps my tastes had just evolved, or perhaps I was slightly ashamed at my hobby's humble beginnings. Regardless, I'm fairly certain I didn't have drop of the stuff until I decided to revisit the brand through a tasting set of four miniature bottles in 2017. To my surprise, The Original bested [Lasanta](#), [Nectar d'Or](#), and [Quinta Ruban](#), despite their being older and having fancy cask finishes. That day, the simplicity and elegance of the humble ten-year-old was enough for me.

Speaking of surprises: on a recent grocery run to a not-very-distinguished store in a not-very-distinguished part of town, I took a glance at the locked liquor display case. Blinking rapidly, I briefly wondered if I hadn't inadvertently consumed some hallucinogens. Could it be? It was! An old-style bottle of Glenmorangie Ten Years Old! I frantically waved over the clerk and indicated my quarry. Why this remained in inventory for so long I can only guess, but I wasn't asking any questions at that point.

So, that brings us to the review. I am hopeful and fearful; I am conscious of simultaneously indulging and tempering [my nostalgia](#). Set your time machine to 2005!

This is single malt Highland whisky, but you knew that. The bottle code of L5 tells us that this dates from 2005. I paid \$42 for 750 ml; "The Original" currently runs closer to \$34 around these parts. It is bottled at 43% ABV, consistent with the American release of the current incarnation.

Glenmorangie Ten Years Old (2005) – review

Color: Medium-pale straw.

On the nose: This is an incredibly pretty nose. Peaches and cream, lychee, mint. There's a topnote of malted barley that is absolutely wonderful. A subtle woodiness and even a hint of barnyard appear here, but mostly it's fresh and lightly fruity. There's a deceptive simplicity to this, in a way; it presents straightforwardly enough but, given just a little time and attention, there are layers that begin to unfold. If I were training someone to nose whisky, I would start with this one.

In the mouth: This is exceedingly soft whisky, for better and worse. The front of the mouth is a watery muddle of malt and wood. As this moves toward the middle of the tongue there's a freshly floral flavor along with a more piquant woody mouthfeel that emerges. This reaches its height as it blooms toward the roof of the mouth with a flavor of almonds that tiptoes on the precipice of bitterness. Finishing with a subtly soapy texture and a note of rosewater, this disappears without lingering much.

Conclusions

I can see why I fell in love with this in a prior life; it was so much more interesting than anything else I was tasting at the time. Particularly on the nose, this is complex without being challenging. As I said, it's the perfect introduction to smelling whisky for a novice. The palate mostly underwhelms, however. Again, I can see this being more interesting to a beginner, as there's a variety of textures here that engage but don't overwhelm the tongue. It hasn't got any flaws, but there's no flavor interesting or intense enough here to warrant a mark above the median. I could see myself potentially docking a point on this, but I won't... for *auld lang syne*.

Score: 5/10

An oral history of the Speaker's Scotch: Uncorking the secrets behind the least likely antidote to partisanship

The Post has spoken with each of the Speakers who presided over the House since the tradition began in 2003

Author of the article: Adrian Humphreys

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Starting in 2003 with Peter Milliken, each Speaker of Canada's House of Commons has selected an official Scotch. Between the four of them, they have released six different single malts over 17 years, each with a distinctive label and special packaging. PHOTO BY CHRIS NARDI/NATIONAL POST

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On the last day of Parliament before Christmas break, Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons, was hustling through a hallway when someone stopped and asked him to autograph a bottle of whisky.

Rota happily complied. It was, after all, his whisky. In a way.

An oral history of the Speaker's Scotch: Uncorking the secrets behind the least likely antidote to partisanship

The bottle was the newly released Speaker Rota's Selection Scotch, a lavish and intense cask strength single malt, the latest release following a tradition of each new Speaker of the House of Commons releasing a special bottling of one of the many malts from Scotland.

It speaks to how popular the tradition has become that it has its own niche of collectors: politics nerd meets Scotch connoisseur.

It all sounds like an old, dusty tradition.

One can imagine James Cockburn, Canada's first Speaker, a waistcoat-wearing Conservative elected in 1867, with monstrous mutton-chop sideburns,

demanding a special dram to wet his whistle, perhaps something peaty and dark, drawn from a forgotten cask in the bowels of a Highland warehouse.

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But he didn't start this. Nowhere close.

It started with Peter Milliken in 2003. The retired Liberal MP for Ontario's riding of Kingston and the Islands became the longest-serving Speaker in Canadian history, presiding over the House during three prime ministers. Among his accolades is an achievement ignored even by his Wikipedia page.

He decided the Speaker should have an official Scotch.

Now the person who starts something is important, but so is the second who repeats it, and the third who makes it a tradition.

Rota is now the fourth consecutive Speaker to select an official Speaker's Scotch for Canada's Parliament. Between them, they have released six different single malts over 17 years, each with a distinctive label and special packaging.

Milliken insists the Speaker's Scotch — and the way it is chosen — acts as an antidote to the rabid partisanship of the modern-day Parliament, although he concedes even the power of one of the world's most storied drinks can only do so much.

It's had its critics and controversies. It's had its supply problems. It's an intensive labour of love, requiring staff to hand-label thousands of bottles. And it's even needed an unorthodox facelift because of COVID-19. Through it all, however, this modern tradition has flourished.

It's now something a new Speaker is most asked about when taking office.

Even so, there is a reluctance to talk about it publicly. Although run on a cost-recovery basis, there can be an optics problem connecting booze too strongly with the corridors of power, and embracing a product often associated with elites and wealth. And a foreign one at that.

To uncork all of this, National Post spoke with each of the Speakers who have presided over the House and the tradition of the Speaker's Scotch.

It all suitably began on the banks of the River Thames in London, under the imposing façade of Big Ben, in the Palace of Westminster, Britain's Houses of Parliament.



A Speaker's Scotch selected and autographed by Geoff Regan. PHOTO BY COURTESY GEOFF REGAN

GEOFF REGAN(*Speaker 2015 to 2019*): I'm trying to recall whether I'd heard of the Speaker's Scotch before I became Speaker, frankly. Not long after I became Speaker, someone in the media was interviewing me about my new role and asked me what the Speaker's Scotch would be. And I said, 'Oh I get to pick a Scotch? Well, then it'd be Glen Breton.' But Glen Breton is a single-malt whisky made in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Of course, you can't call it a Scotch unless it's made in Scotland.

I was excited about that, but then I learned from the staff, some of them had been there for a while, they explained how it usually works, that the Speaker doesn't simply pick whatever Scotch he or she wants. In fact, you do a taste-testing.

ANTHONY ROTA(*Speaker 2019 to present*): When I became an MP, one of the highlights was going to the Speaker's dining room and trying the different Scotches that were put before us and we would rank them. One of the questions I got most often after being elected Speaker was, When are you getting a Scotch? When will the Scotch come out?

The first Speaker's Scotch, chosen by MPs in 2003 was a feisty one, ten-year-old Talisker, with a smoky start and a peppery finish. It's worlds apart from the second chosen during Milliken's tenure, a 15-year-old Dalwhinnie, which swaps custard and honey for smoke and pepper. The bottles are specially labeled and sold in the parliamentary dining room. They became popular with MPs to buy as gifts for supporters and friends, especially at Christmas.

Speakers present them to international delegations, when visiting others, and serve it at receptions.

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MILLIKEN: The reason I did a second was the members came to me and said you've got to have another one of these. This was so much fun, we've got to do it again. I said OK, alright.

My staff would bring a list of ones that were available at the LCBO (Ontario's government liquor stores) to me. We'd discuss which ones we think we should go with and come up with a list of five or six. We'd go down and buy a few bottles of each, bring them up and have them ready for the tasting. When one was chosen, we had labels done for the bottles and had permission to re-label them as Speaker's Selection.



The label from the original Speaker's Scotch selected by Peter Milliken in 2003. It is the only one not to bear the name of the Speaker who selected it. PHOTO BY PATRICK KENNEDY

PETER MILLIKEN(*Speaker of the House from 2001 to 2011*): I went on an official visit to Britain to the Speaker there, fairly soon after I was first elected. I visited a few times. And Speaker Michael Martin talked to me about his whisky that he had selected and all that. I met with him and had a taste of his whisky and I thought this is something that we should do in the Parliament of Canada, too.

