

Kingston Single Malt Society

www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com

A social club for the appreciation of Single Malt Whisky since 1998
February 28th, 2022 VOLUME 15; NUMBER 8c; No. 192



BunnahabhainTM
ISLAY SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY
Since 1881

MENU

Appetizer: *Smoked Salmon & Lima Bean Mousse
Bruschetta*

1st Nosing: **BUNNAHABHAIN MOINE**
(introduced by: John Leighton)

Soup: *Sweet and Creamy Borscht*

2nd Nosing: **BUNNAHABHAIN 11 YEAR OLD 2007
FRENCH BRANDY CASK MATURED**
(introduced by: John Leighton)

Entrée: *Chipotle Chocolate Short Rib, Rice Pilaf
with Corn & Black Beans*

3rd Nosing: **BUNNAHABHAIN 11 YEAR OLD 2008
MANZANILLA CASK MATURED**
(introduced by: John Leighton)

Dessert: *Cherry Pecan Rum Cake*

4th Nosing: **BUNNAHABHAIN 12 YO**

5th Nosing: **BUNNAHABHAIN 12 YO
CASK STRENGTH: 2021 EDITION**
(introduced by: John Leighton)

COST OF THE MALTS

BUNNAHABHAIN MOINE VINTAGES 822523 | 700 mL
bottle, **Price: \$250.00**, Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky
46.3% Alcohol/Vol.

**BUNNAHABHAIN 11 YEAR OLD 2007 FRENCH
BRANDY CASK MATURED Warehouse: 8; Distilled:
27/09/2007; Bottling Date: 04/2019 VINTAGES**
822523 | 700 mL bottle, **Price: \$299.95**, Spirits, Whisky,
Scotch Whisky 52.5% Alcohol/Vol.

**BUNNAHABHAIN 11 YEAR OLD 2008 MANZANILLA
CASK MATURED Warehouse: 9; Distilled:
02/07/2008; Bottling Date: 05/2020 VINTAGES**
822523 | 700 mL bottle, **Price: \$299.95**, Spirits, Whisky,
Scotch Whisky 52.3% Alcohol/Vol.

BUNNAHABHAIN 12 YEAR OLD VINTAGES 068605 | 700
mL bottle **Price: \$89.95** Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey, Scotch
Single Malts 46.3% Alcohol/Vol.

**BUNNAHABHAIN 12 YEAR OLD CASK STRENGTH:
2021 EDITION VINTAGES 068605** | 700 mL bottle **Price:**
\$325.95 Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey, Scotch Single Malts
55.1% Alcohol/Vol.

January 31st Dinner - KSMS Financial Statement
(Money from 34 December attendees @ \$90) = \$3060.00
January dinner 34 persons = \$2077.84
(Money remaining for buying Single Malt) = \$982.16
Cost of Single Malts: = \$1229.70
Cost of Pours per Person = \$30.75
Money for Heels = \$515.00
KSMS Monthly operational balance = \$267.47
Cost per person (All inclusive) = \$97.28

Upcoming Dinner Dates

Monday March 14th 2022 - Irish / Speyside
Monday April 11th 2022 - Speyside / Islands / Islay
Monday May 30th 2022 - Campbeltown / North Highlands
Monday June 20th 2022 - June BBQ - Cigar Malts & Sherry
Monday July 25th, 2022 - Campbeltown / Speyside / Highlands
Friday August 26th, 2022 - 15th Annual Premium Night
Monday September 19th, 2022 - Lowland / Islands (Kyle)
Monday October 17th, 2022 - Speyside / Highlands / Islay
Monday November 14th, 2021 - Campbeltown / Highlands / Islay
Monday December 12th 2022 - Christmas Dinner

Tomatin debuts TR-exclusive 16-year-old Scotch

02 FEBRUARY 2022 By Alice Brooker

Highland distillery Tomatin has introduced a travel retail-exclusive 16-year-old Scotch whisky, matured in Portuguese Moscatel wine barriques.



The 700ml bottling clocks in at 46% ABV

The 16-year-old has been added to the [global travel retail range](#), which comprises: Tomatin 8 Years Old, matured in Bourbon and Sherry casks; the 12-year-old, a one-litre iteration of Tomatin's flagship malt whisky; [the 21-year-old](#), matured in Bourbon barrels; and the 40-year-old, an oloroso Sherry cask-aged expression.

Graham Nicolson, sales director at Tomatin, said: "Our travel retail range showcases the unrivalled variety of casks we have to offer. We are constantly striving to push the boundaries within our portfolio and our global travel retail range is no exception.

"The distinctive cask maturation of this 16-year-old expression is an impressive and welcome addition to the range."

Notes of traditional orange marmalade, sun dried fruits, dark chocolate and a hint of fresh ginger can be found on the palate, while the finish is described as long and waxy.

Bottled at 46% ABV, the 700ml bottling retails for RRP €90 (US\$101.74), and is available in select travel retail outlets globally.

In October last year, [Tomatin lost a lawsuit](#) against a local company's move to name a hotel development after its namesake Scottish village.

Ardgowan appoints Mike Keiller as chair

02 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

Lowland distillery Ardgowan has named former Morrison Bowmore Distillers CEO Mike Keiller as its new chair, taking over from Willie Phillips.



Mike Keiller has joined Ardgowan Distillery as chair

Keiller's career in the industry began at Scotch whisky brand Bell's in Perth, Scotland, and was followed by senior finance and corporate roles at Guinness, United Distillers Europe and Diageo.

He joined Morrison Bowmore Distillers as CEO in 2000 for 14 years and helped transform the firm from a bulk whisky supplier into a brand-led business with whiskies such as Auchentoshan, Bowmore and Glen Garioch.

After his retirement from Morrison Bowmore Distillers, the qualified accountant [served as a non-executive director](#) with The Last Drop Distillers from 2016 until 2018. He will continue to hold a non-executive director position at Distil.

Martin McAdam, Ardgowan Distillery CEO, said: "Mike is a fantastic guy and it's great to welcome him as our new chair as we enter a very exciting phase of our business. In the months ahead we will commence the build of our world-leading carbon negative distillery with the goal of producing the very finest premium malt whisky.

"Mike's industry experience in Scotland, the UK and internationally, and in particular his skills in building a global brand, will prove crucial as our production ramps up in the years to come."

Keiller took over the position of chair from Phillips, who is stepping down [after four years at Ardgowan](#) and 50 years in the whisky industry.

McAdam added: "I also wish to play tribute to our outgoing chairman Willie Phillips, who supported us through the challenging start-up phase. Willie will now become president of our whisky tasting forum – and I look forward to nosing our first new make spirit alongside him."

In June 2021, the Ardgowan Distillery confirmed its Inverclyde distillery project would go ahead after it [received £8.4 million in funding](#), led by principal investor Roland Grain and additional investment from Distil.

Keiller said: "It is exciting to be joining the Ardgowan Distillery as they seek to realise their vision of producing the highest quality malt whisky at their groundbreaking new distillery.

"I'm relishing the opportunity to work with Martin on the company's corporate strategy and to being part of a young, dynamic and fast-growing team of passionate whisky pioneers."

Kilchoman gains £22.5m investment

02 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

Islay whisky distillery Kilchoman has secured a £22.5 million (US\$30.4m) funding package from Barclays to expand its site and grow the brand globally.



Kilchoman Distillery is in the process of building a new warehouse at its site

Kilchoman will use the funds to 'substantially' increase production of its single malt and grow the brand globally.

The distiller aims to produce 40% more whisky within the next 12 months, and the owners have already started work on a new warehouse and hired extra staff. Kilchoman now has 40 employees.

The new investment will allow Kilchoman to store thousands more casks of whisky, which will be released to the public in several years' time.

Islay Heads, general manager at Kilchoman Distillery, said: "Filling thousands of barrels of whisky and waiting several years for the spirit to mature is an expensive business.

"This substantial investment will allow us to invest back in the business, with construction of a new warehouse already underway and

plans in the pipeline that should bring efficiencies and further expansion.”

The brand is available in 50 countries, with France, Germany, the US and China being its biggest markets. The funding will allow the distiller to increase its presence in these four countries.

Heads added: “There are exciting opportunities to grow our brand in countries like France and the US, and despite the unsettling economic conditions there remains a growing market for premium whisky brands.”

Kilchoman is Islay’s only farm distillery and is one of nine producers on the Scottish island. The company was founded in 2005 by Kathy and [Anthony Wills](#), and is now supported by their three sons, George, James, and Peter.

The family business reported turnover of £7m (US\$9.5m) in its last audited accounts to December 2020.

Tasting: Three 18-Year-Old Single Malt Whiskies from Balblair, Speyburn and Old Pulteney

By [Jim Vorel](#) | February 1, 2022 | 10:34am

Photos via Inver House Distillers



Your average whiskey (or whisky) drinker is likely to be familiar with a wide range of distilleries, and have a sense of the range and profile of products coming from each company—we once wrote a piece on this highlighting [specific bourbon distillery house styles](#), in fact. Less visible, at least to the average consumer, are the similarities that may exist across a wide array of distilleries owned by the same *parent company*, something that is especially interesting to compare in the world of scotch whisky, where many distilleries are owned by a handful of larger entities. Sometimes, patterns emerge in the marketing or product formulation ... but each individual distillery ultimately expresses its own style at the same time, which is why the world “single” is in single malt to begin with.

I found myself mulling these questions recently when I had an opportunity to taste a trio of 18-year-old single malt whiskies from three classic Scottish distilleries: Balblair, Speyburn and Old Pulteney. All are owned by [Inver House Distillers](#), a medium-sized player in the scotch whisky industry that is itself owned by ThaiBev, one of Southeast Asia’s largest beverage companies. All are likewise fairly unassuming companies; distilleries that historically haven’t made a huge splash in the hype whisky scene of the U.S. market, but which are all looking to expand their reach in the United States.

Looking at the three products, a few similarities are clear. For one, they’re all obviously 18-year-old single malts that have become part of each distillery’s core range in the last few years. All three are likewise matured in both ex-bourbon American oak and Spanish sherry oak casks, making these fairly pricey, luxury drams with a significant level of maturity—the kind of bottle on which each distillery is staking some portion of their reputation.

Oddly, though, one additional similarity is the fact that you won’t see the word “sherry” on a single one of these labels. For whatever reason, Inver House has chosen to highlight each as being at least partially matured in “Spanish oak” rather than sherry casks, which made me

initially wonder if perhaps other styles of fortified wine such as port might have been involved as well. Upon further inspection, though, I’ve seen no reference to this—these are traditional, sherry-finished single malt, and the parent company has for whatever reason simply chosen to go with “Spanish oak” as its marketing tool, rather than calling out the sherry. Who can say why, exactly?

Regardless, these three expressions end up being a beautiful illustration of how each distillery’s house single malt style and maturation techniques ultimately lead to three distinct drams. Let’s get to tasting.

Old Pulteney 18 Year

ABV: 46% (92 proof)

MSRP: \$140-150



Old Pulteney is known by enthusiasts as “the maritime malt,” with its namesake distillery residing in the Highland town of Wick, Caithness, near the northeastern tip of the country—you can’t go much further north before you hit ocean and islands. As with other seaside malts, this is often said to infuse a certain sense of salinity and “sea air” into the barrels as they undergo their long maturation. The flagship Old Pulteney 12 Year is a solid value that can often be had in the U.S. for \$40-50, or occasionally even less, but this 18 Year core brand demands a rather dramatic MSRP bump. This is sadly not uncommon for sherried malts in particular, as secondary maturation in Spanish oak adds its own increase in cost, and the consumer expects to pay more for such cask finishes. You’ll be hard-pressed to find any comparable combination of age statement and sherry finish these days for a significantly lower price tag. Old Pulteney 18 can at least boast the additional feature of the nicely elevated 92 proof point, which is something many drinkers want when they’re spending more than \$100. On the nose, Old Pulteney 18 is quite fruit forward, with bright notes of peach, apricot, citrus and sultana. The sherry contribution is on the more delicate side, present in the dried fruit notes but presumably less so in the brighter and fresher ones. Cobbler-esque baked fruit mingles with additional hints of cocoa powder and vanilla for a nose that is overall fairly rich but not particularly or overtly “sweet.”

On the palate, I’m getting more of the same baked fruits, along with an earthier quality that is more heather than peat—this is not a smoke-forward Highland dram. Cinnamon spice meets light dried fruit and slightly vinous tones, but then make way for a surprising amount of oak/roast, which brings a notably bitter dimension to the finish, which is also moderately tannic. Overall, the impression is a bit more dry than the nose would suggest, and it’s an interesting combination of some nuanced sherry influences without a lot of the greater sweetness that secondary sherry cask maturation tends to deliver. It’s a fruit-forward malt with a drier, woodier finish than expected.

Speyburn 18 Year

MSRP: \$130-150



In terms of specs, the Speyburn 18 Year is quite similar to the Old Pulteney, having the same elevated strength of 46% ABV (92 proof), although once again we don't specifically know how much of its maturation happened in bourbon barrels, and how much in "Spanish oak." Judging from the Old Pulteney, my assumption would be that it's a modest finishing period in the sherry wood.

The nose of this one is attention getting and unique—less classically fruity than the Pulteney, without the "orchard fruit" and stone fruit notes. Instead, it initially threw me for a bit of a loop, before I began to piece together much more tropically fruity tones; impressions of ripe mango among other things. These tropical notes are enhanced with honey, toffee and light citrus, along with touches of hot cinnamon. Over time, this nose seems to grow, becoming steadily more rich, sweet and spicy.

On the palate, meanwhile, the Speyburn 18 makes its presence felt in the spice department in particular, drawing a quite different dimension of flavor from the Spanish oak than the Old Pulteney. Deeply caramelized notes of molasses, and a growing roast that evokes sweet espresso beans are buffeted by tons of spice notes, suggesting allspice-infused Christmas cookies. For whatever reason, these sherry casks really seem to have leaned into the baking spice dimension, and the result is unconventional but quite enjoyable.

Balblair 18 Year

MSRP: \$190-210



Like the other two, this 18-year-old single malt is "matured initially in American oak ex-bourbon casks, followed by first fill Spanish oak butts, adding depth and charisma." It likewise weighs in at 46% ABV (92 proof), another factor of shared ownership that Inver House seems to have pretty well standardized.

The nose on Balblair 18 Year announces that this immediately seems like the most classical, "sherry forward" single malt of the trio. It's quite rich and malty, but infused with lots of dark fruit compote, blackberry and currant, along with dried fruit notes of raisin. I'm also getting nutty toffee, slight roast and a bit more vinous booziness than in the other bottles. More than the others, it feels like a 92 proof dram.

On the palate, I'm getting lots of roasted nuts, along with toasted bread, toffee, vanilla, and dark fruit jam. Touches of ashy roast lend a bit of balancing astringency to a dram that is otherwise fairly sweet and just a touch desserty in nature. As it opens up in my glass, I'm getting more candied orange peel and dark chocolate, and the sherry barrels are expressing themselves nicely. For drinkers who really enjoy sherried single malts, and want the sherry casks to make themselves felt, this is easily the most expressive of these three bottles, at least in the classical sense. It's not an over-the-top profile, but it's a pretty well balanced one that lets both the Balblair malt and the finishing casks shine.

Rosebank names Malcolm Rennie distillery manager 03 FEBRUARY 2022 By Melita Kiely

Lowland whisky producer Rosebank has welcomed Malcolm Rennie to the team as its new distillery manager.



Malcolm Rennie will be Rosebank's distillery manager. Rennie will oversee the whole production process at Rosebank, from the new make spirit to cask selection and maturation. He said: "Rosebank is an iconic distillery, so it is an absolute honour to be given the opportunity to help bring it back to life."

"The whisky is incredibly well-regarded in the industry because of its unique, and somewhat contradictory production process. "The triple distillation gives you a light and fruity spirit, but then we run it through a worm-tub condenser, which adds real body, texture and weight to the new make."

Rosebank is owned by Ian Macleod Distillers. Rennie will also work with the company's distillation manager, Robbie Hughes, and malt master, John Glass.

The new Rosebank distillery manager boasts 35 years of distilling experience, having worked across Scotland, from Ayrshire to Islay. Most recently, Malcolm helped open Ayrshire's new Lochlea Distillery. He has also worked with Ardbeg, Glen Moray, Bruichladdich, and more. Furthermore, he also helped to revive the dormant Annandale Distillery after 90 years.

Rosebank eyes summer completion

Rosebank's restoration has been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, construction has picked up in recent months – and production is expected to begin towards the end of summer.

The 108ft chimney has been renewed, while inside the mash tun has now been installed, along with the process tanks, and mill and grist case.

The three stills are due to arrive at the distillery in the next few weeks, made by coppersmith Forsyths to the exact dimensions of those used at the distiller 30 years ago.

Rennie added: "Our ambition is to recreate that unctuous, floral spirit that everyone remembers and loves. With limited stocks remaining from the 90s, there's no doubt it will be a challenge, but we won't stop until we get that perfect Rosebank balance correct."

[Ian Macleod Distillers acquired the Rosebank](#) site in October 2017, along with the last remaining stocks. Once the restoration is complete, the 1,000sqm site will include an energy-efficient distillery, a visitor centre, tasting room, shop and warehouse.

The Macallan Estate Part Of Bentley Motors' New Pinnacle British Road Trip

[Gary Carter](#) - [Scotch](#) | February 5, 2022

Bentley Motors and [The Macallan Single Malt](#) together [have plotted what they feel](#) is an extraordinary journey of discovery, a road trip experience that offers the chance to drive a Bentley through stunning British landscapes, including the Peak District, the Yorkshire Dales and the Cairngorms.

The scenic route begins at the home of Bentley Motors in Crewe, Cheshire, and finishes at The Macallan Estate in Scotland's Speyside region.

A year ago, Bentley Motors and The Macallan announced a major brand partnership and this is the fruits of this union, the first time customers are able to experience the homes of both brands together.



Bentley The Macallan Road Trip (image via Bentley)

Seasonal and locally-sourced produce will be served to guests throughout the scheduled culinary experiences. Nature, history, arts and culture, wellbeing and relaxation will all form a part of the trip. The driving program spans five days of scenic drives, with four nights in luxury accommodations.

Guests will be able to access usually private and exclusive experiences, including a dinner within the Bentley factory itself. Guests will be provided with a private car to travel from Cheshire to Scotland; a chance to drive a Bentley perhaps for the first time, or for existing customers to experience new models, in a unique driving-led experience.

The Bentley Event team will offer a full concierge service looking after guests' needs along the way. Places on the exclusive trips are limited, with just five couples within each group. The program will run through late 2022.

The cost is £11,350 per person, based on double occupancy. Single supplement options are also available. And the use of a Bentley is included.

The package also includes all accommodation, food, drinks and activities throughout the five day program.

For more information including dates, customer contact information or to purchase tickets, check out: <https://bentleymotors.com/en/world-of-bentley/experiences/events/uk-extraordinary-journey.html>

Overview of the itinerary

Day One

Arriving in Cheshire, guests from around the world will be greeted by the Bentley team at the brand's flagship CW1 House showroom in Crewe. A private lunch will be served before guests are transferred to the Bentley factory. Following an opportunity to tour the site, an intimate, private dinner will take place in the factory, each ingredient sourced within a 26-mile radius.

Day Two

Guests will drive in convoy, in Bentley's latest models – the Continental GT, the Flying Spur and the Bentayga – towards the Peak District National Park. With a short break at the historic manor house, Fischer Barlow, the group will continue north towards the 'Dark Peak' region. Lunch at the Northcote by chef Lisa Goodwin Allen will be accompanied by a private tour of the aromatic gardens of the Michelin-starred restaurant. Set within the Yorkshire Dales, Georgian country house hotel Middleton Lodge will play home for the evening, offering a home-grown and locally-sourced seasonal produce for dinner.

Day Three

An optional, private guided yoga practice will greet guests as they wake at Middleton Lodge. The convoy continues into the North Pennines and Northumberland National Park, offering some of the world's most spectacular roads. Passing Hadrian's Wall, drivers will head into the Scottish Borders for lunch at an Edwardian manor, nestled in the Tweed Valley.

The journey continues through rolling hills, passing spellbinding abbeys, awe-inspiring stately homes and castles before arriving at The Treehouses at Lanrick. A hidden gem bordering the Trossachs National Park, this green accommodation does not compromise on luxury. As night falls, the group will gather to meet their chef for the evening, the renowned Tony Singh. An al fresco dinner with local, seasonal produce follows a guided stargazing experience with Scotland's Astronomer Royal Catherine Heyman.

Day Four

Heading northeast toward The Cairngorms, guests will stop for refreshments at the peerless Fife Arms in Braemar, a 200-year-old Scottish lodge. A pioneer in recycling and upcycling, the hotel is home to a collection of over 16,000 antiques and curios, and artworks – from Picasso, Freud, Bruegel, to watercolors by HM Queen Victoria and HRH Prince Charles.

The journey will then continue on to The Macallan Estate, set on 485 acres of Speyside countryside and home to the brand's award-winning distillery, designed by internationally acclaimed architects to promote sustainability. The immersive experience will feature a meal in the surroundings, tutored tasting, and private distillery experience. The final destination in the journey celebrates the partnership between Bentley and The Macallan, sharing an insight into the process, production, people and passion that make their single malt whisky special. A farewell for guests will culminate in a private, specially curated dining experience at the Elchies Brasserie, before moving on to stay at the restored Rothes Glen.

Day Five

After a final breakfast, chauffeurs will transfer guests to Aberdeen International Airport to travel onwards home. Alternatively, the Caledonia Sleeper from Inverness can be arranged, offering the iconic railway journey to London.

Caol Ila debuts 24YO whisky

07 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

Islay whisky producer Caol Ila has released a 24-year-old single malt Scotch to mark its 175th anniversary in 2021.



The 24-year-old single malt celebrates Caol Ila's 175th birthday last year. The Diageo-owned single malt brand has released 3,000 bottles of its commemorative whisky.

The 52.1% ABV whisky offers notes of fresh fruit on the nose and smoke, while the palate provides an 'intense sweetness' with salt and pepper. The finish carries 'soft spice, rich cocoa and the lingering smoke of glowing campfire embers'.

Sam Hale, distillery manager, said: "It's fantastic to celebrate more than 175 years of Caol Ila with a brilliant bottle that showcases the distillery's characteristic smoky smoothness and sweet sea air aromas. "It honours the long-standing legacy of Caol Ila as Islay's hidden treasure and I'm sure it will be a hit with our fans, who we look forward to welcoming when we open the doors to our re-imagined visitor experience."

