

Kingston Single Malt Society

www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com

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

SEPTEMBER 16th, 2019

VOLUME 13; NUMBER 3



*This evening's menu in the company of
TOBERMORY / LEDAIG / BUNNAHABHAIN*



MENU

1st Course: Two Sisters Gouda,

Caramelized Pear, Walnuts, Figs, Quince, Focaccia Crostinis

Paired Nosing: BUNNAHABHAIN 25 YEAR OLD

2nd Course: Grilled Shrimp,

Guava Ginger Chili, Pickled Mango, Crispy Plantain

Paired Nosing: ALEXANDER MURRAY & CO. LEDAIG 20 YEAR OLD

3rd Course: Braised Lamb Shank, Roasted Garlic Mashed Yukon Golds,
Honey Glazed Local Carrots, Parsnip, Braising Jus

Paired Nosing: LEDAIG PEDRO XIMÉNEZ FINISH 19 YEAR OLD

Dessert: Chocolate Bodino, Candied Walnuts infused with Bunnahabhain 12YO

Paired Nosing: TOBERMORY FINO CASK FINISH 12 YEAR OLD

COST OF THE MALTS

Mystery Single Malt Bottle brought
by Mike Brisebois

**ALEXANDER MURRAY & CO. LEDAIG 20
YEAR OLD; DISTILLED 1997; BOTTLED 2017**

LCBO 941068 | 750 mL bottle **Price \$174.95**

Spirits, Scotch 50.0% Alcohol/Vol.

**LEDAIG PEDRO XIMÉNEZ FINISH 19 YEAR
OLD SINGLE MALT VINTAGES 647164 | 750 mL**

bottle **Price \$329.00** Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey,
Scotch Single Malts 55.7% Alcohol/Vol.

**TOBERMORY 12 YEAR OLD SINGLE MALT,
VINTAGES 37259 | 700 mL bottle, Price: \$69.40,**
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 46.3% Alcohol/Vol.

**TOBERMORY FINO CASK FINISH 12 YEAR
OLD MULL SINGLE MALT VINTAGES 647172 | 750
mL bottle Price: \$229.00** Spirits,
Whisky/Whiskey, Scotch Single Malts 55.1%
Alcohol/Vol.

**BUNNAHABHAIN 12 YEAR OLD VINTAGES
250076 | 750mL bottle Price: \$87.05** Spirits,
Scotch Whisky 46.3% Alcohol/Vol.

**BUNNAHABHAIN 25 YEAR OLD VINTAGES
367185 | 700mL bottle Price: \$399.99** Spirits
46.3% Alcohol/Vol.

Upcoming Dinner Dates

October 28th, 2019 - Glenrothes / Highland Park - Cameron Millar
November 18th, 2019 - Islands / Islay
December 9th 2019 - Christmas Dinner -
Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /
Highlands / Islands / Islay
January 20th, 2020 - Robbie Burns Dinner - Speyside / Highlands
February 17th, 2020 - Islay
March 16th, 2020 - Irish / Speyside / Highlands
April 20th, 2020 - Speyside
May 25th, 2020 - Campbeltown / Islay
June 22nd, 2020 - BBQ (Final Exam)
July 20th, 2020 - 9th Matt Night
Friday August 28th 2020 - 13th Annual Premium Night
September 21st, 2020 - Campbeltown / Lowland / Speyside /
Highlands / Islands / Islay
October 20th, 2020 - Speyside / Highlands
November 16th, 2020 - Speyside
December 14th 2020 - Christmas Dinner

Winners at the June BBQ

Perfect Attendance Award Winners

Roberto Di Fazio alongside

*Ainsley Creighton, Anne Holley-Hime; David
Simourd, Chantaille Buczynski & Mike Patchett*



Final Exam Winners (out of 18 points)

Elsabe Falkson (10 of 18) - Bunnahabhain Toiteach A'Dha
Helen Driver (8 of 18) - Highland Park Valknut
Bill Gorham (7 of 18) - Macallan Edition No.4
Joe Mezzatesta (6 of 18) - Auchentoshan Bartender's Malt
Mike Patchett (6 of 18) - Royal Brackla 16YO
Karin Gorham; Steve Bruce; John Creber; Allen Stewart;
Spyros Chrysochou; Adam Wise (5 of 18) - Glen Scotia
Double Cask



Results of the JUNE Raffle. The winner was
Chantaille Buczyski who won
Glenmorangie Quinta Ruban; Game of
Thrones Beer and assorted other goodies.
During the course of the raffle a total of \$660
raised.

Thank you everyone!



Results of the JULY Raffle. The winner was
Lorne Kinsella (Dave Finucan's Guest) who
won the Jack Daniels Tasting Set, Old
Forester, & George T Stag.
During the course of the raffle
a total of \$510 raised.
Thank you everyone!

Results of the
AUGUST Raffle.

The winner was
Roberto Di Fazio
who won the
Macallan Quest and
graciously shared
with all in
attendance ☺



Thank you everyone!

Distell full-year sales up 8%

30th August, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

South African drinks group Distell saw its fiscal 2019 revenue increase 8% to 26.2 billion rand (US\$1.7bn), boosted by premium white spirits and a "strong" whisky performance.

Scotch brands Bunnahabhain, Deanston, and Scottish Leader delivered double-digit growth

In the year ending 30 June 2019, the Amarula cream liqueur and Bunnahabhain Scotch whisky owner saw operating profit hit 1.75bn rand (US\$114.8 million), falling 26.3% year-on-year.

In Distell's domestic market, South Africa, sales volumes fell 0.9% as "consumer confidence and disposable income remain subdued and with increased value offerings by competitors, particularly in beer". The group also said that it took "tactical pricing decisions" during the full-year, which had a "positive effect on revenue and margins". African markets, outside South Africa, delivered "exceptional" revenue growth of 20%, while sales volumes were up 10.3%.

All categories delivered double-digit growth, led by Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana and Mozambique. Kibao Vodka and Hunter's Choice Whisky in Kenya led the spirits portfolio's growth.

Volumes in international markets outside of Africa declined by 10.6%. Distell said this was "in line with expectations as our focus continued to shift from the lower-margin wine and RTD [ready-to-drink] categories, toward our higher-margin premium wine and spirits portfolios".

Brand performance

Distell's spirits portfolio delivered "strong" revenue growth, up 11.2%, led by premium white spirits.

Cruz Vodka maintained double-digit revenue and volume growth after the group's ["successful" 75% acquisition in mid-2017](#).

Count Pushkin Vodka "doubled volumes and revenues off the back of white spirit trends and an expanded flavour range", which launched during the period.

The firm's gin brands also delivered double-digit growth.

Distell's whisky portfolio grew 8.5% by volume and 12.9% in revenue, boosted by the premium and blended ranges, following a "refreshed strategy implementation" in 2018.

Scotch brands Bunnahabhain, Deanston and Scottish Leader experienced double-digit growth.

South African single grain whisky Bain's also grew by double digits, while fellow South African whisky Three Ships showed "commendable double-digit revenue growth in a competitive category".

However, Brandy volumes declined as "consumers traded down to competing value offerings". Nonetheless, Distell noted that the overall brandy portfolio showed revenue growth.

Looking ahead, the firm said it "will continue to defend and grow our South African business with a targeted increase in market share across our portfolio, while seeking to drive category growth through innovation".

"We will continue with our network optimisation programme to build a world-class local production footprint," the company added.

Distell also announced that it will split its global operations into three business units: international spirits, exports, and premium wine through Libertas Vineyards and Estates.

The firm said: "We believe this gives us the best opportunity to grow premium spirits and wines in key markets and drive brand premiumisation in line with consumer demand."

"Distell will continue with a number of important changes to its operating model and investments behind its network optimisation alongside strategic future fit capabilities in growth and innovation, shared services and digital transformation."

Earlier this year, Distell put the wheels in motion on a [£10.5 million \(US\\$13.97m\) upgrade](#) of Islay distillery Bunnahabhain.

Tobermory launches first gin

15th August, 2019 by Amy Hopkins

Scotland's Tobermory distillery on the Isle of Mull has expanded its portfolio with the launch of its first gin.



The flavour of Tobermory Gin is said to reflect the colourful Isle of Mull

The distillery is owned by South African drinks firm Distell and produces the Tobermory and Ledaig single malt Scotch whisky brands. The site reopened this year after [a two-year closure for refurbishment work](#).

Its new gin has been inspired by its home of the Isle of Mull, the second largest island in the Inner Hebrides. In addition to neutral grain alcohol, Tobermory adds a "splash" of whisky spirit, dubbed 'botanical #1', to the base liquid.

Thirteen botanicals are used to make the gin, including Hebridean tea grown locally on Mull, juniper, elderflower and sweet orange peel. The ingredients are picked in season and steeped for at least 24 hours in the base spirit, which is then distilled in a John Dore & Co copper pot still.

"Tobermory Distillery is one of the oldest distilleries in Scotland, producing one of the oldest single malts," said Stephen Woodcock, Tobermory distillery manager. "We've got a track record of producing different spirit types, though we'd never tried to make gin, until now."

"Tobermory Gin is the first established single malt distillery to use their name on a gin. Using a splash of spirit from our famous whisky stills, along with a mix of botanicals, some hand foraged on the island, Tobermory Gin really is something different for the gin market, with an interesting story to tell as well as a high quality and unique spirit."

The launch will be supported by a new campaign, titled 'Expressive by Nature', spanning advertising, PR, social and sampling. Tobermory Gin carries an ABV of 43.3% and has an RRP of £31 (US\$38). It follows the launch of [two new whiskies from Tobermory distillery](#) earlier this year.

New whiskies from Bunnahabhain, Tobermory and Deanston

27th June, 2019 by Amy Hopkins

Distell has launched new bottlings from Bunnahabhain, Tobermory and Deanston as part of its 2019 Limited Release Collection.



Three of the new limited edition releases from Distell

The range features a number of cask finishes with each expression priced between £60 (US\$76) and £450 (US\$570). The series consists of:

- Bunnahabhain (2007) Port Finish: RRP £90
- Bunnahabhain (2007) French Brandy Finish: RRP £90
- Bunnahabhain (1988) Vintage Marsala Finish: RRP £450
- Deanston (2002) Organic Oloroso: RRP £100
- Deanston (2006) Fino Finish: RRP £65
- Deanston (1997) Palo Cortado Finish: RRP £150
- Tobermory (1999) Marsala Finish: RRP £130
- Ledaig (1997) Manzanilla Finish: RRP £160

"The team surprise us every year with the creation of new and exciting expressions, with each distillery having a distinct flavour profile and the team continuing to achieve incredible results with their choice of finishing casks," said Derek Scott, brand director for malt whisky at Distell.

"One of my particular favourites this year has to be the Bunnahabhain Vintage Marsala Finish; it has sweet hints of chocolate and caramel that develop into a lingering smoky pepperiness, which is extremely memorable, especially if you can enjoy it on Islay at Bunnahabhain Bay overlooking Bunnahabhain Bay, the Sound of Islay."

Distell used a "modern and progressive route" to unveil the collection, reaching whisky lovers through film and social media. A tasting at the Deanston Distillery with members of Distell's team – including senior blender Kirstie McCallum – was filmed and broadcast live.

In its latest half-year results, Distell's whisky portfolio [experienced double-digit growth](#). Its Bunnahabhain distillery is currently [undergoing a £10.5 million \(US\\$13.97m\) renovation](#).

BATCH 208: DISTELL LIMITED RELEASES 2019

10 July 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)



This week, we're really spoiling you with an extra batch of new whisky tasting notes from Dave Broom, as he gives his full attention to Distell's eight-strong line-up of Limited Release single malts for 2019, including whiskies from Bunnahabhain, Deanston and the Mull tag-team of Tobermory and Ledaig.

The range covers a lot of bases in terms of cask types, encompassing finishes in Marsala, Port, French brandy, plus a Sherry quartet of fino, manzanilla, palo cortado and oloroso. Variety aplenty.

We open on Islay with a solid trio of Bunnahabhains, the highlight being a 'rich and complex' Marsala finish at 31 years of age that evokes memories of marmalade-making.

But, if there's a standout performance this week, it comes from the sometimes underrated Deanston distillery in the Highlands, which scores a hat-trick of successes and impresses Broom mightily.

The oloroso finish is 'classy', the fino finish is 'bargain of the week' at £65 a bottle – but the palo cortado finish tops the lot with its extra layers of depth and complexity.

We close with one whisky each from Mull's double act of Tobermory and peaty Ledaig, but it's more whimper than bang, thanks to the slightly questionable 'dirty burger' qualities of Ledaig and a Tobermory Marsala finish that is 'neither one thing nor the other'.

The soundtrack ranges from Joan Shelley, Julie Byrne and Linda Perhacs plus, er, Sonic Youth (all in gentle mood) to upbeat Carla Bley and Sly Stone, while Jackie Leven's sitting sadly at the back of the pub on Mull. Click on the links in Right Place, Right Time to enjoy the sounds.

[SCORING EXPLAINED](#)

OVERVIEW

- [> Bunnahabhain 2007, French Brandy Finish](#)
- [> Bunnahabhain 2007, Port Finish](#)
- [> Bunnahabhain 1988, Vintage Marsala Finish](#)
- [> Deanston 2002, Organic Oloroso](#)
- [> Deanston 2006, Fino Finish](#)
- [> Deanston 1997, Palo Cortado Finish](#)
- [> Ledaig 1997, Manzanilla Finish](#)
- [> Tobermory 1999, Marsala Finish](#)

BUNNAHABHAIN 2007, FRENCH BRANDY FINISH

SCORE - 84

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND - £ £ £ £ £

ABV - 52.7%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Islay*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Fruity & Spicy*



NOSE Rather fresh and clean, with gentle apricot, some sweet baking spice that shifts to oxidised fruit, apple, some fruit eaux-de-vie and a background funkiness. Found this one a bit tricky, but it starts to grow on you. Water adds in some pecan pie as the sweet, patisserie elements begin to take over. There's this slight alcohol burn.

PALATE A silky-soft start with yellow fruits galore, some dessert apple, more of the apricot/peach, then some cinnamon toast and Bunna's mix of sweet mash, hazelnut and ginger. Like many brandy casks, things become slightly rigid in the middle as the finish begins to exert itself, but though it becomes increasingly firm, there's enough lift and vibrancy there. It needs time and water in order to mellow and bring the two halves together.

FINISH Drying, slight brandy butter burn.

CONCLUSION It starts off very much as a game of two halves, but ultimately it works.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME A mix of [Wine and Honey](#).

BUNNAHABHAIN 2007, PORT FINISH

SCORE - 83

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 55.7%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Islay*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Fruity & Spicy*

NOSE Chewy, with red fruits galore – the Port seems to have taken charge in this relationship. Strawberries, redcurrants, a glimmering of something darker – hawthorn jam, perhaps? – in the background. Grows in boldness as it begins to open, adding a savoury edge. Water opens up the sweet trolley to the full.

PALATE The generosity of spirit is there from the start, as Bunna begins to make its presence more clearly felt. We're back to hazelnut (but now in a Nutella-esque way), then some cherry pie filling. There's a surprisingly mature undertone to this – whiffs of cigar lounge and old-style

whisky bars – that's then given a cooked berry fruit lift. Becomes very spicy in the centre, with some burn in the mid-palate, though this is sorted out by a judicious splash of water, though again it's the finish that's taking charge here – there's also a little drying wood.

FINISH Fruit, light anise, hint of sloe.

CONCLUSION Easier-going structurally than the brandy, but the three years of extra maturation in Port has the wine in charge. That said, it's an easy-drinking early evening companion.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME The dark enfolding you, then lit with [Hits of Sunshine](#).

BUNNAHABHAIN 1988, VINTAGE MARSALA FINISH

SCORE - 87

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 47.4%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*



REGION *Islay*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Rich & Round*

NOSE This has a rich, almost vinous quality that initially gives off strawberry chews and light plum, but then moves into marmalade, some apple and an earthy, cacao note. There's some of the dried rose petal you only get with age, along with scented woods and hints of clove oil. Rich and well-balanced.

Water adds light, almost maritime notes, initially at least, with a return to the light red fruits: raspberry juice/rose cordial, rhubarb, before it starts to deepen and shape-shift into something darker and more dangerous.