I arranged to have it done by having a tasting, at which a number of whiskies were offered for tasting to the MPs. It was a popular event. Members from all parties came, a fair number of them. They seemed to like the experience of standing around in the Speaker's dining room, mixing and mingling and sipping these different whiskies. Then they voted for which one they thought was the best. I voted too, but whichever won the vote was the Speaker's Selection.

The Speaker's Selection isn't really the Speaker's choice — it's the member's choice, they vote for it. I organize the tasting and select the whiskies for the tasting, but it was the members who voted it in.

ANDREW SCHEER(*Speaker 2011 to 2015*): After I was first elected, I remember being invited to the Speaker's event where Mr. Milliken explained to MPs he would be selecting a Scotch but he wanted it to be something members themselves enjoyed. I remember attending that and sampling and voting for the one I liked best.

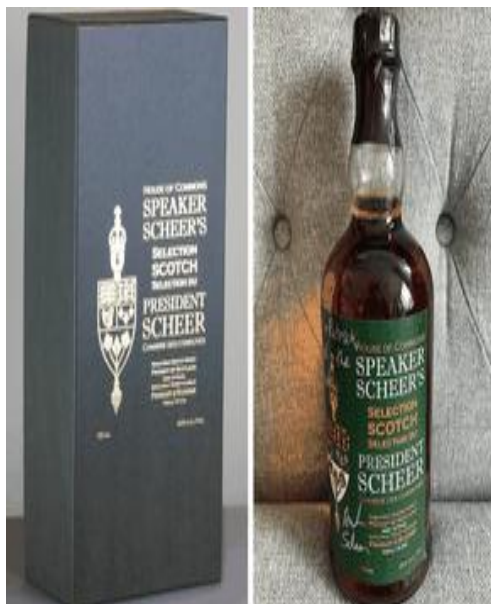
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I thought it was a neat thing to do and a neat way to get members from all different parties in the same room and visiting, over a couple of samples of different Scotches. I thought it was great.



A Speaker's Scotch (with box) selected by Andrew Scheer. PHOTO BY PATRICK KENNEDY

SCHEER: Two days after being elected Speaker, I had members from all different parties saying, are you going to have your own Speaker's Selection? Are you going to continue that tradition? It was clear to me early on in my mandate that members would very much appreciate having that tradition carried on, so it wasn't a very difficult decision. I think Speaker Milliken found a neat way to engage members in the selection and pick something that was not just reflective of his own taste but something that would be enjoyed by a broad section. Obviously, we couldn't have 50 different kinds to sample, so we did provide a selection that I either had recommendations from other members or I knew myself were nice bottles. Scotch can sometimes be associated with a hoity-toity type of thing but in reality, there are a lot of very accessible, enjoyable selections. I think there is a sweet spot — something that's very enjoyable, not just bar rail stuff, that has a nice presentation; we obviously want to keep the price point down to something affordable. I did throw in a bottle of Laphroaig (a particularly in-your-face whisky) just to see if anybody would go for the smokier stuff. I don't think it got too, too many votes, it's a bit of an acquired taste.

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Scheer also had two Speaker's Selection. A second was needed after the first was discontinued by the distributor. The first was a 12-year-old Glenmorangie with a special aging process. For his second, MPs chose a complex but mellow 12-year-old Balvenie DoubleWood.

SCHEER: When the distributor (for the first) was discontinuing serving the Ontario market, rather than try to find a work around or bootleg it in from a different province, we just decided to have a second selection tasting.

REGAN: We had a reception for MPs and then they could do a blind taste test and vote. The funny thing is, when we had our reception, I was there and talking to people but it was so busy that I never got to taste any or vote. And then my staff said you have to get to your next event. It's called the Speaker's Selection, but I didn't play much of a role in its selection.



A Speaker's Scotch selected by Anthony Rota. PHOTO BY PATRICK KENNEDY

ROTA: They are hand-labeled. A design team arranged a meeting. I gave them some ideas, they gave me some ideas, and then they came back with a dozen different choices. We modified them a bit and then we picked the one label I thought worked best.

REGAN: One thing that was part of the design, the plastic that covered the cap, the top, is put on at the factory. We couldn't change that. In our case it was a plum colour. We had to have a label design that went with that. Someone found a tartan that had that colour in it.

As the Speaker's Scotch became more popular, Canadian distillers got agitated that Parliament wasn't using a domestic whisky. It became a scandal in 2016, when Canadian whisky advocates complained to the media. Regan took the brunt of complaints, even though he had insisted on Glen Breton, a single malt from his home province of Nova Scotia included in the taste testing. It didn't win. A 12-year-old Aberlour did.

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REGAN: I can't complain about Canadian distillers being upset. Their reaction was entirely reasonable. I have no argument with their reaction. I must say, I would have been delighted if it was Glen Breton, but that wasn't the one that was selected by the voting.

SCHEER: I was more looking at it with a view towards continuing the tradition Speaker Milliken had started, that it'd be important to establish that first and then see if we wanted to modify it. I do remember being approached by the Canadian distillers about whether or not it would be possible to do something. The suggestion came well after we had already made the Scotch selection.

MILLIKEN: I could have gone with rye, I suppose, instead. But I've never been a big rye drinker, I preferred Scotch. I decided to just run with the Scotch because I thought it would be popular with the members and it was — they weren't complaining that I wasn't doing ryes.

ROTA: One of the things people have expressed concern about is that we have a foreign distiller providing the Speaker's drink. It is a tradition that it is Scotch, and I don't want to break that tradition, but one tradition I'm looking to start is to have a Speaker's Canadian rye whisky as well. I'm hoping that we will all come back (from COVID-19) and part of the return will be a tasting of the different ryes.

After Rota's election as Speaker, COVID-19 made a tasting and voting by MPs impossible, but demands for a new bottling for Christmas gifts remained.

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ROTA: In February (2020) we had decided we were going to go ahead — but then COVID hit and I thought I'll wait until we return to some semblance of normal so that we can have an official tasting. Well, we waited and waited and waited. Everyone was asking for it. They started asking again when we got back in September, but as we got close to Christmas, more and more people were asking about it.

Finally, we thought, OK, we're obviously not going to end up having a big taste test, so we're going to bring them home at the Speaker's Farm, which is the Speaker's residence, and on a Saturday night I had to sacrifice myself and try the different Scotches myself.

My wife's not a big fan of Scotch, she said she'd run the blind taste test and make sure it is completely random. She had them all lined up and then she had a second run with a little bit of water in them. She knew which one was which. I was not aware of what I was drinking. I really enjoyed the evening and my wife enjoyed it as well.

One really caught Rota's attention. It packs a huge punch. With a splash of water, it really opened up. That's the one he picked. It was a cask-strength Aberlour A'Bunadh. Milliken is pleased his tradition carries on. When COVID retreats, he joked, Rota should hold a reception to "see if his selection is upheld by the members." Such interactions are about more than fun.

MILLIKEN: So often MPs are only talking to their caucus friends but not with anybody else. When I was (in Parliament), you could go and chat with members on the other side and that was really helpful. Now it doesn't happen, so you're left to arguing everything on the House floor and because they aren't friends with one another, particularly, it's more hostile.

But at the tastings, they end up mixing and chatting with everybody, even switching languages. It was beneficial, I thought, for collegiality among the group. Having these tastings was an important part of what the Speaker can do to keep things more civil in the chambers.

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A Year of Whisky (Glenmorangie Signet)

[TAYLOR/OCTOBER 28, 2019](#)



Thanks, Linh.

It was her controversial [White Walker](#) piece that got me started. Like other readers, I found that it didn't quite land for me. I got to thinking about what I liked in the MALT reviews I had read: the depth of research about distilleries, the adamantly independent divergences from the industry's party line, and the personality and humor that distinguished each of the individual contributors' viewpoints.

It also made me notice that Jason and Mark would take a chance on new writers. As they were willing to welcome diverse voices to the site, I thought perhaps I might find a place in the chorus?