The 24-year-old whisky is available to buy from selected specialist retailers, malts.com and Lagavulin distillery on Islay, priced at RRP £295 (US\$399) per 700ml.

Caol Ila will be the fourth and final site of the 'four corners' distilleries to reopen with a revamped visitor centre as part of Diageo's [£185 million \(US\\$250m\) investment](#) into the transformation of its Scotch whisky visitor experiences.

The visitor centre was [given the green light](#) to move forward with its renovation in April 2019.

The other three distilleries that have already reopened after upgrades are [Glenkinchie in the Lowlands](#), [Cardhu in Speyside](#) and [Clynelish in the Highlands](#).

As part of the multi-million-pound investment, Diageo opened its eight-floor [Johnnie Walker Princes Street visitor experience](#) in September last year.

Whisky Review: The Dalmore 15-Year-Old Single Malt Scotch

[Scott Bernard Nelson](#) | February 3, 2022

Scottish Highlands distillery The Dalmore made headlines last year at the high end of the whisky market. First, it released five-bottle collectible sets called [The Dalmore Decades](#) that were auctioned off for more than a quarter of a million dollars apiece (it sold 15 sets total). Then it announced a new [annual 30-year expression of its single malt](#), priced at a suggested \$5,500 per bottle.

These are interesting releases for collectors, and speak to [The Dalmore's long history](#) and interest in pushing boundaries on what is possible for Scottish single malts. But let's be honest: Most of us won't get our hands on those bottles in our lifetimes.

[The Dalmore 15-year single malt](#), on the other hand, is no unicorn bottle. You can find it at state-controlled liquor stores across my home

state of Oregon for \$129.95 a bottle. Most likely, you can find it in your state, too.

My brother and I knocked off a bottle of [The Dalmore 12](#) during a family vacation at the coast a few years back, and I remember enjoying both the artistry of the bottle – with the silver stag's head on the front – and the whisky inside it. So an opportunity to put its 15-year-old sibling through its paces immediately appealed to me.

The Dalmore 15 was matured for a dozen years in ex-bourbon casks, then split into three batches that were aged an additional three years of finishing in different types of sherry casks. One of the batches finished in Amoroso casks, one in Apostoles casks and one in Matusalem Oloroso casks. All batches were then blended back together in an upstanding sherry butt for the final release.



The Dalmore 15-Year-Old (image via Debbie Nelson)

Tasting Notes: The Dalmore 15-Year-Old Single Malt

Vital stats: Mash bill of 100% malted barley, aged for 15 years; 80 proof/40% alcohol by volume; MSRP of \$129.95 for a 750 ml bottle.

Appearance: A nice nut brown color, with decent legs holding up on the side of the glass.

Nose: If you're expecting a typical Scotch, this will set you back on your heels quickly. It's sweet and fruity, bringing to mind red wine, Cherry Coke, sticky caramel candy and red gummy bears. The sherry is dominant here, without question.

Palate: As with the nose, you might be surprised if you're expecting traditional Scotch notes. This single malt has the zest of a ginger beer, and a definite sense of red wine (and sherry). It's round, fruity and dark, as if you're drinking a fruit-forward California cabernet. The finish is gentle, and brought to mind one of those milk chocolate oranges you sometimes get in your stocking at the holidays: Creamy, sweet and chocolatey, with just a hint of citrus.

The Takeaway

Summary

There's no arguing that this is interesting whisky. The layers of chocolate, dark fruit and sherry are impressive to peel back, and a pour of this goes down as easily as any Scotch I've had. It's smooth, easy-drinking whisky. (The next time somebody tells me they don't drink Scotch because it's too smokey and peaty, I'm going to pull out this bottle as a counterpoint.) That said, The Dalmore 15 is a bit too sweet for my taste. When I'm in the mood for a Scotch, I want to taste the barley – and that's largely hidden here underneath the sherry notes. It's quality whisky, for sure, but more of a novelty on my bar than a regular sipper. 3/5

Benromach debuts Cara Gold whisky

08 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

Speyside distillery Benromach has launched a limited edition single malt as part of its Contrasts range.



Benromach has added a new single malt to its Contrasts collection. The new Benromach Cara Gold is limited to 6,000 bottles globally, 1,500 of which will be released in the UK.

The new whisky is made using Cara Gold malted barley, a roasted caramel malt that is more commonly found in breweries and provides 'rich fruity and toffee' notes. The malted barley was combined with the distillery's lightly peated malt.

Keith Cruickshank, distillery manager at Benromach, said: "We love to get creative with our small batch vintage expressions and our Contrasts range allows us to do this."

"Unlike any of our other expressions, we have used Cara Gold malt – this is a type of malted barley you would usually find in a brewery rather than a distillery and it has produced a beautiful and unique single malt." Laid down in 2010 before being bottled in 2022, the whisky was matured fully in first-fill Bourbon barrels, resulting in passionfruit, lychee and lime aromas, and a hint of malted biscuit.

The single malt offers sweet flavours of pineapple, apricot and a subtle pepperiness, followed by a fruity and sweet smoke finish. Benromach Cara Gold (46% ABV) is available from the brand's website and select retailers worldwide. It is priced at RRP £49.99 (US\$67) per 700ml bottle.

In August last year, Benromach launched a [second Sherry cask-matured Peat Smoke whisky](#), limited to 2,000 bottles in the UK.

Burns Crystal gets a new look

09 FEBRUARY 2022 By Kate Malczewski

Scottish glassware company Glencairn Crystal Studio has given its Burns Crystal business a rebrand.

Burns Crystal owner Glencairn Crystal celebrated its 40th anniversary last year.

Burns Crystal was founded 35 years ago by professional crystal cutter Donald Kay.

The company was acquired by family-run Glencairn Crystal Studio, maker of the world's leading whisky glass, in 2015.

Now Burns Crystal has debuted a new look to appeal to consumers seeking Scottish gifts. The refresh includes new branding across its redesigned website, online shop and social media channels.

The firm's range features handmade glasses specifically created for whisky, gin, wine and Champagne, with many designs featuring Scottish-themed engravings. The company has also premiered a feature that allows customers to discover if they have a Scottish clan name accompanied by a family crest, which can then be added to its glassware.



"We are incredibly proud of our Scottish heritage – it's an exciting opportunity for us to give Burns Crystal an image refresh and reset alongside, but still separate to, our existing Glencairn Crystal product offering," said Jason Kennedy, sales director at Glencairn Crystal. "Here at Glencairn [we have more than 40 years of experience](#) in the crystal market – we strive to provide a first-class professional, committed and friendly service to all customers, with family values remaining at the heart of everything we do."

Burns Crystal's glassware ranges in price from around £10-£50 (US\$14-\$68) and is available at www.burnscrystal.co.uk.

Dunphail Distillery will be 'purely whisky'

09 FEBRUARY 2022 By Melita Kiely

Speyside-based Dunphail will be "purely a whisky distillery" once operational with no plans to produce any other spirits, assured founder Dariusz Plazewski.



An artist's impression of Dunphail Distillery

Speaking to *The Spirits Business* last month, Plazewski, who is also co-founder and master distiller at London's Bimber Distillery, revealed further details about his plans for the new Speyside Scotch whisky distillery.

He assured the distillery would be dedicated to Scotch whisky, with no plans to release a gin or vodka in the interim.

"It was a mistake," he said, referring to the gin and vodka launches in Bimber's early days. "If I were doing this again, I would never start doing any white spirit because it took a lot of energy and a lot of time. "It wasn't worth it commercially. So we're not going to do this again at Dunphail."

“Dunphail is purely a whisky distillery, and we’re not going to produce any other spirit – just single malt whisky, and on the side we’re looking to launch an independent bottling programme.”

Independent bottlings will be compiled using casks from around Scotland – “and around the world if we can”, added Plazewski.

“The independent bottling will help to create some cash flow on the side. But I’m a whisky geek – I’m all whisky and I want to stay purely whisky.”

Moray Council granted Plazewski [planning permission to build Dunphail](#) in July last year. [Building commenced in December 2021](#), which involves transforming a farm steading on the Dunphail estate, south of Forres in Scotland, into a distillery.

The distillery is forecast to produce 200,000 litres of alcohol annually, and Plazewski is hopeful that the site will be up and running this year. Last month, [Dunphail appointed Matt McKay](#) as director of whisky creation and outreach at the distillery.

For the full interview with Plazewski, see the February 2022 issue of *The Spirits Business*, out now.

Macallan debuts world’s oldest single malt Scotch

09 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

The Macallan has released an 81-year-old whisky, taking the title of the world’s oldest single malt Scotch.



The 81-year-old whisky comes in a decanter supported by a bronze sculpture of three hands

The Edrington-owned whisky brand has unveiled The Reach, a single malt that was laid to rest in 1940 during the Second World War. The bottling has broken the record for the world’s oldest single malt Scotch, previously set by an [80-year-old Gordon & MacPhail expression released last September](#).

The Macallan’s rare whisky is made from a single Sherry-seasoned oak cask and comes in a decanter supported by a bronze sculpture of three hands.

Each hand represents people from the brand’s history, including the distillery workers of 1940 who were behind the spirit; chairman Allan Shiach; and [current master whisky maker Kirsteen Campbell](#), who selected the 1940 cask for The Reach.

Campbell said: “Created during a turbulent time in the world, this extraordinary expression showcases The Macallan’s history, ingenuity and unmistakable strength of character.

“The creation of many hands, The Reach has been a truly collaborative effort. It’s also a tribute to the people who made this precious whisky, and their enduring spirit which never wavered.

“Its deep auburn hue is the first hint of this remarkable whisky’s astonishing depth. Offering notes of dark chocolate, sweet cinnamon and aromatic peat, leading on to treacle toffee, crystallised ginger and charred pineapple, before giving way to an intensely rich, sweet and smoky finish.”

The 41.6% ABV expression is limited to 288 decanters globally, priced at RRP US\$125,000/£92,000/€110,000.

The Reach will be on display at The Macallan Estate Boutique from 9 February 2022, followed by the brand’s Boutique stores in domestic and travel retail locations.

In October last year, The Macallan [premiered a chocolate-inspired whisky](#) as part of a new series of single malts.

Older Whisky Isn’t Always Better. Here’s What You Can Buy Instead

The current bounty of superaged Scotch is great in theory. Until you actually try to get your hands on it.

By - [Brad Japhe](#)

February 9, 2022, 1:43 PM EST

Updated on February 9, 2022, 2:44 PM EST

Good things come to those who wait. Perhaps nowhere is this saying more apt than in the world of whisky, where patient maturation often pays dividends in the form of a dram with unrivaled elegance—and price.

The past year stretched this reality to new extremes. Yamazaki released a 55-year-old spirit that went down as history’s most senior Japanese offering. (Dekanta listed a bottle of it [for \\$950,000](#)—and it’s out of stock.) Likewise, independent bottler Gordon & MacPhail unveiled what was then the oldest Scotch ever, an 80-year-old single malt from the Glenlivet, which sold at auction [for \\$193,000](#). Just this Wednesday, the Macallan one-upped them by a year with the Reach, a [\\$125,000 decanter](#) containing liquid first laid down in 1940. To say these venerable expressions come at a premium is a comical understatement. So while whisky prices almost always follow the rule that older equals costlier, there’s another principle to be considered when you’re shelling out a sizable fortune to enjoy an aged product: the law of diminishing returns. The link between age and quality isn’t always linear. There’s a point where the opposite may be true—something to keep in mind if your goal is to enjoy the spirit and not merely hold it as an investment. To that end, here’s an organoleptic appraisal of five recently released extended-age statements along with younger alternatives that drink similar, especially when factoring in the ability to, you know, buy it. If good things come to those who wait, then great things come to those who contemplate.

To Have or to Hold: Your Whisky Buying Guide

If you can't get ...

The GlenDronach Aged 50 Years



The GlenDronach Aged 50 Years

Courtesy GlenDronach

The historic Highland producer is responsible for some of the most celebrated sherry-bombs on the planet. In January it unleashed the mother of them all: 198 half-century-old bottles from one ex-Pedro Ximénez finishing cask, priced at \$25,000 each. Cherry, date, and walnut are eventually joined on the palate by Turkish tobacco and threads of Mediterranean spice, after which fresh-baked French pastry unfolds.

... Then Buy

The GlenDronach 1993 Master Vintage



The GlenDronach 1993 Master Vintage

Courtesy Glendronach

At a little more than half the age and a fraction of the price (about \$700), the [1993 Master Vintage](#) is exceptional. Although not nearly as complex or robust as its eldest sibling, there's plenty of character: You'll still detect the same notes of walnut and ripened cherry that typify the house style. Even the [15-year-old GlenDronach Revival](#) is a worthy adjunct, readily available for less than \$100.

If you can't get ...
Singleton 54 Paragon of Time II



Singleton 54 Paragon of Time II
Courtesy Diageo

Parent company Diageo Plc's oldest release is not a terrible dram, but for a 1966 vintage slumbering decades in European oak, it's less sophisticated than you might expect. The Singleton's herbal, minty quality is certainly seductive but also somewhat muted. With only 235 bottles available worldwide, you're probably never going to encounter it, anyway—even if you had [the \\$41,000](#) in disposable cash to get it.

... Then Buy
The Balvenie Tun 1509 Batch No. 8



The Balvenie Tun 1509 Batch No. 8
Courtesy The Balvenie

The latest iteration of [Balvenie's Tun 1509](#) can be had for exactly 1/100th the price of the Singleton. It doesn't hold an age statement, but it does exert some similarly earthy, herbal undertones. If you're a Diageo loyalist, consider instead a [43-year-old Xpedition Oak](#) (\$4,700) from Talisker, the distillery's oldest expression, which was released last summer. It swirls with orchard fruit and a tantalizing honey-inspired waxiness.

If you can't get ...
Yamazaki 55



Yamazaki 55
Courtesy House of Suntory

Let me save you the trouble: You're not going to find [this bottle](#). There were only 100 produced. But as someone who's had the good fortune to sample it, I can say it's not the best liquid I've ever tasted from the Osaka, Japan-based distillery. It might not even be in the top three. But it's masterfully complex, announcing itself on a wave of frankincense and myrrh before retreating with persistent treacle and menthol smoke.

... Then Buy
Yamazaki Sherry Cask 2016 Edition



Yamazaki Sherry Cask 2016
Courtesy House of Suntory

If you want something better, you can still secure a bottle of [Yamazaki Sherry Cask 2016 edition](#) for the relative bargain of \$6,000. But if “reasonable” isn't your cup of matcha, the supremely limited [Yamazaki 1984 Vintage Malt](#) is a showstopper of epic proportions—and \$25,000. The distillery's cedar- and honeysuckle-imbued [18-year-old flagship](#) is nothing to scoff at either, even as its price has quietly crept up to more than \$1,000.

If you can't get ...
The Glen Grant Dennis Malcolm 60th Anniversary Edition



The Glen Grant 60 Year Old Single Malt Scotch Whisky
Courtesy Glen Grant
Bottled at 52.8% alcohol by volume from a single ex-Oloroso sherry cask, the Speyside producer's [60-year-old](#) is entirely energetic for its age—much like the master distiller it's honoring. A dark fruit potency deepens the nutmeg and Christmas spice at its core, while an alluring creaminess in the mouthfeel ensures you'll sit and ponder it—and its \$29,000 price tag—long after each sip.

... Then Buy
Douglas Laing Old Particular Glen Grant 25 Year Old



Douglas Laing Old Particular Glen Grant 25 Year Old
Photographer: Courtesy Douglas Laing
Independent bottlings, in which third-party specialists age spirit from established distilleries, remain a great way to get your hands on rare and old whisky at a relatively low price. This [25-year-old Glen Grant single malt from Douglas Laing](#) is a prime example, with its honey-hued biscuity appeal. Found online for \$300, it's a crisp pour with lingering threads of maple-syrup-slathered pancakes.

If you can't get ...
Gordon & MacPhail Generations 80 Year Old



Gordon & MacPhail Generations 80YO Single Malt Scotch
Courtesy Gordon & MacPhail
Elgin's legendary independent bottler has consistently pushed the age envelope. [This particular Scotch](#) was laid into an especially hardy sherry butt at the Glenlivet distillery on Feb. 3, 1940. More than 80 years later, a single bottle from that barrel sold at auction for \$193,000. Its nuanced notes of rancio and worn leather are almost irrelevant; what you're ponying up for is a piece of history.

... Then Buy
Private Collection 1973 From Linkwood Distillery



Gordon & MacPhail Private Collection Linkwood Distillery 1973
Courtesy Gordon & MacPhail
Just about any of Gordon & MacPhail's Private Collection bottlings are a good match for when one's enthusiasm for superaged Scotch surpasses one's spending power to acquire it. [A 47-year-old offering](#) sourced from Speyside's Linkwood Distillery is a great place to start. Full-bodied and pleasantly fruity for about \$2,200, it's a fraction of the price of the 80-year-old bottle.

But What About Bourbon?

Unlike most other kinds of whiskey, bourbon requires primary aging in virgin and charred oak, which is responsible for the caramel- and vanilla-laden sweetness that characterizes the style. The flip side, however, is that it's hard to achieve balance when you're aging it for very long, which is why you rarely see American whiskeys with age statements comparable to their Scottish and Irish counterparts. Here are some notable and recent exceptions to that rule.

Michter's 20-Year Kentucky Straight Bourbon

Assertive yet graceful, rich yet pleasantly piquant—and incredibly limited. This year the Kentucky distillery dropped a [mere 582 bottles](#) that were supposed to retail at \$750 a pop, but you won't find one for less than 10 times that price. Seek out the latest [Blue Run 14 Year](#) (about \$500) for a similar depth of flavor.



Michter's 20-Year Kentucky Straight Bourbon and Very Olde St. Nick Ancient Cask 13 Year Bourbon

Source: Vendors

Very Olde St. Nick Ancient Cask 13-Year Bourbon

Now under the purview of [Preservation Distillery](#), Olde St. Nick was once produced by legendary Kentucky families like the Van Winkles. The hot, 107.5-proof whiskey bursts out of the glass with toffee and cinnamon spice. [A deal, even at \\$500](#). Less of a cult sensation but a rival when it comes to balance and richness, [Bardstown Bourbon Co. Discovery Series #6](#) (\$130) uses 17-year Tennessee spirit in its latest no-age-statement blend.

Edinburgh's first single malt in 100 years launches

11 FEBRUARY 2022 *By Nicola Carruthers*

Scotch whisky maker John Crabbie & Co has released the first single malt to be produced in Edinburgh in nearly a century.



Chain Pier Single Malt is limited to 234 bottles

The new whisky is the first to be released from the brand's Chain Pier Distillery in Edinburgh.

The Granton-based site was set up by Halewood Artisanal Spirits as an 'experimental' pilot distillery, while the larger Bonnington distillery for Crabbie Whisky was still under construction.

The expression, called Chain Pier Single Malt, was matured in heavily charred virgin American oak casks.

The resulting liquid offers notes of berries, forest fruits and green apples on the nose, with rich caramel, sweet malt and ginger spice on the palate.

James Stocker, marketing director at Halewood Artisanal Spirits, said: "The Chain Pier distillery was operational for just a year (between 2018 and 2019), yet it gave our team a great opportunity to continue John Crabbie's legacy of innovation – handcrafting unique distillations and trialling everything from malt types to custom casks.

"The launch of the Chain Pier Single Malt is an incredibly exciting step in the John Crabbie & Co journey, as the malt whisky that we have crafted from start to finish at a site of our own.

"The quality of the liquid is really a testament to our distilling team and [master blender Dr Kirstie McCallum](#), and a great preview of what's to come from the Crabbie whisky brand."

The 57% ABV expression was distilled on site using a 500-litre copper pot still, and is limited to 234 bottles.

Chain Pier Single Malt is available to buy from specialist whisky shops and The Drop's online store, priced at RRP £65 (US\$88).

In February last year, Halewood Artisanal Spirits released 260 bottles of [Crabbie 1992 Speyside Single Malt whisky](#) in the UK.

Raasay owner to open Campbeltown whisky distillery

14 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

The owner of Isle of Raasay Distillery has revealed plans to build a sustainable single malt whisky distillery in Campbeltown.



R&B Distillers has purchased Dhurrie Farm in Machrihanish for the build of a new distillery

Scotch whisky maker R&B Distillers has acquired Dhurrie Farm in Machrihanish, on the west coast of Scotland, with the aim of building a new farm-to-bottle distillery and visitor centre, as well as establish a whisky club.

The build of Machrihanish Distillery will enable the producer to add a second single malt brand to its portfolio, after [Isle of Raasay whisky](#). The site is expected to become the first distillery in the Campbeltown region in more than 180 years. The area was once home to more than 30 distilleries and now has only three, R&B Distillers said.

Planning is expected to be finalised this year with the purpose of breaking ground in 2023.

A recipe for the Machrihanish single malt is currently under development. The recipe will seek to bring a different style of whisky from a distinctive Scotch whisky region to complement the firm's Isle of Raasay Single Malt, as well as increase the company's market and production output.

The Machrihanish Distillery will have an initial production capacity of 400,000 litres of pure alcohol annually. The site will aim to avoid the use of fossil fuels in production and use biological farming practices.

Bill Dobbie, co-founder and executive chairman of R&B Distillers, said: "When the business was founded in 2015 we had a clear ambition to create Scotland's leading artisanal distiller – building on Raasay's nascent success, and noticing the clear global demand for supreme quality drinks with unquestionable provenance, today's announcement confirms significant progress towards this goal."

R&B Distillers said it will continue to work with underdeveloped communities to produce super-premium spirits with 'true provenance'.

The Isle of Raasay Distillery [bottled the first legal single malt whisky](#) from the Hebridean island in November 2020. The whisky is available in 24 markets, including the UK, France, Germany, Japan, China and Taiwan.

R&B Distillers plans to double production capacity at its Isle of Raasay Distillery to 400,000 litres per annum over the next three to five years. Microdistillery plans

The company has also revealed plans to build a micro grain distillery in Coldstream, based in the Scottish Borders.

R&B Distillers, South of Scotland Enterprise, and Scottish Borders Council are exploring several options for the site of this new distillery which is due to be confirmed shortly.