PALATE There's some wood here from the off, alongside that slightly burnt raisin quality which you can get from Marsala casks. As things start to open, you get an intriguing mix of After Eights, ginger (very Bunna') in syrup, then a huge hit of liquorice allsorts

(savoury-sweet, coconut and dried fruit). Water brings out the oak more, drying things down. Things have shifted to the nutty side compared to the first pair and, while there's still some of the pâtisserie on show (brioche this time), the hazelnut is now toasted. A late flaring of soft fruits gives a nodule of sweetness towards the back, but things start to dry and fade slightly.

FINISH More oaky (but hey, it's 31 years old), with chocolate and a drying, almost ashy finish.

CONCLUSION Mature, a little oaky, but overall rich and complex.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Stewing things down in the kitchen, making [Marmalade](#).

DEANSTON 2002, ORGANIC OLOROSO

SCORE - 88



[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 50.6%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Highland*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Rich & Round*

NOSE Deep, sweet and lightly prune, with some cereal back notes. Moving towards figginess and tinned prunes. That said, it's also retained sweetness – there's a touch of vanilla and buttercream icing and a tiny hint of red fruits, which brings both sweetness and lift, adding to the complexity. Water enhances this steamed figgy pudding quality, alongside more resinous qualities.

PALATE As the nose suggests, this is sweet and highly concentrated, starting with deep, heavy chocolate, some tobacco and lots of iced gingerbread. There's a flare of heat in the middle before it resolves itself back into those figs again. It's here,

in the softly-textured mid-palate, that Deanston's signature citrus comes in to perk things up, alongside a return of dried raspberry/raspberry leaf. It then progresses into spices: mace, clove especially. With water added, you get some more mature notes (leather), as well as freshness (red cherry). Things remain generous and ripe.

FINISH Slight peppery heat. Dried fruit.

CONCLUSION This started off in recharred casks, then spent some unspecified time in oloroso casks from Montilla-based organic producer Robles. Rather than being dominated by the finish, it is enriched. Classy stuff.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Lying in the open air under the [honeyed moon](#).

DEANSTON 2006, FINO FINISH

SCORE - 89

[Scoring explained >](#)



PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 55%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Highland*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Fruity & Spicy*

NOSE Immediately bright, fresh and fruity, with zingy citrus dominating: spiced orange, tangerine marmalade, light almond and a distinct waxiness reminiscent of scented candle. In time you get some olive playing alongside the fruit syrups. With water, there's some sweet nut and a light chalkiness. Upfront and energetic.

PALATE Warm and soft to start, with concentrated, lightly oxidised fruits and a touch of bran on the sides, before things soften in the middle of the tongue, where it is all butterscotch toffee, thick peach juice and orange blossom honey. As seems to be the case with Deanston, it's here that the spices start to kick in – and do

so fairly dramatically. Has drive and real energy, but is balanced. Water makes things more oxidised and, by calming the spiciness down a notch, makes things more rounded overall.

FINISH Lightly acidic. Mandarin Napoléon.

CONCLUSION Only £65? Bargain of the week – and marked in its competitive set. There's only 268 bottles though...

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME A [Frisky](#) little number.

DEANSTON 1997, PALO CORTADO FINISH

SCORE - 90

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 51.8%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Highland*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Fruity & Spicy*

NOSE Opens with the pleasant fuzziness you occasionally get from good Sherry-casked whiskies. Working your way through that, you can pick out fruit salad, overripe melon, soft dried fruits (sultana especially) and citrus peels. The waxiness seen on the fino is more overt here: beeswax-polished wood.

Everything is ripe and mellow. There's some nougat-like nuttiness when water is added, alongside hints of toffee which provide another layer to the mix of (now dried) citrus peels, banana skin, fruit trifle and black cherry.

PALATE Chewy, sweet and rich to start, with sweetness taking off to

the extent that you wonder if it's got enough grip and acidity to balance. There's fruit trifle, ripe nectarine, then the date. The mid-palate remains soft and tongue-coating, but here the mature elements and the wax start to spread out. There's some country house elements, light leather, dried fruit while, when the spices come in, they have the earthy pungency of cumin and the acidic brightness of sumac. When water is added, there's more orchard fruits layered on top, as well as Seville orange peels giving a twang of bitterness.

FINISH Peaches and spices, then some chocolate.

CONCLUSION Deanston is on fire with this trio. This has more depth and complexity than the fino and is less heart-on-the-sleeve than the oloroso. Classy.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME All is [in balance](#).

LEDAIG 1997, MANZANILLA FINISH

SCORE - 80

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 52.9%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Islands*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Smoky & Peaty*

NOSE Big and smoky, with the smell of an old copper coin/just polished brass, then a whiff of stable/tack room and linseed oil. No real manzanilla influence, as far as I can see. When water is added, you get some rubbery notes; then cigarette ash and kippers – the stale yet pungent smell of the breakfast room in a rundown Hebridean hotel.

PALATE Big, oily, slightly earthy and meaty and, as ever, teetering on the brink of being grubby, but this time it saves itself with a mid-palate hit of minty sweetness and rich, cooked red fruits. The wood and the smoke are integrated; some woodsmoke,

smoked cereal, some treacle-cured bacon and tar. With water, thick, briny and oily.

FINISH Tarry. The first Gitanes of the day.

CONCLUSION A dirty burger that's been saved by the barbecue sauce.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME Wiping the [Greasy Gravy](#) off your chin.



TOBERMORY 1999, MARSALA FINISH

SCORE - 82

[Scoring explained >](#)

PRICE BAND £ £ £ £ £

ABV 55.7%

PRODUCTION TYPE *Single malt whisky*

REGION *Islands*

FLAVOUR CAMP *Fruity & Spicy*

NOSE Quite a funky opening: all stewing fruit, old citrus peels and almond, with a slight meatiness behind. There's a distinct weightiness here. When water is added, you get more wet, earthy notes, alongside vegetable stock cube then finally the concentrated, raisined fruits. The distinctive whiff of an old bookshop, stuffed with leather-bound, slightly foxed tomes.

PALATE Starts with rich, fruity weight, some peachiness, touches of raisin and then the slightly singed/liquorice signature from the Marsala cask. As it relaxes, so you can pick out more soft plummy weight, though that runs

alongside the artificial flavour of an isotonic drink. It needs water, which brings out fresh orange, more sweetness, riper fruits and, finally, some camphor.

FINISH Drying and short.

CONCLUSION It's neither one thing nor the other.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME In a quiet corner, [Grievin' at the Mishnish](#).



STEPHEN WOODCOCK, DISTELL

04 June 2019 by Matt Evans

Stephen Woodcock oversees operations at Deanston, Bunnahabhain and Tobermory distilleries in his role with parent company Distell. Ahead of Tobermory's re-opening this summer, he reveals what went

on behind the scenes during the Mull distillery's two-year closure and the drive behind creating its first gin.



Neat freak: Woodcock loves the whisky he makes – but loathes pairing it with food

'I cannot understand the trend of pairing whisky with food, or [whisky and chocolate](#), or whisky with anything else. I know it sounds cliché, but I like to enjoy a nice whisky on its own, as intended. Why would you pair something that's so nice when enjoyed on its own? A splash of water or a rock of ice is fine, but I want my full attention on the dram. I have a very one-dimensional palate – it's one reason why I'll never be a blender.

'I was born into the drinks industry, as my father owned a pub and my mother worked for [Allied Distillers](#) for 40 years. I'm a chemist by trade. I worked in chemistry for a couple of years, but the lure of whisky was never far away – I landed a role with [Diageo](#) at [Port Dundas](#) distillery in Glasgow and worked there until it closed. I moved north and my role took me to a number of distilleries and I've been working in whisky ever since. Distilling is just a chemical process like any other.

'Tobermory is extremely important to the community on the island of Mull. When we closed for two years we wanted to retain the staff as we're not tripping over distillers in Mull by virtue of being the only distillery on the island. Each distillery is a big part of the community it's in, so we wanted to make a commitment to the locals that we'd be staying open, especially in light of the distillery's chequered past. Over the years, [Tobermory](#) has been closed almost as long as it's been open.



Community spirit: Tobermory distillery is a key feature on the small Scottish island of Mull

'In those two years we've done a lot of work to the infrastructure such as replacing the roofs, all four washbacks and two stills. We've also been working on a gin plant with a smaller still for experiments.

'The new stills will work slightly differently, with replaceable joints as opposed to having everything welded in place. When we come to change any of the parts, it will operate like a Formula One pit crew: rather than cutting through the still and welding it back together again like the old days, we're using air-driven torque wrenches. Old kit out, new kit in and suddenly we're back up and distilling. It's quicker, but it's also safer. Unfortunately, I'm yet to convince Andrew [Brown, distillery manager at [Bunnahabhain](#)] to go for this kind of still. He's so traditional – he said: "I will not see a flange [a raised rim that runs along a joint] on a still as long as I draw breath".

'Those new stills won't change the way we distil our whisky. If you've got a good thing going, you don't change it. However, what we have done is [rebranded the Tobermory 10 to a Tobermory 12](#), relaunching it with new, vibrant packaging. The 10-year-old was a fine dram and to be honest, we were underselling it. But rather than being cynical and just increasing the price of the bottle, we've premiumised it by leaving the whisky for a couple of extra years in the cask. Those two years have

added a nice round maturity to the whisky, coupled with a sweetness the 10-year-old was lacking. I believe the age, the quality of the spirit and the price point now all tie together beautifully. 'Funnily enough, we kept the visitor's centre open and we've seen record numbers of footfall since the distillery was shut. Even being silent hasn't put people off visiting us.



Longer wait: Tobermory's new flagship whisky has been matured for a further two years

'We recognised Tobermory was not doing much to tap into the uniqueness of Mull. We were the only distillery on the island and we wanted to put something through the stills that would reflect the island's unspoiled landscape, so we created Mull's only gin. We could have taken the easy route – you may not be aware there's an old gin rectification house at [Deanston](#), so [Distell](#) could have produced gin there – but we decided to make something from scratch and distil our spirit in a beautiful part of the world. 'That was the rationale behind building our small experimental stillhouse, which is home to our little "wee Mary" gin still. The name comes from Tobermory, which is Gaelic for "Mary's well". 'As an industry, whisky is often viewed as taking an awful lot from some of our natural resources without putting too much back in, but Deanston sticks out for its green credentials. Deanston was one of the first distilleries to make organic whisky, bringing in barley grown without pesticides, which lessens its environmental impact. Seeing more organic whiskies coming through would be a very positive thing for the industry. At Bunnahabhain, we're looking at installing a biomass boiler for steam generation and we've stopped sending our waste co-products like draff to be turned into cattle feed. Instead, all our co-products now go to third parties who generate gas with it, so we're feeding energy back into the grid. 'My family home is in Speyside. From Monday to Friday, my time is split between three distilleries, so when I go home those two days are very precious to me. I love my music – I have always been a very keen guitar player. I'm not very good at it and I know that, because I can see the faces of the people in the room when I'm playing it. 'I was also a keen rugby player, but my nickname as a full-back was "Hole In My Bucket" because I never seemed to catch the ball. Now I'm a man of a certain age, I make my voice heard from the touchline instead. However, regardless of what I'm doing, I can always manage to squeeze a dram in somewhere.'

DISTELL UNVEILS 2019 LIMITED EDITION MALTS

26 June 2019 by Matt Evans

South African spirits company Distell has revealed this year's collection of limited edition single malts from its Bunnahabhain, Deanston and Tobermory distilleries.



Spoilt for choice: Six of the eight limited expressions from Bunnahabhain, Deanston and Tobermory

The 2019 collection is comprised of eight whiskies, all of which have been finished in a variety of ex-Sherry, Port and brandy casks. Derek Scott, brand director for malt whisky at [Distell](#), said: 'The team surprise us every year with the creation of new and exciting expressions, continuing to achieve incredible results with their choice of finishing casks.

'One of my particular favourites this year has to be the [Bunnahabhain](#) Vintage Marsala Finish; it has sweet hints of chocolate and caramel that develop into a lingering smoky pepperiness, which is extremely memorable.'

The eight limited edition expressions featured in the collection are as follows:

- Bunnahabhain 1988 Vintage Marsala Finish, bottled at 47.4% abv and priced at £450 per bottle. Approximately 420 bottles have been created.
- Bunnahabhain 2007 Port Finish, bottled at 55.3% abv, priced at £90 per bottle. Around 275 bottles have been produced.
- Bunnahabhain 2007 French Brandy Finish, bottled at 52.5% abv, priced at £90 per bottle. An estimated 570 bottles have been created.
- [Deanston](#) 1997 Palo Cortado Finish, bottled at 51.8% abv, priced around £150 per bottle. Around 280 bottles have been produced.
- Deanston 2002 Organic Oloroso, bottled at 50.6% abv, priced at £100 per bottle. The organic oloroso casks used to finish the malt were supplied by Robles, said to be the only fully organic Sherry producer in Spain. An estimated 528 bottles have been created.
- Deanston 2006 Fino Finish, bottled at 55% abv, priced at £65 per bottle. An estimated 268 bottles have been produced.
- [Tobermory](#) 1999 Marsala Finish, bottled at 55.7% abv and priced at £130 per bottle. Around 211 bottles have been created.
- Ledaig 1997 Manzanilla Finish, bottled at 52.9% abv, priced at £160 per bottle. An estimated 258 bottles have been produced.

The collection will be available in international markets and global travel retail from July, although the Bunnahabhain Port Finish and Deanston Fino Finish will be unavailable in Canada and the US. To announce the release of the collection, Distell has produced [a video](#) in which master blender [Dr Kirstie McCallum](#), blender Julianne Fernandez and distilleries manager [Stephen Woodcock](#) lead tastings of all eight whiskies.

July also marks [the reopening of Tobermory](#), following a two-year closure to renovate and improve the distillery's facilities.

General Knowledge *for all the Whisky* *Lovers....*
Glenfiddich is the world's best-selling single malt

Johnnie Walker Red *Label* is the world's best-selling Scotch.

*The Famous *Grouse* is the best-selling whisky in Scotland

Glenmorangie is the best-selling single malt in Scotland.

The world's fastest growing Scotch today is *Black Dog*. India is a major contributor to its sales.

The five most popular single malts globally are *Glenfiddich*, *The Glenlivet*, *Glenmorangie Original*, *Aberlour* and *Laphroaig*

Bruichladdich's _The Octomore_ is the most heavily peated whisky in the world (167ppm)

The three oldest single malts currently sold are *Glenturret*, *Oban* and *Glenlivet*

The oldest distillery in Scotland is _Glen turret_ (1775), followed by _Bowmore_ (1779)

With each bottle of *Laphroaig* that you buy, you are entitled to a lifetime lease of one sq foot of the distillery's land, along with a personalized certificate of ownership

Cadenhead's Whisky Shop on _Canongate_ has a unique selling point: customers can have a bottle poured straight from a cask and labeled with their name. When sealed it has a label with the 'born on date', as whisky stops aging as soon as it leaves the wooden barrel, so each bottle is a unique blend.

Edradour is the smallest distillery in Scotland. The entire operation is run by just three people

The _Glenmorangie_ distillery is one of the smallest in the Highlands and employs just sixteen craftsmen, called *The Sixteen Men of Tain*

The most expensive country in which to buy Scotch, ironically, is the *UK*, where it is made

In the UK, its home country, the five most popular blended Scotch whiskies are The Famous *Grouse*, *William Grant's*, *Bell's*, *Teacher's* and *J&B* Rare. Note: Johnnie Walker does not feature in the list of best-selling blends in its home country.

A closed bottle of Scotch can be kept for 100 years and still be good to drink. After opening, a bottle of Scotch whisky will remain good for five years.

The Australian Wine Research Institute has introduced a measure called a *standard drink*. In Australia, a standard drink contains 10 g (12.67 ml) of *alcohol*, the amount that an average adult male can metabolize in one hour.

Although their proof differs, standard drinks of *beer*, *wine* and *spirits* contain the same amount of alcohol – 0.6 ounces each. They're all the same to a breath analyser.

18,000 litres of *Scotch whisky* worth over \$800,000 were accidentally flushed down the drain at *Chivas Brothers'* Dumbarton bottling plant in 2013.

Experts advise you to drink single malt with just a dash of water. The water supposedly _'releases the serpent'_ from the whisky

If there is a serpent, there is also an angel. As it ages, 2-2.5 % of the whisky maturing in a barrel is lost to evaporation every year. Distillers refer to this as the 'angel's share'.