I was a casual whisky drinker for around 17 years at that point. I had been writing out wine notes for nine years and spent around two and a half years recording my tasting notes for whisky. I had begun to take it seriously following a trip to Japan in which a whisky-loving friend had started to introduce me to the world "beyond the dram." My knowledge was building like a snowball rolling down a mountain, moving slowly at first but gaining size and velocity at an accelerating rate.

I decided to start in my own backyard, with a review of a [local store pick of a distillery in my area](#). In hindsight I made some rookie mistakes, including not visiting the distillery or reaching out directly to assemble some of the information I lamented not having at hand. Still, I thought it was reasonably good, and mustered the gumption to submit it.

With a slightly queasy feeling of excitement, I sent it to Mark and Jason with the subject "Unsolicited review" and braced myself for a (hopefully gentle) rejection. I was surprised and elated when they responded positively and slated the review for publication.

Little did they know, but they had opened a can of worms by uncorking a genie's bottle inside a Pandora's box. Before the review had even hit the site, I sent them another one followed by a regular stream every few days in the following weeks.

I was giddy with excitement when the first review went up. I quickly sent it around to all my whisky-drinking friends, begging them to say something complimentary in the comments section. A few of them obliged, but I also started to get welcomes and encouragement from the MALT family on social media. Each like or retweet was a little sugar rush for me, fueling my desire to taste more, to learn more, and to write more.

The first negative feedback came in response to the [Japanese whisky article](#) which, admittedly, re-tread a lot of well-worn ground in the preamble. I tried to push back by restating my case more directly, but it was a lesson that not everybody would be pleased. Fortunately, Mark and Jason have been consummately supportive throughout, always encouraging me to re-focus and to just write about what I want to write about.

The other really problematic early piece that jumps out is the [Journeyman](#) review. I agonized over this, particularly after actually visiting the distillery. The tour was given by a cheery and enthusiastic staff member, but also revealed some of the shortcomings and cut corners which resulted in some really bad-tasting whiskey. I looked around the distillery and bustling bar, noticing the hardworking employees and the customers enjoying whiskey dumped into tumblers full of muddled fruit and other sugary ameliorations.

Self-doubt began to creep in; was I just a rotten crank, insistent on spoiling a good time?

I felt a twinge of regret, evident in that piece, at not being able to ignore the elephant in the tasting room. I learned a sad lesson: nice people can produce bad whiskey. Some writers might spare their feelings and discard a poor review, but that's not the MALT way. Multiple re-writes produced a piece which hopefully justifies the criticism with some forbearance, empathy, and objectivity.

A year on, I am privileged to look back on a body of work which I hope has contributed something to the worldwide whisky dialogue.

I have reviewed 118 whiskies over the course of 71 pieces, which doesn't even count the many expressions I tasted without a proper write-up. I've learned an incredible amount. Beyond mere names and dates, I've developed a number of soft skills which hopefully translate into me being a better person, in whisky as well as in life.

Humility doesn't come naturally to me, but it has been an important attribute to emphasize. Often, a better-informed reader or fellow member of the team will chime in to correct a misconception or point out a mistake. In my introduction to conversations with professionals in the whisky world, I make it clear that I am nothing more than an enthusiastic amateur. Jason is a superlative role model in this regard, as he is always quick to acknowledge when his considerable body of knowledge has been increased by a heretofore unknown fact. Opening myself up to criticism has sharpened my focus and made me a more attentive listener, a more careful reader, and a more judicious writer. I'm also conscious that my opinion is just that: my opinion. I'm not the final word on any of the drams I taste. I feel a bit saddened when a reader responds to a critical review with a disappointed "but that's my favorite whisky!" I'm in the business of writing about what I like, but my tastes and preferences remain my own. I hope that anyone who has read this site for long enough will remember that all of us, myself included, are just as flawed and fallible as humankind more generally. About the best I can say for us is that a good review is never the payback for financial or other compensation. If a whisky gets a high score, it's because one of us thought it was really delicious. I've also learned that my naturally skeptical (some may say cynical) approach is not only appropriate, but necessary in the contemporary world of whisky. Consumers are being sold substandard product at rising prices. Large distilleries (or their corporate owners' marketing departments) rely on folderol to distract from the fact that the bottle often contains some truly undistinguished whisky.

The industry also plays [fast and loose](#) with history, concocting stories that might charitably be described as fantastical. The label of one of the world's most [highly sought-after whiskies](#) claims that it is "distilled, aged & bottled" at a distillery that does not exist, nor has ever existed. My background research for this site has provided the opportunity for the type of journalistic detective work that yields a thrill when I discover that all is not what it seems. As the market gets increasingly crowded with expressions struggling to differentiate themselves and fighting for shelf space, I sense that this type of probing approach will become more essential in the coming years.

My photography has improved thanks to some good-natured ribbing from Jason. The winter months in Chicago are bleak, leaving little in the way of visually-stimulating backdrops. I had to make do inside my apartment from November to March, with some really stark results (apologies to Blauw Bros for [especially clinical treatment](#)). I've learned to emphasize natural light, to avoid catching my own reflection in the bottle, and to compose my photographs more artfully. I've also developed the foresight to snap a bottle before it's open, to avoid the unsightly torn capsules and half-filled containers which mar a photograph.

More than these prosaic concerns, what stands out most of all is the relationships that have developed out of this process. Though I have yet to meet any of them in the flesh, I consider Jason, Mark, Adam, and Phil to be true friends. Any one of them could show up unannounced at my place with the guarantee of open arms and an open whisky cupboard (though, for the benefit of my wife's sanity: please call first).

Beyond the MALT team, I now have an incredible global network of casual acquaintances. United by our shared passion for this remarkable beverage, we've swapped drams and stories. I have been floored by the generosity of readers who have sent me care packages full of samples and have tried to pay this back (and forward) in kind. Sincere thanks to all of you.

Though I've made mostly friends, there's probably a few enemies lurking in the shadows. I've heard that I got an unnamed bigwig cussing mad with an especially critical review of a high-profile release. There are a couple craft distillers that no longer return my emails, and I'd be loath to visit a handful of distilleries without protective headgear. I'm comforted in the knowledge that all of this has been in the service of a greater good. When a reader writes to thank me for saving her a few dollars/pounds/euros/yen by giving an honest assessment of a subpar bottling, I am reminded of the paramount importance of independence and objectivity to what we do here at MALT.

What does the future hold? Your guess is as good as mine. The list of craft distilleries I haven't tried still outweighs those I've experienced, and even that latter group is filled with expressions that I haven't gotten around to. I've matured beyond simple reviews and have begun to [wax metaphysical](#); this is an outgrowth of being able to step back and consider what a given whisky, but also whisky more generally, means to myself and others. Why does it incite such strong feelings? Why is it such a big part of some of our lives? These are the truly important questions, to me, and I'll endeavor to continually inject a balanced dose of "why" into the "who," "what," "where," and "how" that form the bedrock of a standard review.

I've also come to appreciate the power of voices other than my own and shall try as much as possible to let people tell their own stories. In practice, that means dispensing with paraphrasing and interpretation, finding a way to

incorporate individuals' own words directly as they spoke them. It requires a lot more planning and work, but I feel strongly that the final pieces are richer for taking this approach.

Speaking of different voices: the real intention of this piece is to prod and encourage others to take the same journey I embarked on 365 days ago. I have enumerated my joys and sorrows and documented my triumphs and mistakes as a means of enticing you to have a go yourself.

As noted above and reiterated here with humility: I am little more than a novice with unlimited curiosity and a capacity to type energetically. If I can do this then you can, too. If a dram has moved you (for better or worse), if you've got a story to tell, or if you've uncovered a bit of hornswoggling: by all means put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and share it with the world.

Looking back on the past year: I feel so many things, but nothing stronger than the most ebullient gratitude. Thank you to all who make this possible.

You've been kinder to me than I have deserved, and it has been a daily pleasure to have this forum as a creative outlet. I don't take it for granted and can promise that I'll try my hardest not to disappoint.