The company said it will build on the family history of its co-founder and master distiller, Alasdair Day, using his family's recipe book, as well as capitalise on the 'market curiosity' around a Scottish Bourbon through the use of different grains for the creation of a new whisky. Furthermore, R&B Distillers has realigned its executive team with Bill Dobbie leading Day, Norman Gillies as operations director, William Dobbie as commercial director and Stuart Blues as finance director. R&B Distillers currently employs 25 people between Raasay, Edinburgh and London, with the number expected to grow because of the new plans. The Machrihanish project will more than create 20 new jobs.

Tomatin Introduces A 16 Year Old Single Malt To Its Travel Retail Range

Gary Carter - [Scotch](#) | February 8, 2022

[Highland distillery Tomatin](#) recently announced the latest addition to its global travel retail range, the Tomatin 16 Year Old single malt.

This new expression will be a travel retail exclusive, and will sell in selected outlets for a suggested retail price of €90.

This 16 Year Old is said to draw its style and flavors from the Portuguese Moscatel wine barriques it matured in. Balanced with the influence from traditional oak casks, the distiller's notes show that this single malt brings flavors of traditional orange marmalade, sun dried fruits and dark chocolate with a hint of fresh ginger and a long, waxy finish.



Tomatin 16 Year Old (image via Tomatin)

Tomatin's Travel Retail portfolio includes the 8 Year Old (matured in bourbon and Sherry casks), the 12 Year Old (a one liter version of Tomatin's flagship malt), the 21 Year Old (matured in bourbon barrels), and the 40 Year Old (the premium Oloroso Sherry expression). Each bottle in Tomatin's Travel Retail range has been awarded a gold or double gold award at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition. Graham Nicolson, Tomatin sales director, said in a prepared statement, "Our Travel Retail range showcases the unrivaled variety of casks we have to offer. We are constantly striving to push the boundaries within our portfolio and our global travel retail range is no exception. The distinctive cask maturation of this 16 year old expression is an impressive and welcome addition to the range."

Bottled at 46% ABV, Tomatin's new 16 Year Old comes in 700ml bottles.

GlenDronach reveals 19th Cask Bottling collection

15 FEBRUARY 2022 By Kate Malczewski

The GlenDronach Distillery has unveiled two limited edition Scotch whisky releases, including the 19th batch in its Cask Bottling series.



Batch 19 features bottlings distilled between 1990 and 1994 Cask Strength Batch 10 and Cask Bottling Batch 19 were crafted by The GlenDronach master blender Rachel Barrie.

For The GlenDronach Cask Strength Batch 10, Barrie chose to combine liquids aged in Pedro Ximénez (PX) and oloroso Sherry casks. The whisky was bottled at 58.6% ABV, and offers notes of mocha, apricot, baked orange chocolate cake, roasted nuts and raisins on the nose, with a palate of spiced fruitcake, nectarine, cherry and sultanas.

“The GlenDronach Cask Strength Batch 10 is incredibly rich and full-bodied, with the full depth of Sherry cask maturation at its heart,” Barrie said.

Meanwhile, Cask Bottling Batch 19 is a collection of 12 expressions ranging in ABV from 50.7% to 57.89%. Each one was drawn from a single PX or oloroso Sherry butt and distilled between 1990 and 1994.

“The GlenDronach Cask Bottling Batch 19 offers an insight into our Sherry cask maturation history, and the exceptional quality of the casks we have at The GlenDronach,” the master blender continued.

“I have personally chosen these 12 casks to celebrate and share the very best of the distillery’s character. Each represents the rich selection of barrels, hogsheads, puncheons and butts that have been used throughout The GlenDronach’s history.”

Batch 10 is priced at £77 (US\$104), while Batch 19’s bottlings vary in price from £545-£1,037 (US\$738-\$1,404), with cask availability varying by region.

“Both releases showcase our enduring commitment to crafting the most exceptional, richly Sherried single malts, representative of The GlenDronach’s rare dedication to its craft, embodied in every expression,” Barrie concluded.

Last month, The GlenDronach [debuted its oldest and rarest whisky](#) to date, a 50-year-old expression that was distilled in 1971.

Glasgow Distillery Co unveils festival bottling

16 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

Scotch producer Glasgow Distillery Co has created an exclusive 1770 single malt in partnership with Glasgow’s Whisky Festival.



The 1770 single malt created for Glasgow’s Whisky Festival was matured in a Marsala wine cask

Glasgow Distillery Co is the headline sponsor of the whisky festival, which takes place this Saturday (19 February) at Hampden Park stadium in Glasgow. The event was previously due to take place in November 2021 but was moved to this month.

Glasgow Distillery Co will showcase its range of spirits at the festival, including rum, gin, vodka and its 1770 single malt whiskies.

The Scotch whisky maker worked in partnership with the organisers of Glasgow’s Whisky Festival to create a single cask bottling for the event. Cask No. 17-598 is a first-fill Marsala cask, filled on 23 August 2017 and bottled at 55.8% ABV on 8 February 2022. The producer filled the cask with its peated whisky, distilled from malted barley which has been smoked to 50PPM with peat from the Scottish Highlands.

The expression is non-chill-filtered and natural in colour, with only 408 bottles of the whisky available.

The resulting liquid offers bonfire smoke, tobacco leaf, butterscotch, figs and marzipan on the nose. The palate brings sweet smoke and dark chocolate, leading to a cracked black pepper spiciness with notes of red apple, almond and shortcake.

Sebastian Bunford-Jones, marketing manager at The Glasgow Distillery Co, said: “We’re delighted to see Glasgow’s Whisky Festival come back online after a few years of uncertainty and cannot wait to once again be able share our spirits with our local audience.

“To be able to collaborate with the organisers as headline sponsors and create a special single cask bottling is especially exciting as it allows us to mark the return of the festival with something truly unique and exclusive.

“We have chosen an exceptional first-fill Marsala cask which has been filled with our smoky peated spirit for the duration of maturation. The combination of soft aromatic smoke and the Marsala wine influence is really lovely, is different from anything else we have released so far and I’m sure it’ll prove popular on the day.”

This bottling is available to buy from the festival shop from 12pm on 19 February, where visitors can choose to redeem their £10 (US\$13.56) voucher against the purchase.

A limited number of bottles will be released on the Royal Mile Whiskies website from 6pm GMT on the same day, priced at RRP £59.95 (US\$81).

Dál Riata Distillery joins Campbeltown renaissance

17 FEBRUARY 2022 By Nicola Carruthers

A second producer has come forward with plans to build a Scotch whisky distillery in Campbeltown, called Dál Riata.



An artist's impression of the Dál Riata Distillery in Campbeltown. Bowman Stewart Architects has submitted the plans for the new Scotch whisky distillery, which will be located in Kinloch Road, overlooking Campbeltown Loch.

The news comes just days after the owner of the Isle of Raasay Distillery revealed plans to [open a single malt whisky distillery](#) in Campbeltown.

Dál Riata takes its name from a kingdom that existed on the western coast of Scotland and northeast Ireland between the sixth and ninth centuries.

The site will have the capacity to produce 850,000 litres of spirit per year and will use locally grown barley from Dunadd Hillfort. According to the producer, this area was the capital of the Dál Riata kingdom and will be used as the inspiration for creating a spirit in line with the style and traditions of the region.

Plans for the distillery also include a retail store and visitor centre, as well as a still house with a balcony overlooking the loch and bay.

Dál Riata said Campbeltown was once the whisky capital of the world, with more than 25 distilleries in the mid-1800s. By 1925, the Scottish town had only two operating distilleries.

"The addition of this distillery to the Campbeltown region will reinforce the town's place in the story of Scotch, and Dál Riata will be a new chapter to an already incredible history," said Iain Croucher, director of the distillery and founder of independent bottler North Star Spirits.

The other directors of Dál Riata Distillery are Ronnie Grant, owner and managing director of electrical business RB Grant, and David Stirk, former founder and owner of bottler Creative Whisky Co and author of *The Distilleries of Campbeltown*.

New single malts

To mark the launch of the new distillery, three single malts have been released under the South Star Spirits brand: Highland, Speyside and Islay.

Each whisky is representative of its namesake area and made with a vatting of 10 hogsheads.

Highland is a 10-year-old whisky that is described as 'nutty, rich and chewy', while the 10-year-old Speyside single malt provides a fruity and floral nose with a salty-sweet palate of toffee and syrup.

The eight-year-old Islay bottling is an 'intense peaty liquid' with notes of smoke, vanilla and sea salt on the palate.

Each expression is limited to 2,200 bottles worldwide and bottled at 48% ABV. The whiskies are available to buy in the UK from 22 February 2022.

Covid wrecks £115bn devastation on hospitality

17 FEBRUARY 2022 By Melita Kiely

The Covid-19 pandemic has cost the UK hospitality sector £114.8 billion (US\$156.3bn) in lost sales over two years.



Bars across the UK, including London (pictured), have been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic

New data from trade body UK Hospitality revealed that pre-pandemic, the hospitality industry would generate up to £140bn (US\$190.6bn) annually in the UK. However, it has lost 43% and 45 full weeks of sales since March 2020.

Furthermore, the sector is facing rising costs, and UK Hospitality is urging the government to support the on-trade by keeping VAT at 12.5%.

[Kate Nicholls, UK Hospitality chief executive](#), said: "These figures lay bare the utter devastation that two years of this terrible pandemic has wreaked on the third largest private sector employer in the UK, with thousands of businesses closed, [many on the brink of collapse](#), and countless jobs lost. The last thing operators need – and which a lot of them simply wouldn't survive – is a VAT increase.

"Businesses big and small have been left with depleted cash reserves and crippling debt [from] Covid loans, as well as contending with a [gaping hole of 400,000 job vacancies](#), as more than 80% of hospitality businesses report they have roles to fill.

"Who'd have thought two years ago that we'd now be looking at a once vibrant and dynamic industry brought to its knees? Tragically, in addition to the devastating monetary losses are the damaging and long-term psychological effects on thousands of people in our sector who have lost their livelihoods and, in some cases, seen their life's work ruined.

"But two years on, and with all restrictions about to end, there are signs of hope and recovery. With government support, hospitality – which is full of energetic, creative and entrepreneurial people – must be at the vanguard of the UK's wider post-pandemic recovery."

The most recent edition of the UK Hospitality and CGA Quarterly Tracker showed hospitality enjoyed £17.3bn (US\$23.6bn), or 121%, growth in the fourth quarter of 2021, compared with the same period in 2020.

However, that represents a drop of 32.3% in the 12 months to the end of December 2021 when compared with the year ending December 2019. This equates to a £43bn (US\$58.5bn) loss across hospitality in 2021 against expected 2019 levels.

Vinexpo Paris sees successful return

17 FEBRUARY 2022 By Melita Kiely

Trade show Wine Paris and Vinexpo Paris welcomed 25,739 visitors from around the world at its comeback event this week.



The Infinite Bar is a firm fixture at Vinexpo Paris, and returned for 2022. In January, Vinexpo Paris was [anticipating 20,000 visitors](#) to Wine Paris and Vinexpo Paris, but exceeded this estimation with more than 25,000 guests.

The trade show returned to the French capital from 14 to 16 February after a two-year hiatus because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was held at the Paris Expo Porte de Versailles.

Of the 25,739 visitors, 28% were from overseas, hailing from 109 countries. The top five international countries in attendance were: Belgium, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands and the US.

Importers, wholesalers and specialist distributors made up 51% of visitors, while 17% were from the hospitality sector.

A total of 2,864 exhibitors showcased their portfolios at the event. Furthermore, the Vinexpo Connect digital portal received 19,350 meeting requests, registered from 1 to 16 February.

[Spirits exhibitors](#) enjoyed 61% extra floor space compared with the area's debut in 2020.

During the opening ceremony, Julien Denormandie, the French minister for agriculture and food, recognised the event's ability to elevate France's international reputation.

Franck Riester, French minister attached to the minister for Europe and foreign affairs in charge of foreign trade and economic attractiveness, commended "the extraordinary success of this exhibition, supported by an industry committed to international development".

Dates confirmed for 2023

The organiser of Wine Paris and Vinexpo Paris, Vinexpo, has already confirmed the dates for next year's event: 13 to 15 February 2023.

Vinexpo said its 'single-minded' ambition is to improve and enhance the business for all participants next year.

The Best Scotch Whisky Between \$60-\$70, Ranked

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

FEBRUARY 15, 2022

Spending \$60 on a single bottle of [Scotch whisky](#) might seem like a pretty big ask. You can easily get three solid bottles of [bourbon](#) for that price. But that's apples and oranges. [Scotch](#) isn't [bourbon](#) and carries with it a wholly different flavor vibe. It's also an import — which implies a whole different cost structure.

The best [Scotch whisky](#) at this price point is accessible and, most importantly, very tasty. While we're still in a somewhat "entry-level" range — think 12-year-old bottles and the beginnings of special releases — there's a lot of great juice to be had. This is the price point where you can get into scotch, maybe for the first time, and start to really understand it better. This is where peated and unpeated whiskies start to shine without the hefty price tags that are soon to come.

The ten bottles of [Scotch whisky](#) below are ranked according to taste (from my own tasting notes). I tried to keep this a good mix of peated and sweet Scotch whiskies to offer variety for those looking to get into something new. Let's dive in!

10. Benriach The Twelve Speyside Single Malt



BROWN-FORMAN

ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$61](#)

The Whisky:

Dr. Rachel Barrie's reimagining of [BenRiach](#) has been a stellar success. This dram is a marrying of 12-year-old malts that matured in ex-bourbon, ex-sherry, and ex-port casks before vatting, proofing, and bottling.

Tasting Notes:

This has a bold nose full of apple and pear candy, plenty of blooming heather scrub, and blueberry juice and stems with a hint of dark orange chocolate balls. The taste boils everything down to a silken palate of stewed pears with cinnamon sticks, sherry-soaked prunes, freshly milled oats, orange-infused marzipan with dark chocolate frosting, and a slight espresso bean oily bitterness. The finish creates a creamy espresso macchiato vibe that's spiked with that dark orange chocolate note and a final hit of those stewed fruits.

Bottom Line:

This is one of those "ah-ha!" whiskies. It's super svelte while packing a pretty solid flavor punch. Pour this over some rocks or use it in your next Scotch cocktail to really amp those flavor notes up.

9. Compass Box Peat Monster



COMPASS BOX

ABV: 46%

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

The Whisky:

Compass Box is one of the most interesting blender/bottlers working today. This expression is the perfect example of the craft of whisky blending, with six masterfully married peaty barrels coming together, focusing on Caol Ila and Laphroaig. A touch of Highland malt is added to bring in hints of dark spice to balance all that Islay peat.

Tasting Notes:

This is peaty but not ridiculously so, thanks to the subtlety of the Caol Ila in the mix. There's a really rich and sweet apple/pear vibe that cuts through the earthy peat while a vanilla cream brings about a velvet mouthfeel. The smoke returns but is tied to the fruit — like a bushel of

smoked apples, pears, and apricots next to a touch of ashy smoke — on the finish.

Bottom Line:

This is a great starter peated whisky. There's plenty of fruitiness and sweetness layered into the dram that'll help temper the heavier aspects of the peat. I prefer this in smoky cocktails but wouldn't turn it down over the rocks any day.

8. Aultmore 12



BACARDI

ABV: 46%

Average Price: [\\$61](#)

The Whisky:

This tiny whisky is part of their Last Great Malts range from Dewar's. The juice is a rare release from a distillery that releases bottles every few years (this bottle dropped back in 2014).

Tasting Notes:

The nose bursts forth with notes of ripe apples and pears next to a seriously creamy vanilla base with touches of orange blossoms and soft cedar bark. The palate wraps those apples and pears into a soft and buttery puff pastry with plenty of soft spice and brown sugars as the vanilla thickens into a pudding with the florals becoming slightly more dried towards the mid-palate. The finish hoists those stewed apples and pears to center stage as the mild spice gently fades away.

The Bottom Line:

This is a pretty special whisky, especially if you're looking for a rare-ish bottle. The fruity/spicy vibe of this one makes it a great candidate for highballs or cocktails.

7. Glenfarclas 12



G. GRANT

ABV: 43%

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

The Whisky:

Glenfarclas is a bit of an outlier. The whisky is distilled with old-school fire-heated stills (most stills use steam) to this day. The juice is then aged exclusively in ex-sherry casks for 12 long years.

Tasting Notes:

There's a rumminess to the nose that touches on molasses, prunes, nuts, and jam. The taste holds onto that vibe to the point of having an almost spiced rum sweetness and clear notes of holiday spices, plenty of dried fruit, and a roasted almond element. The end is long and spicy, leaving you with a warming Speyside hug.

Bottom Line:

This just feels classic. There's no pretension anywhere in this sip. I really dig using this in a simple highball or cocktail (think three or fewer ingredients).

6. Bruichladdich Port Charlotte 10



RÉMY COINTREAU

ABV: 50%

Average Price: [\\$69](#)

The Whisky:

Bruichladdich really has fun with peated whisky. This expression keeps the peat phenols in the mid-range, leaning high. The casking is a mix of first and second-fill bourbon barrels and second-fill French wine barrels. That utilization of second-fill oak means there's a very light touch of wood on this peated whisky.

Tasting Notes:

Imagine a dark chocolate orange drizzled in salted caramel and served on a wet leaf of seaweed on the nose. The smoke kicks in on the palate with those wet seaweed leaves thrown on a smoldering pile of pine to create a massive billow of smoke everywhere, as hints of buttery white wine and strawberry jam-covered scones linger in the background. The finish leans into the bready nature of the scones with a dry straw edge that's followed by a mouthful of the seaweed heavy grey smoke.

Bottom Line:

This really is a peat lover's whisky. You'd be forgiven for not digging this one or finding it hard to enjoy if you're put off by smoke bombs. Still, there's enough layered fruit and creaminess below that smoke to find something to enjoy, especially on the rocks.

5. Ardbeg An Oa



LOUIS VUITTON MOËT HENNESSY

ABV: 46.6%

Average Price: [\\$65](#)

The Whisky:

This is a quintessential Islay peaty whisky. The juice is aged in a combination of Pedro Ximénez, charred virgin oak, and ex-bourbon casks before being married and rested again in Ardbeg's bespoke oak "Gathering Vat," allowing the whiskies to really meld into a cohesive dram.

Tasting Notes:

Slow-smoked peaches, soft cherrywood on fire, and singed sage mingle on the nose. That profile leads towards buttery but almost burnt toffee with hints of egg nog spices, savory leafy green vegetables with a bit of dirt, walnut shells, black tea, and a little bit of pancake syrup (the high fructose corn syrup kind). The finish is long, has hits of black licorice, and really brings the soft yet sweet smoke with an almost meat smoker edge.

Bottom Line:

Where the previous whisky was unabashed about its peatiness, this Islay malt really feels like a delicate balance of sweet and smoke that might just hook you into peated whiskies once and for all. Try this one with a few drops of water to let it bloom then on the rocks before mixing your favorite cocktail with it.

4. GlenDronach 12



BROWN-FORMAN

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$63](#)

The Whisky:

This Highland malt is blended by Scotch icon Dr. Rachel Barrie to highlight the beauty of the Scottish Highlands. The juice is a blend of whiskies aged for 12 years in Oloroso and Pedro Ximenez sherry casks before vatting, proofing, and bottling.

Tasting Notes:

This opens with spicy berries next to tart apples with a hint of lemon/lime and old leather. The sip leans into a honey sweetness with vanilla beans, dark plums, and spicy malts. The finish smooths out with a mineral water softness as old cedar boards mingle with a raisin tobacco chewy spice on the very end.

Bottom Line:

This is just freaking nice and also feels pretty classic. I tend to pour this over some rocks mostly but have used it to make some great cocktails.

3. The Macallan 12



EDRINGTON GROUP

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$62](#)

The Whisky:

Where many scotches spend time in ex-bourbon and then ex-sherry casks or some combination therein, this expression spends all 12 years of its maturation just in sherry casks. The barrels are imported from Jerez, Spain, and hand-selected for their excellence to mature this much-beloved whisky.

Tasting Notes:

Apple cider with a cut of cinnamon and clove in the juice greets you with a clear sense of vanilla, nuts, and plums on the nose. On the taste, those plums turn into prunes as orange peels mingle with sweet oak and a hint of tobacco spice. The end is long, full of that sherry, dried fruit, and sweetness, and returns back to the chewy tobacco spice.

Bottom Line:

This is a testament to less is more. The taste on this is so dialed in and luscious. It's kind of shocking it's only 12 years old (which is young by Scotch standards). Pour some of this over some good rocks and you'll be all set.

2. Oban 14



DIAGEO

ABV: 43%

Average Price: [\\$69](#)

The Whisky:

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

Tasting Notes:

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

Bottom Line:

Oban 14 is one of the subtlest peated malts out there. The beauty of his pour is layers of fruit, citrus, salt, and peat that compliment each other with none of them ever overpowering the taste. It's great on the rocks or in your favorite Scotch cocktail.

1. Talisker 10



DIAGEO

ABV: 45.8%

Average Price: [\\$64](#)

The Whisky:

This is one of the most awarded single malts ever. The juice is matured in ex-bourbon casks in Talisker's warehouse which is literally feet away from the sea. The subtly peated malts take on a real seaside feel as those years tick past, creating a whisky that will not disappoint.

Tasting Notes:

There's a distance to Talisker that draws you in on the nose — I've often described it as campfire smoke from a few hundred yards down a rainy beach. The sea spray mellows the smoky peat to a fine point as oyster shells dance with almost dry pears, dried apricot, and rich malt. The end doesn't overstay its welcome and reminds you of oyster liquor and that smoldering campfire somewhere far down a rainy beach.

Bottom Line:

This is one of those whiskies that hooks people into scotch for the rest of their lives (it was that whisky for me). It's so beautifully built and easy-drinking while offering a serious flavor profile that's truly elevated. But it's also fully accessible, mixable, and very sippable.

Inside the world of ultra-rare Scotch whisky

18 FEBRUARY 2022 By Tom Bruce-Gardyne

The past few years have seen an increasing number of eye-wateringly expensive and old Scotch whiskies hit the market. What effect is this having on the sector?



Prominent whisky makers have released a variety of old and rare expressions over the past few years

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

When cask number 340 was filled at The Glenlivet distillery in February 1940, virtually all Scotch whisky disappeared into blends to be bottled and drunk within a decade. That should have been its fate, to be another drop in the ocean of the drink's post-war boom. Instead, the cask slumbered in the depths of Gordon & MacPhail's Speyside warehouse for 80 years before emerging as the oldest Scotch whisky ever released. After the first decanter was [knocked down for HK\\$1.5 million \(£143,488\)](#) at a charity auction in Hong Kong in October, the price for the remaining 249 decanters was [set at £80,000 \(US\\$107,000\)](#). "I'm not sure how much it is seen as Scotch whisky," says David King, Gordon & MacPhail's sales director. "I think it's seen as an object of desire." Whatever the perception, this rarefied end of the whisky market appears to be on fire. The 80-year-old Glenlivet is the latest in the firm's Generations line, following its release of a 75-year-old Mortlach for £20,000 in 2015.