There is also a devil. The whisky absorbed by the wood of barrel during maturation is known as the _'devil's'_ cut'_

Indian *whisky* is technically flavoured *rum*, because it's essentially made from sugar

Glenfiddich unveils 23-year-old cuvée cask-aged whisky

3rd September, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Glenfiddich has released the first expression in a new series of high-end single malts – a 23-year-old whisky finished in French oak cuvée casks.



Glenfiddich Grand Cru was created to tap into “celebratory moments”

The new whisky, called Glenfiddich Grand Cru, is first aged in American and European oak casks before being “further bolstered with extra intensity” from cuvée casks from the Champagne region. Created to tap into “celebratory moments”, Grand Cru is the first release in the new Grand range. The next whisky in the series will launch in late 2020.

Bottle at 40% abv, the Glenfiddich Grand Cru has notes of apple blossom, freshly baked bread and candied lemon on the nose. The palate has hints of rich vanilla oak, sweet brioche, sandalwood, pear sorbet and white grape.

Glenfiddich malt master Brian Kinsman said: “Breaking category conventions once more, this unusual collaboration presented an exciting opportunity to create a spirit that further elevated our unique Glenfiddich style.

“We experimented with the maturation time and hand selected the right balance of 23-year-old Glenfiddich casks out of our unique collection of old age malts.

“The further influence from the oak of the French cuvée casks added an extra layer of complexity thanks to the liquid they once held.

“Marrying the best of both worlds, the final liquid presents an exceptional finesse and is a special tribute to each individual cuvée cask the malts were finished in.”

Struan Grant Ralph, Glenfiddich's global brand ambassador, added: “This new whisky exemplifies the brand's passion for pushing Scotch whisky boundaries, looking beyond the world of whisky to create exquisitely flavoured liquids.

“Our aim was to create a fresh, new drinking moment for Glenfiddich and for the wider whisky category, by crafting an expression that plays on the liquid synonymous with celebration but that brings the substance and smoothness of single malt to the moment.

“The result is Grand Cru – a liquid that bears the hallmark of quality and innovation associated with the brand and is a true testament to our innate maverick spirit.”

Glenfiddich Grand Cru is presented in a sheer black glass bottle and a black box featuring a golden firework design.

The expression is available to buy today from London-based department store Harrods exclusively for two weeks and direct from the Glenfiddich website for £220 (US\$265). It will also be available to buy from luxury whisky retail outlets and high-end venues from 18 September.

Last year, Glenfiddich extended its Experimental Series with the [launch of Fire & Cane](#) – a smoky single malt Scotch finished in rum casks.

Glenfiddich Fire & Cane joined fellow Experimental Series expressions [Glenfiddich IPA Experiment](#) and [Glenfiddich Project XX](#), which both launched in 2016, and Glenfiddich Winter Storm, which was released in 2017.

Winter Storm has been [finished in French oak icewine casks](#) from the Peller Estate winery in Niagara.

Scotland's Isle of Mull to welcome first distillery in 220 years

24th July, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Scottish gin producer Whitetail Spirits has opened the first distillery on the Isle of Mull in 220 years.



The funding will help Whitetail Spirits increase its product range
Whitetail Spirits has gained support from Business Gateway Argyll and Bute, which helped to provide funding through its Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme. The programme is funded by Argyll and Bute Council and the European Regional Development Fund.

The funding has allowed Whitetail to move its gin production in-house from London to Tioran and purchase essential equipment. A new still will be used to produce smaller bottles and a "diversified flavour range", giving Whitetail Spirits the ability to produce 250 bottles a day.

The company will also launch a range of five liqueurs this summer. Named after Europe's largest bird of prey, Whitetail is based next to the white-tailed eagle's nest at Tioran Forest on the Isle of Mull. Jamie Munro, founder of Whitetail Spirits said: "The funding support provided through Business Gateway gave us the incentive to proceed with the investment required to purchase our micro-still and grow our business.

"Thanks to their support, we are looking forward to increasing and diversifying our product range.

"More generally, we are excited to establish Mull's first on-island distillery in over 200 years and move our production from London back to our family home."

Angela Vernel, business adviser with Business Gateway, said:

"Whitetail's expansion is a great indicator of the strength of demand for Scottish gin, both in the UK and worldwide.

"Jamie had already tapped successfully into this market but by recognising Business Gateway could help him with funding options for his growth business, he has been able to expand production.

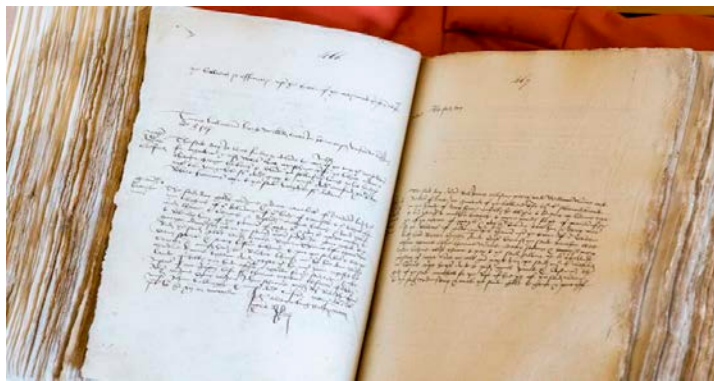
"We look forward to continuing to work with him as the business grows."

Whitetail Gin is available in Selfridges stores, 25 Co-op stores and 300 retail outlets across the UK, along with around 30 shops, bars and hotels on the Isle of Mull.

'EARLIEST' WHISKY STILL MENTION FOUND

19 July 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

Historians have discovered what is believed to be the earliest reference to a Scotch whisky still in a 1505 entry in the Burgh Records of Aberdeen.



On the record: The reference comes in Aberdeen's Burgh Records of 1505

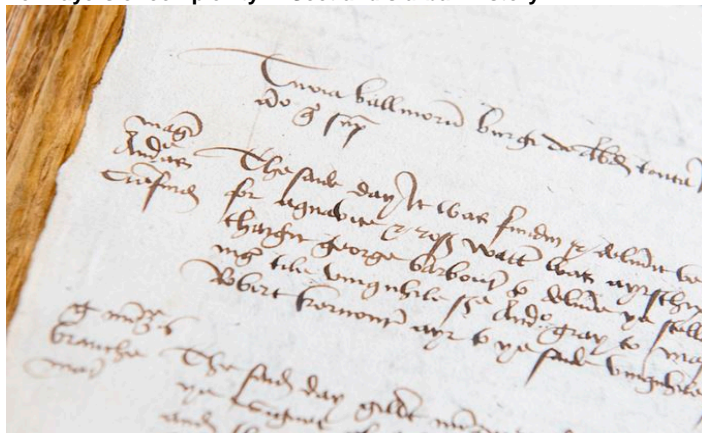
The text, discovered by University of Aberdeen research fellow Dr Claire Hawes, is part of an inquest into the inheritance of chaplain Sir Andrew Gray, and names among his possessions 'ane stellatour for aquavite and ros wattir'.

According to researchers, the description suggests that the 'aquavite' – the Middle Scots word for whisky, derived from the Latin *aqua vitae* – was whisky to be drunk, rather than spirit to be used in the manufacture of gunpowder.

The earliest reference to whisky is generally accepted to come in the Exchequer Roll of 1494, in which a monk, Brother John Cor, is given '8 bolls of malt, wherewith to make aqua vitae for the King'.

But experts have pointed out that John Cor's aqua vitae may have been used in the manufacture of gunpowder, or in researches into alchemy, rather than to make a potable spirit.

'This is a very significant find in the history of our national drink,' said Dr Jackson Armstrong, who led the project to transcribe the Burgh Records. 'It reframes the story of Scotch whisky and suggests new layers of complexity in Scotland's urban history.'



For consumption?: The description implies that this 'aquavite' was to be drunk

He added: 'This is the earliest record directly mentioning the apparatus for distilling aquavite, and that equipment was at the heart of renaissance Aberdeen where at this time our own university had just been founded and the educational communities of humanism, science and medicine were growing.

'This find places the development of whisky in the heart of this movement, an interesting counterpoint to [the established story of early aquavite](#) in Scotland within the court of [King James IV](#).

'What is more, some other early references to aquavite refer to the spirit used in the preparation of gunpowder for the King. The Aberdeen still being for aquavite and rose water may suggest, by contrast, that it was for making whisky to drink.'

Now the historians have been awarded £15,000 to continue their research by [Chivas Brothers](#), which owns whiskies such as [Chivas Regal](#), [Ballantine's](#) and [The Glenlivet](#), and which has strong links with Aberdeen.

Dr Hawes said the funding would enable researchers to look more deeply into the Burgh Records for entries related to distillation, which could 'significantly change our understanding of the origins of our national drink'.

Young and middle-aged US drinkers prefer spirits

A survey of adult American consumers has found that 29% of imbibers prefer spirits, led by young and middle-aged drinkers. According to a new poll from analyst Gallup, beer was the overall favourite beverage among adult Americans, while spirits and wine almost tied for second spot, with 29% and 30% of the vote respectively.

The findings are from Gallup's 1-12 July Consumption Habits survey and are based on telephone interviews with US adults, aged 18 years and older.

In 2017, 26% named spirits as their preferred drink, but this dropped to 19% in 2018. Gallup said that the "broad trend is one of increased preference for liquor" despite the decline last year.

The average percentage of imbibers choosing spirits has climbed from 19% in the 1990s to 21% in the early 2000s. In the past five years, the average percentage hit 23%.

Increased preference for spirits has occurred primarily among young and middle-aged adults, the poll noted. There is "little movement" for those aged 50 and above.

A higher percentage of women drinkers this year chose spirits over beer, but Gallup said it will continue to observe later readings to see if the change is meaningful.

The group also said that recent health trends, including the "recent popularity of low-carbohydrate diets", has led some consumers to move towards spirits.

Adults under the age of 55 are most likely to prefer beer as well as spirits, while consumers aged 55 and over are most likely to prefer wine.

Gallup noted that the 30% for wine is "on the low end of the range seen over the past two decades, with between almost 30% and 35% most years" claiming to favour wine.

Around seven in 10 consumers said their most recent drink was within the past week, while 30% said they last drank over a week ago.

The number of Americans who drink alcohol has remained steady over the past 20 years at just under two-thirds, while 34% claimed to be a "total abstainer."

SCOTCH 101: START YOUR EDUCATION WITH THESE WHISKIES

[Macallan Double Cask 12 year old](#)—90 points, \$65

Macallan is one scotch that can intimidate drinkers on name and reputation only. However, there's a reason the Speyside brand became the quintessential "luxury" whisky—it's consistently great quality. And although you aren't likely to start with a \$7,000 bottle of The Macallan M, the younger offerings hold plenty to love. This newish entry to the core lineup—[number 17 in Whisky Advocate's 2017 Top 20](#)—shows how enjoyable a heavily sherried scotch can be, expressing itself with a pleasant earthiness and tons of cocoa notes.

[Glenmorangie Original 10 year old](#)—87 points, \$40

It would be virtually impossible for even the most ardent scotch avoider to dislike Glenmorangie's core single malt. Sweet and malty, it has a wide range of flavors: a ton of fruit, a little spice, and lovely floral notes explode on the palate. Never too aggressive in any one direction, this Highlands offering is definitely smooth, going down almost too easily.

[Aberlour 12 year old](#)—87 points, \$55

Maturation in a mix of bourbon and sherry casks makes this Speyside single malt dessert-like in flavor. With notes of figs on the nose, more dark fruits enter the fray upon the first sip: raisins and dates, backed by caramel and milk chocolate. The lower proof ensures a finish that, while lingering, goes down easy and can thus be enjoyed neat by just about anyone.

[Highland Park 12 Year Old](#)—90 points, \$55

For neophytes who want to try something with a kiss of peat, this option from the Orkney Islands is the perfect pour. Fruity and floral on the nose, partial maturation in ex-sherry casks adds balance to the local peat, which runs toward the floral side of smoke, rather than iodine and seaweed.

[Dalwhinnie 15 year old](#)—86 points, \$65

One of the more delicate scotches on the market, this Highlands dram is a great choice to get your toes wet. The distillery calls its single malt the "gentle spirit" and, indeed, this refined bottling doesn't offer any of the more challenging notes (like smoke) that turn off so many beginners. Instead, it's liquidized honey, citrusy on the nose with a touch of dried fruit on the palate, all delivered with a creamy, inviting mouthfeel.

[Auchentoshan 12 year old](#)—84 points, \$48

This Lowlands malt—one of Scotland's few triple-distilled whiskies—might be one of the most well-balanced whiskies out there. Tropical fruits like pineapple and mango explode on the nose, while the palate is nutty, backed by baking spices, and just a hint of vanilla. Despite the proof of 40%, this is easy to drink thanks to its viscous mouthfeel.

[Caol Ila 12 year old](#)—89 points, \$65

"Peat" and "beginner" are two terms that rarely meet, but there are examples of peaty drams that even newbies can handle—and this is one. Saline and grassy on the nose, the palate offers a peatiness that is clearly present but not overwhelming—more like the taste of good bacon than an overwhelming bog fire. The full-bodied, oily texture only adds to the enjoyment.

Single Malt Scotch for Beginners: 7 Bottles Every New Drinker Should Try

MAY 20, 2019 | AARON GOLDFARB



Single malt scotch is often regarded as a rarefied drink—something to be approached with reverence. Few people seem to be intimidated by good ole bourbon or humble Irish whiskey, but single malt is different. Especially among new whisky drinkers, it can be seen as too fancy, expensive, or sophisticated to take a chance on.

That thinking is simply not true. Sure, single malt can offer a greater range of flavors than bourbon or rye, but not all of it is of the aggressive, house-on-fire peated variety that many scotch newcomers ascribe to the whole category. Many single malts have fruity, floral, sweet, and silky flavor profiles that make for easy first—and successive—sips.

[7 Bottles That Every New Bourbon Drinker Must Try](#)

These reasonably priced single malt scotches each offer something that anyone can approach without hesitation—whether you are already well into a whisky-drinking career, or have just decided to make single malt your starting point.

Is diversity bringing down the quality of whisky?

Whisky consumers right now are spoiled for choice. Most of the distilleries that bottle their own malt now offer a vast selection of different bottlings at a range of prices so that there's something for everyone. Most brands now offer one or more No Age Statement expressions in their portfolio, together with, say, a 10yo or 12yo, a 15yo, 18yo, 21yo, and so on. Other brands just come out with a myriad of different bottlings under different names to pad out a broad – and, it must be said, *complicated* – portfolio....Highland Park and Macallan being two good examples. But is all this diversity actually *good* for the consumer? More critically, what does it mean for quality?

This all came home to me recently when I stumbled across an old article I wrote for Johnnie Walker over 15 years ago when they launched their then-new Green Label. At that point in time, Johnnie Walker had a very simple portfolio that consisted of just four products: Red Label, Black Label, Gold Label, and Blue Label. What this meant is that Diageo's stock inventory and its team of Master Blenders only had to focus on getting four products "right". At the time of its launch, Green Label became the fifth product in Johnnie Walker's portfolio.

Today, in stark contrast, the Johnnie Walker portfolio has exploded. Red Label remains Red Label, but Black Label now has a number of

variants (e.g. Double Black and Sherry); Gold Label split into numerous variations of Platinum, Gold Reserve, and 18yo age statements, and Blue Label expanded to incorporate the likes of Blue Label, King George V, the Casks edition, and the Ghost & Rare series. Not to labour the point, but Green Label also took on additional variants (e.g. the Islands), and we now also have the Blenders Batch series; the Exclusive Blend range (currently with eight different offerings); and a host of Limited Edition whiskies as well. (Click [here](#) for the full Johnnie Walker range).

Now put yourself in the shoes of a Diageo Master Blender. Where once you had to worry about trying to get just four products right, you now have to worry about getting at least 15 products right! Each blend (and the blender behind it) has to compete amongst their own stock and their colleagues to get "the good casks" or the desirable stock. I can imagine the blender behind one particular product in the range having a fight with one of the other blenders responsible for another whisky as they battle over the same casks that they each feel will complete the missing piece in their masterpiece. Only one can win. Surely it is no mere coincidence when long-term fans of the brand lament that Red Label is not a patch on what it used to be.