Apropos of nothing in the paragraphs above, here's a review. It's a whisky I bought when I knew less about whisky than I do now; several readers have since requested a review. It's got associated sentimental resonance; Glenmorangie, in its 10 year old expression, was the single malt that got me started on serious whisky, or rather on taking whisky seriously.

I'll be tasting the Signet expression, which sits in the range above the 18 year old but below the [Grand Vintage Malt](#) series. It's packaged in a hefty wooden box, which seems to position this for gift giving. Jason tried it a few years back and had [uncharacteristically positive](#) things to say about it.

Glenmorangie's website provides a few nuggets of information swaddled in a bunch of vague, general adjectives:

"A fusion of unique and rare elements, and clouded in secrecy, Signet is the culmination of a lifetime's experience. A blend of our oldest whisky and spirit matured in a selection of the world's finest casks, this undoubtedly is the richest whisky in our range.

Of course, whilst the exact secrets of its production are known only to our whisky creators, we can tell you that Signet's melting sweetness and explosive spiciness is, at least in part, caused by our unique roasted 'chocolate' barley malt and the 'designer casks' made bespoke for Glenmorangie from American white oak. Non chill-filtered."

I could pick apart these conceits artfully, but I'm going to relax and raise this glass to you, the potential future MALT writer.

This is single malt Scotch whisky. I managed to snag a bottle a while back for around \$170, though the prevailing retail price in my area has steadily risen to nearer \$260. Interestingly, it is £126.95 in the U.K. from [Master of Malt](#), around the same price as five years ago when Jason had a crack. Although the [Whisky Exchange](#) is asking for £145. It is bottled at 46%.

Glenmorangie Signet – Review

Color: Brooding burnt orange-brown.

On the nose: This is a great deal of fun to sniff. There's a top note of lively fruit balanced against richer flavors of cocoa and coffee. Chocolate-covered candied cherries. Espresso, in one of its fruitier and more acidic variations. Dewy meadow flowers, lemon curd, underripe kiwi fruit, clover honey, coconut, and mocha.

In the mouth: Starts with a firm and stony mouthfeel, which transitions via a bittersweet note of dark chocolate to the midpalate. There, this dram bursts with a wood-inflected mocha and coffee bean roastiness. Turning somewhat stony again, this finishes with the slight aftertaste of café Americano and an off-bitter woody scent.

Conclusions

The roasted barley is evident throughout, making this a pleasant departure from the wood-forward style that characterizes modern Glenmorangie, as well as so much other Scotch whisky. There's not as much of the nose's delightful sweet fruitiness in the mouth, but there are added layers that emphasize the darker notes. More than anything, this sits up and says "notice me!" in a way that distinguishes itself from so much of the forgettable output clogging store shelves.

At the UK retail price, this is a nice treat and suitable for a special occasion. I'd be reluctant to go out and pay prevailing American retail prices, but if you can find a bottle in the mid-\$100's it's worth a splurge.

Score: 7/10

(at UK retail prices; I'd dock a point at \$200+)



The Glenturret Trinity The Provenance (image via The Glenturret)

The Trinity Provenance comes just a few months after The Glenturret [released a new range of expressions](#), including their Triple Wood, a 25-year-old single malt, and a 30-year-old single malt—all featuring new labels and bottle designs (also designed by Lalique).

All of these releases are among the first moves by Glenturret Holding, a recently formed joint venture between Lalique Group and Swiss entrepreneur Hansjörg Wyss, which took ownership of The Glenturret Distillery in 2019. With the acquisition, Glenturret Holding helped increase whisky production and hire more staff, as well as adding a Lalique shop to the distillery's visitor center.

"2020 has been a challenging year for all, but also a very exciting year for us,"

The Glenturret's managing director John Laurie [told the Moodie David Report](#).

"We recently introduced a fresh visual brand identity as well as six new expressions, hand-crafted by our incredible team at the distillery in Crieff. Adding The Glenturret Provenance is an important milestone for us – this is a whisky to be savoured slowly, which fits in perfectly with our distillation process as we still do everything here by hand."

As only 320 of these decanters are being made, the SRP for each bottle of the Trinity Provenance is £9,800 (about \$13,100 USD) and is available through the distillery directly.

<https://manofmany.com/lifestyle/drinks/guide-to-scotland-whisky-regions>

A Comprehensive Guide to Scotland's Whisky Regions

JACOB OSBORN, 14 AUG 2019

You might fancy yourself an expensive [single malt](#) at the end of the day, but do you know your Scotland whisky regions? If not, we've put together a guide just for you. It covers the five whisky regions of Scotland (or is it six?), highlighting the qualities and characteristics of the [spirits](#) therein. From the smoky essence of [Islay malts](#) to the sweeter flavours produced by Northern Highlands' foremost distilleries, let's take a journey through this famously fruitful terrain, one region at a time.

Does the Whisky Region Matter?

When it comes to flavours and profiles, there are definite overlaps between the various whisky regions of Scotland. However, don't take to mean each specific region doesn't render a unique influence upon the spirits produced within its borders. Hence, the short answer is yes, the whisky region matters, even if Scotland isn't all that large a country. To that end, everything from local production methods to terroirs to broader geographic factors will influence how the whisky smells and tastes.

Scotland Whisky Regions Map

Originally, Scotland broke down into four officially-recognised whisky regions: Highlands, Lowlands, Isle of Islay, and Campbeltown. Speyside was eventually brought into the fold and with good reason, as it has the country's largest number of distilleries. That raised the tally of unique regions to five, according to the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA).

Meanwhile, some folks consider the Islands—which refers to all the whisky-producing islands except Islay—to be a region unto itself. From an official perspective, however, the Islands make up part of the Highlands; more on that later.

Here's a map of Scotland's whisky regions:

The Glenturret Has A New Limited Edition Whisky Collaboration With French Glassmakers Lalique

By [Robert Ham](#) / January 7, 2021

The Glenturret, the oldest working distillery in Scotland, recently announced the first release in their Trinity series [called The Provenance](#). A collaboration between the whisky makers and renowned French glassmakers Lalique, this limited edition, non-chill filtered single malt whisky is bottled in a crystal decanter, specially designed by Lalique's artistic and creative director Marc Larminaux.

The whisky within each decanter was drawn from three casks filled in 1987 and bottled on the liquid's 33rd birthday, December 4, 2020. According to The Glenturret's master blender Bob Dalgarno, the whisky offers "rich notes of ginger, brandy-soaked cherries and plump, juicy sultanas, followed by hints of cinnamon sticks, dates and soft whispers of oak and green apple."



5 Whisky Regions of Scotland

As mentioned above, there are five official Scottish whisky regions and then one unofficial region. Being that most folks treat the Islands like its own region, we'll do the same, including it as a "bonus" toward the end. Also featured are some of the top distilleries from each respective whisky-producing region in Scotland. Let's get to it!



Speyside

Located at the northeastern end of Scotland, the Speyside whisky region is truly abundant in rivers, glens, history, and whisky. A veritable destination among locals and tourists alike, this heralded whisky-making region hosts about 60 per cent of the country's distilleries. As such, there's a ton of great stuff to be discovered here, including a number of smaller and lesser-known producers.

Along similar lines, you'll uncover a wonderfully diverse range of characteristics and flavours in these parts. That said, the region remains best-known for its well-rounded single malts, many of which undergo maturation in sherry casks. The use of peat is fairly uncommon in Speyside, though that doesn't mean you won't occasionally come across a smoky dram. Some of the region's best-known distilleries like The Glenlivet also deliver lighter and grassier fare.

Typically, most Speyside whisky is fruity, sweet, and nutty, featuring notes of apple, honey, vanilla, and spice. You can also expect to find the kind of malted barley essence that's synonymous with most Scotch whiskies. It all amounts

to a classic and palatable spread of single malts, making the region itself ideal for novice drinkers and seasoned sippers and everyone in between.

Top 5 Speyside Distilleries:

- The Macallan
- Glenfiddich
- Aberlour
- Glenfarclas
- Balvenie



Lowlands

In the simplest terms, any (land-bound) distillery that's south of the Highlands and north of England classifies as a Lowlands distillery. From the perspective of pure land-mass, this region is the country's second-largest, though it doesn't have many distilleries to show for it. However, more and more operations continue to pop up, so that all might change over the course of subsequent years.