That fourfold increase cannot simply be blamed on being a few years older, or on inflation – or, indeed, anything that might tether it to the real world.

A new world

As for how the price is worked out, "there's no authoritative answer because this is a new world for everybody", says King. "The honest answer is: it's what the market will pay. The insight I would offer is that it's not about the expense of the bottle, it's about how many people are interested in it. What we've found is that if you get a really avid collector the price is almost irrelevant."

Collectors, investors and high-end consumers form a three-legged stool to support this market, and if ever the whisky becomes too expensive to drink there is a risk the stool will collapse. That said, the three players may well be the same person who will try and acquire two bottles, one to keep and maybe sell later, and the other to sip and share.



Gordon & MacPhail Generations 80YO

This last point was brought home to David King in Las Vegas, where he was amazed to meet someone who had actually tried an earlier Generations release. He had apparently got together with other members of a whisky club to buy a bottle.

Such very old whiskies are a race against time, with the strength and volume dropping year by year. The Glenlivet 80-year-old was bottled at 44.9% ABV, with loss through evaporation, the angel's share, contained to just 1% a year. This was due to the thickness of the staves, apparently, and presumably to the cold, dank place in the warehouse where the cask lay.

Andy Simpson, co-founder of analyst Rare Whisky 101, says he "would probably put money" on there being a 100-year-old whisky one day, although he adds: "I think because the temperature's rising we are getting more rapid evaporation and maturation."

You'd imagine that the talk about age might undermine distillers' efforts to play down the number on the label and promote no-agestatement whiskies, particularly in travel retail. But Simpson sees no issue, and says: "Older is certainly more valuable, but I don't think the industry is saying 'older is better'."

Macallan's marketing director, Glen Gribbon agrees, saying: "Obviously the older the bottling the fewer bottles there are, so they're more desirable and more collectible. But, certainly for what we're releasing, it's absolutely not about the age."

"It's about the quality of the whisky and the stories it allows us to tell about the brand's legacy and history. If you're absolutely fixated on the age and that is the story, there's a danger it lacks any real depth, and therefore, frankly, starts to lose relevance."

As for quality, well, it clearly matters if the whisky is drunk.

"For [Macallan](#), despite how scarce some of our releases are, we know that some of those bottles are going to be opened and shared," says Geoff Kirk, the brand's head of private client management.

"It's a positive pressure as we know they're not going to sit on the shelf gathering dust."



The Macallan recently unveiled The Reach, the world's oldest single malt Scotch

Or be stored under bond or in some bank vault never to be seen, like high-end wines such as Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, whose bottles are traded, fondled and almost never drunk.

King believes "the stuff has to be visible, otherwise it loses some of the awareness", to which Kirk adds: "We try to ensure we've got a balance between engaging people directly and making the product available in some specialist retail stores and the on-trade."

The latter accounts for at least half of all Macallan's sales, and is especially important in the US where "the bounceback has been truly remarkable", says Gribbon. "As we get into next year, we certainly expect to be back at the levels of pre-Covid."

The wide availability of Macallan raises doubts about its luxury status, according to Simpson. "Anything I can buy at Tesco is not luxury," he says, provocatively. Not that the brand's supermarket availability held back the bids at a sale at Sotheby's in October 2019, when a collector [paid £1.5m \(US\\$2m\) for a bottle of The Macallan 1926](#) – a record that stands. Yet that spread of prices from the high street to the auction house is what keeps the brand – and the whole Scotch category – accessible, in Simpson's view.

In the 1970s single malt whisky was a whole new vice with a tiny fan base, and brands such as Singleton didn't exist. Undaunted, Diageo recently emptied a cask of Dufftown into [235 bottles of Singleton 54-year-old](#), its oldest expression to date, priced at £28,850.

It is part of the Rare & Exceptional portfolio, whose share of total value is "honestly just a drop in the ocean", compared with the firm's core Scotch business, insists James Mackay, Diageo's head of rare and collectable spirits.

As to the impact on regular Singleton drinkers used to paying £30-£35 a bottle, he says: "We hope they'd be aware that the brand they trust also releases incredibly unique things in tiny quantities."

He also looks after the so-called [Prima & Ultima bottlings](#), "where we've decided to focus on the vintage year", he explains, "because that's really speaking more to the provenance, and the fact that each of the whiskies is a moment in time rather than a number on the bottle."



Diageo's 2021 Prima & Ultima Scotch whisky collection

Like Gordon & MacPhail, Diageo occasionally sells the outturn of a cask to wealthy people who are sometimes part of a syndicate. "It can often be a five-year journey," says Mackay, describing the period between the initial approach and receiving the final whisky as an official bottling. While the media seems to relish discussing the investment potential of these expensive bottles and casks, brand owners are a lot more reticent. "There are people that collect for the joy of collecting, and good for them, but encouraging people to invest to make a return is absolutely not the conversation we as a brand want to be having," says Gribbon.

Healthy scepticism

Kirk adds: "We have seen in recent years the chatter about the returns from cask investments. A lot of it is slightly false data, and we look on it with healthy scepticism."

It is the same at Diageo. "We'll never endorse whisky as an investment," says Mackay, nor will he comment on the secondary market, except to say: "Like the fine wine market it goes up and down, but it doesn't put the rest of the market or the vast majority of consumers in any danger. It makes for good headlines."

Yet arguably the auction houses are one of the few barometers of demand available to distillers as they work out a release price that is considered reasonable. Too high and they'll be accused of having delusions of grandeur. Too low, and bottles will be snapped up and resold in an often contentious practice called flipping, not that Mackay sounds unduly bothered. "Once bottles are sold," he says, "if they get flipped very quickly for much higher prices, it is what it is."

Who knows what ancient casks are lurking in Scotland's whisky warehouses, each edging closer to eclipsing that 80-year-old Glenlivet. But if you can't wait, Gordon & MacPhail is offering a [leather-lined oak cabinet with 17 bottles](#) of some of the rarest whisky it owns. The collection has been dubbed 'the ultimate Christmas present', and if you've got a hotline to Santa, it's only £100,000.

Glenfiddich's \$2,000 Limited Edition Grand Cru is a Work of Modern Art

[HEATH DAVIS](#), 22 FEB 2022 | NEWS

Those proud [whisky](#) aficionados among us will attest that indulging in their favourite liquid pastime has always been fashionable. Especially when it comes to the world's most awarded single malt [Scotch](#) whisky makers: [Glenfiddich](#). Of course, this is a view rarely shared by the naysayers out there. However, sigh no more friends, because the "full-proof" is finally in the pudding. Yes –



we now have that much sought-after evidence to back up those "contemptible" claims. That's right – Glenfiddich has put the HIP back in the hip flask.



Image: Glenfiddich

This week the proud traditionalists at Glenfiddich announced they've gone all progressive on us with their latest blend involving the cutting-edge Australian [fashion](#) and art worlds – a mixture that has set tongues wagging and, mouths watering, all over town. Want to know more? Well, in the words of Pulp Fiction's Vincent Vega, it breaks down like this.

With Australian fashion week just around the corner, Glenfiddich is celebrating by launching an exclusive [Grand Cru](#) drop in collaboration with esteemed Aussie designer, Jordan Dalah. Australia's designer of the moment, Dalah brings his innovative eye and master craftsmanship to perfectly compliment Glenfiddich's acclaimed Grand Cru. And, what

better way to toast, than by kicking back by the catwalk with your missus, admiring the fine frenzy of Fashion Week.

"As a designer, Glenfiddich allowed me the creative freedom to put my stamp on Grand Cru," Dalah said. "With this campaign and pack, I've been able to recreate Grand Cru's tone, look and feel as I see it while the wonderful liquid remains unchanged, full of rich flavours.

Glenfiddich recognised and encouraged my passion for pushing boundaries with colour and materials, and what we've created together has the same level of creativity and craftsmanship as my clothing. This is a piece of art collectors can treasure forever."



Image: Glenfiddich

What's more, the limited box set comes with a special signed print keepsake as well as a set of six impressive Grand Cru crystal coupettes. Prices start at \$2,199.00 per set. But don't mess around as orders are by ballot, so register your interest online.

"Handing over creative reins to a trailblazer like Jordan Dalah may be unusual for other whisky brands, but not for Glenfiddich," Glenfiddich Brand Ambassador Ross Blainey said. "Genuine collaboration starts with shared values and finishes with the idea that neither of you would have delivered alone. For Glenfiddich and Jordan, it's about pushing the boundaries, being thought-provoking and asking "where next?". Jordan pushes boundaries in fashion and fabric, creating garments as no one else has seen. He is a genuine leader with an incredible imagination and unique designs. The campaign and the pack, which are a work of art themselves, are a taste of what is to come from our partnership as we raise our glass and celebrate the start of a new year." While the Jordan Dalah collaboration marks an impressive release, the amazing collaborations don't stop there. This week Glenfiddich teamed up with another of Australia's finest artists in Jordan Gogos to create a whisky bar experience like no other as part of the annual Melbourne Art Fair. Gogos's endlessly innovative and immersive pop-up bar, come art installation, is a must-see for all whisky and art lovers alike. The acclaimed multidisciplinary artist showcases his famously inventive technicolour hand-print designs to reimagine Glenfiddich's iconic valley of the deer badge.



Image: Glenfiddich

Best of all, according to our spies on the ground, this remarkable display is the first of many Glenfiddich have scheduled with Gogos throughout 2022. Like you, we can't wait to see more. The Glenfiddich Jordan Gogos Bar will be open to the public until Sunday, so get along whilst you can.

For those yet to discover the best dram from the valley, the Glenfiddich range includes Glenfiddich 12-Year-Old, Glenfiddich 15-Year-Old, Glenfiddich 18-Year-Old, Glenfiddich Gran Reserva 21-Year-Old, Glenfiddich Grand Cru 23-Year-Old, Glenfiddich Grande Couronne 26-Year-Old, Glenfiddich Experimental Series IPA, Project XX (pronounced Project Twenty) and Fire & Cane. Grab a bottle for the home bar today. You won't regret it.

[Check it out](#)



Image: Glenfiddich



Image: Glenfiddich



Image: Glenfiddich



Image: Glenfiddich

Mossburn Distillers launches Caisteal Chamuis whisky brand
23 FEBRUARY 2022 By admin
Mossburn Distillers looks back to the history of the Isle of Skye as its inspiration for a new duo of blended malt Scotch whiskies.



Caisteal Chamuis was matured in Bourbon casks
Mossburn Distillers has created an approachable Scotch whisky brand that pays tribute to Hebridean life and lore. Caisteal Chamuis is designed to welcome drinkers to a world of peat fires and misty sea breezes often seen on the Western Isles. The brand is named Caisteal Chamuis (Castle Camus for non-Gaelic speakers) after a castle that lies on the headland of the eastern flank of Knock Bay, on the Isle of Skye. The castle is visible from Mossburn Distillers' single malt distillery, Torabhaig. Last occupied over 380 years ago, the first elements of the castle were raised in the 13th century on the site of an Iron Age fort known as Dun Torabhaig. The ruins signify the rich heritage of the Isle of Skye. Ancient lore said that the ghosts of bloody battles at Caisteal Chamuis float through the mist on this foggy Hebridean island. Despite Skye being enshrouded in ancient mystery, Mossburn Distillers' new brand aims to demystify the world of peated malts.



Caisteal Chamuis 12 Year Old is made from a blend of single malts all distilled on Islay and Orkney

The brand debuts with two expressions, Caisteal Chamuis 12 Year Old Sherry Barrelled Blended Malt Scotch Whisky and Caisteal Chamuis Bourbon Barrelled Blended Malt Scotch Whisky.

The full-bodied, smoky blends marry heavily peated whiskies, and each carry an ABV of 46%.

Caisteal Chamuis 12 Year Old is made from a blend of single malts all distilled on Islay and Orkney. It has been matured in oloroso Sherry butts, resulting in a 'rich and smooth' whisky with a 'complex fragrant, heathery, lavender-like peat'.

Meanwhile, the bold and smoky no-age-statement bottling offers a balance of heavy peat smoke with a crisp oak spice and vanilla finish. The expression has been distilled on Skye, Orkney and Islay, and is finished in first-fill Bourbon casks.

Rick Bennett-Baggs, marketing director at Marussia Beverages, owner of Mossburn Distillers, said: "The peated malt whisky category can often be perceived as intimidating, so while the lore surrounding Caisteal Chamuis may be mysterious, we recognise that enjoying a peated blend doesn't need to be. Our duo of blended malts seek to transport drinkers to the misty Hebridean isles."

Caisteal Chamuis 12 Year Old (RRP £49/US\$67) and the no-age-statement Caisteal Chamuis whisky (RRP £39/US\$53) are available to buy in more than 15 markets, including the UK, France, and Germany, and in the US this month.

Speakeasy does it: classic whisky cocktails with Mortlach Whisky brand Mortlach teamed up with Wallpaper* for a 1930s-inspired New York dinner, pairing classic whisky cocktails with modern Indian cuisine

Left, 'Fluted' coupe, \$155, by Richard Brendon; 'Art Deco' plate, \$160, by Marie Daâge, both from Jung Lee NY. Crab puri and Kaluga Amber caviar served with a Scotch Manhattan whisky cocktail. Right, napkin, \$112 for four, by Kim Seybert, from Jung Lee NY. 'Snake' napkin jewel, \$215 for four, by L'Objet. 'Rafia' dinner set, \$149, by Marie Daâge, from Jung Lee NY. Mother-of-pearl spoon, \$75 for five-piece place setting, by Jung Lee NY. Goan chocolate layer cake with filter coffee ice cream. *Photography: Keirnan Monaghan and Theo Vamvounakis. Entertaining director: Melina Keays. US director: Michael Reynolds. Prop stylist: Rebecca Bartoshesky*

Mortlach By Design is a programme that sees the nearly 200-year-old whisky brand invite six designers to take inspiration from its unique characteristics, and the sculptural forms of the six stills behind its signature 2.81 distillation process, to create diverse projects. As part of Wallpaper*'s contribution, US director Michael Reynolds and entertaining director Melina Keays hosted a 1930s-inspired, speakeasy-style dinner at interior designer Ken Fulk's Tribeca loft, working with chef Hari Nayak, from Priyanka Chopra's much-talked-about Indian restaurant Sona, to create the perfect dishes to pair with the unique and robust flavour profiles of Mortlach's 12-, 16- and 20-year-old whiskies. (The dishes are shown here, recreated in Sona's Flatiron restaurant.) Mortlach whisky and a speakeasy-inspired soirée



Serpentine light [sculpture](#), \$1,800, by Jeff Zimmerman, for R & Company. 'Fluted' double old fashioned tumbler, \$120, by Richard Brendon, from Jung Lee NY

Guests were offered a choice of whisky cocktails on arrival, specially crafted to celebrate the spirit's complex and robust flavour. There was a Scotch Manhattan, New York's rich and smoky take on the classic Rob Roy, made with 12-year-old Mortlach, sweet vermouth and dashes of bitters; and a Boulevardier, aka the Whisky Negroni, composed of 12-year-old Mortlach, sweet vermouth, and Campari.

The latter's creation is accredited to Erskine Gwynne, the American-born writer who founded Boulevardier magazine in Paris during the 1920s. Both cocktails were the perfect complement to the crab puri and caviar appetisers passing through the room.



Sculptural vessel, \$12,000, by Jeff Zimmerman, for R & Company. 'Tresor' plates, from \$185, by Raynaud, from Jung Lee NY. 'Aegean' dinner plate, \$280; 'Perlee' soup plate, \$260; 'Snake' napkin jewel, \$215 for four, all by L'Objet. 'Cornice' napkin, \$90 for four, by Bodrum, from Jung Lee NY. Buckwheat bhel with sprouting fenugreek, raw mango, and chilli and honey dressing (bottom left), chilli chicken tikka with roasted tomato and garlic marinade and cauliflower mash (top), Kerala sea bass curry with green mango and cassava dumplings (middle), and chilli cheese naan bread (right)

Mortlach 16 – with ice and soda – was served with dinner, chef Nayak pairing the complex expressions and unique flavour profiles of the whisky with beet galouti, buckwheat bhel and tamarind lamb chops. Alongside the darkly glamorous chocolate bebinca dessert, a dram of Mortlach 20-year-old provided a bold and magnetic finale. \$



'Stars Spice Jewels' salt shaker, \$195 for set; 'Terra' plate, \$40, both by L'Objet. Mother-of-pearl knife and fork, \$75 for five-piece place setting, by Jung Lee NY. 'Massena' water glass, \$190, by Baccarat, from Jung Lee NY. 'Concorde' napkin, \$140 for four, by L'Objet. Tamarind lamb chops served with pickled fennel and turmeric

Tobermory Distillery releases 24YO whisky

24 FEBRUARY 2022 By Alice Brooker

Whisky and gin producer Tobermory has added a limited edition 24-year-old single malt to its Hebridean Series.



The whisky will retail for RRP £320 (US\$430.45)

The expression is the first special release whisky created by [Cara Gilbert, the world's youngest distillery manager](#). Only 3,600 bottles of the Tobermory 24-Year-Old have been produced.

Gilbert commented: "We are incredibly proud of this new release and its deep-rooted Mull heritage."

The Isle of Mull is the second largest island in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland.

Gilbert added: "The series is inspired by the unique influences that myself and the team experience from living and working on the beautiful island, hand-crafting our whiskies."

"One of the finest releases in our 230-year history, we know it'll be a highly sought-after collector's item from fans eager to enjoy a true taste of Mull."

The bottling joins the 23-Year-Old expression in the Hebridean Series. The whisky spent nine years resting in oloroso Sherry Gonzales Byass casks, said to deliver notes of 'Mull's wild landscapes'.

With dark berries on the nose and blackcurrant jam on the palate, nutmeg and cinnamon are also balanced with a salty tang, alongside vanilla with toasted oak and a hint of cocoa.

The distillery's surrounding shoreline is said to provide the Tobermory 24-Year-Old with its coastal characteristics and a warm salted caramel finish.

The whisky has been bottled at 52.5% ABV, and joins Tobermory's existing portfolio, which comprises a 23-year-old, a 12-year-old, Ledaig 10-year-old, Ledaig Sinclair Series Rioja Cask Finish, and Ledaig 18-year-old. The brand also produces [gin inspired by its home on the Isle of Mull](#).

The bottling will be available to purchase for RRP £320 (US\$430.45) exclusively from wine and spirits merchant Berry Bros & Rudd for two weeks from today (24 February). It will then become widely available on the brand's website from 10 March.

Membership and Dinner prices for 2021-2022

Membership Fee:	\$50 (singles)
	\$75 (couples)
One Time Initiation Fee:	\$15
Standard Dinner Fee:	\$90 (member)
	\$100 (non-member)

Reservation policy

- The agreement with the Kitchen's requires that we provide five (5) business days notice for them to guarantee accommodation for our requested numbers. To accommodate the Kitchen's needs and meet our obligation with them; our members are requested to respond to the emailed invitation five (5) business days prior to the respective dinner to guarantee a seat at the dinner. Following the RSVP date members will be placed on a waitlist.
 - For these individuals the process will be as follows, using the Monday September 20th, 2021 dinner date as an example:
 - Dinner invitations will be sent out Friday August 20th, 2021. Please respond to me (rdifazio04@gmail.com) in the form of an e-transfer. I will then acknowledge that you have a seat. Please understand that if you do not receive a response you are not guaranteed a seat at the respective dinner. In such circumstances (e.g., computer glitches) please e-mail me again or call me (613-532-5285).
 - Once payment is received I will send a confirmation and your seat will be guaranteed reserved.
 - An RSVP only does not guarantee the seat and if there is a waiting list, you run the risk of losing your seat.
 - Unless otherwise stated accommodation at the dinner will be guaranteed for all members who respond by Friday September 3rd, 2021 @ 6pm or until capacity is achieved.
 - Please keep in mind until further notice our maximum attendance will be capped at 40. So delays run the risk of you missing out.
-

Cancellation policy

- Using the same example as above, anyone who cancels anytime prior to Friday September 3rd, 2021 @ 6pm will be removed from the list.
 - Anyone canceling between Friday September 3rd, 2021 @ 6pm and Monday September 20th, 2021 will be expected to pay for the cost of the dinner and scotch (\$90). It is the responsibility of the member who cancels their (or their guest's) reservation to find a replacement. If I am asked to find a substitute and one is found, then the member will be asked to pay for 50% of their dinner cost.
 - Anyone who fails to attend the Monday September 20th, 2021 dinner without having cancelled and been successfully replaced will be expected to pay the full cost (\$90). A member will be responsible for their guest's cancellation (\$100).
 - If a member asks to be included at the dinner between Friday September 3rd, 2021 @ 6pm and Monday September 20th, 2021 their name will be placed on a wait-list and be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.
-

Dinner Payments

- Please consider sending your payment by e-transfer to me at: rdifazio04@gmail.com prior to the dinner. The password will be "**KSMS2022RDF**", to whatever your security question is. Receiving payment in advance will allow everyone the opportunity to socialize before the dinner as well as reduce the accounting work required after.
 - For e-transfers, Members are responsible for collecting from their guests, and then forwarding one payment in total by e-transfer.
-

Assigned / Reserved Seating

- Assigned Seating will be offered for the January, June, August, and December dinners.
 - Reserved Seating will only be considered if it is a group consisting of a single member plus 3+ guests or a couple member plus 2+ guests.
-

Perfume / Cologne and Whisky

- Our enjoyment of fine whisky at KSMS starts with a nosing - for many a definitive and delicate moment in their relationship with a new dram. The power of aroma is unquestionable. From defining life experiences to the recall of special memories, the sense of smell is as individual as a fingerprint and has the ability to evoke some of the most precious, rewarding and distinctive moments. Unfortunately strong perfumes can mask and distort other aromas and smells and interfere with the ability to register and recognize subtler fragrances.
 - To be fair to all we ask all our members to please refrain from wearing scented products and perfumes to our KSMS evenings.
-

Just a note because we care.