Whilst I've used Johnnie Walker as a possibly exaggerated example, the principal remains the same. Twenty years ago, when the portfolio



of each single malt brand was much smaller, the master blenders behind each expression – be it a 10yo, or a 15yo, or an 18yo – had a much easier time of it. Put simply, there was less competition from within and more room to move. And there are plenty of links and parallels we can draw when it comes to quality:

- The larger your range of products, the harder it is to maintain quality. It's easy to produce one, great expression of whisky.....it's much harder to consistently produce (say) six or seven great expressions of whisky when your base stock is the same.
- As an extension of the above, the simple increase in casks and stock being required for these expanding ranges of whiskies means that quality cannot be maintained.

I remember reading an article back in 2005 that focussed on the vintage year-dated releases being put out by Glenrothes at that time, which changed that year when they introduced their first non-vintage release, the Select. I can't readily find the exact quote, but the production manager said words to the effect of, "A few years back, for every 100 casks we produced, we'd pick out the best three or four to bottle as single malts. With increased demand now, we're having to pick out the top 20." It stands to reason that as your product range increases and requires you to draw upon an ever increasing number of casks, it is statistically and scientifically impossible to maintain the same quality.

And this, ladies and gents, is the thrust of this little piece. All this diversity and increased choice at your local liquor outlet might seem great on the surface, and fans of certain distilleries now have many different expressions they can taste as they explore their favourite brand. But are our tastebuds *really* better off? Just because an expression is different and new, does that make it good?

There's a lot of chatter in numerous whisky forums and a general undertone of dissatisfaction amongst many drinkers as they continue to be underwhelmed by certain new releases or particular NAS expressions. Perhaps this is one of the driving causes? Is diversity driving down whisky quality? Or will people just blindly continue to get excited about what's shiny and new?

It's an interesting challenge and I'm keen to hear peoples thoughts in the comments below. If you're a fan of a particularly distillery, would you prefer to have six or seven expressions in the portfolio to explore, albeit of slightly lower quality, or just two or three expressions that are consistently ace?

Cheers,
AD

GLASGOW DISTILLERY UNVEILS FIRST PEATED MALT

21 August 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Glasgow distillery has introduced its first peated whisky, which will join its new 1770 range of single malts.



Smoky starter: Glasgow distillery's first peated malt is now available to pre-order

The 1770 Peated has been matured for around three years in first-fill ex-Sherry casks and finished in virgin oak.

Bottled at 46% abv the expression is described as having notes of 'flamed orange zest and rich caramel toffee leading to various dark earthy fruits'.

It is the first peated bottling from the [Glasgow](#) distillery, which began operation in the Hillingdon area of the city in 2015.

Its release in late September will follow the launch of the distillery's unpeated [1770 Single Malt in April this year](#).

The two expressions will be joined by a third, a triple-distilled, unpeated malt in 2020, collectively forming the Glasgow distillery 1770 range.

Liam Hughes, CEO and co-founder of Glasgow distillery, said: 'Our peated run was originally a much smaller percentage of our overall production but when the first spirit came off the stills, the distillers told me I had to taste it.

'Within the hour, Mike [Hayward, distillery co-founder] and I ordered three times the quantity of peated malt we had originally planned. 'The quality of the spirit we were tasting was so good, we just knew we needed more.'

Bottles of the 1770 Peated Release No.1 are now available to pre-order from the Glasgow distillery website for £49.

Hughes added that the new 1770 range 'shines a light on modern distilling'.

He said: 'Glasgow is really important to us, not just because we are the Glasgow distillery, but because Glasgow is now part of a new chapter in the world of single malt Scotch whisky, which is really exciting.'

Glasgow distillery was founded in 2012 and began producing single malt in 2015.

Its opening brought malt distilling back to the city for the first time since the 1975 closure of [Kinclaith](#), which was situated within the [Strathclyde](#) distilling complex.

After just four years of operation, [Glasgow has already doubled its production capacity](#) with the installation of two new stills.

Laphroaig unveils limited edition 16-year-old whisky

2nd September, 2019 by Owen Bellwood

Beam Suntory-owned Islay Scotch brand Laphroaig has unveiled a limited edition whisky that has aged for 16 years in ex-Bourbon barrels.



Laphroaig 16 Year Old has aged in ex-Bourbon barrels

Laphroaig has produced 900 cases of its new 16 Year Old, which will be available in Europe exclusively through online retailer Amazon and in select US retailers.

The whisky's maturation in ex-Bourbon barrels is said to have softened "the famously rich peat smoke" and added flavours of leather and sweet vanilla.

John Campbell, Laphroaig distillery manager, said: "Laphroaig 16-year-old is the perfect illustration of how our rich whiskies mellow as they mature.

"Whilst this expression carries the iconic smoke of Laphroaig, this is married with sweeter notes of honey and caramel, creating a remarkable dram that's perfect for the long evenings of late summer and into cosier nights of autumn."

On the nose, the 16-year-old whisky has notes of "sweet leather, oaky spices, vanilla and wood character", while the palate is "sweet with treacle and caramel, Manuka honey and thyme but also intense wood smoke, creosote, lots of floral notes of heather and bergamot, and a chilli mouthfeel".

Bottled at 48% ABV, Laphroaig 16 Year Old is available to pre-order from Amazon now for £89 (US\$108) per 700ml bottle.

MALTS MUST STAY ROOTED IN LOCALITY

21 August 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)

The office has a distinct smell of juniper. In fact, I'm pretty convinced my skin smells of it as well. That comes from deciding to make 300-plus serves from 80 different gins. It's been a long day, but I wanted to get to grips with what has happened to the gin market in recent years – and the change is noticeable.

Gin started life as the first global spirit, though in a manner different to how we use the term these days. It was the first social spirit whose character came from ingredients obtained from around the world; the offspring of the mercantile empires of the Netherlands and Britain; the first manifestation of the world shrinking, an exotic distillation of trade routes.

Local spirits spoke in a different way. If gin was expansive, they looked to their soils, earth, and air. They looked inwards. In time although Cognac and single malt Scotch became global in reach, they remained rooted to place. Gin stayed global in flavour... until now.

As gin has become reborn, so its [new distillers have begun to make spirits](#) which reflect more clearly the scents of the place: South Africa's fynbos or the Australian outback, the shores and moors of Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and England; the mountains of Norway, the hillsides and forests of Japan. Pepperberry and lemon myrtle, yuzu, sencha and hinoki; bog myrtle and horseradish, rowan berries, elderflower, milk thistle, and seaweed. Yes, the botanical mix still has global reach, but many gins are now more determinedly distillates of a specific environment.



Sense of place: Single malts like Talisker are rooted in their locality and individual identity

Blended Scotch has long been moving in the opposite direction. By their nature, global brands become – or can become – stateless, not so much the product of a place than a concept with a tangential relationship to origins. The brand becomes the focal point; its place of manufacture is secondary.

Maybe blends' success is down to them being malleable, their ability to adapt to the needs of different occasions and markets, having the versatility to be served in numerous ways. This fluidity of image and usage makes it easier for people to relate to. It becomes theirs, but as a consequence it loses touch with its roots.

Blends' biggest challenge in a world where the local is becoming a more important motivation for purchase is to try and reinforce their Scottish roots. It's a tricky manoeuvre, and one which can easily slip into cliché and sentimentality. But the majors are trying – the [Johnnie Walker Experience in Edinburgh](#) is at the forefront of this recalibration.

If the blend world is one of amenability, flex and inclusiveness, single malt's point of difference is being an intense expression of a singular identity. Each single malt will always be different to its neighbour. Why? Because blenders need that to be the case. It means that the malt world is one of variety and exploration.



Global-local: Johnnie Walker's Edinburgh Experience fuses the locality of malts with the global reach of blends

It may chafe with the globalist views of marketing departments, but malts do what blends can't – and vice versa.

If single malts begin to try and wear the same garments as blends in an attempt to become global brands their essence is eroded. Malts are defined by location and the specificity of their flavour. The distiller has to balance being true to that distillery character while still finding new ways of expressing it.

The danger lies in forgetting that and trying to imitate what other malts are doing. 'There's a backlash against Sherry? OK we'll do a volte face and take it out.'

'Consumers like vanilla? We can do that as well.'

'Some folks don't care for smoke? We can hide it.'

In each case, the distillery's foundations are being chipped away, individuality being replaced by standardisation. Malts can become brands, they just can't become brands in the same way as blends. Malts are local.

IS A SECOND 'WHISKY LOCH' BREWING?

19 August 2019 by [Tom Bruce-Gardyne](#)

The 1980s 'whisky loch' followed a period of misplaced confidence and massive over-production by the Scotch industry. Now, with over 40 distilleries opening this decade alone, Tom Bruce-Gardyne wonders whether history could repeat itself.



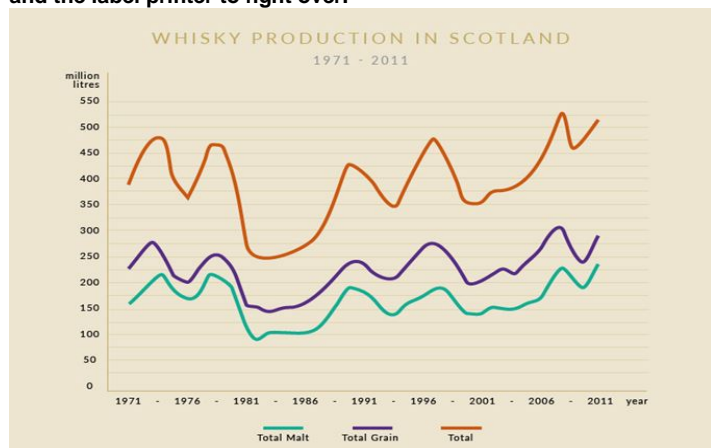
Deep water: Scotch producers are keen to avoid the mistakes of the past, which led to the 1980s 'whisky loch'

The writer, political fixer and consummate PR man, [Sir Walter Scott](#), effectively created Scottish tourism in the early 19th century when fans of his best-selling novels began flocking to the Highlands. Ever since, people have braved the weather and the midges to explore the same heather-clad hills and misty lochs. One recent loch would have escaped their notice however. It appeared suddenly in the late 1970s – a vast expanse of glittering gold and full to the brim with whisky.

'Yes, I remember the whisky loch and the three-day week,' says Ian Palmer, who has been in the business since 1978 and now runs [InchDairnie](#) distillery in Fife. 'I think what the industry got wrong was thinking of whisky as a commodity.'

Another veteran, [Johnnie Walker's](#) master blender [Dr Jim Beveridge OBE](#), blames 'a disconnect between the producers and the marketeers'. He says: 'My sense is that producers had their heads in the sand and were talking to marketeers, whose job it is to say they were going to sell lots, and they didn't.'

The scale of that over-optimism can be seen in just how long it took to drain the loch. While the industry slammed on the brakes in 1981, slashing production by a third and keeping it low for a decade (see chart), there was still a sea of unloved, three-year-old whisky two decades later. This was clear from the distressed pricing in the supermarkets, which proves Palmer's point about it becoming a commodity. In 2001 you could buy a bottle of blended Scotch whisky in Asda for £6.67. Having deducted duty and VAT, that left just 20p for the distiller, the retailer, the haulage company, the glass maker and the label printer to fight over.



Turbulent times: Whisky distilling slowed dramatically in 1981, with output falling by 35%

The collateral damage was appalling. Twenty [distilleries closed during the 1980s](#), leaving a trail of redundancies and torn communities. Some were brought back to life, while others were bulldozed into history. Palmer believes the industry was panicked into a knee-jerk reaction. It seems it had failed to notice that demand was already falling; US baby-boomers were drinking vodka and the Brits had discovered wine. Then came the late 1970s hike in oil prices that helped precipitate a global economic downturn.

Alan Gray, the independent analyst and author of the *Scotch Whisky Industry Review*, believes the main reason may have been more prosaic. From 1972 until 1992 UK interest rates oscillated between 10-15%, which put distillers under intense pressure to liquidate stock. The [Distillers Company Ltd](#) (DCL), owner of [Port Ellen](#) and [Brora](#), both of which closed in 1983, had its so-called 'dam-busters' plan to drain the loch by dumping whisky on anyone who would take it. This caused a tide of cheap, own-label blends to flood the supermarket shelves in France and Britain, which undermined brands, eroded profits and tempted the boardrooms of Big Alcohol to back other categories of booze instead. For a while Scotch appeared to be caught in a tailspin.

Of course hindsight's a wonderful thing. 'It's dead easy being a spectator, shouting at the referee,' says Palmer. 'I think with managing whisky stocks, there's only one thing that's guaranteed, and that is you'll get it wrong.' Given all the imponderables, all those 'unknown unknowns' to quote Donald Rumsfeld, he may well have a point. Understanding how and why the last big surplus happened seems a good place to start, but 40 years on, you wonder if those painful truths have been forgotten.

'No, I think the memory lingers and the lessons were learned,' says Beveridge. 'The way the industry is organised these days is much closer to market reality, and that's a safety valve to the supply and demand dilemma.' Palmer doesn't disagree, but says: 'The world has moved on, and so the lessons that were learned were relevant to that time.'



Whisky slump: Port Ellen was one of several distilleries to fall silent during the 1980s

For him, the most positive change is the focus on brands. 'There's a lot more intelligence being applied to the management of stocks. Decisions being made for the long-term benefit of a brand, and not the short-term thinking of a company. The brand is king, and you mustn't damage it by being stupid with the stocks.'

Meanwhile there has been an explosion of [new distilleries](#), with more than 40 set to open this decade, although no-one seems worried they will create much of a surplus. 'Their total capacity, assuming they're going flat-out, doesn't really swing the needle very much,' says Rupert Patrick of [James Eadie](#) and WhiskyInvestDirect. Most of the new distillers produce less than half-a-million litres per annum (lpa) and some are tiny, like [Daftmill](#) in Fife, which has been averaging just 100 casks a year since it started distilling in 2005. By contrast, Diageo's [Roseisle](#) produces 10m lpa while Chivas Brothers' [Dalmunach](#) is on 12m.

Patrick estimates that a third of all Scotch is made by [Diageo](#), and around 20% by [Chivas](#). 'That's just over half the production in the hands of two companies,' he says. 'Add in [William Grant & Sons](#), and [Edrington](#), and there's not much left.' With fewer big players than 40 years ago, it means fewer captains on the bridge if you think of the Scotch whisky industry as a super-tanker. Theoretically, that should lessen the risk of another whisky loch.

Whisky has become far more profitable in the past 10-15 years, claims Patrick, and as a result distillers can afford to sit out periods of oversupply in a way that was far harder in the past.



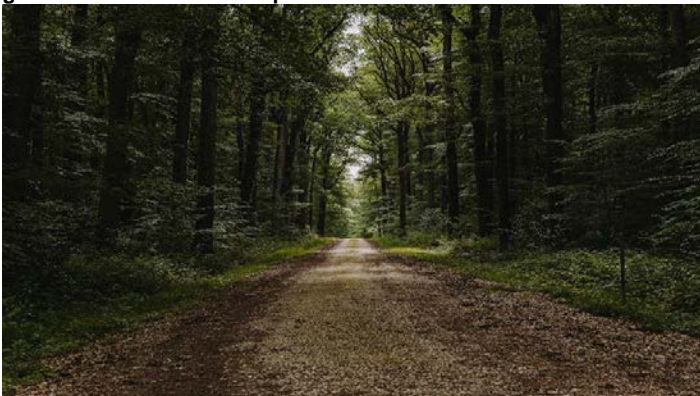
Global reach: Scotch producers face competition from other whisky brands worldwide

[Leonard Russell](#), managing director of [Ian Macleod Distillers](#), which is set to reopen [Rosebank](#), adds: 'The decision to cull those distilleries in the 1980s was driven by the imperative to cut the costs of production.' In his view, that has changed thanks to the unprecedented growth in single malts. He accepts we live in uncertain times, with the nightmare of [Brexit still unresolved](#), but insists the following dictum remains true: if you lay down whisky you will make a profit, you just can't tell when. Edrington's former director of malts, Ken Grier, claims: 'The thing beholden to us is that we continue to remain scarce and sell everything that we make to a very high standard.' He was speaking of [Macallan](#), whose [new distillery](#) can produce 15m lpa a year, while capacity at [Glenfiddich](#) has soared to more than 20m, as has [The Glenlivet](#). In years to come this huge surge in production will work its way through to the market. You can't help wondering if Macallan will feel quite as 'scarce' by then. It is also worth remembering that Scotch whisky's share of global whisky is shrinking. 'Complacency's a terrible thing, but I would think the mood at Chivas, Diageo, William Grant and Edrington is quietly confident,' says Patrick. The industry is now more concentrated and its exports are spread over far more markets than ever before. With profits up and interest rates down to almost zero, maybe Scotch can start to relax about the dangers of a future whisky lull. Then again, human nature and greed may get in the way. The industry is certainly better placed than it was in the late 1970s, but any hubris is best avoided, as Gordon Brown discovered. The UK's former chancellor famously claimed to have abolished boom and bust, only to be hit by the global financial crash of 2008.

UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERIES OF THE CASK

21 August 2019 by [Richard Woodard](#)

Casks have a huge influence on Scotch whisky, and now research involving single malt Jura is focusing on how oak species, grain size and toasting level can help shape the flavour of the dram in your glass. Richard Woodard reports.



Location, location: Specific forests (such as Loches in France) impact flavour in whisky

Perhaps one of the most eye-catching aspects of [the radical revamp of Jura's single malt range](#) in 2018 was the introduction of [Jura](#) Seven Wood, an NAS expression combining spirit matured in

American oak and in French oak sourced from six different forests: Vosges, Jupilles, Les Bertranges, Allier, Tronçais and Limousin. The project certainly intrigued Gregg Glass when [he was appointed as blender and whisky maker](#) at Jura owner [Whyte & Mackay](#) in 2016. 'My first question when I joined the company was: why Seven Wood?' he recalled [at the Jura relaunch](#) event in London. The answer was far from simple.

Seven Wood is one practical outcome of a highly complex area of research into how, over time, a cask modifies the flavour of the spirit it contains, touching on multiple areas including oak species, grain size, geographical location (of the forest) and the toasting process. The work has been a collaboration between Whyte & Mackay and cask supplier Demptos, moving from forest to sawmill and cooperage, with the scientific analysis undertaken by the team at the Demptos Research Centre within the University of Bordeaux, headed by Dr Magali Picard.

It shows how far the knowledge surrounding cask maturation has come. 'Originally, the barrel was just a vessel and you were just transporting the wine [or the whisky] in it,' points out François Witasse, Demptos president.

'Now there are so many factors: tannin content, flavour content, oxygenation. People are selecting on different criteria: origin of oak, tannin/flavour content, microporosity/speed of ageing.'



Bench trials: Whisky maker Gregg Glass aims to put complex research into practice

Demptos customers – mainly wine producers, but also Cognac houses and, increasingly, whisky makers – can select casks based on a combination of up to 188 different 'ingredients', including factors that are forest-specific, grain-specific – even molecule-specific.

'It's a moving target with whisky right now,' says Witasse. 'Whisky makers are more interested in flavour extraction, but are now looking more at tannins and also colour. Also, spiciness – which is found more in French than American oak – is becoming more requested in spirits.'

The research undertaken by the four-strong Demptos Research Centre team, all of whom have PhDs in wine science, has one central aim: to help the cooperage to tailor its casks to meet the complex needs of the client.

Using a variety of techniques, including gas chromatography/mass spectrometry, liquid chromatography and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), the team undertakes a comprehensive analysis of samples of spirit, wine or wood in order to deconstruct the chemical basis for the human perception of flavour.

The analysis of samples, taken at different stages of maturation, covers three main areas: first, the smaller, volatile molecules that make up aromatic compounds; second, macro-molecules, covering astringency, bitterness and sweetness; third, how the first two areas interact, how wood polymers release (or not) aromatic compounds – and how this affects human perception.

Research findings can be broken down into three main areas: oak species, grain size and level of toasting (with forest and tree location also feeding into this).



Practical outcome: Jura Seven Wood uses seven types of cask and two spirit styles

OAK SPECIES

The research has looked at three species of oak: American oak (*Quercus alba*), and two types of French oak (*Q. robur* and *Q. petraea*), discovering distinct variations in aroma compounds, polymers and grain.

Q. alba has by far the highest levels of aroma compounds – particularly ‘whisky lactones’ that produce American white oak’s distinctive coconut flavour, but also eugenol (spice/clove) and vanillin (vanilla). These are less pronounced in *Q. petraea* (although still quite high), and much less so in *Q. robur*.

However, the picture changes when it comes to oak-derived polymer compounds – the non-volatile substances contributing to taste and texture, known as ellagitannins. These regulate levels of astringency, bitterness and roundness, and also act as antioxidants and colour agents.

The highest release of ellagitannins comes from *Q. robur*, followed by *Q. petraea*, with *Q. alba* only making a slight contribution to body or structure, according to the research.

So: more aroma (especially coconut/vanilla) from American oak; more structure from French.

GRAIN SIZE

The grain of oak is regulated by a tree’s annual growth rings, with each year split between spring wood – with lots of wide vessels to carry water/sap – and summer wood – fewer, smaller vessels thanks to less water availability and less need for sap.

As a result, summer wood is denser and less porous than spring wood, and the proportion of summer wood – in turn regulated by how quickly a tree grows – is what makes the grain of the wood finer or coarser. Faster growth = broader rings of summer wood = coarser grain.



Size matters: Coarse or fine grain can have quite an impact on whisky flavor

As grain becomes coarser, it impacts the release of wood molecules, with aromatic compounds (eg coconut) decreasing, and ellagitannins (structure, astringency) increasing. Coarser grain is also less porous in terms of oxygen ingress, whereas more oxygen enters the cask when grain is finer.

Grain size is partly related to oak species: *Q. petraea* typically has the finest grain (1-3mm), followed by *Q. alba* (1-5mm), with *Q. robur* having medium to coarse grain (3-10mm). However, there can be quite wide variances within the same species growing in different forests (and even in different locations in the same forest). So *Q. petraea* growing in the Allier forest has a fine (1.2mm) grain; but *Q. petraea* growing in Vosges has a medium (2.6mm) grain.

TOASTING

Many complex reactions occur when an oak cask is toasted, linked to the thermodegradation of wood macromolecules. This helps form key aroma compounds, such as volatile phenols, furanic and phenolic aldehydes, and alkylpyrazines, which are variously perceived in flavour terms as spice, chocolate, coffee and smoke.

The key is toasting intensity, whatever the species of oak, with progressively higher temperatures reducing ellagitannin content and astringency.

With aromatic compounds, the effect is more complex. The more intensive the toasting, the lower the perception of coconut notes, but other aromas, such as smoked/toasted notes (volatile phenols) increase.



Hot topic: The intensity of the toasting process is another flavour influencer

In flavour terms, Dr Picard breaks it down as follows: light-medium toasting = fresh, fruity and spicy aromas; medium-plus = complex, sweet, spicy and toasted aromas; heavy = smoky aromas, with less coconut and wood aromas.

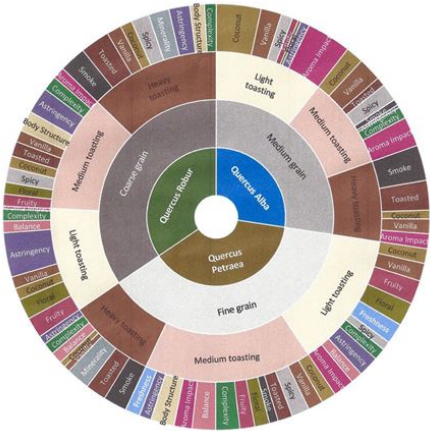
THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME

If all of those variations and permutations have sent your head spinning, Dr Picard has created a sensory wheel that conveys the vital information: what flavours are contributed by the various combinations of oak species, grain size and toasting.

Meanwhile, Glass has been putting theory into practice with bench trials examining the impact of individual wood types on spirit, using stave sections that he chars and toasts in conventional ovens (eg replicating medium/medium-plus toasting at 200-220C). He might then upscale the sample size to 20-50 casks, monitoring these every 6-12 months.

Age spirit in *Q. petraea* from Vosges with no toast and you get plenty of spice; medium toasting adds chocolate; heavy toasting gives powerful notes of polished wood. Meanwhile, a heavy char (where the wood is heated quickly with gas) creates a more spirty profile and a paler hue as the colour retreats when the wood treatment creates a hydrophobic barrier.

The Jura Seven Wood recipe involves three main components: unpeated Jura matured in American white oak (mostly first-fill, but some second); unpeated Jura matured in American white oak, then extra-matured in French oak sourced from the six forests; and peated Jura matured in American white oak (here, Glass is looking for a ‘vibrant’ peated element, and Seven Wood’s peating level is one of the lowest in the range).



Made simple: Dr Magali Picard's sensory wheel (click on image for higher resolution)

Making Seven Wood NAS was helpful, Glass believes, since he was using a lot of new oak (the French oak casks are either new or have been used once before for Jura), giving plenty of wood influence at a relatively early stage.

Tasting the different French oak components (after 10 years in American plus seven in medium/medium-plus toast French, although ages in the final product vary), the differences between the forests are clearly perceptible: red fruit, milk chocolate and roasting coffee from Vosges; guava, peach and mango from Les Bertranges; red fruit and polished wood from Jupilles.

By contrast, faster-growing Limousin, with its coarser grain and reduced oxygenation, offers a big, spicy, brooding, astringent character.

Jura Seven Wood began with trial casks almost a decade ago. 'We built the recipe up over time,' says Glass. 'Sometimes we'll take the liquid and put it back into more neutral wood – it's about creating a good balance of flavours, not about going too woody or going too far in one direction.'

It's a complex product, and it's the result of a highly complex area of scientific research. In the end, though, the aim is simple: equip whisky makers with another set of tools for flavour creation, giving them the ability to come up with new whiskies that taste good.

And this is only the beginning. The research, particularly as it relates to whisky, is still at an early stage, and its practical interpretation in terms of whisky creation even more so. The more that scientists like Dr Picard understand, the more they can pass that knowledge on to whisky makers like Glass – and the more they, in turn, can use it to shape the whiskies of the future. Watch this space.

GLENKINCIE TATTOO HONOURS EDINBURGH PARADE

20 August 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)
Glenkinchie distillery has partnered with the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo to create an exclusive single malt Scotch whisky.



Edinburgh institutions: Glenkinchie Tattoo honours the city's military, music and dance showcase

The limited edition Glenkinchie Tattoo has been released as the official whisky of the annual military spectacle showcase, currently taking place at Castlehill (2-24 August 2019).

The no-age-statement single malt has been matured in rejuvenated hogsheads and American oak barrels, and bottled at 46% abv. Selected by both the Glenkinchie and Tattoo teams, Glenkinchie Tattoo is said to have notes of dried fruits, warm baking spices, butterscotch and Scottish tablet.

Ramsay Borthwick, senior site manager at [Glenkinchie](#) distillery, said: 'This highly prized release has been specially selected by our expert team at the distillery as a celebration of our heritage as "the Edinburgh Malt" and the unique partnership between two of the city's greatest icons, both celebrating our glorious history.' Just 6,000 bottles of Glenkinchie Tattoo have been created, available for £65 exclusively from the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo shop and Glenkinchie distillery, located 15 miles outside the city. The first Edinburgh Military Tattoo took place in 1950 at Edinburgh Castle.

The military display now attracts an annual audience of around 220,000 spectators.

MICHAEL NELSON, BROWN-FORMAN COOPERAGE

20 August 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Brown-Forman's cooperage in Louisville, Kentucky produces most of the barrels used to mature Jack Daniels, Woodford Reserve and many other whiskeys. Its plant director tells Becky Paskin how the site keeps up with soaring demand for Bourbon barrels.



Cooperage caretaker: Michael Nelson oversees the creation of around 600,000 barrels a year

'We're making about 2,300 barrels a day, and that's across two 10-hour production shifts. We have folks here around the clock, some production through the night but our heavy production starts early in the morning and ends late into the evening, about midnight, and then we do it all again the next day.

'The production rate has been as many barrels as we can make, at least for the five years I've been here. As needed we'll work some weekends: whatever we can make, the distilleries can use.

'[Brown-Forman](#) satisfied that demand for extra capacity by putting another cooperage online in Alabama – they're making about half of what we make, about 1,300 barrels a day. They were built to expand so as demand for the whisky grows, we can support those needs through our cooperage organisation, though they are currently operating at capacity as well.

'Most of what we make here supplies Jack Daniels, Woodford Reserve, Old Forester and Early Times, and some we send down to Mexico to our Tequila distillery [Herradura]. Jack Daniels gets the majority of barrels, as they are the biggest distillery.



Fast workers: Coopers each raise 300 barrels a day at the Brown-Forman cooperage

'Our oak is sourced from all over the eastern United States. We have a team that sources the logs; they go to mills, where they quarter-saw the lumber so we have the right grain structure and profile to hold the liquor in. American white oak is used because the tree naturally fills its pores with a substance called tyloses, so to cut that wood in a quarter sawn method gives you the ability to hold that liquid in. We source that from all the way down to the gulf in the south, up north to Minnesota, and out east into Virginia.

'There are differences between the oak grown in various places, but by the time it's in our plant it's all mixed up. With the volumes we're putting through our cooperage there's no way to know that that barrel has three staves from Tennessee and four from Minnesota and the rest from Ohio. We don't know. Essentially once it gets into our facility we're just looking for defects – knots, worm holes, too much sap, rot... not necessarily where it's from.

'We don't own any standing timber in Brown-Forman; our wood procurement group has a close association with regional forestry associations because it's crucial for our industry in general that we make sure that white oak, which is a sustainable resource, stays that way, because without it our industry doesn't exist.

'Once the lumber shows up on our yard we like to let it age for three to six months, let Mother Nature do its thing. It's called seasoning. It sits out in the weather, gets rained on, snowed on in the wintertime, and that releases some of the tannins in the wood, but it's also starting to dry the lumber. Then we'll put it in a kiln and dry it down to about 12.5% moisture, and then we're able to machine the wood – shape it, plane it, cut it.



Perfect fit: The stave edges are shaped so they can slot neatly together into a barrel shape

'If it's been very wet and rainy the last year it means you have to dry it in the kiln a bit longer. It goes in the kiln for a few days to a few weeks, depending on the moisture content of the wood. They get as hot as 150F. There's a whole science behind drying wood – if you dry it too fast, too quick, it will cause splits and defects as the moisture tries to escape the cells of that wood, so it's got to be dried slow. 'We have the capability of having a lot of control over how we toast, which is why we don't show that off and it's proprietary. If a master distiller like Chris Morris [for Woodford Reserve] wants to play around with a Master's Collection or something that he wants to try differently, we have the ability to tweak and make changes. 'Toasting is a radiant heat; the marshmallow analogy is a good one – some people like their marshmallows golden brown, others like to catch 'em on fire. What we're doing is a combination of the two. The radiant heat, or the toast, is the same process – it's [caramelising sugars in the wood](#) like you would caramelise the sugars in a marshmallow over a campfire. Nice golden brown, you're toasting, you're not in the direct flame.



Fierce flame: The barrels are set alight to produce a layer of char on their interior surface

'The char fire is a direct flame – the wood literally catches on fire on the inside and burns until we punch it with water and put it out. A common question I get asked is: "You're taking the time and effort to toast it and then you catch it on fire. Aren't you just destroying what you just did?" The answer is yeah, to some degree, but we're able to set that toast deep into the wood to where we're not destroying all of that toast, to where we're able to have the best of both worlds really. On the outside surface you've got the char and behind it you've still got some toast left in that barrel.

'Our visitor centre has been open about a year. If you go to [cooperscraft.com](#) or go through [Mint Julep Tours](#) you can schedule a private tour at certain times of the day. One of the things we were pretty proud of as a company is we're the only major distiller that operates its own cooperage and barrel making facility, and it's something that we feel we should show off a little bit. So creating this visitor centre is a nice space to be able to do that.

'Everyone who comes through here is overwhelmed by the size, the pace and the number of barrels we put out in a day. Most big cooperages put out hundreds; we put out thousands, and people are always surprised by that, by the amount of work and detail that goes into it, the knowledge that's needed and the different processes that come together as one final barrel. They'd think, "take some boards, slap them together and there you go, you got a barrel," but there's so much more to it than that, so much more science behind it than that. When you can actually see it here and smell it, you can't pick up a glass of whisky ever again and not think about what went into it.'