Generally, this region is synonymous with lighter and grassier whisky, most of which eschews peat. Because of the inland (i.e. non-coastal) geography, Lowlands whisky also tends to be absent of maritime notes like salt or brine. And while each distillery in the region used to practice triple distillation, Auchentoshan is the only one that still employs the method on each and every one of its expressions, thereby lending them an edge of citrus flavour.

If you like Scotch whisky of a smooth and somewhat neutral variety, then there's probably a Lowlands single malt out there with your name on it. Linger just beneath the mellow veneer will be notes of cream, grass, cinnamon, and ginger. This region is also home to the 'Lowland Ladies,' a group of whiskies that famously impart with light and floral characteristics.

Top 5 Lowlands Distilleries:

- Auchentoshan
- Glenkinchie
- Bladnoch
- Daftmill
- Girvan



Isle of Islay

To summarise the whiskey from this island region in a word: peaty. Odds are you've smelled an Islay malt and then either recoiled or engaged, depending on your personal palate. Speaking strictly for ourselves, we love few things in

life more than a smoky Islay malt. Rife with layers of complexity and character, the region's best expressions start at the mouth and go straight down to the ends of one's toes.

Due to Islay's rugged coastal terrain and windswept climate, it's a miracle there are any distilleries here at all, let alone nine of them. And what distilleries they are, hence the loyal and growing worldwide fanbase. Indeed, ask three devoted Scotch-lovers about their favourite dram and at least one of them will say "Lagavulin 16" in return. It's a show-stopper, gentlemen.

Suffice it to say, you'll know an Islay single malt at first whiff, as a blast of peat smoke hurdles up your nostrils. From there, your mileage may vary, as each distillery tends to have its own calling card. On some expressions, you'll pick up huge notes of iodine, chocolate, and ocean salt, while others play with pepper and moss to glorious effect. Try them all before deciding which one you like best, presuming you have a penchant for peat.

Top 5 Islay Distilleries:

- Laphroaig
- Lagavulin
- Ardbeg
- Bowmore
- Bruichladdich



Campbeltown

What was once the self-proclaimed "whisky capital of the world" isn't exactly that these days, though the Campbeltown region is still good for a quality dram. At one point in time, there were over 30 distilleries in this remote town. Alas, that number is currently down to just three.

Nevertheless, the three distilleries still doing their thing are doing it quite well. In turn, the whisky strikes a properly distinctive accord, interweaving choice notes of dried fruit, vanilla, toffee, and brine within a dry and pungent body.

Top (and Only) 3 Campbeltown Distilleries:

- Springbank
- Glengyle
- Glen Scotia



Highlands

As the largest whisky-producing region in Scotland, the Highlands accordingly delivers an epic range of flavours and characteristics. Because there's so much diversity to grapple with, most folks break the region down into four sub-regions, each of which has its own style of whisky.

The Northern Highlands is best known for its sweet and full-bodied single malts from labels such as Dalmore and Glenmorangie. Meanwhile, Eastern Highlands and Southern Highlands whiskies tend to be a tad lighter in texture than their Northern counterparts. Then there are Western Highlands distilleries such as Oban, which retain a much peatier influence.

As if this region's overall landmass weren't impressive enough, it's actually even bigger than most whisky maps might suggest. Technically, neighbours like Speyside and the Islands are both sub-regions of the Highlands. In fact, when you bring Speyside into the fold, you end up with about 85% of all the whisky production in Scotland.

For the sake of this guide, we'll treat the Highlands region as an entity that exists separate from Speyside or the Islands. Trust us when we say there are still tons of great distilleries to find within these parts, some of which dominate in both Scotland and around the world.

Top 5 Highlands Distilleries:

- Oban
- Glendronach
- Glenmorangie
- Dalmore
- Aberfeldy



Bonus Region: Islands

We know, we know: there are supposed to be *five* whisky regions in Scotland (as per the SWA). What's up with this "bonus" sixth region called the Islands? The answer is pretty straightforward. Officially, the Islands is regarded as a sub-region of the Highlands, perhaps because the two words rhyme, though it more likely has to do with proximity.

It might also have to do with the fact that the Islands itself is a rather vague term, which describes a number of separate islands surrounding mainland Scotland. To be even more specific, if any of Scotland's 800 islands produce whisky and don't go by the name of Islay, then they're considered part of the Islands region.

As you can probably guess, there's a fair amount of diversity between the various Islands distilleries. However, there's also some consistency such as the presence of salinity and peat, making these whiskies loosely similar to Islay single malts. The profiles get broader from there, touching down on herbal, sweet, citrusy, and nutty characteristics. It's all lying in wait, should you go hopping from one island to the next by way of bottle or dram.

Thanks to their brilliant output, Islands distilleries like Talisker and Highland Park are hugely popular the world over. Put it all together and you end up with a region that's official in everything but designation, and well worth your time.

Top 5 Islands Distilleries:

- Highland Park
- Talisker
- Arran
- Jura
- Skye

Whisky Review: Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Lagavulin 12 Year
By [Courtney Kristjana](#) / January 8, 2021

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

The annual Diageo Special Releases always has a theme. However, the 2020 edition is the first time a theme has been repeated. Due to the popularity of the 2019 Rare By Nature collection, Diageo has released a part two. This is a special opportunity for Master Blender, Dr. Craig Wilson to highlight the rarest whiskies from the chosen distilleries for an encore.

The [2020 Rare by Nature](#) has the same whiskies as the 2019 Special Releases for whisky lovers to compare. Each whisky is meticulously hand-selected by Dr. Wilson to show another side of the distilleries chosen. The fourth whisky in the Rare by Nature editions comes from the Lagavulin Distillery. Both Special Releases collections feature the Lagavulin 12 Year.

Lagavulin is one of Islay's oldest distilleries. Founded in 1742, [ten small and illicit distilleries were originally grouped together to form the distillery](#). It did

not get the name Lagavulin until 1816, when a farmer and distiller, John Johnston made the whole operation legal. Johnston ran Lagavulin up until his death twenty years later. Lagavulin changed ownership time and time again. Eventually, White Horse Distillers Ltd. (formerly Mackie & Co.) take over. Lagavulin tried to survive during wartime, but WWI caused grain shortages. Even in the midst of WWII when men were drafted and women replaced them at the distillery, Lagavulin shutdown in 1941 for the remainder of the war. Once opened back up in 1948, the distillery continued to produce non-blended whisky. Let's see how the 12-year-old single malt from 2020 compares to the [2019 edition](#).



Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Lagavulin 12 Year (image via Diageo)

Tasting Notes: Rare by Nature Special Release Lagavulin 12 Year
Vital Stats: 56.4% ABV. Islay single malt distilled in 2007. Matured in refill American oak casks. 750ml \$166.

Appearance: Pale straw/practically clear

Nose: Caramelized vanillin smoke hits the nostrils right away. Processed cocoa gathers in the middle. A kiss of citrus also bursts out in the dram. The earthen peat comes out towards the end.

Palate: The mouthfeel is full bodied and oily. The natural cask strength is perfect as it only warms the palate rather than burns and overwhelms it. Dark chocolate covered espresso beans sit on the sides of the tongue while fruit stays at the front. Orange and vanilla mingle like a Creamsicle. Dried oak hits at the back and roof of the mouth near the finish. The whisky is bold with peat but it unfolds elegantly and gently.

The Takeaway

Summary

Lagavulin is not messing around. This year I did not notice the meaty taste to the whisky like I did in the 2019 Rare by Nature Special Release. You cannot go wrong with Lagavulin. It is a staple scotch for a reason. The 2020 edition just seems classic.

4.5 / 5

A Glenmorangie quartet

JOHNAUGUST 11, 2020



I once read that the only time you should look back is to see how far you've come.