Please understand that for the purpose of each event you are advised to drink responsibly and refrain from excessive consumption. The dinners hosted by the Kingston Single Malt Society are sampling events. By agreeing to pay and thereby attend the dinner you agree to release from legal responsibility and hold harmless Kingston Single Malt Society, its President Roberto Di Fazio, and any other volunteers from liability or claims arising from these events.



Kingston Single Malt Society

Roberto Di Fazio, President

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WORDS FELIPE SCHRIEBERG

THE PEAT PROVENANCE MYSTERY

*Baffled by talk of coastal versus mainland peat?
How about PPM figures? It's time to roll
up our sleeves and go digging...*



Long ago and far away, when distillery tours and live whisky tastings were common, a question could often be heard at events where peated whisky was served: "What's the PPM of this one?" Curious whisky fans asking this question were searching for the fixed number of phenolic 'parts per million' (PPM) that's often quoted by brand reps and industry figures which, in theory, determines on a sliding scale the level of peat in a whisky. These fans have made the assumption – encouraged by the whisky industry – that the higher the PPM number, the more 'peaty' aromas and flavours will be found in the spirit.

By this logic, more peat equals more phenols which therefore equals more smoky aromas and flavours in the glass. The light peat of Benromach, for example, pales next to the 40 PPM of a Laphroaig, while Laphroaig cowers in the face of 80-309 PPM whiskies released by Bruichladdich under its Octomore brand. However, as with so many aspects of whisky, the role of peat in the creation of aromas and flavours we find in our glasses has many facets, some which are still unknown. The fact that Octomore certainly is not twice (or more) as smoky as Laphroaig to nose and taste indicates that there are many different factors at play which combine to deliver the organoleptic qualities of peated whisky.



Peat ('turf' to the Irish) are mosses, grasses and plants decomposing without oxygen over tens of thousands of years. When extracted, it resembles a cross between mud and clay. Once the primary fuel source for Celtic tribes, today it is sometimes dried, broken into bricks and burned in the fireplaces of the Scottish Highlands and islands.

In the world of whisky, it is burned in a kiln oven to dry barley after malting. The smoke from the peat sticks to the barley through adsorption. That smoke contains the compounds, primarily phenols, that eventually infuse a glass of whisky with smoky, meaty, and medicinal aromas and flavours.

Now, the organic chemistry: phenols (or phenolics) are a group of chemical compounds by which one or more hydroxyl groups (an oxygen and hydrogen atom stuck together) are bonded to an aromatic hydrocarbon group (a jumble of bonded carbon and

hydrogen atoms). The simplest phenolic compound also happens to be called phenol, or C_6H_5OH .

"You can divide the phenols found in whisky into roughly two groups, phenols and guaiacols" says Dr Barry Harrison, a senior scientist at the Scotch Whisky Research Institute. "The former tend to bring medicinal notes, and the latter are often smoky and sweet."

For a 2009 study that he co-authored, Harrison collected peat extracted from different regions of Scotland at different depths, and identified the compounds that emerged from the samples. Of the 106 compounds detected, 46 were phenolics. Various peats contained different quantities of compounds – though Harrison notes that some are harder to perceive in the glass than others, "Though you'll have different amounts of phenolic compounds present in the peat, the thresholds at which you'll taste them can also vary

These pages, from above: Keith Cruikshank, Benromach's distillery manager; Inside the fiery heart of peated whisky.

massively for each of them."

Harrison says even the most sensitive noses and palates would struggle to identify individual phenolic compounds, and that it's basically impossible to know where the influence of one begins or ends: "We don't quite yet know to what extent non-phenolic compounds in peat play a role in flavour," he says. "It's something we're working on."

As Harrison's samples contained varying quantities of phenolic compounds, logic dictates that peats from different regions will provide different flavours. For example, Orkney-based distillery Highland Park often draws attention to the high concentration of heather used in its peat. Its reason for doing so is the claim that burning of Orkney peat creates carbohydrate-based phenolic compounds sourced from the heather's broken-down lignins that lead to a sweeter, smoky profile.

Few people are better qualified to muse about peated whisky than Ardbeg distillery manager (and ex-Lagavulin manager) Colin Gordon, who replaced the recently retired Mickey Heads, and he thought, along with his colleagues, that there was something special about Islay peat: "I'm a romantic! The guys I know who worked at the Port Ellen

“Comparing peat from the mainland to Islay, the smoke from the Islay peat always looks richer...”

© SOREN SØLVER



maltings always preferred to burn Islay peat. Now I don't have any scientific proof, but you did really notice it. Comparing peat from the mainland to Islay, the smoke from the Islay peat always looks richer and darker."

However, it looks like Gordon's romantic impulses are correct after all. Speaking at a virtual tasting covering the role of peat in whisky during this year's Whisky Show: Old and Rare festival, Harrison's colleague at the SWRI Frances Jack was emphatic that the region where peat is sourced

definitely matters: "When we were looking at the different regions in the peat, the samples taken from each of the regions had to be standardised and we were looking at the same depth within the bog. You can just see that there's big differences between the peats...so we know that depending on where you take your peat from it's going to have an impact on the flavour."

While the provenance of the peat is certainly a factor impacting the aromas and flavours that emerge, the methods used for whisky production also make

a big difference and determine which phenolics will come through in the glass. It starts with the actual kilning of the peat itself. Each maltster has to deal with peats that contain varied moisture contents, and also must calculate how that peat should be burned when dealing with barley that will also vary in moisture content. However, what really matters is that the barley gets smoked as efficiently as possible under the circumstances. Gordon illustrates how certain moisture conditions can lead to more peaty malt while emphasising that flavour considerations don't yet come into play: "Looking at the grains that are going into the kiln, wetter grain generally leads to a higher phenol content. As you burn the peat, it sticks to the husk better. However, the length of time you burn the peat for and how you deal with its moisture content during kilning, doesn't really matter for flavour. It's about effective production."

After this process, the measurement for phenols is taken from the malt (High Performance Liquid Chromatography, or HPLC, is considered to be the most reliable method for measuring phenols in whisky), and subsequently unmalted barley is usually mixed in with the peated malt to achieve the desired PPM figure. From this point on, phenols are constantly lost throughout the whisky-making process, starting with the milling of the barley. The phenols from the peat are located on the barley husk after smoking. If there's a lot of husk waste (known as skinnings), or if there's a lot of movement during milling, more phenols will be lost. Husks are also required during mashing; without them there will be drainage issues that can lead to the further loss of phenols, as well as the loss of other compounds necessary to create a good batch of spirit.

Phenols are also lost during mashing and fermentation. Some are left behind with the draff, while others are lost or transformed as water, barley and yeast combine to form new compounds. The distillation process and the cut points



Whisky Science Peat

decided by each distillery also play a significant role. Heavier compounds, including phenols, are found primarily at the end of the distillation run when the spirit is extracted. The longer the hearts are run, the more 'heavy' phenolics incorporate themselves into the character of the new-make spirit that goes on to become whisky.

According to Benromach's manager, Keith Cruikshank, this is how the Speyside operation brings more peated aromas and flavours to its heavily peated Contrasts: Peat Smoke release, compared to the usual softly peated house style of the distillery. "The skill of our dedicated distillers is especially critical when it comes to cutting the spirit, the moment when they consider the new spirit to be of the highest quality," explains Keith. "As the Benromach core style is peated, the only thing we do differently for Peat Smoke is adjust the cut point from spirit

to feints to create a smokier profile."

Comparing the distillation processes at Ardbeg and Lagavulin also reveals why their smoky characters are so different from one another. Both distilleries cut onto their feints at a similar point, though Ardbeg's malt is slightly more peated. Ardbeg's Gordon describes his distillery's profile as a mixture of soot and fruit, while he finds Lagavulin has a heavy, oily, and earthy character. The distillation processes are quite different. At Lagavulin, running a slow distillation combined with re-using a lot of foreshots and heavily phenolic feints (known as 'charge') from past distillations is important. Therein lies the tension that forms the core of Lagavulin, according to Gordon: "There's a high charge in the spirit stills, above the man door. Because it's high, even though there's lots of reflux and you're running those stills slowly and gently, that still leads to that

really heavy, oily character. You're still hammering everything through."

At Ardbeg, on the other hand, Gordon illustrates how phenols combine with other elements to contribute to its fruity character: "We have a purifier there that means as your spirit is going over the swan neck into the lyne arm, there's loads of reflux as it all gathers back and forth. This amplifies the fruity and estery notes you find in the whisky. There's also a slightly shorter run of foreshots compared to Lagavulin."

Then there is Octomore, literally the peatiest whisky in the world. Its origin and wide PPM range comes from the fact that Bruichladdich has asked its Inverness-based maltsters, Bairds Malts, not to mix in unpeated barley after the peated batch is put through an intense, slow cold-smoking process – making a consistent PPM level impossible to attain. However, the intense peat levels that go up to 309 PPM after malting are primarily tamed by Bruichladdich's distillation process.

"We've got our tall stills, with these narrow necks, so you get a lot of reflux and contact with the copper. Also with the long fermentation we get these lovely fruity and floral flavours," says Bruichladdich head distiller Adam Hannett. "Because of this, most other distilleries working with our malt would make a more phenolic whisky, but with us we've got a lighter, more elegant style, so we're looking to achieve a balance that feels right."

As a result, when considering the role of phenols in a dram, it actually is less about the amount that are squeezed into the malting process through kilning and more about how their loss is controlled throughout the remainder of the process. Because even the world's top whisky scientists have not yet cracked all the mysteries of peat, whisky fans simply must trust the judgement and instincts of skilled producers like Cruikshank, Gordon, and Hannett, who are doing their best to create and share the full spectrum of smells and tastes of peated whisky. ○

This page:
Colin Gordon and
Mickey Heads.



Whisky Tasting Women & Whiskey Tasting

A Natural Nose for Whiskey

Research indicates that women generally have a better sense of smell than men, but it's more than just biology that makes them better whiskey tasters

WORDS MAGGIE KIMBERL





When we think of science in the whiskey industry, often we are imagining the

quality control lab which ensures all the grains are free from foreign materials and the pH of the mash is just right. Few people realise that there's a whole area of scientific research exploring how we interpret the many flavours of whiskey when we taste it, and even fewer people realise that there's strong evidence indicating womens' biology makes us better whiskey tasters.

A study called *Sexual Dimorphism in the Human Olfactory Bulb: Females Have More Neurons and Glial Cells than Males* (Oliveira-Pinto et al, *PLoS One*, Nov 2014) sent to me by Susan Reigler, former lecturer and research associate in biology at Indiana University Southeast, and founding member of The Bourbon Women Association, states right in the title that women have more of the cells that translate olfactory sensations into information processed by our brains. This conclusion was later backed up by the publication of a meta-analysis (Sorokowski et al, *Frontier Psychology*, Feb 2019) that examined the results of a variety of studies with a total sample size of more than 37,000 people. The authors stated that the research seemed to confirm what they call the 'common knowledge' on female olfactory superiority, though they also emphasised that the extent of the differences was 'notably small'.

"It doesn't mean that all women have better olfactory sense than all men, since there are 'supertasters' of both sexes," says Reigler. "But, in general, women do have a better sense of smell than men." She explains that there are evolutionary reasons for this that boil down to mate choice and it seems that, completely unconsciously, women find men attractive based on how the men smell to them. As it turns out, the most attractive men to women are those whose immune systems are different from their own. According to Reigler,

this has come about because the mixing of immune system genes strengthens the offspring's immune systems, giving them an edge in fending off illness.

"And why are women so choosy?" asks Reigler. "Simple answer: eggs are expensive, sperm is cheap. In other words, a female's genetic investment is costly. Mammal females, and especially primates, including humans, can only have so many offspring in a lifetime. So, in order for her genetic investment (i.e. children) to survive, she wants (again, unconsciously) the top-quality genes (including immune system genes) to be contributed by her mate."

In short, women are wired to be better smellers and tasters for the sake



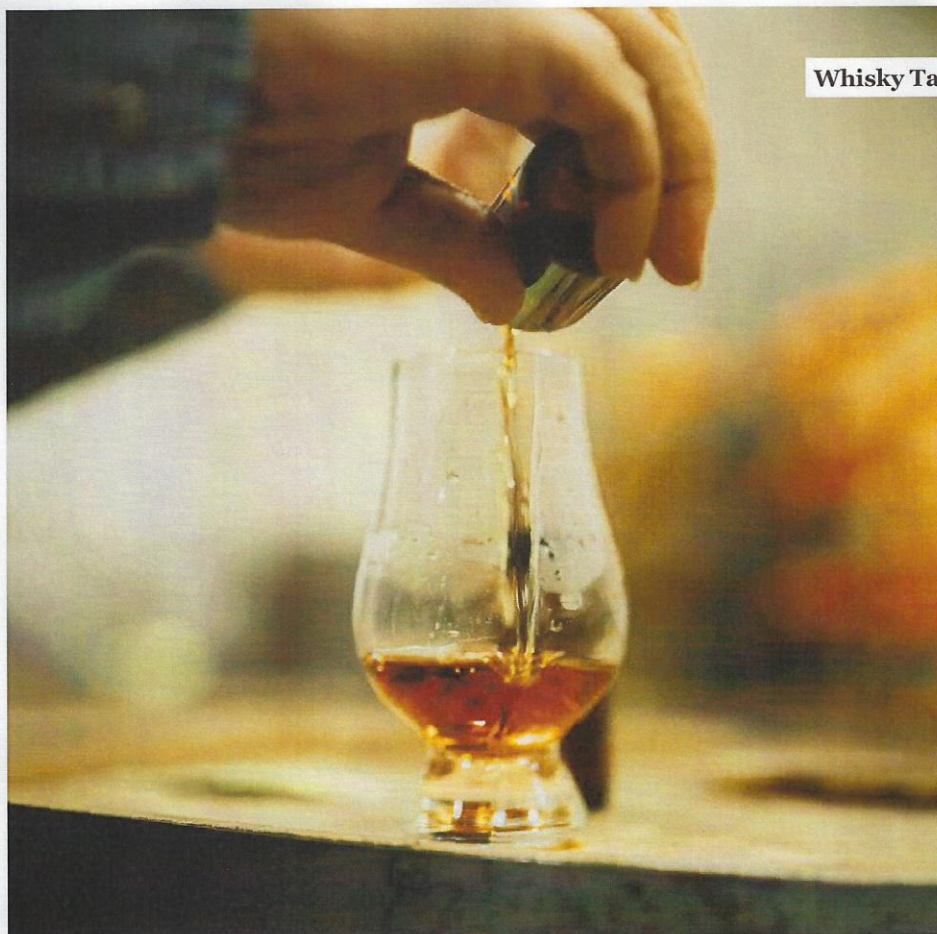
of the continuation of the species, and this biological difference means we can detect more subtleties in a variety of substances – including whiskey. The Bourbon Women Association has polled members in a blind tasting and found that women prefer higher-proof, more flavourful whiskeys on average, though more scientific study of this area has yet to be done.

However, it's not just these biological factors that predispose women to being better whiskey tasters than men. Anecdotally, women also tend to be better able to articulate their olfactory experiences, to categorise and name those sensory inputs in a way that is constructive and precise – a skill that is definitely an advantage in any role involving whiskey communication, production or sensory analysis. The reasons why this might be the case are not fully understood and could be impacted by culture as much as biology.

Scholarly work suggests that women may have an advantage because they can more precisely name and recall particular flavours and aromas. In *Gender-specific Induction of Enhanced Sensitivity to Odors* (Dalton, Doolittle & Breslin, *Natural Neuroscience*, 2002),

the authors demonstrate that men and women acclimate at different rates to sensory inputs, but point out that differences are largely restricted to aspects of olfactory processing that require higher-level cognition, such as odour identification or odour memory. They go on to conclude that this, coupled with the fact that women develop olfactory sensitivity much quicker and to a higher degree than men, supports the anecdotal evidence that women have greater sensitivity to ambient odours. This research built upon previous work, including *Odor Identification by Males and Females: Predictions vs. Performance* (Cain, *Chemical Senses*, 1982), which demonstrated that the difference between men and women's olfactory perceptions can be at least partially explained by the fact men took longer than women to generate the correct labels for their olfactory sensations.

In plain English, women are quicker on the recall of correct labels for their sensory memories and also adjust quicker to sensory inputs than men, which supports the anecdotal evidence that women are more descriptive in naming their sensory inputs. There are



also questions as to whether language affects perceptions, but it's likely that cultural experiences and availabilities of different flavours would come much more into play when talking specifically about whiskey. Thus, at least in general, we're more descriptive about what we are smelling and tasting, and it is precisely this talent that has drawn many women to the whiskey industry.

Peggy Noe Stevens, founder of The Bourbon Women Association, was the first woman to become a master Bourbon taster in the Kentucky Bourbon industry. Her mentor, Lincoln Henderson, invested his time in her because he believed not only that women are more detailed and descriptive about tasting whiskey, but also because he and Stevens shared a common background as foodies.

"Becoming the world's first female master Bourbon taster in my early days of working at the Woodford Reserve Distillery was something I could not have appreciated then as much as I do now," says Stevens. "The incredible experience and training that Lincoln Henderson, Woodford's master distiller at the time, gave to me was invaluable."

Stevens was the visitor centre

manager and assisted with tastings and barrel selections before Henderson suggested she might have a particular gift. "With our mutual appreciation for being culinary 'foodies' and spending hours in those tastings hearing him dissect flavours and trying to absorb his knowledge, I was fascinated with the flavours of Bourbon," she continues. "We did barrel samples, worked in the lab, etc., but I believe what set me apart at the time was my culinary approach to tasting Bourbon."

Lincoln and Noe would have long discussions about food flavours, which were stimulated by her having a broad culinary training and extensive experience working with chefs from all over during her time in the hotel industry. "My vocabulary was broad in the fact that I did not just describe Bourbon as caramel and vanilla," says Noe. "Instead, it was crème brûlée, mascarpone, dark brown sugar. This enlightened many drinkers, and I created the first culinary flavour wheel for that Bourbon." Stevens' work as a master taster opened the doors for many other women to fall into place in an industry naturally suited to our palates, and her founding of The

Opening pages: Image courtesy of Chivas Brothers, from the launch campaign of Ballantine's 7 Bourbon Finish.

These pages, left to right: Ashley Barnes, co-founder of The Spirits Group; Susan Reigler and Peggy Noe Stevens.



Bourbon Women Association has given many women the encouragement and visibility they needed to take that first step. Since then, the industry has seen not only many more women master Bourbon tasters, but also women master blenders, master distillers, high-level mixologists, and more.

"When I was young, I spent a lot of time with my Mom in the kitchen cooking, canning, and trying to create recipes for the next local and state fair 4-H entry," says Ashley Barnes, co-founder of The Spirits Group. "I knew early on that something was different, and I did not taste things like the rest of my family. I just figured I was picky to be honest." Barnes started her career at Buffalo Trace, went on to work in the lab at Four Roses, and later started her own company with Monica Wolf, where the pair work with distilleries on blending, quality control, and more.

"I learned what I have heard referred to as 'classically trained' blending techniques from my peers at Buffalo Trace," she continues, adding that master blender Drew Mayville was always willing to answer questions, talk through calculations and demonstrate how things should be done.

Whisky Tasting Women & Whiskey Tasting

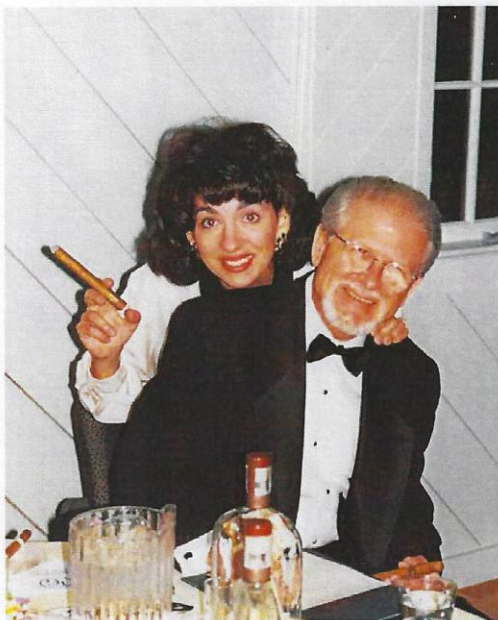
That kid in the kitchen who just thought that she was picky soon learned otherwise: "It became very clear that I could taste in more detail than others... the encouragement I got from my peers led me to start smelling and tasting any and everything I could that might pertain to whiskey. Tasting someone's banana bread, writing down what I thought was in it and then asking for the recipe. I took advantage of every opportunity I could to expand my verbiage so that I could convey what I was tasting."

However, the journey from biological truth to a career in the whiskey industry isn't all that straightforward. According to Barnes, it takes time and exploration. "When I started at Four Roses, I learned that there were even more subtle differences in the Bourbons I was tasting," says Barnes. "Really zeroing in on the different yeast codes and how that made each expression different and unique. I learned several blending techniques from Brent Elliot and Jim Rutledge while I was there. Again, there wasn't ever a guide with steps A, then B, then C and now you can taste and blend. I suspect that this is typical of anyone in the industry who tastes for a living. There are basic truths that you will learn from senior peers and then it is on you to take that and run with it."

These days, Barnes occupies such a position in the industry that she relies on her palate for her income by blending, detecting quality issues, and determining whether whiskey is mature enough to be bottled. This means she has to worry about coughs and colds more than others might, and schedules around her known seasonal allergies: "I always joke that it's not a problem if I were to break my leg but a cold could knock me out for a week or so."

In addition to the strict precautions she's currently taking to safeguard herself from Covid-19, Barnes puts a lot more thought into her sense of smell and taste than the average person on a daily basis. For example, she only

This page from top:
Peggy Noe Stevens
drawing whiskey
from the cask;
Peggy and Lincoln
Henderson.



wears a light perfume or won't wear any at all when tasting, but also takes precautions to ensure her palate is not adversely impacted by food or drink: "I have made changes over the years to ensure my palate is always ready... think of a professional athlete who uses nutrition and exercise to keep their body condition or what-have-you in tip top shape; I do things such as not drinking super-hot liquid. I love a great cup of hot coffee or tea; however, you will see me add an ice cube or wait until the cup is sufficiently cooled before taking a sip."