DIAGEO STRIKES COULD 'HALT' WHISKY MAKING

19 August 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Diageo's Scotch whisky operations could 'grind to a halt' after some of its Scottish workers voted in favour of strike action.



Scotch strike: The sites affected by Diageo's pay dispute handle the bottling of Johnnie Walker, among other brands

Members of Unite the union working at Diageo's Cameronbridge, Leven and Shieldhall plants voted in favour of industrial action following what they call an ["insulting" proposed pay rise of 2.5%](#). During discussions, [Diageo](#) offered an alternative 2.8% pay rise offer, which Unite members also deemed 'insignificant'. Around 43% of Diageo's Scottish workforce are members of the Unite or GMB unions.

The whisky producer, which operates 28 malt distilleries across Scotland in addition to the [Cameronbridge](#) grain distillery and bottling plants at Leven and Shieldhall, announced an increase in pre-tax profits during 2018/19 to £4.2 billion, which the union claimed has 'infuriated' workers.

Unite regional industrial officer Bob MacGregor, said: 'Unite has received a clear and strong mandate for industrial action from our membership in Diageo's largest distilling and bottling plants in Scotland.'

'The recent announcement in July of an increase in pre-tax profits to £4.2 billion alongside Diageo's refusal to give a fair pay award has rightly infuriated the workers.'

MacGregor urged Diageo to continue discussions with union members to find a resolution.

'If they do not, then Diageo's operations will needlessly grind to a halt in the coming weeks,' he added.

Unite said the strike action is likely to occur between September and November this year.

However a spokesperson for Diageo claimed the company has developed 'contingency plans' to ensure operations continue.

The spokesperson added: 'The Unite union has confirmed that their members have voted in favour of strike action at sites in Scotland and we await confirmation of their next steps.'

'We have well developed contingency plans in the event of industrial action but remain committed to seeking a resolution and ensuring our employees receive an increase on their pay, alongside maintaining the competitiveness of our operations.'

'We are a very good employer and aim to ensure our staff are rewarded competitively; our pay and benefits for our bargaining group employees are in the top quartile for manufacturing in Scotland.'

Members of the GMB union are also being balloted over potential strike action, with the voting deadline this Friday (23 August).

8 Whisky and Cookie Pairings

MAY 15, 2018 | BRITTANY RISHER



The classic match-up for cookies may be a cool glass of milk—but who wants milk when you can have whisky? Just as there's a different style of whisky to suit every person's taste, various cookies also have a perfect flavor match.

"Whisky and cookies are an ideal pairing," says Morgan Kirchner, whiskey advisor for [Jack Rose Dining Saloon](#) in Washington, D.C. "Cookies, like whisky, are a marriage of simple ingredients that come together to make an incredibly delicious snack. Aside from the fact that they share multiple aromatic and flavor profiles, cookies are comforting and homey, as is a lot of whisky. Few things sound as appealing as a fresh-baked cookie and a delicious dram."

Or perhaps you'd prefer a whisky cocktail with your cookies. Gamlin Whiskey House in St. Louis, Missouri recent partnered with the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri for a fundraiser event. The bar developed a special whiskey cocktail—Buffalo Trace Single Barrel bourbon, simple syrup, and lemon juice, topped with LaMarca Prosecco—to pair with the Savannah Lemon cookie. (The cocktail was for the adults, of course.)

You can also mix your spirit right into your cookie. "Our menu changes often, and in the past, we have created a variety of different whiskey-based cookies and desserts," says Dustin Parres, corporate bar manager of the [Gamlin Restaurant Group](#). How about a bacon rye cookie with Knob Creek mixed into the dough, or scotch thins baked with chocolate chips and Laphroaig 10 year old?

If that's too ambitious, simply enjoy these recommended whisky and cookie pairings. Dunking is optional.

OREOS AND SINGLE MALT SCOTCH

Top pick: [BenRiach 21 year old](#)

"Oreos present an interesting dilemma—crispy, chocolatey, slightly salty exterior with a cloyingly sweet creamy middle," Kirchner says. "A good middle ground would be a single malt with an interesting cask maturation or finish." An awesome dram matured in four types of casks—bourbon, virgin oak, Pedro Ximénez sherry, and red wine—BenRiach 21 year old has flavors of milk chocolate, nuts, and cocoa powder that would complement an Oreo beautifully.

CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES AND RYE

Top pick: [Knob Creek Straight Rye](#)

"The inherent spiciness of a rye contrasts and calls out the brown sugar notes in a chocolate chip cookie," Parres explains. Whether you prefer your cookies gooey, chewy, or crispy, a full-bodied rye like Knob Creek will match nicely.

OATMEAL COOKIES AND WHITE WHISKEY

Top pick: [High West Silver Whiskey Western Oat](#)

Without barrel aging to add other flavors, the grains play a prominent role in a white whiskey, making it a natural fit with the grainy flavors of a sweet oatmeal cookie. Any white whiskey will work well, though it's hard to resist the obvious continuity of pairing this oat-based whiskey from High West.

THIN MINTS AND HIGH-RYE BOURBON

Top pick: [Noah's Mill](#)

"High-rye bourbon has a tendency to have a menthol characteristic," Kirchner explains. "Many people rave about the 'modern classic' pairing of Thin Mints and Basil Hayden's; however, I prefer

something more along the lines of Noah's Mill. There's a wonderful spicy, floral, minty quality and just enough bite to this particular whiskey to really stand up against and complement the overwhelming mint characteristic put forth by Thin Mints."

PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES AND TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Top pick: [Jack Daniel's](#)

The charcoal filtering of Tennessee whiskey imparts a custard-like flavor that goes well with creamy peanut butter, Parres says—though if you prefer a chunky variety, that's okay too.

PEPPERIDGE FARM MILANOS AND IRISH WHISKEY

Top pick: [Tyrconnell 10 YO Madeira Cask Finish Whiskey](#)

Milanos have layers and make a great pairing for a whiskey that has some complexity of its own. The soft red fruit of an Irish whiskey, especially one finished in madeira wine casks, is perfect to complement this cookie's buttery chocolate flavors.

SHORTBREAD AND SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH

Top pick: [Aberlour 12 year old](#)

This is a no-brainer, Kirchner says. "Buttery, toasty, biscuity, and slightly sweet—these cookies make the perfect match for one of the more underappreciated single malts in the world, Aberlour 12 year old. This whiskey is matured in both oloroso sherry and bourbon casks which provide a buttery mouthfeel, as well as a subtle dried fruit characteristic that won't overpower the delicate nature of shortbread cookies."

SNICKERDOODLES AND BOURBON

Top pick: [Old Forester 1920 Prohibition Style](#)

For this complex cookie, pick a bourbon with a traditional mashbill. "Spice goes well with spice, especially when it comes to cookies and whiskey," says Kirchner, who suggests Old Forester because its dark fruit aromatics and caramel and nut-forward flavor profile stand up to all the cinnamon in a snickerdoodle.

Top 10 award-winning American whiskeys

13th August, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Despite tariff pressures, the American whiskey category is brimming with producers of all sizes offering exceptional liquid. We round up the expressions that scored highly in our recent blind-tasting competition.



SB presents award-winning bottles from this year's American Whiskey Masters competition

The Spirits Business held its annual American Whiskey Masters [last month](#), where an experienced panel of judges recognised the best bottlings in the business.

Looking across multiple categories, from single malt to Tennessee whiskey, Bourbon to rye, a wide range of whiskeys were awarded the top accolades of Master and Gold medals for their quality.

The individual scores of each entrant have not been revealed, however these are 10 of the highest rated medalists in the competition, in no particular order.

While some expressions are not standard priced, our judges have given each American whiskey listed here the seal of approval for offering excellent quality within their respective price categories.

Colonel EH Taylor Jr Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon



Price: £94.95 (US\$114.50)

Sazerac Company's Colonel EH Taylor Jr Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon grabbed a Master in the ultra-premium leg of the Bourbon round.

The judges enjoyed the expression's aroma of "soft vanilla and fudge", and "complex" palate filled with flavours of "tarte tatin and spice".

The brand is named after Colonel Edmund Haynes Taylor, a historic Bourbon figure from the 1800s.

New York Distilling Company 2 Year Old Batch 1 (That Boutique-y Rye Company)



Price: £37.95 (US\$45.80)

In the Rye – Aged up to 7 Years flight, Master-winning New York Distilling Company 2 Year Old – Batch 1 (That Boutique-y Rye Company), was praised for its "classy maturity".

"A lovely rounded rye with all the character you'd expect from a middle-aged rye," one judge noted.

The 53% abv expression is made from rye selected and grown exclusively by Pedersen Family Farm in the Fingerlakes region of upstate New York.

Ironroot Harbinger Bourbon



Price: £35 (US\$42.23)

In the Bourbon – Aged up to 7 Years round, a Master medal was bestowed upon Ironroot Harbinger Bourbon, which had a “fresh, complex” nose, despite being 57.5% abv. Notes of “chilli chocolate, coffee and apple strudel” were prominent on the palate. Texas-based grain-to-glass distillery Ironroot Republic also produces a corn whiskey, gin, vodka and moonshine.

Old Forester 1870 Original Batch



Price: US\$46

Brown-Forman took home a Master for its Old Forester 1870 Original Batch, in which judges were thrilled to find flavours of “marmalade, leather, pear juice, black cherry”. The expression also swiped the coveted Taste Master title.

The US drinks firm created Old Forester 1870 Original Batch to celebrate the year 1870 when George Garvin Brown created Old Forester on Whiskey Row in Louisville, Kentucky.

291 Colorado Rye Whiskey Aspen Stave Finish



Price: £86.95 (US\$105)

A tasting of the ultra-premium ryes unearthed another Master in 291 Colorado Rye Whiskey Aspen Stave Finished.

One judge said: “I was excited to taste this; the nose was so enticing. There’s nice subtle barbecue smoke in there.”

The expression is a single barrel rye whiskey distilled in a copper pot still, aged in American white oak barrels for one year, and finished with aspen

St George 2 Year Old (That Boutique-y Rye Company)



Price: £54.95 (US\$66.30)

Master winner St George 2 Year Old from That Boutique-y Rye Company was commended for its “wonderful Riesling grape nose” and “cloves, dried orange and banana”.

The two-year-old rye from California-based distiller St George Spirits is bottled at 55% abv. Batch one is limited to a release of 400 bottles.

Elmer T Lee Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon



Price: £62 (US\$74.82)

Judges found notes of “strawberry laces” and “berry pie” in Sazerac Company’s Elmer T Lee Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon, which was awarded with a Master medal in the super-premium Bourbon round.

The limited edition whiskey was launched in honour of master distiller Emeritus Elmer T Lee, who died in 2013 at the age of 93.

Uncle Nearest 1856 Premium Aged Whiskey



Price: £55 (US\$66.37)

In the Tennessee – Super Premium heat, a Gold medal was handed to Uncle Nearest 1856 Premium Aged Whiskey for its “really interesting” flavours, such as “passion fruit cheesecake”. Bottled at 50% abv, Uncle Nearest 1856 Premium Whiskey is produced in Tennessee using a combination of corn and rye, and is put through the Lincoln County Process before being aged in new American oak barrels.

Balcones Texas No 1 Single Malt



Price: £79.99 (US\$96.55)

Storming to success in the Single Malt – Ultra Premium category was Gold medallist Balcones Texas No.1 Single Malt, with its flavours of “pink pepper, wheat and mulberry”. Texas-based Balcones Distilling uses “classic techniques and ingredients adapted for New World tastes” to create the 53% abv expression.

Old Forester Rye Whiskey



Price: US\$23

The Rye – Premium round delivered a Gold medal to Brown-Forman's Old Forester Rye Whiskey, which judges said had “cracking rye spice”. “This was textbook – and light for the abv,” noted one judge.

The 50% abv expression was made with a historic recipe, acquired in 1940 by Owsley Brown I, and features a mash bill of 65% rye, 20% malted barley, and 15% co

retail.



Fiery finish: Lagavulin 10 Year Old is said to be full of ‘intense’ spice and smoke on the palate

The single malt has been matured in a combination of ex-Bourbon, refill and newly-charred rejuvenated casks before being bottled at 43% abv.

The whisky is said to be initially ‘sweet and salty’ on the palate with an ‘intense spicy and smoky finish’.

Dr Craig Wilson, master of malts at [Lagavulin](#) owner [Diageo](#), said: ‘The different wood types used have helped create a whisky with a fiery yet light, and smoky yet smooth character – one that is filled with surprising contrasts.

‘To many people, Lagavulin is the definitive Islay malt and, like other members of the family, this new expression has a charming exuberance.’

Priced at £50 per 70cl bottle, Lagavulin 10 Year Old is exclusive to Dufry, a travel retailer operating more than 2,300 stores in 63 countries.

The 10 Year Old was first unveiled at [Fèis Ile 2019](#) – the Islay Festival of Music and Malt – alongside the distillery’s [19-year-old festival exclusive](#) expression.

BOWMORE DRAGON EDITION HONOURS RARE WHISKY

09 August 2019 by [Becky Paskin](#)

Bowmore is releasing a 36-year-old single malt matured in the same parcel of Sherry casks used to create the rare Bowmore Sea Dragon.



Mythical status: Bowmore Dragon Edition pays tribute to the distillery’s Sea Dragon malts

Bowmore Dragon Edition is the first in a series of four whiskies being released in honour of the ‘Four Guardians’ that feature in Chinese mythology – the Azure Dragon of the East, the Vermilion Bird of the South, the White Tiger of the West, and the Black Turtle (also called Black Warrior) of the North.

The Dragon Edition has been created from the same parcel of casks used for the Bowmore 30 Year Old Sea Dragon released in a ceramic bottle in the 1990s, as well as two later editions bottled in glass in 2006 and 2012.

Containing some much-revered Bowmore single malt distilled in the 1960s, the now rare expressions have become regarded as classic examples of the Islay distillery's character at the time. David Turner, [Bowmore](#) distillery manager, said: 'This new expression is a homage to the 30 Year Old Sea Dragon that's been much loved and collected by Bowmore fans across China. 'We've taken this amazing legacy and renewed it for the next generation of whisky drinkers.'



Rare icon: Bowmore Sea Dragon was a 30-year-old whisky released in the 1990s

Just 888 bottles of the Bowmore Dragon Edition are being made exclusively available at [Whisky L Shanghai](#) (10-12 August), and through selected retailers in China.

Matured exclusively in ex-Sherry casks, the whisky is said to have aromas of 'tropical fruit, toffee apple and caramelised orange', with notes of 'dried fruits... roasted coffee beans and dark chocolate' on the palate.

Bowmore Dragon Edition will be available to purchase for US\$2,000 per bottle.

GLENLIVET 14 YEAR OLD DEBUTS AS US EXCLUSIVE

30 July 2019 by Matt Evans

Speyside distillery Glenlivet has released Glenlivet 14 Year Old, a new US-exclusive single malt finished in ex-Cognac casks, as part of the distillery's efforts to 'open up to a new generation of whisky drinkers'.



New recruiter: The 'fruity' Glenlivet 14 is part of the distillery's effort to attract new drinkers

The whisky, said to contain notes of 'moist raisins, chocolate and liquorice', has been bottled at 40% abv.

Alan Winchester, [Glenlivet](#) master distiller, said: 'We crafted the Glenlivet 14 Year Old with the curious single malt community in mind – the blend of rich Cognac-cask flavour influences and our signature

fruity, smooth style are guaranteed to captivate single malt drinkers looking to explore.

'Having spent time with whisky drinkers in the US, you can see the passion for original single malt innovation growing and we're confident the whisky will be a success with those looking to explore new flavour frontiers.'

Priced at US\$55 per 750ml bottle, Glenlivet 14 Year Old is available from specialist US retailers from July.

The distillery plans to donate US\$1 from each bottle sold to The Purple Heart Foundation, a charity created to enhance the quality of life of wounded veterans and their families, with a guaranteed minimum donation of US\$50,000 and up to a maximum of US\$100,000.

The expression's [revamped purple packaging](#) matches the colour used for Glenlivet's other Cognac-finished expression, the [Glenlivet Captain's Reserve](#), which claimed to be the 'first major single malt finished in Cognac casks' when it launched in 2018.