Having a lot more free time has put me in a "get rid of clutter" mindset; I've been drinking a lot more of the expendable bottles in my collection, mostly by making cocktails out of them. Because I buy faster than I drink, I chose about eight almost empty bottles over the course of the past few weeks. Thanks to my efforts, I now have more space again. Less clutter means less effort exerted to separate the expendable bottles from the rare ones. During my

searching, I found some old forgotten options placed at the farthest ends of my cabinets. When I saw these bottles, the quote above came to mind.

I bought them a long time ago. One of the bottles I found was one Glenmorangie Quinta Rubin. This, along with [Glenlivet 12](#), [Glenfiddich 15](#) and [Glenmorangie 10](#), which have already been emptied, were among the first bottles of single malts I ever owned back in 2012/13.

I remember myself and others thinking that [Glenmorangie](#) and its parent company Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) were the pinnacle of quality and innovation. The Glenmorangie core range was considered a great introduction lineup for beginners.

The Philippine single malt market was very, very new and small back then. Anything non-Johnnie or Jack were very new to myself and others. I was enamored with their then-12-year-olds with different ex-wine cask finishing. It was simply all so new and amazing.

How times—and I—have changed! My opinions of LVMH, as well as others', did not age well. For all the innovation they boasted of years ago, they seem to have run out of ideas—or did the rest of the industry just catch up? Were they not innovative in the first place? Their special releases do not seem appealing or even particularly "special" in any true sense of the word anymore. The use of different ex-wine casks is now all over the place. And using [wild yeast](#) is not an uncommon thing in the world of Mezcal and rum.

Because I'm now more into distillates with more character, I have also not bought nor tried any of their core ranges in a long time. The huge prominence of sulfur in ex-wine casks has been a significant turnoff for me. I have also grown to value maturing a spirit solely in ex-bourbon casks, as it lets the distillery DNA shine—if there is something there to shine at all.

I often forget about Glenmorangie as a whole, as well. Their only release that makes good noises is the [Signet](#). Despite having a smaller core range, Ardbeg makes more noise and has more loyal followers in the Philippines. When I'm asked by others what they should buy, I've been recommending locally available brands of quality

like [Glenfiddich](#), [Kavalan](#), [Glengoyne](#) and [Glencadam](#) to people who wish to move beyond the usual suspects. (Some of you will disagree with my suggestions, but we don't have as much variety here as in more mature markets.)

Looking back, I really have turned my back on the brands I liked a lot when I started. Is this just a case of developing a more distinguished palate? Did the marketing BS render me jaded about brands like these? Are spirits geeks really just destined or programmed to dislike or forget about brands they loved at first?

I don't think I will be inspired to write about Glenmorangie again any time soon, so I'll throw in reviews of the other Glenmorangie releases in my stash.

Glenmorangie Quinta Rubin 12 year - review

Color: Honey syrup.

On the nose: I get some very pleasant sweet and woody scents. Bread raisins, sulfanas, brandied cherry juice, port (of course), chestnuts, ripe bananas and dates.

In the mouth: Hints of sulfur, raisin bread, brandied cherry, banana bread, grape skin and dark chocolate. Hints of cloves, allspice and leather.

Conclusions

Very dull on the nose and in the mouth. Absolutely boring, forgettable and inoffensive. Perhaps losing my sweet tooth and my dislike for "smooth" spirits is a huge factor. I'll also consider that oxidation may have affected this whisky, but I remember it being even tarter. In any case, I'm glad I don't buy any official Glenmorangie anymore. They're overpriced for the quality.

Score: 3/10

Glenmorangie 10, 100 proof - review

Color: hay.

On the nose: Very hot ethanol with scents of coffee, toffee and salted caramel bursting out. Behind those are hints of honey, vanilla and coconut wafer rolls. At the end are hints of orange and lemon peels and some coconut sugar syrup.

In the mouth: Very hot, like on the nose. A quick and initial taste of coconut wafer rolls, toffee and salted caramel quickly gives way to a lingering orange peel and cloves taste. These are followed by peppers, mocha, more coconut wafer rolls, hints of dates and Graham's crackers.

Conclusions

I'm lucky I was able to buy this for around \$100 five to six years ago. I only bought it because I liked the Glenmorangie 10 year back then. I was also following the logic in which [Laphroaig 10 Cask Strength](#) was far better than the regular [Laphroaig 10](#).

I put this aside because I thought it needed to breathe. After breathing for a very long time, it hasn't really changed. True to the ABV, it is very hot: hot to the point that the flavors are essentially incohesive and destroyed by the strength. I see this go for about €280 to €400 online. IT IS NOT WORTH IT.

Score: 5/10

Glenmorangie Sonnalta PX - review

Color: amber.

On the nose: More fiery compared to the Quinta Rubin. A very pronounced sultana scent with hints of cloves, thymes and cinnamon sticks. Raisins, hints of tawny port, Muscat grapes, tobacco, and figs.

In the mouth: Figs, hints of chocolate with caramel, golden cherries, plums, raisin nut bars, cherry liqueur, brandied cherries and rum cake. There's a lingering orange liqueur taste at the end.

Conclusions

This makes a pretty good everyday whisky for a sherry lover. There is nothing unpleasant about it, with no sulfur or PX notes really out there.

I bet this bottle would cause a commotion today if it were a regular release, but it's not amazing for a limited-edition release with a higher price tag. I

remember buying this for about \$100 back in 2014. I was amazed back then that I didn't want to finish the bottle. Now? I don't see how this is that different from something like a Glendronach 12.
Score: 6/10

Glenmorangie Finealta - review

Color: hickory wood.

On the nose: Hints of BBQ smoke with apple cider vinegar, pine forest, something like a thick forest soil, dried orange peel with very weak faints of vanilla, and cherries at the end.

In the mouth: A smokey orange marmalade is followed by hints of cherries, dates and figs. A second sip gives burning firewood, hints of vanilla and cinnamon, more faint cherries with cranberries and strawberry candy. At the end are cloves, pink peppercorn, orange peel oil and a mix of dark and milky chocolate.

Conclusions

It's the most interesting out of all the Glenmorangie Private Editions I've tried (I've tried the Ealanta, Companta and [Milsean](#) before this. The last two I found too sweet). The mix of American oak with ex-oloroso sherry and smoke gives this some interesting flavor combinations, and I'd have given this an 8 if the nose were more expressive. Unfortunately, the BBQ smoke, while not aggressive, is just the most noticeable smell. Once you sip it, everything else comes to life. Quite worth it for the \$90 price tag I picked it up for in 2014.

I wish Glenmorangie made more releases like these, but I can see why they might not want to release peated Glenmorangie: it might cannibalize [Ardbeg](#) sales. If that's the case, though, it's still a waste not to make good and interesting whisky where it could be created.

Score: 7/10

Vital Stats: 51.9% ABV. Highland single malt distilled in 1989. Matured in refill hogsheads. 750ml \$732.

Appearance: Light amber

Nose: Peaches and nectarines immediately jump out to me. Spun sugar with the overly sweet cotton candy mingles with bright lemon peel. Fresh garden mint with tree bark rounds out the backend.

Palate: All the oak just comes at you at the beginning. It is hot on the tongue at its natural cask strength, and the mouthfeel is light. There is a bit of soot or charcoal to the whisky. However, the palate offer little compared to the nose. It is earthy or swampy. Overall, you really have to focus to pick out the stone fruit.

The Takeaway

Summary

The Dalwhinnie 30 year-old in the Rare by Nature Special Releases encore is more on the nose than the 2019 edition, yet less flavor than the 2019 edition. While it is hot on the tongue from the ABV, it does not burn the way the 2019 did. Overall, the 2020 edition is better even though both editions have the same age statement. I recommend comparing them side by side if you have a chance.

Column: To Pick Or Not To Pick: The Single Barrel Conundrum

By [Cary Ann Fuller](#) / January 12, 2021

Part ego, part elitism: is the single barrel selection craze a scam?

Single barrels, store selections, and private picks have become fixtures as commonplace as the cash register in retail stores. An opportunity for consumers to catch a glimpse of the magic inside the aging process, single barrel selections dominate both the conversations and collections of hard core enthusiasts. Add to the mystique of an elusive single barrel a custom sticker and you've got yourself a recipe for demand. Distilleries and retail owners alike have us wrapped around their little fingers, begging them to take our money.