Science tells us that women are better suited to jobs as tasters and blenders, but that's only the beginning. It was these women's passion, dedication, experience, intelligence and skill that transformed inherent ability into a keenly honed tool and propelled them to the highest levels of the industry. It took a few great women shattering that glass ceiling to open up the possibilities for all of us. ○

A close-up photograph of a metal pipe pouring liquid into a wooden barrel. The liquid is splashing, creating a dynamic scene. The word "PROOF" is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters, centered horizontally and partially obscured by the pipe and liquid. The background is dark and out of focus, showing industrial equipment.

PROOF OF

WORDS IAN WISNIEWSKI

ENTRY

Filling a cask isn't as simple as pouring spirit through a bung hole

When tasting a malt whisky, two focal points are the alcoholic strength chosen for bottling, and the influence of the cask type used for ageing, as both influence the overall flavour profile and how those characteristics are experienced by the drinker. An earlier step on each whisky's journey which also combines both of these aspects is the filling strength: that is to say, the alcoholic strength of new-make spirit when filled into a cask.

The normal filling strength in the Scotch whisky industry is 63.5% ABV (alcohol by volume), a standard which enables companies to easily trade casks of the same age and volume 'like for like' as, when dealing in new spirit, alcoholic concentration is intrinsically linked to value. The capacity to 'swap' with other distilleries has historically been a necessity for whisky makers, as all need to have access to a wide range of flavours and spirit styles for blending purposes – though this requirement as it concerns the major blends has been somewhat alleviated through the creation of large conglomerates such as

Diageo and Pernod Ricard, which own large numbers of distilleries producing a varied style of makes. Nevertheless, trading still goes on and the industry standard has stuck.

As new make settles in the spirit receiver at what's called 'receiver strength', typically around 70% ABV, water is added to reach this lower filling strength. However, it should be noted that this is hardly a universal approach and at Glenfiddich, Balvenie and Kininvie, for example, new-make spirit at 71% ABV is reduced to two different filling strengths of 63.5% ABV and 68.5% ABV. "These are our traditional filling strengths for as far back as we can see in our records and,

Opening pages:
Filling the cask.

once it's a tradition, it's a very bold move to change it. Every cask at either filling strength could be used in any expression. Glenfiddich 12 Years Old, for example, comprises casks filled at both strengths," says Brian Kinsman, William Grant & Sons master blender.

Meanwhile, according to master distiller Billy Walker, the team at The GlenAllachie fill at four different strengths: 63.5%, 65%, 67% and 69.3% ABV, depending on the cask type being filled and the intended maturation period. Another option is filling at receiver strength and this practice is common at a number of grain and malt whisky distilleries; Bruichladdich, for example, has filled at receiver strength of 69% ABV since re-opening in 2001.

There are a few factors influencing a distiller's decision to fill at a particular strength. Firstly, there are the practicalities. The higher the filling strength is, the lower the final volume of liquid, which requires fewer casks and therefore less warehousing space – both of which result in lower overall cost to the distiller. Correspondingly, lower filling strengths create greater volumes of liquid, meaning more casks and warehousing space, increasing costs. The fact that lower filling strengths mean adding greater amounts of water has brought about a flippant industry saying: "Why age water?"

However, this 'common-sense' view neglects the scientific realities of maturation. It has been proven that a combination of alcohol and water is more effective at extracting desirable

“ There are a few factors influencing a distiller's decision to fill at a particular strength ”

Production Filling Strengths

flavours than alcohol alone and there is a direct relationship between entry proof and the 'speed' of maturation in the first 10 years, at least when measured by tracking certain key maturation indicators. Though, as is often the case in whisky, there's still some room for debate.

Flavour compounds must solubilise (dissolve) in order to be extracted from the cask. Some of these are more soluble in alcohol, others in water, though every compound has a degree of solubility in both. A test case is vanilla, one of the most universal flavours in whisky. This derives from vanillin, which is more alcohol soluble.

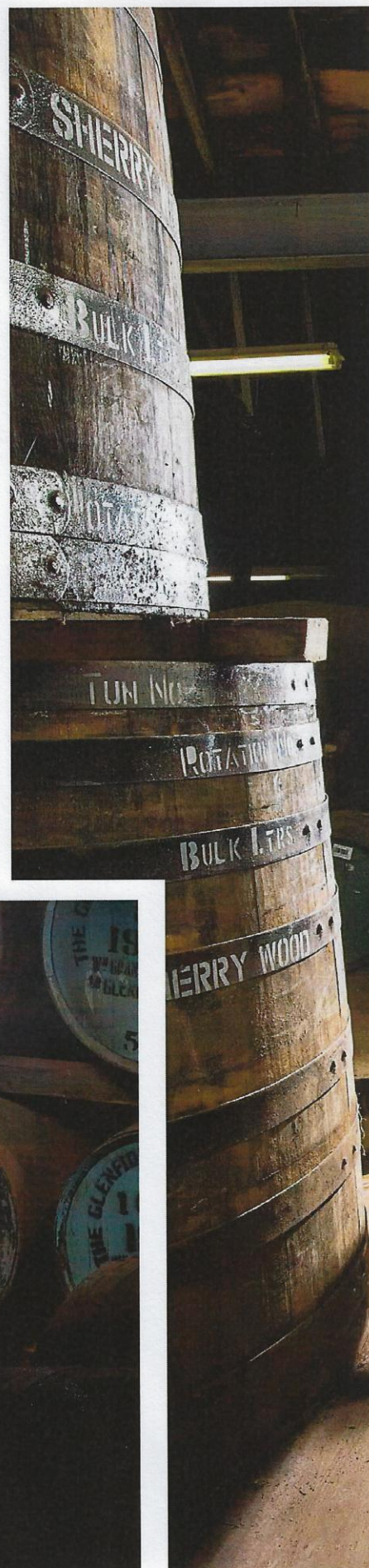
"Different filling strengths result in a different flavour profile, as the interaction of spirit and wood differs. At a higher strength you draw a broader range of flavours from the wood, and you have the potential to age for longer before the strength would drop below

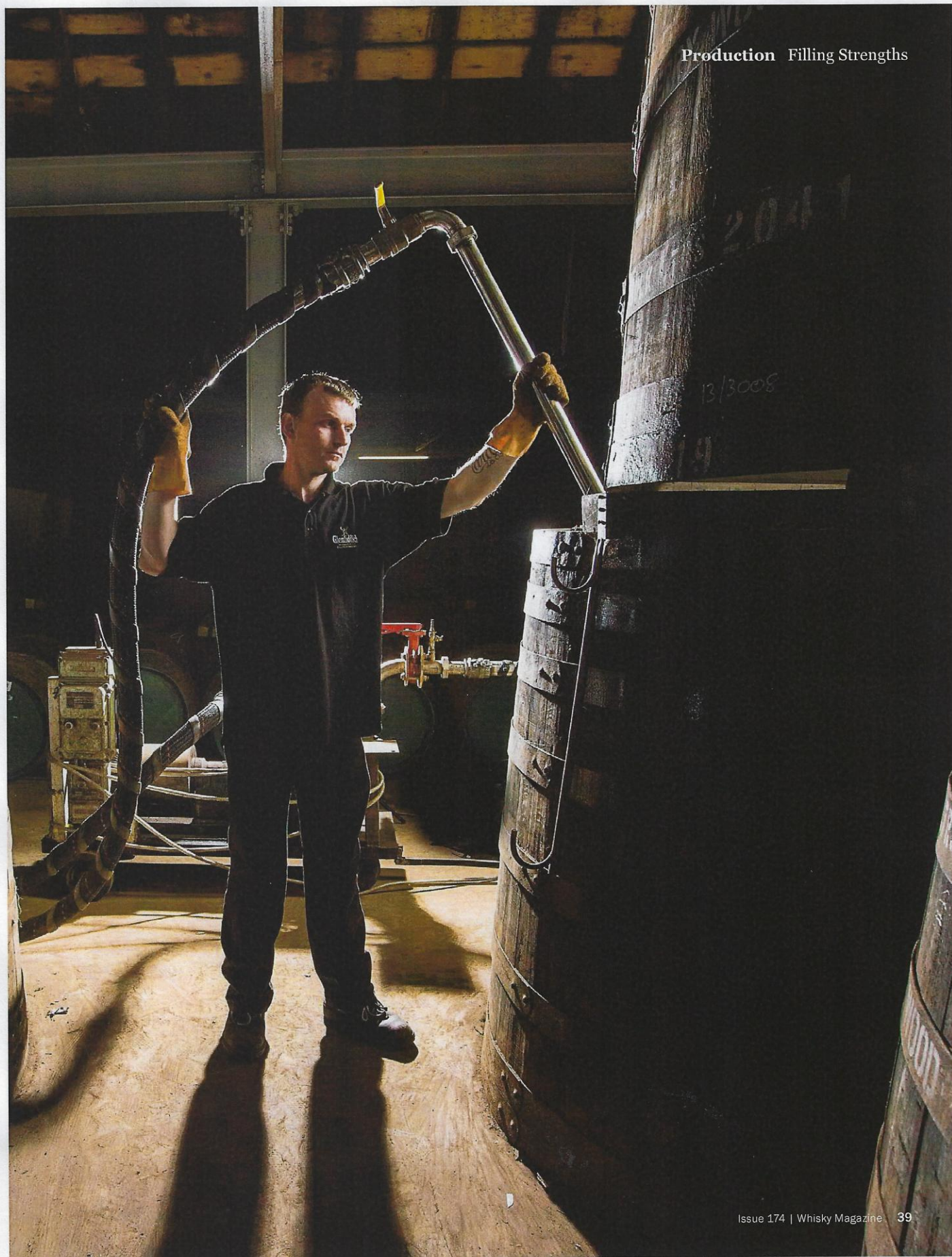
40% ABV," says Adam Hannett, head distiller at Bruichladdich. "Octomore's high peating level and high filling strength work well together; filling at 63.5% ABV wouldn't give the same intensity in the resulting malt. The greater level of vanillin extracted at a higher filling strength also complements the phenolics very well."

However, this doesn't necessarily translate into perceivable differences in the whisky when it's nosed and tasted, as Brian Kinsman explains: "The level of vanillin can be greater in casks filled at higher strength, but once diluted for bottling there's no difference in the level of vanilla notes on a sensory evaluation, and the level measured in PPM (parts per million) is the same."

Meanwhile, Kinsman points out, evaporation from the cask includes water and alcohol, which means the alcoholic strength is continually changing: "Evaporation is two per

These pages:
Monitoring
maturation at
Glenfiddich.





Production Filling Strengths

cent per annum, which includes an annual loss of 0.5% ABV in both our filling strengths. This two per cent is indicative up to 12 years, then slows down to one per cent for the next 10-15 years. After that it's very cask specific as it continues to flatten out, but there is always some evaporation."

It's often said that higher filling strengths require longer to mature, while lower filling strengths mature more rapidly. One explanation for this is that the rate of reactions between the spirit and the cask slows down at higher strengths, and accelerates at lower strengths. However, only some reactions seem to be impacted by this (for instance, research suggests that ester formation remains constant regardless of fill strength) and the issue of exactly how much filling strength needs to vary in order to alter the rate of development changes depending on who is asked. Some say as little as 2% ABV is enough to impact maturation character, while others claim that a change of 5% ABV would only make a negligible change to the resulting whisky. So far, research seems to suggest that both can be right, depending on the exact maturation characteristics that the distiller wishes to emphasise.

Whether the filling strength has a particular influence on specific styles of malt whisky is another consideration. Peated malts are an interesting test case, being at one 'extreme' end of the flavour spectrum: "We sometimes fill Ardbeg above 63.5% ABV, which promotes a smokier whisky; filling below 63.5% ABV makes it fruitier," says Brendan McCarron, Glenmorangie's head of maturing whisky stocks. "If you change anything, the result will be different. The question is how different."


Conducting experiments to reach a definitive verdict on filling strengths is challenging. Even casks of the same type don't have an identical influence, which means differences in the resulting malt whisky can be down to cask variability rather than filling strength. Similarly,

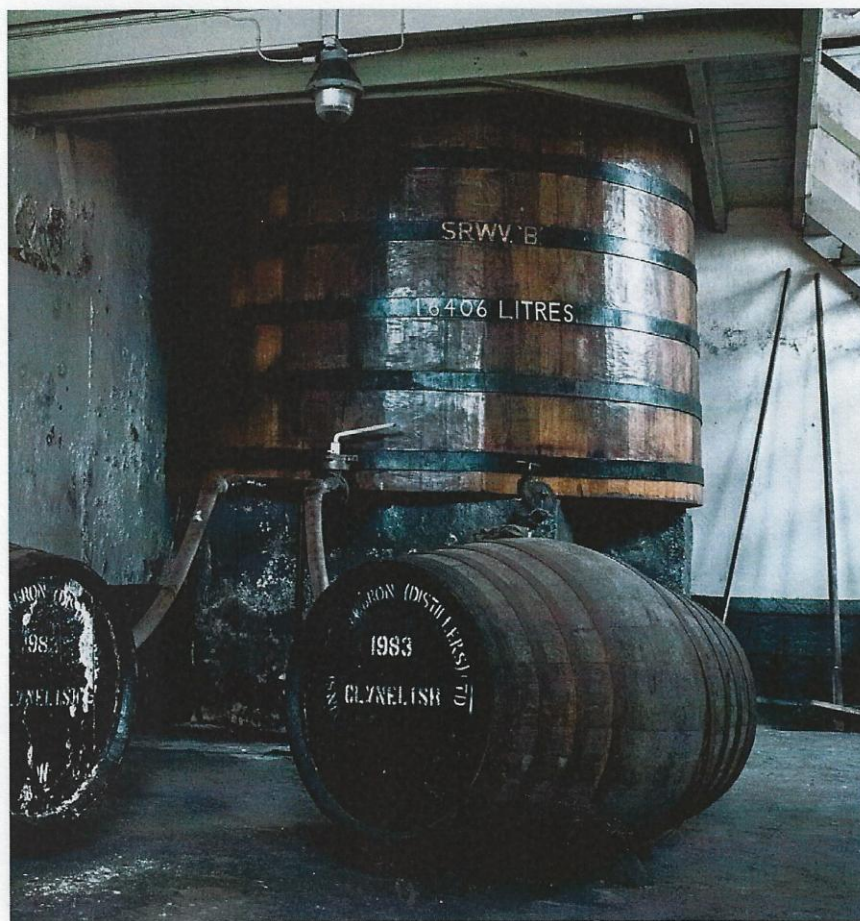
This page:
Taking time to rest.

even two warehouses next to each other can have microclimates that modify the influence of the cask and, of course, the overall maturation environment (meaning seasonal weather and local climate conditions) plays a significant role too.

Nevertheless, research is ongoing and more may be revealed in the coming years. Perhaps Torabhaig, operational since 2017, will provide answers. They have been filling new-make spirit at various strengths, including 58%,

61.5% and 63.4% ABV, and according to Neil Mathieson, whisky maker at Torabhaig, each cask is labelled and set up in such a way that the team can directly compare casks where the only variable is the filling strength: "There are distinct patterns in the flavour profiles gained at each strength... But we can only muse on the results until we have actual empirical data."

As is so often the case in the world of whisky, it looks like we'll just have to wait and see. 



© GLENFIDDICH DISTILLERY | © CHRISTOPHER COATES

INCHGOWER

For every Talisker and Lagavulin in Diageo's inventory of distilleries, there are many more lower-profile plants making spirit that rarely sees the light of day away from the blending vats. Think Glenlossie, Glen Spey and Inchgower. Think Inchgower in particular as this distillery, located on the far north-eastern fringes of the Speyside region, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Celebrations are likely to be suitably low key, but the style of malt created at Inchgower is an important component of many Diageo blends and the role of Scotland's lesser-known distilleries should never be underestimated.

Inchgower distillery was founded in 1871 by Alexander Wilson & Co, beside what is now the A98 Fochabers to Fraserburgh road, half a mile south of Buckie, in an area once renowned for illicit distilling. The town is situated on the Moray Firth, and remains a lively and productive port despite the difficulties faced by the Scottish fishing fleet during the past few decades. When fitting out Inchgower, Wilson used equipment from Tochineal distillery, which the firm had also operated, located at Lintmill, near Cullen, some eight miles east of Buckie.

Tochineal was built by Alexander Wilson's predecessor John Wilson in 1825, but by 1871 the Tochineal site

had become too cramped and the enterprise, which had begun in 1825, was also in need of major upgrading, with some sources suggesting water supply was also an issue. Remains of the distillery can still be seen today, with buildings having been used subsequently for agricultural purposes. Inchgower remained in the hands of Wilson & Co until the company went bankrupt in 1936, when the site and the owner's house were purchased by Buckie Town Council for £1,000, thereby becoming the only council in Scotland ever to own a distillery.

Not only did their intervention safeguard jobs at Inchgower, but it also profited greatly by its investment,

WORDS GAVIN D. SMITH

INTRIGUE

Rarely publicised and mostly used for blending, this Morayshire distillery nevertheless has a story to tell

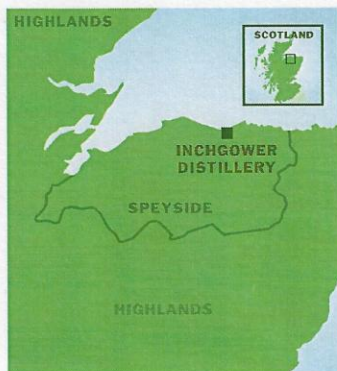
selling the distillery on to Perth-based Arthur Bell & Sons Ltd for £6,000 just two years later. Not that Bells was complaining, as it had spent no less than £56,000 acquiring Blair Athol and Dufftown distilleries four years previously. Bell's greatest years in terms of sales were still ahead of it and were largely driven by Raymond Miquel, who died earlier this year at the age of 89. Miquel joined Bell's in 1956 and rose to the position of managing director in just a dozen years. Something of a martinet, he was loved by some and loathed by others, and reputedly once insisted that senior executives accompany him on a training run in Perth on Christmas Day! Under Miquel's leadership, however,

Bell's grew to become Scotland's leading blended Scotch by 1970, and in 1978 it was the best-selling blended Scotch in the UK, with sales growth in terms of value increasing by around 800 per cent during that decade.

Inevitably, such growth required more spirit and Inchgower's capacity was doubled in 1966 by the installation of a second pair of stills, while Dufftown was doubled in size two years later,

followed by Blair Athol in 1973. The next year, Pittyvaich distillery (now demolished) was built in Dufftown and Bell's total malt spirit capacity grew from 4.75lpa to 13.44lpa. Miquel saw that his distilleries were worked as hard as his staff and, in order to maximise output, short fermentations and rapid distillation were the order of the day, which dictated the nutty, spicy house style that's still favoured at Inchgower.

“ ... the role of Scotland's lesser-known distilleries should never be underestimated ”



When Guinness acquired Arthur Bell & Sons as a result of a hostile takeover in 1985, Inchgower was one of the five malt distilleries included in the deal, along with Blair Athol, Dufftown, Pittyvaich and Bladnoch, with Bell's having acquired the last-named Lowland plant two years earlier. Guinness went on to take over The Distillers Company Ltd in 1986, forming United Distillers, which was the forerunner of present owners Diageo – hence Inchgower's inclusion in Diageo's 28-strong portfolio of malt distilleries.

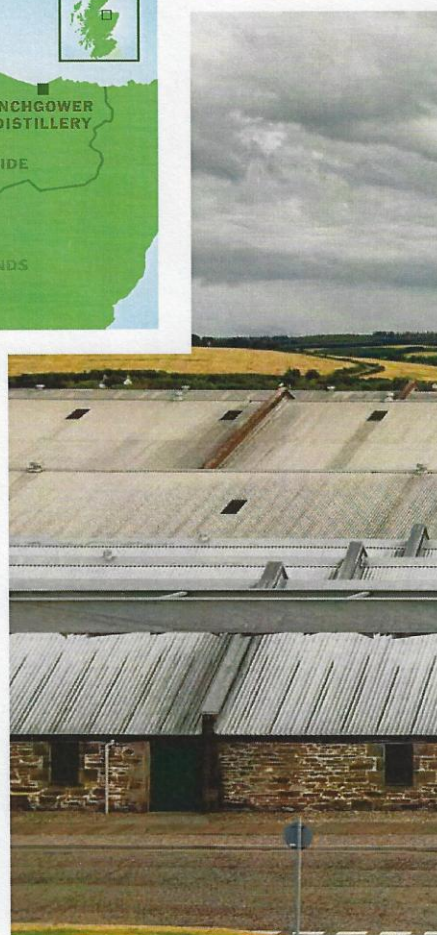
When it comes to creating Inchgower's malt whisky, Ewan Gunn, senior global brand ambassador for Scotch whiskies at Diageo, declares that, "The key character we're looking for in Inchgower is 'nutty' with an oily background. We operate a fast production regime to achieve that.

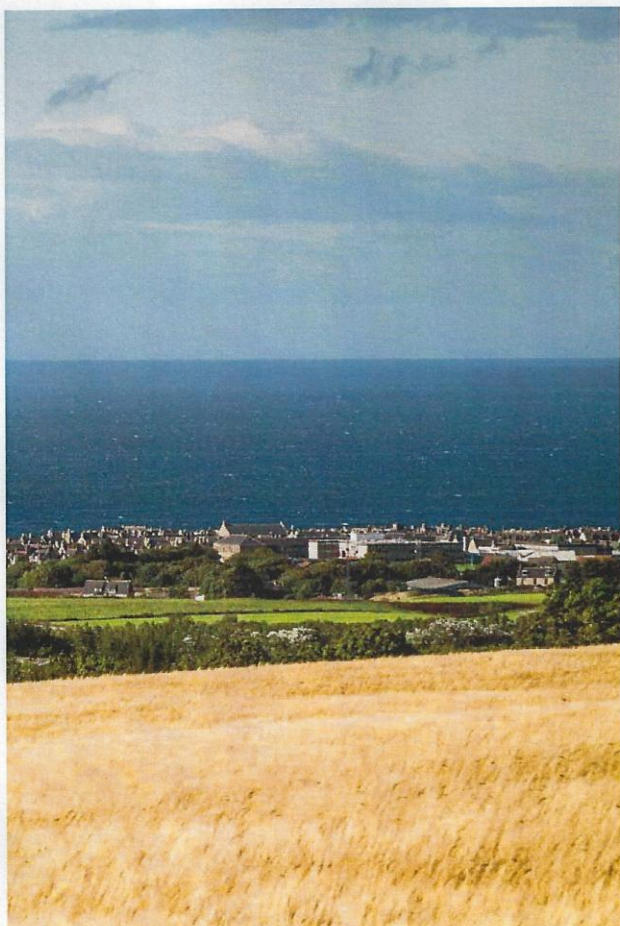
"We create a cloudy wort in the mash tun, which is rapidly drained,

allowing more suspended solids to be carried through. We do short and long fermentations, with the short ones being very short at 39 hours. This gives cereal, nutty and spicy characteristics. We don't give it time to develop estery notes," explains Gunn. "During the first distillation, cereal oils are carried over, and we distil hard and fast to reduce the copper conversation and allow the heavier elements to carry over...there is little reflux, little copper contact."