Glenlivet also released the [Glenlivet Enigma](#) – part of its mystery series of whiskies, sold without details or tasting notes – as a US exclusive in June 2019.

OBAN OLD TEDDY HONOURS DISTILLERY FAMILY

31 July 2019 by Becky Paskin

Oban is celebrating 'three generations of whisky craftsmanship' with the launch of Oban Old Teddy, a new distillery exclusive single malt.

Generation game: Oban Old Teddy honours one of the distillery's most dedicated families

Oban Old Teddy is being released in honour of the Maclean family, three generations of which have served at the west coast distillery.

'Old Teddy', after whom the expression is named, worked at [Oban](#) as master distiller in 1953. His son, 'Young Teddy', joined in 1985, followed by grandson Derek in 2017.

Derek Maclean, senior operator at Oban said: 'This unique bottling is a celebration of our heritage and pays homage to my grandfather, whose fine craftsmanship has been preserved in the heart and soul of the distillery at Oban.'



'This bottling is inspired by Old Teddy's warm and gentle nature, physical strength and pride as dedicated maltster. It is a dram he would be proud of.'

Matured in ex-bodega Sherry casks and refill casks, Oban Old Teddy is described as having notes of 'dried fruits, gentle vanilla, citrus peel... honey and sticky toffee pudding'.

The expression is bottled at 51.7% abv without an age statement. Just 3,960 bottles are available to purchase exclusively at the distillery from July for £150 per 70cl bottle.

Gordon & MacPhail bottles whiskies from closed distilleries

29th July, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Independent bottler Gordon & MacPhail has unveiled its new Summer Collection, which includes some of the oldest whisky releases from silent distilleries St Magdalene and Dallas Dhu.



Gordon & MacPhail 1969 from Dallas Dhu Distillery has an RRP of £6,950

The range comprises Gordon & MacPhail 1969 from Dallas Dhu Distillery, Gordon & MacPhail 1982 from St Magdalene Distillery, and Gordon & MacPhail 1966 from Longmorn Distillery. The expressions were bottled as part of the producer's Private Collection range. With an RRP of £6,950 (US\$8,556), Gordon & MacPhail 1969 from Dallas Dhu Distillery was filled into a refill Sherry hogshead, cask number 1656, on 10 June 1969.

The Speyside distillery closed in 1983. It was designed by architect Charles Doig, who also designed the Gordon & MacPhail retail shop in Elgin.

Only 176 bottles of the 38-year-old single malt will be available globally.

Gordon & MacPhail 1982 from St Magdalene Distillery is thought to be one of the oldest bottled single malts from the Lowlands distillery.

St Magdalene was initially known as Linlithgow Distillery until its merger with Bonnytown Farm Distillery in 1826.

Laid down the year before the distillery closed, the Gordon & MacPhail 1982 from St Magdalene Distillery was matured in cask number 2092, a refill American hogshead. Only 161 bottles are available to purchase from select whisky retailers internationally for an RRP of £1,000 (US\$1,231).

In addition, the Gordon & MacPhail 1966 from Longmorn Distillery is a 53-year-old single malt whisky matured in cask number 610, a first-fill Sherry butt. It is limited to 398 bottles globally, with an RRP of £6,950 (US\$8,556).

Each expression is bottled in a bespoke crystal decanter and presented in a wooden case.

Stephen Rankin, director of prestige at Gordon & MacPhail, said: "Our Private Collection whiskies embody the expertise, skill and patience that has been passed down over four generations of my family.

"My grandfather, George Urquhart, recognised an opportunity to match new make spirit with carefully selected casks at a time when the vast majority of production went into blends. Over the decades he was able to master this art which has become his legacy.

"He could never be persuaded to bottle a whisky before he believed it had reached its ultimate peak in terms of quality – a tradition we're proud to continue today."

Diageo unveils 2019 Special Releases

24th July, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Diageo has named the eight whiskies in its 2019 Special Releases collection, which celebrates the surroundings of each Scotch distillery in the range.



Full details of Diageo's 2019 Special Releases will be unveiled soon

The Johnnie Walker maker has teased the launch of this year's much-awaited Special Releases range, which features eight limited edition whiskies, as opposed to the usual 10.

Selected by master blender Dr Craig Wilson, the 2019 Special Releases follows the theme of 'Rare by Nature'. Each expression is said to deliver a "different journey of discovery" and connects to a "particular part of Scotland" and the people who shaped it.

The group of "one-of-a-kind" whiskies comprises: Mortlach 26 Year Old, The Singleton Glen Ord 18 Years Old, Cragganmore 12 Years Old, Cardhu 14 Years Old, Lagavulin 12 Years Old, Talisker 15 Years Old, Pittyvaich 29 Years Old and Dalwhinnie 30 Years Old.

Cardhu 14 Years Old is described as an "elegant and unique" expression while the "complex" Cragganmore 12 Years Old combines "Speyside elegance with a touch of spice and smoke".

The Dalwhinnie 30 Years Old is described as an "extra matured and unusual older expression, which retains its undeniably gentle character".

The collection also includes the "youthful" Lagavulin 12 Years Old, a "most impressive" Mortlach 26 Years Old, and a "mature and smooth" 29-year-old single malt from the silent Pittyvaich distillery. Rounding off the series is a "sweet, yet deep and spicy" Talisker 15 Years Old layered with maritime flavours, and The Singleton of Glen Ord 18 Years Old, which is described as a "different and delicious spicier expression previously never bottled". Diageo will reveal details of pricing, full tasting notes and availability soon.

LOCH LOMOND 2002 KERR CELLARS RED WINE CASK-FINISHED

Style: Single malt

Origin: Scotland (Highlands)

Age: 16 years old

Proof: 48.1% ABV

Price: \$200

Release: June 2019

Availability: 4,000 bottles

Need to know:

Distilled in 2002, this single malt spent most of its life in bourbon casks before undergoing a 10-month finish in pinot noir casks from [Kerr Cellars](#), a California winery owned by pro golfer Cristie Kerr.

Whisky Advocate says:

I met with Cristie Kerr last week to talk scotch, wine, and how the collaboration with Loch Lomond makes sense for her [both professionally and personally](#).

DEANSTON 2006 CREAM SHERRY CASK-FINISHED

Style: Single malt

Origin: Scotland (Highlands)

Age: 13 years old

Proof: 54.2% ABV

Price: \$105

Release: September 2019

Availability: 2,000 bottles, including 480 bottles for the U.S.

Need to know:

Distilled on January 27, 2006, this whisky matured first in refill hogsheads. On May 19, 2016, it was transferred into cream sherry hogsheads for a lengthy finish—nearly three years.

DEANSTON DRAGON'S MILK STOUT CASK-FINISHED

Style: Single malt

Origin: Scotland (Highlands)

Age: Not stated

Proof: 50.5% ABV

Price: \$70

Release: September 2019

Availability: 1,914 bottles

Need to know:

Distilled in December 2012, this single malt matured first in re-charred casks, then was transferred to Dragon's Milk stout barrels from Michigan's [New Holland Brewing](#) in October 2017.

Whisky Advocate says:

Both of these Deanstons have relatively unusual finishes. While sherry casks are totally ordinary for scotch, they're usually oloroso or PX; much less common is cream sherry, a style that usually blends dry sherry with sweet, or even with grape must. Meanwhile, beer barrel-finished whisky has become a part of the canon now, but the fact that Deanston used New Holland beer barrels for this finish is interesting—especially considering that New Holland makes [bourbon](#) and [rye](#) finished in Dragon's Milk stout barrels.



BUNNAHABHAIN 1988 MARSALA CASK-FINISHED

Style: Single malt

Origin: Scotland (Islay)

Age: 30 years old

Proof: 47.4% ABV

Price: \$625

Release: November 2019

Availability: 1,260 bottles, including 240 bottles for the U.S.

Need to know:

Distilled on December 1, 1988, this whisky matured in “traditional oak” (i.e. ex-bourbon, probably second- or third-fill) casks until July 7, 2016, when it was transferred to marsala casks.

Whisky Advocate says:

Marsala cask finishes are becoming more common; recent releases include a [limited-edition Knappogue Castle 12 year old](#), the most recent bottling of [Tullibardine The Murray](#), and [Red Spot](#).



- Tobermory 1999 Marsala Cask-Finished—55.7% ABV, \$190, 180 bottles in the U.S.
- Ledaig 1997 Manzanilla Cask-Finished—52.9% ABV, \$221, 228 bottles in the U.S.
- Bunnahabhain 2007 French Brandy Cask-Finished—52.5% ABV, \$125, 540 bottles in the U.S.
- Deanston 1997 Palo Cortado Cask-Finished—51.8% ABV, \$210, 360 bottles in the U.S.
- Deanston 2002 Organic Oloroso Cask-Finished—50.6% ABV, \$263, 480 bottles in the U.S.

Whisky Advocate says:

Crystal glassware producer Glencairn has reported its 15th consecutive year of growth after turnover reached £11.3 million (US\$14.2m) in the 12 months to April 2019.



Glencairn team l-r: Jason Kennedy, sales director; Gordon Brown, marketing director; Paul Davidson, managing director; Raymond Davidson, founder; James Crilly, purchasing director; Scott Davidson, new product development director

The Glasgow-based company, which is run by the Davidson family, has doubled sales every five years since 2004, when turnover amounted to £858,000 (US\$1.08m).

Demand for custom-made decanters for old and rare spirits has grown by a fifth in the last year, Glencairn said.

Growing demand in China boosted Glencairn sales over the last 12 months, while the US “continues to provide huge growth” for the firm, representing £4m (US\$5m) of the business – almost £1m (US\$1.3m) of which came from online sales.

Scott Davidson, new product development director at Glencairn, said: “We are so proud of the success we have achieved in this past year.

“Our hardworking team and the worldwide growth of the spirits market, specifically whisky, has meant that we have been able to capitalise on what we do best – provide clients with a high-end customer service they can’t get anywhere else.

“Above all else, we continue to put our customers and their needs first – something that is demonstrated through 15 years of continued growth.”

GlenAllachie releases Wood Finish range

5th July, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

Speyside distillery The GlenAllachie has released a new limited edition range of single malts, which have been finished in a variety of casks including Port, rye and Sherry.



The GlenAllachie Wood Finish range of whiskies have been aged in Port, rye and Sherry casks

The GlenAllachie Wood Finish range comprises the eight-year-old Koval Rye Quarter Cask Wood Finish, 10-year-old Port Wood Finish, and 12-year-old Pedro Ximénez Sherry Wood Finish.

Koval Rye Quarter Cask Wood Finish was first matured in American oak barrels and then underwent additional maturation in organic rye quarter casks from Chicago’s Koval Distillery. The larger liquid-to-

Glencairn celebrates 15 years of consecutive growth

15th July, 2019 by Melita Kiely

wood ratio in the smaller casks is said to “rapidly” release the “rich spicy flavour” of the rye.

The 10-year-old Port Wood Finish was initially matured in American oak barrels before being re-racked into vintage ruby Port wood pipes from north Portugal. The Port wood influence is said to add “flavour, depth and complexity” to the liquid, with “sweet notes of heather honey, butterscotch and treacle”.

Described as a “rich sumptuous whisky with great depth”, Pedro Ximénez Sherry Wood Finish was matured for more than 10 years in American oak wood barrels before its additional maturation in pedro ximénez puncheons. This process “enriches the flavour, creating a sweeter, fruitier whisky”.

To create the range, [master distiller Billy Walker](#) first hand-selected barrels from 50,000 casks in the 16 warehouses at the distillery near Aberlour for the additional maturation period.

Walker sourced casks from an array of bodegas and distilleries that shared his “culture of careful wood management” and also from those who he had established relationships with during his career.

“I’m incredibly excited to unveil this new range featuring GlenAllachie’s first-ever range of wood finishes,” said Walker.

“Wood management is something I’m very passionate about and we invest a substantial amount of time and money into sourcing exceptional casks from all around the world.

“I look for casks that will complement and enhance the GlenAllachie spirit, with the different woods making a greater, or sometimes subtle, influence, and taking us on a journey of new flavours.”

“The rich golden Rye Quarter Cask delivers a hit of spice and cloves with classic GlenAllachie characteristics of honey and butterscotch, whereas the ruby red Port pipe has a sweeter and fruitier flavour, with honey, damson and rose hips.

“Finally the Pedro Ximénez, deep rich mahogany in colour, delivers what the eye promises; raisins, sultanas, toffee and dark chocolate.

“With this first release you can see the impact that a quality and carefully chosen cask can have on our whisky, from the amazing array of colours to the intensity of flavours in the final whisky.”

Koval Rye Quarter Cask Wood Finish and Port Wood Finish are both priced at £54.99 (US\$69), while the Pedro Ximénez Sherry Wood Finish has an RRP of £58.99 (US\$74).

In May this year, GlenAllachie [opened its new visitor centre](#) and launched an exclusive single cask bottling for the Spirit of Speyside Festival.

HOW CAN WE FACE DOWN THE WHISKY FLIPPERS?

03 July 2019 by [Dave Broom](#)

He’s not one given to black moods, my distiller friend; so what he said was more with baffled resignation than despair. He’d been doling out some of his whisky in the pub. Under the table. You wouldn’t want to draw attention to the fact that you were reducing the takings.

Not that there was any fear of that. The drams were simply top-ups. Tasting samples. In any case, as the landlord had wandered over, empty [Glencairn](#) in hand, there seemed to be tacit approval of the behaviour.

We were all eager to try the wares that he’d carried down from the distillery in a rucksack. ‘I’m on the train,’ he’d told me. ‘We might have got thirsty... In any case, I thought people might be interested.’ We were.



Sip versus sell: How many new Scotch whiskies will end up in collections?

He told me how some of them were to be bottled soon. ‘But you’ll possibly be some of the only people to try them.’ I must have looked bemused. Or more bemused than usual. I know that single casks are, by nature, limited; a few hundred bottles for the market, maybe the world.

‘At times I wonder if anyone has ever tried any of my whisky,’ he went on. ‘I put it out, people buy it, and then I see the bottle on an auction site for twice or three times the amount I sold it for. I suppose some might be holding on to it for a special occasion, but I reckon [most are flipping them](#). No-one really knows what it tastes like... want to try this one?’

A few days later, back at home, I was chatting to a blender/bottler. ‘We’ve become a cult,’ she said. ‘Great,’ I responded, ‘... that’s what you want.’

‘Well...’ she replied. ‘We released a small batch for sale locally. It sold out within 24 hours. People were driving from all over to get a bottle.’

‘That’s amazing,’ I replied.

‘Aye, well,’ she went on. ‘The thing is, it’s now on auction sites for four times the initial cost. It worries me. I’m not a big fan of [collector madness](#), but suddenly we are hot.’

Both are new players trying to build their reputations on the strength of their liquid, but the liquid is of no concern to the flippers. All that matters is the name, the rarity. Whisky is irrelevant; this is speculation which revolves around the reward, which could be achieved by some commodity.



Spirit of sharing: Newer distilleries such as Daftmill want whisky fans to taste their Scotch

The nature of the product doesn’t matter, only the potential profit. It’s pork futures, the orange harvest, coffee. It’s like buying a rare record and never taking it out of the wrapping; it’s having a piece of art and keeping it in a bank vault.

Will it stop? Of course it won’t, and therein lies the problem. Think of the number of [new distilleries due to open](#) in the next few years. All will be standing there, proud parents showing their newborn to the world, only for it to be snatched away and hidden until the market decides.

At the moment, the only way to try and dampen down the rampant speculation is by using the blunt weapon of price. Distillers ask more – and you can see why – so retailers then have to adjust accordingly.

The result? The real [whisky lover is still priced out](#).

The other consequence is that some established distillers, having seen the way in which this area of the market is moving, are releasing whiskies purely to satisfy the speculators.

Let’s see how high we can push it. Have a lovely pack to lure them in. They’ll make the money eventually and we’ve at least pocketed a decent return. Can the whisky reflect the packaging and justify the price? You’d hope it would... Cynical? Moi?

Are there any other ways around it? I asked my distiller friend. ‘I don’t know,’ he said. ‘I’ve been wondering whether I should only sell them at the distillery and open each bottle when they buy one,’ he mused.

Perhaps someone can invent some sort of device that pops the cork after three months. Until some solution is found, maybe distillers will have to sit in pubs, pouring drams under the table.