I've had the opportunity to participate in hundreds of selections over the years. It's a good time. Across the board, distilleries roll out the red carpet for barrel selections. It's an experience. It's even romantic, if whiskey is your one true love. But what does it accomplish?

What a barrel selection is:

Typically, if one is able to visit the distillery for the selection, the visit consists of a full tour of the distillery- from grain intake to mashing to fermentation to distillation and warehousing- before the tasting begins. Each distillery, presented with a captive audience, rattles off their origin story and touts their uniqueness and unsurpassed quality to the group. Finally, a selection of whiskeys is presented and you go about the business of breaking down the individual options.

Each distillery has its signature experience when it comes to the actual selection process. Some take place in the rick houses, some have special rooms built for the specific purpose of hosting the visiting pick groups. Smaller distilleries might plop you down in the lobby. Between three and ten barrel samples are offered. Four Roses is uncommon in that a variety of recipes are on the table. Mostly, though, the choice being made is all about barrel interaction as the samples will be from the same mash bill, yeast strain, and of relatively similar age.

[Read More Whiskey News](#)

[Whiskey Review: Chicken Cock Ryeteous Blonde](#)

A barrel selection is often times bottled at a strength uncommon to the core brand. Cask strength is king in the store selections, especially with brands that normally bottle at lower proofs. Many established brands dictate the ABV and don't allow for customer input at bottling. It is in the interests of both the distilleries and store owners to create a new product that doesn't compete with the core brands already on the shelf.

What a barrel selection isn't:

With few exceptions, a barrel selection isn't free rein in the rick houses to go and find your barrel. You aren't set loose with a drill and a glass to go find your favorite. The Master Distiller or a proxy thereof pre-selects barrels based on what they want you to have. It is, after all, a representation of their brand, regardless of the stickers affixed and claims of picking prowess.

A single barrel selection is a choice between a very few barrels already selected by the distillery. It is not so much a testament to the skill of the picker as much as it is a way for distilleries to sell more whiskey by selling it by the barrel instead of by the case. It is unlikely that the distillery will let a barrel go out that in any way reflects poorly on the profile they've spent years creating in their batched products.

Where barrel selections don't belong:

Beginners to the hobby will surely be dazzled by the lure of the single barrel. Resist! Get to know the base product and create some sensory memories. The fun of the single barrel lies in its variances. If your palate isn't intimately familiar with what the blended batch offers, you'll be hard pressed to recognize the intricate and subtle variations presented by a cask selection.

[Read More Whiskey News](#)

[Dickel's Nicole Austin Continually Strives Towards Building A Better Bottled in Bond Whiskey](#)

A single barrel selection should never be your introduction to a brand, especially craft brands. Get to know a product before judging it based on a

Whisky Review: Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Dalwhinnie 30 Year

By [Courtney Kristiana](#) / January 11, 2021

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

The annual Diageo Special Releases always has a theme. However, the 2020 edition marks the first time a theme repeats itself. Due to the popularity of the 2019 Rare By Nature collection, Diageo has released a part two. Master Blender, Dr. Craig Wilson was given this special opportunity for an encore to his carefully selected whiskies from 2019.

The [2020 Rare by Nature](#) has the same whiskies as the 2019 Special Releases for whisky lovers to compare. Dr. Wilson meticulously hand-selects each whisky to show another side of the distilleries chosen. The third whisky in the Rare by Nature editions comes from the Dalwhinnie Distillery. The age statement of the whisky has not changed, and it is one of two 30-year-old whiskies in the 2020 edition.

[Fun fact:](#) the Dalwhinnie Distillery is the second highest distillery in Scotland at 1164 feet above sea level. John Grant founded the distillery in 1897. Whisky production, however, started a year later. It quickly changed owners, and eventually an [American liquor company became the first investors](#) in the Scotch whisky trade. The Cook & Bernheimer Company bought the Dalwhinnie Distillery specifically for selling blended whisky.

With wartime looming, the Cook & Bernheimer Company sold the distillery and went out of business. Even with ownership repeatedly changing hands, production kept going until a fire in 1934. It took four years to rebuild, but by that time WWII caused barley shortages throughout Scotland.

It should be noted that only 10% of Dalwhinnie's whisky is bottled as a single malt. Even with Diageo owning the distillery, the rest of the whisky gets blended for the brand Black & White. Luckily for us, Diageo put a Dalwhinnie single malt in both the 2019 and 2020 Rare by Nature Special Releases collection. Let's see how the [30-year-old whisky compares to last year's edition](#).



Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Dalwhinnie 30 Year (image via Diageo)
Tasting Notes: Rare by Nature 2020 Special Release Dalwhinnie 30 Year

store pick alone. Smaller craft distilleries are just as eager, if not more so, to sell their inventory by the barrel to increase sales. With fewer barrels to choose from, consistency from sample to sample might not be achievable and single barrels might not best reflect their efforts.

Single barrels should not be whiskey of the year or best whiskey ever or generally judged against batched whiskey. Single barrels are not representative of a duplicative process. Magic happens in a barrel, yes. Honey barrels are real. Recreating that magic in enough barrels to produce a consistently great product is the skill and talent worthy of awarding. So why are we so crazy about getting the latest picks?

Single barrel selections are a great place to turn to further your education and test your palate. For long time whiskey drinkers, a single barrel can be a cure for boredom. Purchasing store selections gives you a chance to chat up the store owner and perhaps show loyalty. But mostly, the picks are a game of bravado and showmanship and create a market for comparison, where the consumer is compelled to buy more. Is it fun? Hell yeah.

I'm lucky to be in close proximity to the distilleries of Tennessee and Kentucky. It's not uncommon for me to run up to Bardstown or Frankfort or over to Tullahoma or Lynchburg for a day trip to pick some barrels. I'll continue going as long as I'm invited. My personal modus operandi is always to find the barrel that best represents the brand tasting. Others choose the funkiest, most offbeat, disparate barrel they can get their hands on. And that contrast, my friends, is why we continue chasing these barrels, singularly.

DON'T MISS THESE UNDERRATED DISTILLERIES IN SCOTLAND

by [Thijs Klaverstijn](#) - January 13, 2021

Scotland is littered with distilleries; well over a 130 in total. However, a small minority of them get the majority of the attention. It's often the big Speyside producers like Glenlivet, Glenfiddich and Macallan that are in the limelight. This is followed closely by some of the iconic Islay distilleries such as Lagavulin, Laphroaig and Ardbeg. They are important brands that receive the bulk of the marketing budget from their owners. As Scotch whisky enthusiasts we're spoiled for choice, but many underrated distilleries get lost in the shuffle.

If you look a few tiers below these giants you might be surprised at the output quality of the distilleries you've overlooked so far. There's a myriad of reasons these underrated distilleries haven't attracted as much notice. Although they've flown under the radar—sometimes for centuries—they are more than deserving of your attention. Some are overshadowed by bigger sister distilleries, while others mostly produce for blends, but all are worth your while. Now it's their time to be in the spotlight.

KNOCKDHU

Founded in 1893, Knockdhu is located just outside of the distillery-dense Speyside region. As a result, many whisky tourists never even make the effort to veer out to this hidden gem. The distillery releases single malts under the brand name anCnoc, as to avoid confusion with the similarly named Knockando. Gordon Bruce, the current master distiller, has a propensity for doing things the sustainable way; he has managed to reduce the distillery's energy consumption by 35% over the last 10 years.

Knockdhu is one of the least automated distilleries in Scotland. The traditional, hands-on approach and sulphury new make spirit (the effect of a little reflux during distillation and the use of [worm tubs as condensers](#)) results in a single malt that's vibrant at a young age, but also ages very well. The core range of [12](#), [18](#) and [24-year-old](#) expressions can go up against almost any other distillery.



Knockdhu Distillery /Photo Credit: Thijs Klaverstijn

GLENGYLE

Glengyle is a tiny distillery in [Campbeltown](#), the smallest whisky region of Scotland. The only reason it exists is because the Scottish Whisky Association (SWA) contemplated absorbing Campbeltown into the larger Highlands region. Adding Glengyle in 2004 upped the total distilleries to three, the same number that the Lowland region had at the time. Therefore, this essentially negated the SWA's argument.