Esters give fruity characteristics to spirit and are created when alcohol and acid molecules interact, with lengthy fermentation producing banana, pear and apple aromas and flavours, which are not desirable in Inchgower spirit. Lack of reflux also inhibits the development of esters and, in order to avoid them as much as possible, the 'middle cut' begins as high as 70% ABV, but continues until as low as 55% ABV to capture heavier compounds late in

Opening pages: Inchgower, a low-profile distillery. **These pages, from above left:** Over the rolling landscape of Speyside; A rooftop view of Inchgower.





GETTING TECHNICAL

Water source: Springs, Hill of Menduff

Malt: Unpeated, Laureate barley

Mashing: Stainless steel semi-lauter mash tun, processing a 8.63 tonne mash. Currently 12 mashes per week

Fermentation: Six Oregon pine washbacks, with a charge of 38,500 litres. Five long fermentations (90-100 hours) and seven short fermentations (39 hours) per week

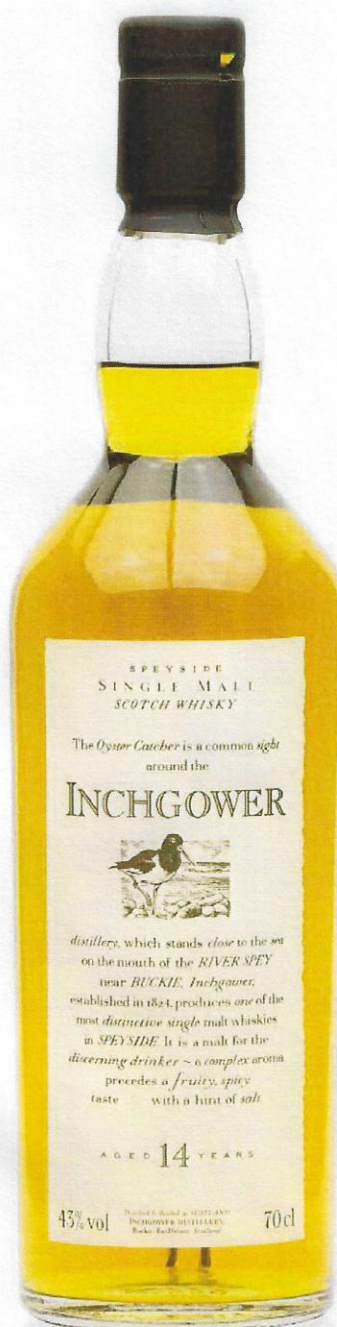
Distillation: Two 'plain style' wash stills (12,800 litres capacity) and two 'plain style' spirit stills (8,000 litres capacity)

Capacity: 3.1 million lpa per annum maximum, currently operating at 2.1 million lpa per annum

the run. The lyne arms are also quite steeply angled to assist collection of these compounds.

When ascribing stylistic characteristics to whiskies, one epithet often applied to Inchgower is 'salty', in common with other distilleries located near the sea, such as Pulteney and Diageo's Oban. However, according to Ewan Gunn, "There is certainly not enough sodium chloride present that you could detect. Inchgower is not chemically 'salty'. It's probably the extreme spiciness and heavy nuttiness which imply that style. It's not about any aspect of production... It's about flavour association. It's not really been explained, and it's not about the casks being matured beside the sea because





some Inchgower is matured at the distillery and some is not."

When it comes to 'salty' Oban, Gunn notes, "From a scientific point of view, it's operated differently to Inchgower. Long fermentations are the order of the day, producing a spirit that is floral and sweet, then citrusy, with orange oil notes." He continues, "Inchgower is used in quite a lot of our blends, including Bell's and J&B. It adds a richer, nuttier flavour, adds body and rounds off other flavours well. It's got a lot to do with mouthfeel. It plays an important role at a high age in Johnnie Walker Ghost & Rare Glenury Royal. It's respected and admired by our blenders."

In operational terms, Inchgower has worked a five-day week since 2017, making 2.1 million litres of pure alcohol (lpa) per year, but working 24/7, the distillery could deliver 3.1 million lpa per year. As the site is fully automated, one man per shift can operate the entire whisky-making process, if required. All the new make is filled into tankers and taken away to be filled into casks – principally refill Bourbon – in the Central Belt, but a significant amount goes back to the distillery to mature, along with various other Diageo whiskies. The dunnage and racked warehousing at Inchgower can hold 65,000 casks and 61,000 are maturing there at present.

Inchgower is, as may be expected, elusive as a single malt, with the principal 'house' expression being Inchgower 14 Years Old (Flora & Fauna series), while independent bottlers currently offering Inchgower include That Boutique-y Whisky Company (14 Years Old) and Signatory (12 Years Old). Earlier this year, the Scotch Malt Whisky Society released an intriguing 13-year-old expression (No. 18:33) that has been finished for two years in a first-fill ex-rye whiskey cask. Diageo included a superb 27-year-old expression among its 2018 Special Releases, which served to showcase just how good Inchgower whisky can be when this low-profile 'workhorse' gets the chance to shine. 



WORDS
JACOPO MAZZEO

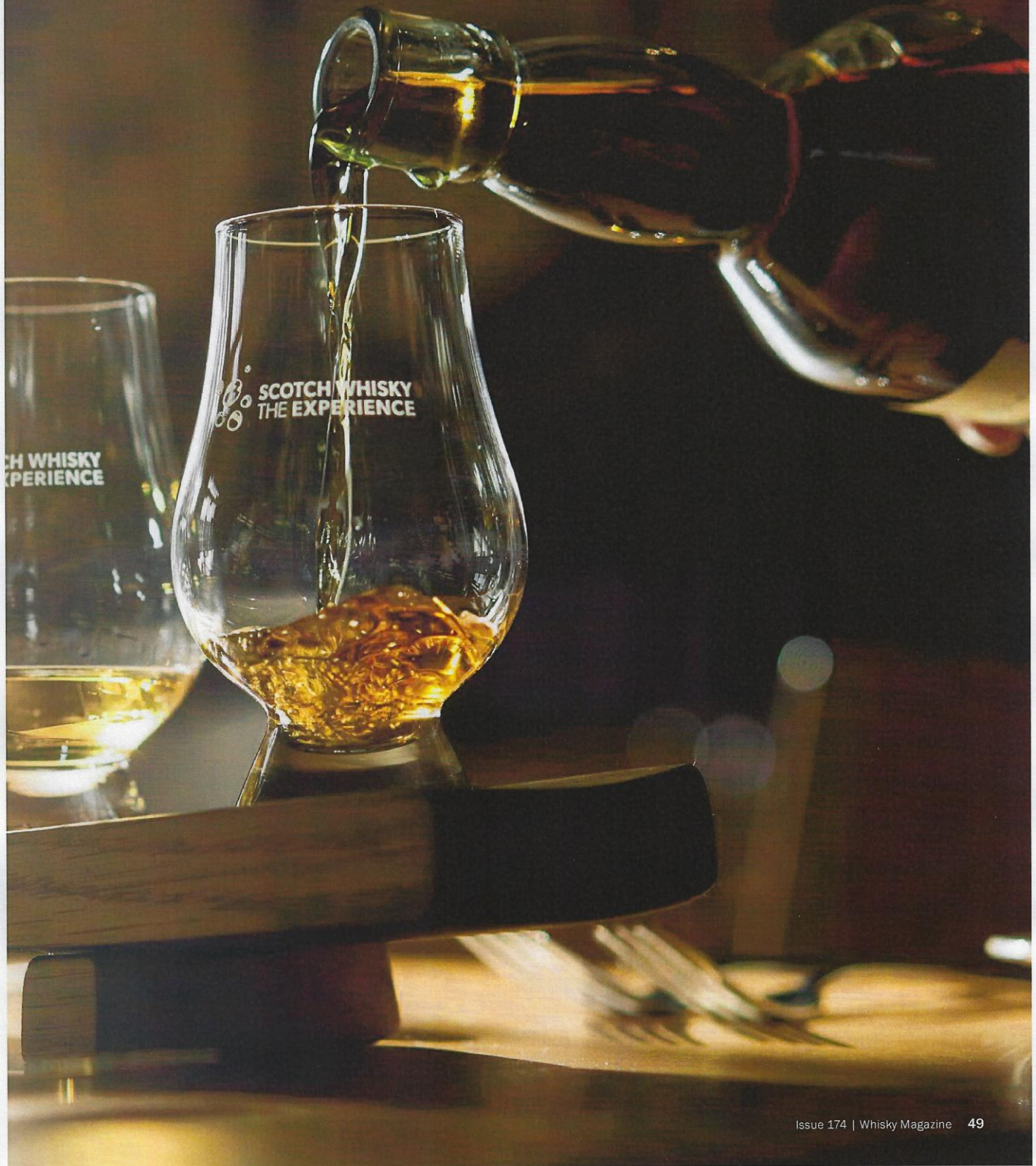
A Glass For All Whisky

*Looking back on
the birth of an icon*

When, in the early 2000s, Italian pioneer brewer Teo Musso and beer guru Kuaska teamed up to design a glass specifically devoted to beer, the Italian craft brewing industry swiftly adopted it as its unofficial drinking vessel. Named Teku, after the inventors' initials, the glass gifted the category with a crucial sense of self-awareness and with the necessary confidence to thrive in a nation of wine drinkers. Such was its success that the Teku glass was eventually embraced well beyond Italy's national borders; today, it's even endorsed by the often controversial yet iconic Scottish craft brewer BrewDog.

Up until the late 1990s Scotch whisky was, coincidentally, in a pretty similar boat. A range of different glasses, none of which were specifically designed for the enjoyment of whisky, would find their way to the bar. For instance, the rocks glass – although popular and practical – wasn't, and still isn't, suitable for appreciating a fine whisky's organoleptic qualities; the balloon glass, on the other hand, is certainly elegant and





Whisky Design The Glencairn Glass

stylish but is primarily associated with Cognac and other brandies. It was for this reason that, in the 1980s, the founder of glassmaking firm Glencairn Crystal, Raymond Davidson, set out to create a glass that would encourage the user to fully appreciate the nose and palate of a whisky.

"Champagne, brandy and wine, all had their own glasses," explains Raymond Davidson's son and Glencairn Crystal's new product development director, Scott. "And whisky, despite the scale of its industry, never seemed to have a glass that it could call its own. That was the fundamental thing he [Raymond] wanted to achieve." Scott Davidson points out that his father was after a design that could help drinkers appreciate whisky's flavours and aromas but at the same time look aesthetically pleasing. The idea took a while to turn into reality: the first prototype was developed in the 80s but remained relegated to the filing cabinet for nearly 20 years. It was only in the late 90s that Raymond's son Paul, now Glencairn's managing director, discovered his father's whisky glass prototype while looking through samples and believed it had some unexplored commercial potential. "The shape of the glass was like a short copita but without the stem. It looked nice, it felt comfortable in the hand and engaging to use," says Scott Davidson.

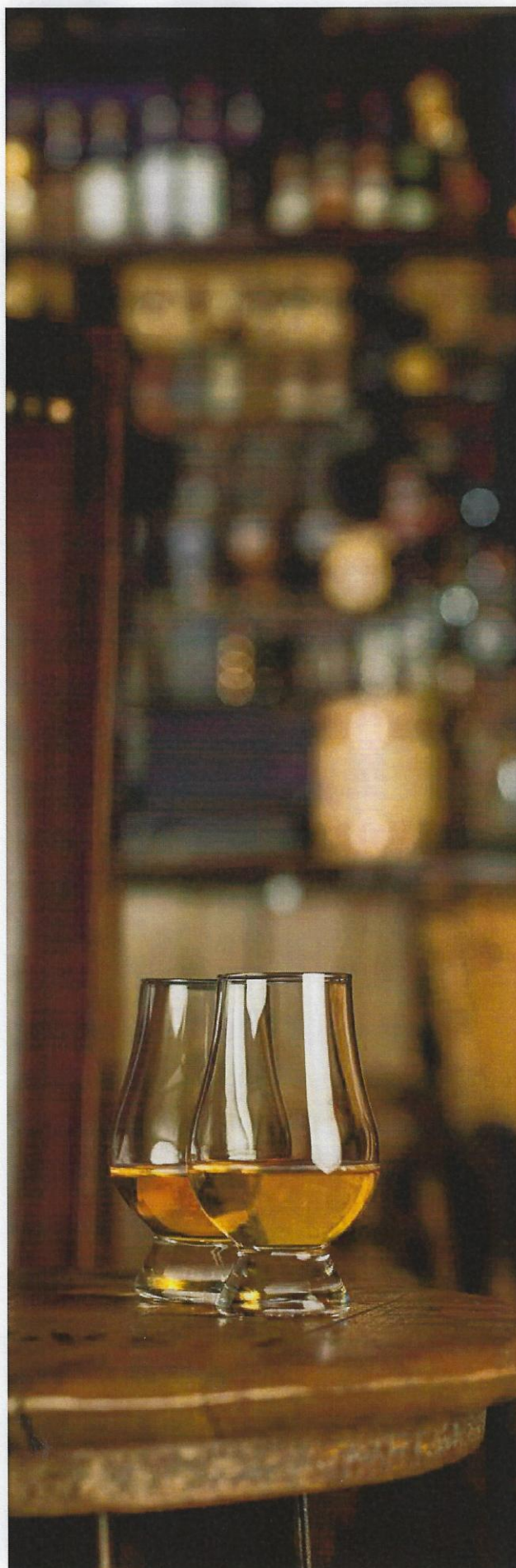
The prototype was sent for feedback to some of Scotland's most respected master distillers of the time, Robert McElroy from Diageo, David Stewart from William Grant & Sons, Robert Hicks from Allied Distillers, Richard Paterson from Whyte & Mackay, and John Ramsay from The Edrington Group. "It was essential to obtain the opinions of these five esteemed master blenders to ensure the concept would eventually be welcomed by the whisky industry," highlights Raymond Davidson. After testing the prototype, the master distillers advised Davidson to scale up the glass's design, in order to accommodate stronger spirits and "give

them more space to breathe", as Scott Davidson recalls. The final design – a larger, stemless copita-inspired shape – was eventually released 20 years ago and soon became an icon for Scotch and for the whisky industry as a whole.

For Scott Davidson, the Glencairn glass won the global whisky community over thanks to its elegant yet functional design, which sufficiently promotes the concentration of aromas needed for serious whisky tasting but maintains a profile that's comfortable to hold and sturdy enough to drink from socially: "The copita is quite small by comparison and has a narrow aperture, so it's hard to socially drink from. Likewise, you've got a brandy glass with its massive surface area which channels more alcohol [than a copita glass] towards the nose."

According to the Davidsons, the Glencairn glass' wide bowl is designed to allow easy appreciation of the whisky's colour while its tapering mouth ushers aromas to the nostrils, thus allowing for the detection of subtle nuances. The base avoids contact between the hand and the bowl, which would warm up the liquid. It also allows the drinker to swirl the glass while looking unpretentious enough to fit in a relaxed bar environment, where whisky isn't necessarily the focus of the conversation. Admittedly, this is a combination of factors that neither a copita nor a balloon benefit from – let alone rocks or shot glasses – but there happens to be far more to the success of the Glencairn glass than mere aesthetic and functional performance.

"For us the glass's story is important," explains Julie Trevisan-Hunter, marketing director at The Scotch Whisky Experience, one of Edinburgh and Scotland's top tourist destinations. She believes that, with some of Scotch whisky's most distinguished personalities involved in its final design, the glass presented itself more as a team effort for the greater good than a conventional business venture. "The fact that it was created collectively and



collaboratively by so many people from many different distilleries, has certainly had an impact on its widespread popularity."

In pre-Glencairn times, The Scotch Whisky Experience would rely on plastic cups and small balloon glasses: "Those brandy glasses! They were pretty much all you could get that would allow you, to some degree, to assess colour, body, legs and those kinds of things. But they weren't ideal. People would immediately say, 'Oh, you use brandy glasses?'. They were not expecting to be drinking Scotch and presented with something linked to a different category and product."

But lack of identification between

vessel and liquid wasn't the only issue:

"You would constantly find bits of broken glass in the dishwasher," Julie recalls. "The Glencairn is a crystal glass, it's of quality of course, but somehow it's also really robust as an item."

Trevisan-Hunter guarantees that practicality was certainly the key to granting Glencairn the industry's seal of approval and the factor which led to its adoption by The Scotch Whisky Experience. "We do lots of tastings and events and wash thousands of glasses. If they were really fragile it would be a disaster. But storing the Glencairns, transporting them, stacking them, taking them out, putting them in, dishwashing them... they are really

Opening pages:
The Scotch Whisky Experience was an early adopter of the Glencairn glass.

These pages:
An ideal design;
The directors of
Glencairn Crystal.



Whisky Design The Glencairn Glass

practical to use and safe for people to take home and transport them in their bags. As a commercial business, this element is absolutely critical."

For Birmingham Whisky Club owner Amy Seton, not only is the Glencairn glass practical, it's a springboard to kick-start a conversation around whisky, too: "People are fascinated by the design and it's always nice to expand on that. As we are all about education, we do take time to chat about why whisky glasses are made in a certain way and why we use them. We find it's neither too delicate nor too clunky, so a wide range of people feel comfortable using it. Newcomers to whisky don't feel it's too specialist but it still looks good and enhances the whisky-drinking experience."

On top of its intrinsic qualities, the Glencairn glass benefited considerably from the endorsement of influential organisations and firms such as the Scotch Whisky Association – the trade body that represents about 95 per cent of all Scotch production – or The

Scotch Whisky Experience itself. The Experience welcomes nearly 400,000 visitors a year, 80 per cent of which come from overseas. After each tour, tourists receive a Glencairn to take home as a free gift (some two million over the past decade alone), which turns the glass into a tactile memory that visitors may transfer on to relatives and friends. Not only does this process broaden the reach of Glencairn's business and of the Scotch Whisky Experience, it simultaneously promotes Scotch whisky as a drink of choice.

Unsurprisingly, widespread endorsement has been coming from brands, too: "It's an easy win for a brand to give their own Glencairn glasses to bars," says Birmingham Whisky Club's Seton. "We have numerous branded ones from whiskies we've worked with. And once whisky clubs started doing their own and posting about them... I imagine that's when [branded Glencairn glasses] started to snowball."

According to Seton, the number of branded glasses you have at home and




This page, from below:

Amy Seton; Julie Trevisan-Hunter.

post about on social media tells the world how serious a whisky drinker you are. "It's a status symbol," she adds, "as it will immediately indicate the tastings you go to and the brands you're involved with."

Seton is particularly devoted to the glass herself and she has even made it the main element of her club's logo: a barley ear inside a Glencairn glass. "The brief to my designer was to make something easily memorable but a clean and clear image. We played around with other glasses but the grain [barley ear] only worked well with the Glencairn. It really is the only glass that says 'whisky'... The Glencairn is more linked to Scotch drinking than anything else. Other glasses are used for other drinks as well and we wanted to be very clear and speak to whisky drinkers without using text."

Indeed, over the 20 years since the launch of the Glencairn glass, the vessel and the drink have entered into a mutually favourable symbiosis. This bond, in line with Raymond Davidson's vision, gifted Scotch and the wider world of whisky with a glass that all distillers and whisky drinkers can call their own. 



WORDS JASON THOMSON

THE RACE TO 100

Recent years have seen the release of some of the oldest single malts ever bottled, but will we ever see a whisky matured for a century?

At any given moment, in any one of Scotland's many bonded warehouses, a whisky is suddenly becoming ready. That's not to say it's becoming whisky; the spirit may have long passed the legal three-year stint in oak it must endure to carry that name. This is something very different; something much more subtle. Somewhere in Scotland right now – yes, right now – a whisky is reaching its zenith. Like apples on a tree, these casks will only be plucked from their racks once the spirit within has ripened to its full potential. Just like that apple, it can't be left too long or that fleeting pinnacle of flavour will have passed, it will begin to decline in quality and, eventually, wither away. There is no set formula for predicting this special moment and no handy pocket guide with tips and tricks for maturing each distillery's spirit. Some casks take 10 years to reach their peak, others 20. For an exceptional few, it can take substantially longer.

In recent whisky history we have been fortunate enough to see some of the oldest expressions that have ever been committed to glass. Glenfiddich, Glenfarclas, Highland Park and Tamdhu have all released whiskies matured for 50 years or more. The Dalmore turned heads with the release of their 64-year-

old Trinitas, breaking records along the way. However, there are two companies that have managed to take single malt past the age of 70: Gordon & MacPhail and The Macallan. On release, Gordon & MacPhail's 'Generations' range presented whiskies the likes of which had never been seen before, including a Mortlach 70 Years Old, Glenlivet 70 Years Old and a second Mortlach aged for 75 years. In January 2021, this set of septuagenarian malts were joined by a new addition: a 72-year-old release of Glen Grant.

Not to be outdone, The Macallan recently released The Red Collection, a prestigious series of six single malts ranging from 40 years old to (an almost unbelievable) 78 years old. In total, the Red Collection contains three malts that have been matured past the (until recently unheard of) milestone of 70 years in cask. It begins to make one wonder how much further whisky can go. If 78 years old can be reached, then 80 is not far away. If that's possible, surely a nonagenarian can be achieved and, with those mere formalities out of the way, a century of ageing doesn't seem so out of reach. Though simple on paper, like almost everything that's worth doing right, achieving such lofty heights requires planning and, as with any whisky, the right spirit being filled into an appropriate cask.

“ ... achieving such lofty heights requires planning and, as with any whisky, the right spirit being filled into an appropriate cask ”





"We have matured spirit from over 100 distilleries and we've learned that certain spirits react differently over extended periods of time when matched to different casks," says Stuart Urquhart, operations director at Gordon & MacPhail. "If you are intending to mature a spirit for a long period of time, then a heavier style of spirit tends to hold the balance better over the years."

Kirsteen Campbell, master whisky maker for The Macallan, says something similar and describes the spirit made at The Macallan as having a 'viscous mouthfeel and fruity aroma,' adding weight to the idea that a heavier spirit might fare better for longer maturations. However, she also adds that their

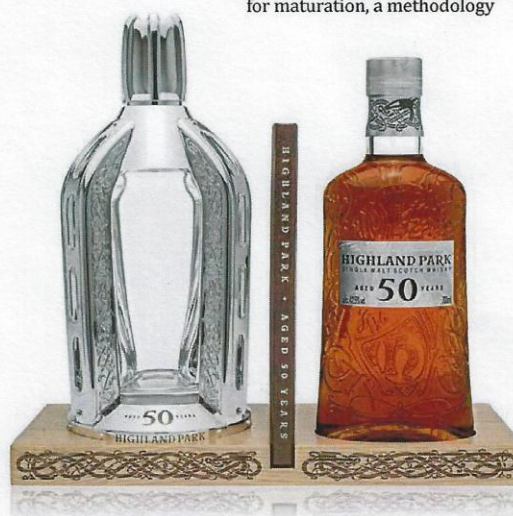
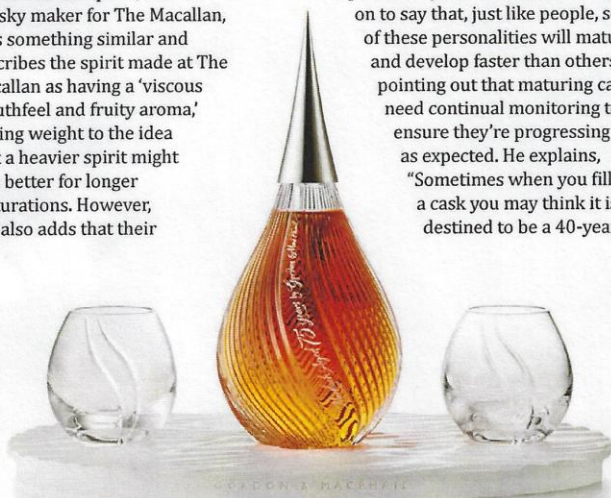
'distinctly robust and characterful new-make spirit' is the starting point for every whisky from The Macallan, no matter the age that they are destined to be bottled at. While the spirit seems to be an important starting point for these ultra-aged releases, it is in the long, slow years of maturation that they're really forged.

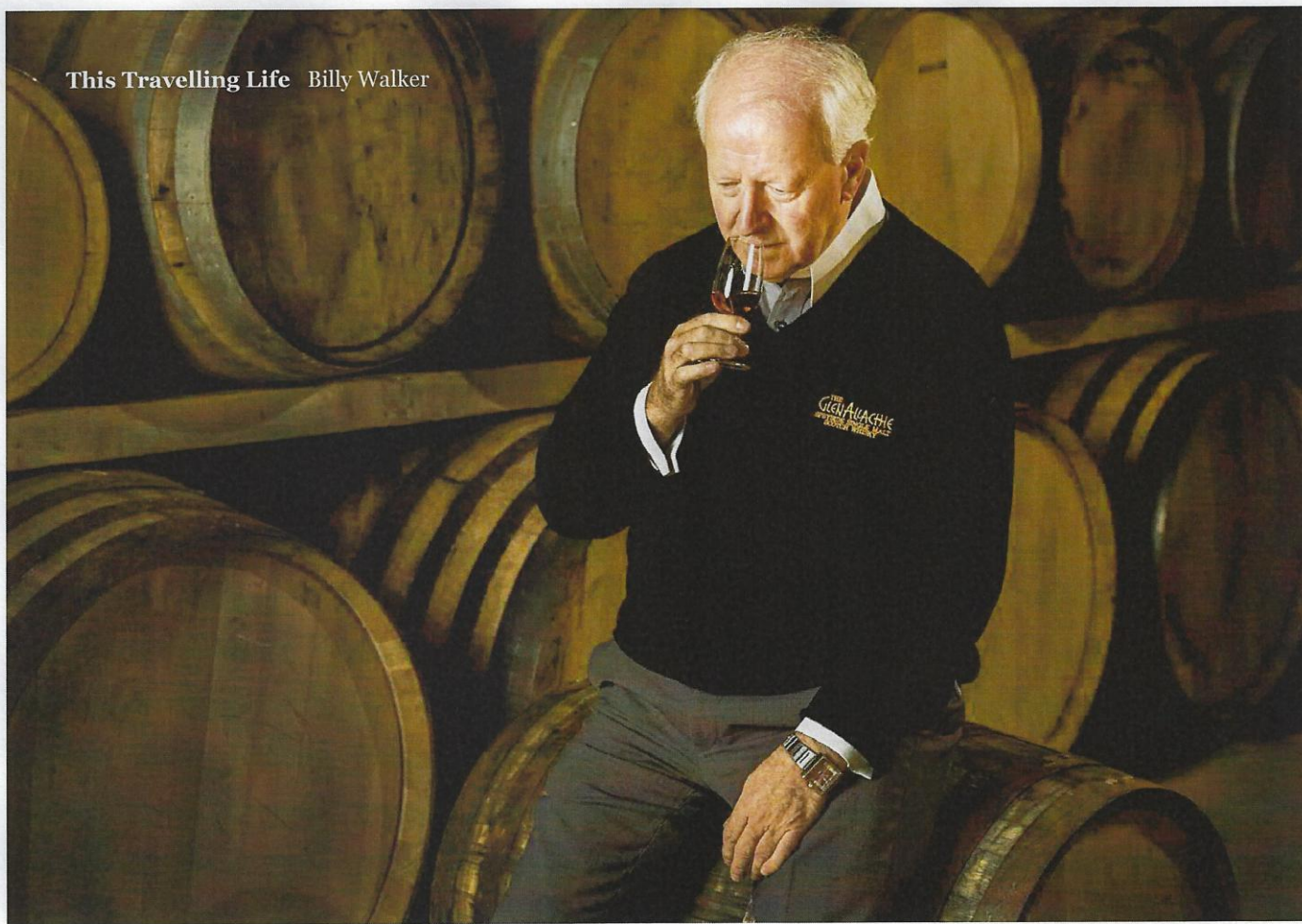
"Casks are like living breathing people and each develop their own personality," Stuart tells me. He goes on to say that, just like people, some of these personalities will mature and develop faster than others, pointing out that maturing casks need continual monitoring to ensure they're progressing as expected. He explains, "Sometimes when you fill a cask you may think it is destined to be a 40-year-

These pages, clockwise from top left: Kirsteen Campbell; Stuart Urquhart; Highly aged whiskies from Tamdhu, The Macallan, Dalmore, Highland Park and Gordon & MacPhail.

old, but only after careful monitoring do you discover the cask has not 'behaved' in the way you have expected and you release the whisky as a 23 Years Old because it is at its peak."

Kirsteen tells me that The Macallan's casks are the single greatest contributor to the quality of their whiskies and shares a similar sentiment to Stuart when it comes to the rigorous cask monitoring required to maintain optimum conditions for maturation, a methodology





WORDS JOE BATES

THE MASTER BLENDER

In this issue, Joe speaks with Billy Walker about science, travel and a lifetime in whisky

Billy Walker, master distiller at the GlenAllachie Distillery, is one of most famous names in the Scotch whisky business and has had a glittering career stretching back nearly half a century. After a stint as a research chemist, he moved into whisky production and blending at various big-name whisky companies. In 2004, Billy led the acquisition of BenRiach Distillery, establishing the BenRiach Distillery Company and later redeveloping the offerings from GlenDronach and Glenglassaugh distilleries. In April 2016, it was announced that Brown-Forman would purchase the company. In October 2017, Billy Walker acquired The GlenAllachie Distillery along with Trisha Savage

and Graham Stevenson, and the first core range from The GlenAllachie was launched in July 2018. Throughout his career, Billy has travelled the globe to spread the good word of Scotch.

Joe Bates (JB): Our theme this issue is science and whisky. How good were you at science at school and did you ever think you would follow a career in which science would play an important role?

Billy Walker (BW): I don't think that really crystallised until I was in the Scottish education system in the third year. I'm not even saying by that point I was totally focused on science, but chemistry was an attractive subject by then. I had a good teacher who made the learning experience exciting. It

was quite easy to become interested in science, partly driven by my own curiosity. I went to Glasgow University to get a degree in chemistry. Doing a degree in Glasgow was a positive experience; the campus was relatively uncluttered. There were 3,000 or 4,000 people on campus tops. Today, it's in the order of 20,000. It's a more intense experience for young people today.

JB: When was the first time you thought a career in Scotch whisky might be for you?

BW: I think there were coordinates everywhere. I was brought up in Dumbarton, which was, and still is, a big whisky town. It was the home of Hiram Walker, which produced Ballantine's; there was a bottling plant there and a grain distillery. They also had Inverleven and Lomond as Lowland single malts. J&B had a bottling plant... there was a big whisky influence in the town. I suppose part of your DNA was influenced by the environment of the town. It was almost inevitable that I would at some point eventually end up in whisky. But when I first left university, I worked as a pharmaceutical

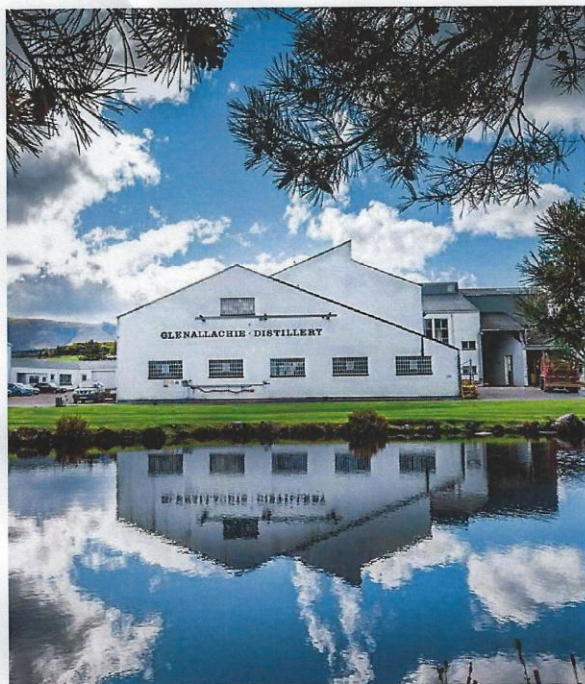


research chemist for about four and a half years, which was a very intriguing and interesting experience too. It was certainly a different world from making and blending whisky. They both had their attractions.

JB: Do you think the role of science in whisky making is sometimes undervalued given the industry's focus on history, heritage, craft and the art of blending?

BW: I don't think it's undervalued. It doesn't get the exposure it deserves. The science of fermentation, distilling and subsequently maturation is from a chemistry perspective good knowledge to have. If you ask me is blending a science or an art, I would tend to err on the side of art, but to have knowledge of the science and to understand the expectation of what you know should

These pages:
Master distiller
Billy Walker; The
GlenAllachie
Distillery.



“ It was almost inevitable that I would at some point eventually end up in whisky ”

be happening all through the process is very, very helpful when it comes to the more personality-driven blending side.

JB: What's the most memorable dram that you've had on your travels?

BW: If you're in Myanmar, you're going to end up drinking the big brands that are available. In Singapore and Shanghai the choice is terrific. In Tokyo, the choice is remarkable. It's memorable not so much for the brand, but it's about getting back to the hotel having had an exhausting day, and having the opportunity to choose a dram, relax and have a chat with somebody who hopefully you've been talking to throughout the day.

JB: You say that you sometimes find travel stressful. Do you have any travel tips to pass along?

BW: I think it's the reflection that travel today is somehow easier than it was. Actually, it's not easier. Travelling 20, 30, or 40 years ago was a much more pleasurable experience, but it was also a more limited experience. Today, the experience of taking yourself through the airport is stressful.

JB: If you could share a dram with someone at the airport while waiting for a delayed flight, who would it be?

BW: It's not easy to answer that question. Anybody who would have a listening ear. I have been held up at airports on numerous occasions. That period of delay is not a great experience and anybody who wanted to talk to me during that time would find me in not the most engaging of moods!

JB: If you had 24 hours to explore a city, where would it be?

BW: There are a lot of good examples, but Tokyo and Osaka are fantastic cities. You can feel secure walking around them. I remember telling a friend that the first time I went to Tokyo, it was such a secure and safe city that if you dropped your pocket book with money and cards in it with the hotel address in it, it would be delivered to the hotel.

JB: Can you tell us an anecdote about something strange, unusual or funny that happened to you during one of your travels?

BW: The one I recall with least pleasure is when I was in Manila many, many years ago. There was a kind of military activity. I am not going to say it was a coup, but there was some kind of unrest. I was detained in the hotel in Manila for three days. Did I feel unsafe? No, I didn't, but it wasn't something I had factored into my travel plans. I also arrived at Moscow with a visa that had been issued for the following day's arrival. There was an interesting exchange with the border patrol people!

JB: When we can travel more freely, where would you most like to go?

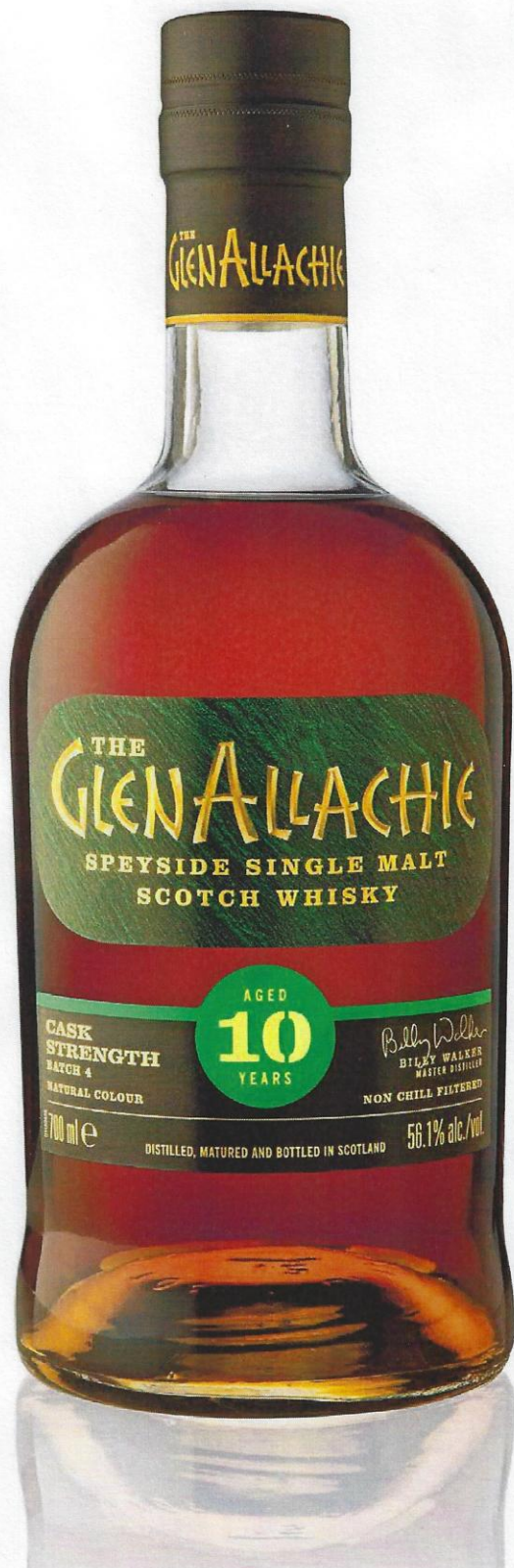
BW: If I had the opportunity, I'd go to Cape Town. If I couldn't get to Cape Town, I'd go to Vancouver. I have been to both places and would love to go again. They are both fantastic cities.

JB: If you were shipwrecked on a desert island, what bottle of whisky would you like to find washed up on the shore?

BW: Well, obviously, either the GlenAllachie 21 Years Old or 15 Years Old. If either of those rolled up, I would have a smile on my face. ☺

WORLD WHISKIES AWARDS 2021

Single Malt – Sponsored by Rankin Brothers & Sons



WORLD'S BEST SINGLE MALT

Best Scotch Speyside

12 Years & Under

The GlenAllachie 10 Years Old Batch 4 56.1%

The nose opens up initially in a soft way, with light toasted notes and some oak and honey. The palate gets a little more punchy with dried apricots, white pepper and cloves, all of which is balanced by soft caramel, pineapple and coffee notes leading to the finish.

SHORTLIST

13 to 20 Years

Tomintoul

16 Years Old 40%

21 Years & Over

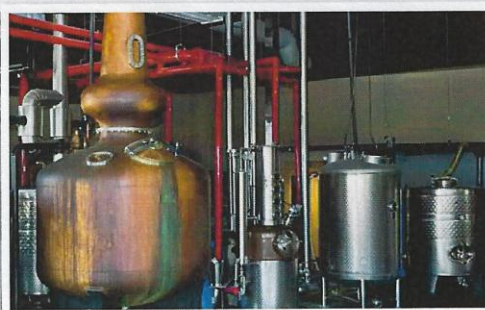
Glen Keith

21 Years Old 56.9%

No Age Statement

Aberlour

A'Bunadh 57.1%



Craft Producer of the year

IRONROOT REPUBLIC DISTILLING

America

In 2011, brothers Robert and Jonathan Likarish decided to take a bold step. Robert was finishing his law degree, while Jonathan was working as a biomedical engineer when they decided it was time to pursue distilling. Following several years of interning within the industry the pair set down roots in Denison, Texas. Ironroot Republic opened in 2014, managed by their mother, Marcia, and now the team mash, ferment, distil, barrel-age and bottle on site. The spirits are created using heirloom and non-GMO corn from local farms, capturing the flavour of north Texas.

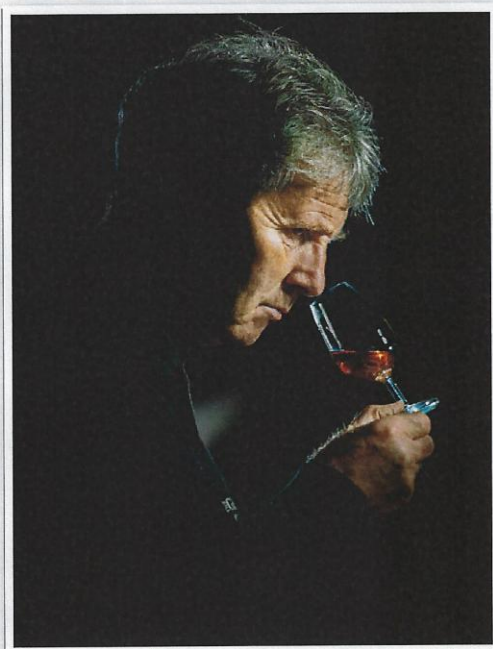
Shortlist

Australia – Furneaux Distillery Co.

Ireland – Dingle Distillery

Rest of World – Milk & Honey Distillery

Scotland – Arbikie Distillery



Master Distiller / Blender of the year

Sponsored by Casknolia

BOB DALGARNO

THE GLENTURRET DISTILLERY

Scotland

Bob Dalgarno has had a life that is truly interwoven with the whisky industry. His father worked at the GlenAllachie Distillery and Bob followed in his footsteps, starting at The Macallan in 1984 as a warehouseman. After learning the skills of each aspect of the whisky-making process, Bob went on to spend 30 years at The Macallan Distillery in Speyside, exceptionally fulfilling the role of whisky maker before stepping into his new position as Glenturret's master blender.

Shortlist

America – Victoria Eady Butler, *Uncle Nearest*

Australia – Patrick Maguire, *Sullivans Cove*

India – Mr. Meyyappan, *Amrut Distilleries*

Ireland – Noel Sweeney, *The Powerscourt Distillery*

Rest of World – Dhavall Gandhi, *The Lakes Distillery*

Best Scotch Highlands

21 Years & Over

Royal Brackla

21 Years Old Sherry

Cask Finish 46%

Red apples, grapes, cranberries and cherries on the nose. On the palate, lots of red fruits and a lusciously long finish.

SHORTLIST

12 Years & Under

Loch Lomond

Inchmurrin 12

Years Old 46%

13 to 20 Years

Royal Brackla

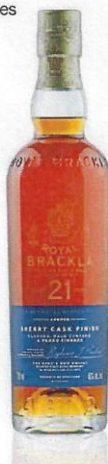
18 Years Old Sherry

Cask Finish 46%

No Age Statement

Deanston

Virgin Oak 46.3%



Best Scotch Islands

13 to 20 Years

Ledaig

18 Years Old 46.3%

Smoky herbs and iodine on the nose, quite an earthy aroma. On the palate there's peat smoke, rubber and a medicinal note. Things sweeten with fresh peppers and sweet wine that leads into a long finish.

SHORTLIST

12 Years & Under

Ledaig

10 Years Old 46.3%

No Age Statement

Highland Park

Triskellon 45.1%



Best Scotch Islay

21 Years & Over

Bunnahabhain

25 Years Old 46.3%

Very fruity from the off, with lovely dark sherry aromas, roasted nuts, chocolate, leather and a spritz of orange. The palate is complex with intense raisins, chocolate, dates, earthy cherry and spice that leads into the finish.

SHORTLIST

12 Years & Under

Bunnahabhain

12 Years Old 46.3%

13 to 20 Years

Bunnahabhain

18 Years Old 46.3%

No Age Statement

Bunnahabhain

Cruach Mhona 50%



IF you
SEE it
Buy it!

Best Scotch Lowlands

21 Years & Over

Rosebank

30 Years Old 48.6%

The nose brings intriguing notes of leafy greenery, with mint and tarragon touches. The palate gets a lot more creamy than expected, with stacks of sweetshop fruitiness and more fresh mint, like a mint fondant. The finish is minty and long.

SHORTLIST

12 Years & Under

Kingsbarns

Dream to Dram 46%

13 to 20 Years

Bladnoch

14 Years Old 46.7%



Best Swedish

12 Years & Under

High Coast

63 Batch 3 63%

A fruity, malty and smoky nose leads to a malty palate with notes of very ripe fruit, roasted spices, roasted almonds and warm smoke. Quite a long, smoky aftertaste.

SHORTLIST

No Age Statement

High Coast

Cinco 50.5%



Best Taiwanese

No Age Statement

Kavalan

Podium 46%

Aromas of nutmeg, vanilla, cloves, orange zest and raisins – very Christmassy. These notes continue onto the palate, with added hints of banana and light smoke. The finish is slightly drying.

SHORTLIST

12 Years & Under

Omar

Peated (Duty-Free) 46%