This distillery is more than just an anecdote. While larger brother and cult distillery [Springbank](#) gets most of the attention, Glengyle produces a similar style of whisky. In fact, the distilleries share a malting floor and staff. Its [12-year-old](#) is one of the best entry-level whiskies in the industry, and one of many reasons it made our underrated distilleries list. When on the lookout for

this single malt, keep in mind that the whisky made at Glengyle is named Kilkerran, because a different party owns the Glengyle trademark.

FETTERCAIRN

You've most likely heard of [Dalmore](#), the uber premium Scotch whisky that regularly makes headlines for its exclusive, expensive and record-setting releases. Sister distillery Fettercairn can only dream of such accolades, even though it has been around for nearly two centuries. However, that might change now that owner Whyte & Mackay has put some thought into creating a new range of Fettercairn single malts aged between [12](#) and [50-years-old](#). Beyond that, Fettercairn is a quirky distillery with interesting tidbits that set it apart from its contemporaries. For example, it is the only distillery in Scotland with cooling rings attached to the outside of its pot stills. These rings spray cold water down the sides of the still—aiding reflux in the process. Between 1995 and 2009, the distillery also used stainless steel condensers (copper is the norm), which added a different character to the whisky. Far from a dime a dozen, Fettercairn deserves to be explored.



Fettercairn Distillery /Photo Credit: Fettercairn Distillery

AULTMORE

Founded during the peak of the late-Victorian whisky boom, Aultmore is an important part of [Dewar's blended Scotch whisky](#). Not many would know this, because big brother [Aberfeldy](#) is actually marketed by owner Bacardi as the home of Dewar's. However, when Bacardi was in talks of acquiring Dewar's from Diageo, it is very telling that they were willing to walk away from the deal if Aultmore wasn't included.

Aultmore is revered by blenders—who rank it Top Class—but it never had much of a single malt presence up until 2014. That is when Aultmore was relaunched as part of The Last Great Malts of Scotland campaign. Aultmore stands out even from other underrated distilleries in that it now has a high-quality core range of [12](#), [18](#) and [21-year-old](#) expressions. Even so, it is regularly overlooked by whisky enthusiasts, while owners Bacardi have generally diverted more attention to some other distilleries in their portfolio.

GLEGLASSAUGH

Glenglassaugh lay silent for over two decades. It was saved from oblivion in 2008 and bought five years later by the same consortium that already owned [GlenDronach](#) and [BenRiach](#). Those two distilleries have a pristine reputation, large following and plenty of aged stock to boot. As a result, Glenglassaugh fell to the wayside a bit, even though it produces a very singular, individual single malt.

Over a decade since it restarted, [Glenglassaugh's](#) whisky is coming of age and poised for a breakout. Some young single casks show huge potential, while the quality of the core range has gone up since those early years. It remains to be seen when current owners Brown Forman will give Glenglassaugh a much-deserved push, but when they do it can finally break free from the underrated distilleries list.

Gordon & MacPhail bottles 72YO Glen Grant Scotch

18th January, 2021 by Owen Bellwood

Scotch whisky bottler Gordon & MacPhail will debut its 72-year-old Glen Grant single malt at a Bonhams Hong Kong auction later this month.



Gordon & MacPhail has bottled a Glen Grant Scotch whisky from 1948

The Gordon & MacPhail 72 Year Old was distilled by Speyside producer Glen Grant in 1948. The whisky has since matured in an American oak ex-Sherry cask, which imparted 'a deep amber hue'. On the nose, the whisky has aromas of Christmas cake moistened with oloroso Sherry, with a slightly burnt base. On the palate, drinkers will find 'a sweet taste at the start and a tannic, dry kick to finish with a surprising punch of spice, whispers of espresso and deep dark chocolate'. Charles MacLean, whisky expert and Master of the Quaich, said: "I am generally sceptical about very old malts because they lose vitality and tend to become fragile and flat. Not in this case. "It's great age adds value to the experience of tasting it, conjuring images of what the world was like in 1948. I can honestly say that this is one of the finest malts I have tasted in 40 years of professional exploration. It is outstanding." Gordon & MacPhail has filled 290 decanters with the rare Glen Grant whisky. Bottle number 88 will make its debut at Bonhams' Hong Kong auction on 29 January 2021. The new release has a book estimate of HK\$300,000-HK\$380,000 (US\$38,700-US\$49,000). Daniel Lam, wine and whisky specialist at Bonhams, said: "There's been numerous new records set for whisky sold at Bonhams in 2020. We anticipate collectors' desire and determination to acquire the market's best whiskies to continue into 2021. "With the Gordon & MacPhail 72YO's stunning decanter design on the front cover our whisky catalogue, we expect some new records to be set for Scotch whisky at our upcoming auction. The desirable bottle number 88 will surely become a legacy piece at the event." Bottled at 56.2% ABV, the 72-year-old whisky is packaged in a Dartington Crystal decanter that features a design to represent the age of the cask and is inspired by a tree's annual growth rings. The crystal decanter is housed in an American black walnut presentation box.

Membership and Dinner prices for 2020-2021

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

Reservation policy

- The agreement with the Kitchen's requires that we provide seven (7) business days notice for them to guarantee accommodation for our requested numbers. To accommodate the Kitchen's needs and meet our contractual obligation with them; our members are requested to respond to the emailed invitation seven (7) business days prior to the respective dinner to guarantee a seat at the dinner. Following the RSVP date members will be placed on a waitlist.
- For these individuals the process will be as follows, using the Monday September 23rd, 2019 dinner date as an example:
- Dinner invitations will be sent out Friday August 23rd, 2019. 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 6th, 2019 @ 6pm.
- Once the RSVP date has been achieved I will e-mail a spreadsheet informing everyone of their status and amount due.

Cancellation policy

- Using the same example as above, anyone who cancels anytime prior to Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm will be removed from the list.
- Anyone canceling between Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm and Monday September 23rd, 2019 will be expected to pay for the cost of the dinner and scotch (\$70). It is the responsibility of the member who cancels their (or their guest's) reservation to find a replacement. If I am

asked to find a substitute and one is found, then the member will be asked to pay for 50% of their dinner cost.

- Anyone who fails to attend the Monday September 23rd, 2019 dinner without having cancelled and been successfully replaced will be expected to pay the full cost (\$70). A member will be responsible for their guest's cancellation (\$80).
- If a member asks to be included at the dinner between Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm and Monday September 23rd, 2019, their name will be placed on a wait-list and be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.

Assigned / Reserved Seating

- Assigned Seating will be offered for the January, June, August, and December dinners.
- Reserved Seating will only be considered if it is a group consisting of a single member plus 3+ guests or a couple member plus 2+ guests.

Perfume / Cologne and Whisky

- Our enjoyment of fine whisky at KSMS starts with a nosing - for many a definitive and delicate moment in their relationship with a new dram. The power of aroma is unquestionable. From defining life experiences to the recall of special memories, the sense of smell is as individual as a fingerprint and has the ability to evoke some of the most precious, rewarding and distinctive moments. Unfortunately strong perfumes can mask and distort other aromas and smells and interfere with the ability to register and recognize subtler fragrances.
- To be fair to all we ask all our members to please refrain from wearing scented products and perfumes to our KSMS evenings.

Dinner Payments

- Please consider sending your payment by e-transfer prior to the dinner. The password will be "KSMS2021RDF", to whatever your security question is. Receiving payment in advance will allow everyone the opportunity to socialize before the dinner as well as reduce the accounting work required after.
- For e-transfers, Members are responsible for collecting from their guests, and then forwarding one payment in total by e-transfer.

Just a note because we care.

Please understand that for the purpose of each event you are advised to drink responsibly and refrain from excessive consumption. The dinners hosted by the Kingston Single Malt Society are sampling events. By agreeing to pay and thereby attend the dinner you agree to release from legal responsibility and hold harmless Kingston Single Malt Society, its President Roberto Di Fazio, and any other volunteers from liability or claims arising from these events.



Kingston Single Malt Society

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