WHAT ARE 'LEGS' DOING IN MY WHISKY?

29 May 2019 by [The Whisky Professor](#)

Don't worry, your whisky's not been flavoured by some hairy Scotsman's pins. Whisky 'legs' are the trails left on the inside of the glass post-swirling, and can actually reveal more information about your whisky than you'd think. The Whisky Professor explains.



Whisky trails: The liquid's reaction in the glass can give clues as to how it will taste

Dear Prof,

I was at a tasting the other day and the person giving it began talking about how the whisky had 'legs'. I must confess I didn't quite understand what he was meaning. Can you help?

Mark Rourke, Peterborough



Trail of information: Whisky legs contain some fun facts about your dram, says the Prof

Dear Mark,
Many thanks for your question. It's an important one. When we are tasting whisky we are using all of our senses, not just smell and taste. Our eyes can give us clues

as to how a whisky might behave on our palate.

The colour of the whisky (as long as no [caramel tinting](#) has taken place) will give us an idea as to what type of oak cask has been used. Ex-Sherry casks have a deeper mahogany shade than the rich gold of ex-Bourbon. A pale colour in an old whisky indicates both a refill cask and a lack of interaction (which is a different question, if anyone cares to ask it).

The next stage is to look at those 'legs' you were mentioning. When you swirl a whisky, some of the liquid sticks to the side of the glass and then begins to form trails as it flows back into the bowl. These are the legs, although I have also heard people use terms such as 'tears' or 'cathedral windows'.

Why would this be the case? It is to do with alcohol having a lower surface tension than water. The agitation of the whisky results in it coating the inside surface of the glass (thanks to capillary action). Because the alcohol is more volatile than the water, it starts to evaporate more rapidly and lose strength.



Oak influence: Extractives from the cask will affect the weight of a whisky's legs

As there is now more water, so the surface tension is increased. This then pulls some of the whisky up the sides of the glass. This then coheres and falls back under its own weight into the mass of liquid as 'legs'.

This was first explained by Glaswegian physicist James Thomson in 1855, though his eureka moment doesn't appear to have been stimulated by taking a dram. Today, it is known as the Marangoni Effect, which records the flow of liquid caused by surface tension gradients.

The question is: what does it tell you? As you can see from the Marangoni Effect, the legs are an indication of strength. But the speed at which the legs flow down the side of the glass, and their thickness, will also give you an indication as to the character of the whisky. Although viscosity is a different area, it is clear that higher levels of oak extractives and other oils will contribute to the speed and weight of the legs. The legs therefore help give you an idea of strength, spirit character and the level of interaction (I'm wary to say age) of the whisky.

Put simply, the more rapidly the legs move, the lighter the whisky will be in the mouth; the thicker and slower they are, the heavier it will feel. The inside of the glass therefore can be said to replicate in some way the inside of your mouth.

There are two other ways in which your eyes can help to assess a whisky's character. The first is the 'beading' test which involves shaking the (closed) bottle of whisky and seeing if a ring of bubbles forms on its surface. You can also do this by covering the glass with your hand and shaking vigorously. The more persistent these beads are, the higher the strength of the whisky will be. No beads will form in a mature whisky if it is under 50% abv.



Under the microscope: A close look at the glass can uncover information about the whisky

Oak extractives will also have a part to play. New make, for example, will not form a bead. Beading can therefore give you an indication of cask influence as well as strength. Again, it is an example of the Marangoni effect.

The final use of sight comes when you add water to a mature whisky. If you cup the whisky in your hand as you do this gently, you will observe coils forming in the liquid. These are known as viscometric whorls (the overall effect is called viscometry).

While there is debate over the science – it could be caused by an exothermic reaction from adding cold water to the whisky, or might be a visual manifestation of a pressure wave – it is another clue as to the feel of the whisky. The more persistent the viscometry, the higher the strength and thicker its mouthfeel.

There are exceptions to this. It is noticeable that mature grain whisky has a lower viscometric level than single malt, leading to some viscometric researchers to claim they can estimate the grain content in blends. It has also been observed that, in general, Japanese whisky has less viscometry than Scotch. The whorls, it has been claimed, also rotate in a counter-clockwise direction in the southern hemisphere, but I have not been able to verify this claim.

I hope that this helps to answer your question. Remember when tasting, use all of your senses.

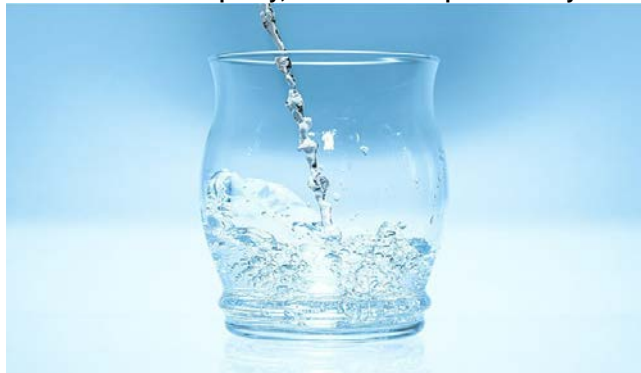
Yours, Prof

AM I ADDING THE WRONG WATER TO MY WHISKY?

25 June 2019 by [The Whisky Virgin](#)

Just as The Whisky Virgin wraps his head around the debate of adding water to a dram of Scotch, he discovers a whole new

dispute bubbling just below the surface: whether some types of water are of inferior quality, and can even spoil a whisky's flavour.



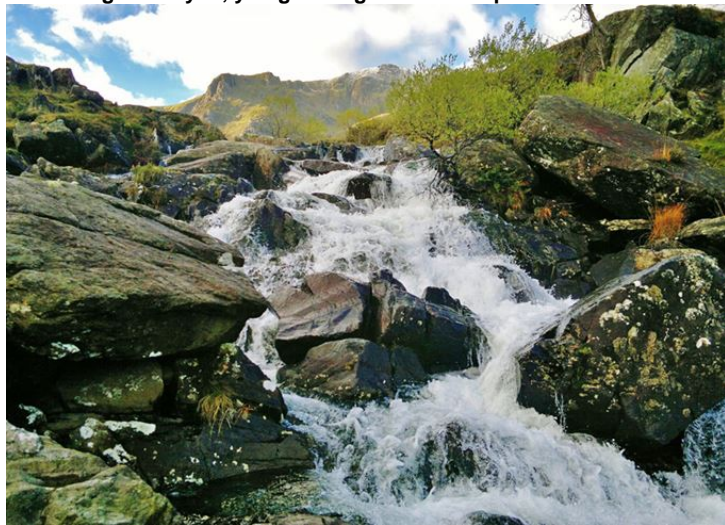
Murky waters: Do certain types of water have a negative affect on a whisky's taste?

When I first started out on my voyage of whisky discovery I wasn't sure what the deal was with adding water to a dram. I worried that by adding a few drops to turn down the heat I'd out myself as a total newbie. But it seems that after years of Scotch-fuelled debate and some scientific studies, this is a closed case.

The verdict: it's fine to [drop a little water in your whisky](#) if you feel like it. Turns out reaching for the water jug is just a way to fine-tune your whisky to suit your palate. I even hear tell that doing this can bring different flavours out of a whisky. Sounded good to me. But then I came across a question that changed everything.

What *kind* of water should you add to whisky?

Uh, the regular kind? Two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen? Comes out of the tap... from the ground? Is there really a wrong sort of water? Goddammit whisky! Every time I feel like I've understood something about you, you go and get more complicated.



Naturally sourced: Some whisky fans will only add mineral spring water to their Scotch

So apparently, debate rages about the [best water for optimum whisky slugging](#). Some veteran drinkers go so far as to say the chemicals and impurities in tap water will muss up the flavours in a Scotch, even if you only add a few drops. Such purists seem to think that we should be buying de-ionised or distilled water to up our dilution game. Others reckon the best is natural spring water, bottled straight from the source in Scotland, if you can get it. I'm not totally sure what de-ionised water is or what sort of environment-hating, millionaire super-villain you'd have to be to get special water shipped to you from whisky country, but my interest was piqued. It makes sense to me that regular water can carry flavours and smells that might get in the way of serious whisky sniffing. I live in London, and while the tap water here is totally chill to drink, it also has a certain dog-in-a-swimming-pool thing going on. I'd never thought about it before, but it seemed totally possible that cutting my drams with a drop of the Thames could compromise their integrity. Had I really been ruining precious whisky with inferior H₂O?

Some specialist water dealers out there seem to say so.

I just learned about a company called Uisge Source (which sounds Scottish AF) that bottles water captured from the wild, up in Scotland's different whisky-producing regions. The idea, I guess, is

to have Speyside water with Speyside whisky and so-on. Now I can tell you, having been there recently, that Islay water has its own particular honk, but do I really need to pay someone to ship it all the way from the literal Hebrides to accentuate my Islay whisky? Is that a homeopathy thing?

Another aspiring player in the whisky water game called Larkfire just dropped, a rival Scotch water in little minibar-sized cans. Their website also says I'm killing whisky with chlorine if I put tap water in it. Huge if true.



Wild liquid: Larkfire sources its water from the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides

I wanted to test this theory but both of these authentically Scottish waters work out about £40-45 a litre. Which isn't far shy of some of my go-to brands of Scotch. Getting whisky-wise is already expensive enough for a cash-strapped millennial like myself, what with all the necessary investment in booze and special glasses, and my planned sleeve tattoo of [Jim 'The Sniffer' Murray](#). Now I'm supposed to drop dollar on special water?

I'm not made of money, like.

I still want to find out if water changes the flavour of whisky, but I reckon it can be done on a budget.

The corner shop by my gaff sells a couple of brands of water with thistles and stuff on them that claim to be something to do with the Highlands, so I grabbed one of these for on-brand testing. I couldn't find any distilled water but one of my seven housemates is from the north and says you can't make a proper cup of tea with southern tap water, so I was able to cop a glass of filtered from her Brita. Two types of water secured, I set up at the kitchen table with a bottle of Scotch and a control sample from the tap to do some mother-flipping science.



Individual preference: Whisky drinkers should add whichever water they think tastes best

Did 'better' water make my dram taste better?

I want to say yes, I really do. I want to make out that I have such a rad sense of taste that I can sniff out a couple parts per millilitre of chlorine in a dram, like a princess feels a pea under her mattress – but I just don't think I do.

If you do, congrats. Have fun buying special water.

Don't get me wrong, I get that water can change place-to-place. But whisky is big, bold stuff and after my highly scientific drinking session I've decided it's probably pretty hard for a few drops of water to hurt it. It was also pointed out to me while I was looking into this business that most [whisky has water added](#) to it before it's bottled anyway, and there's no guarantee that that stuff came from an ancient waterfall in Glen MacKilty either. I reckon if I'm planning some serious, straight-faced, no-laughing-matter whisky tasting I'll think about getting some filtered water in, because I reckon it was the most neutral. But some common bottled would also probably be fine. Even if it doesn't contain magic Scottish minerals, or whatever.

The stuff that costs £1 a can? Nah, pal. I may be a whisky virgin, but I'm not whisky daft.

Aberdeen 'could be birthplace of Scotch whisky'

19th July, 2019 by Nicola Carruthers

The city of Aberdeen could have been the site of the first Scotch whisky still, according to researchers who came across a record from 1505.



Early findings of Scotch whisky references "could significantly change our understanding of the origins of our national drink"
Researchers from the University of Aberdeen found a 1505 record for a still making 'aquavite' – Latin for 'water of life' and the Middle Scots word for what is now known as whisky – in the city's Unesco-recognised Burgh Records.

Dr Claire Hawes discovered the document as she was deciphering the 1.5 million words in Aberdeen's municipal registers, the earliest and most complete collection for any Scottish town, to make them available online.

It is thought to be the earliest found mention of a Scotch whisky still and its descriptor suggests the equipment was used to create spirit for drinking, rather than to be used in the preparation of gunpowder. However, it is not the first reference to whisky, which is widely recognised as being in 1494 when King James IV ordered malt to be sent to make 'aquavite'.

The reference to the still appears in the inquest into the inheritance arising from the death of Sir Andrew Gray, held by the bailie court of Aberdeen on 20 June 1505.

Gray died in December 1504 and among his possessions was a still, which he is thought to have used during his lifetime.

"This is the earliest record directly mentioning the apparatus for distilling aquavite, and that equipment was at the heart of renaissance Aberdeen where at this time our own university had just been founded and the educational communities of humanism, science and medicine were growing," said the University of Aberdeen's Dr Jackson Armstrong, who led the project to transcribe the Burgh Records.

"This find places the development of whisky in the heart of this movement, an interesting counterpoint to the established story of early aquavite in Scotland within the court of King James IV.

"What is more, some other early references to aquavite refer to the spirit used in the preparation of gunpowder for the king. The Aberdeen still being for aquavite and rose water may suggest, by contrast, that it was for making whisky to drink."

'Significant find'

The Aberdeen record shows that the aquavite still was in the hands of a George Barbour at the time of the hearing and he was ordered to hand over possession to Gray's heir, dean Robert Kervour.

"This is a very significant find in the history of our national drink. It reframes the story of Scotch whisky and suggests new layers of complexity in Scotland's urban history," added Armstrong. Researchers have now been awarded £15,000 (US\$18,790) in funding from Pernod Ricard's Scotch whisky arm Chivas Brothers. It will fund new research into the still and associated stories from the *Aberdeen Registers Online*.

Hawes said the funding would allow the research team to uncover further details of the origins of whisky in Aberdeen.

"All references to aquavite or whisky from this period are significant because its early development is largely unrecorded," she explained. "Others such as the first ever reference to malt for the King in 1494 are stand-alone references but what is really exciting here is that it is part of our extensive Burgh Records.

"That means we can trace those involved in the distillation of aquavite throughout the records, looking at their connections, where they lived, their professions and how all of this might be intertwined with the early development of Scotch whisky.

"This could significantly change our understanding of the origins of our national drink."

Karen Betts, chief executive of the Scotch Whisky Association, said: "This is an exciting discovery which adds to our understanding of the history of Scotch whisky distillation.

"The work that the University of Aberdeen has done to uncover new information about the origins of the industry is particularly timely given the surge in Scotch whisky distilling in recent years.

"All new distillers learn their craft from the past, and so ensure that the heritage and traditions of the industry are taken forward into the future."

Beam Suntory breaks ground on new distillery

26th July, 2019 by Melita Kiely

Jim Beam owner Beam Suntory is investing US\$60 million to increase production of its small batch Bourbons – including building a new distillery in Clermont, Kentucky.



Artist impression of the new distillery in Kentucky

Beam Suntory broke ground on the Fred B Noe Craft Distillery on Thursday (25 July), which is part of a US\$60m investment to bring back the James B Beam Distilling Co in Clermont, Kentucky. James B Beam Distilling Co was the firm's name after Prohibition and will be the name of Beam Suntory's Clermont operations from now on.

Furthermore, Beam Suntory plans to "elevate" its visitor centre with a tasting room, behind-the-scenes tours across all brands and the chance for guests to customise their own experiences.

Albert Baladi, president and CEO, Beam Suntory, said: "Beam Suntory is excited to honour our roots by investing in the James B Beam Distilling Co, and setting ourselves up for a bright future in Kentucky and around the world.

"With nearly 225 years behind us, we are proud of our history of entrepreneurialism, craftsmanship and innovation.

"As the world leader in Bourbon, we are thrilled to be laying the foundation for the next 225 years."

The Fred B Noe Craft Distillery has been named after seventh generation master distiller Fred Noe, and will produce small-batch Bourbons such as Booker's and Baker's. It will be situated on the James B Beam Distilling Co site.

It will also be the home of the Little Book brand, which was created by eighth generation Beam distiller Freddie Noe. Furthermore, the site will be used for experiments and research into fermentation and distillation techniques.

Freddie Noe commented: "At Beam Suntory, we like to say that we're all one big family and what we're beginning here today reinforces our leadership in Bourbon, and sets us up for the future.

"Now I can't think of anyone who's set up the future of Bourbon any better than my dad, so I can hardly begin to express my pride in naming this new distillery after him."

Beam Suntory recently gave a US\$5m donation to the University of Kentucky on behalf of Jim Beam to establish the [James B Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits](#).

At the start of July, a [fire broke out at a Jim Beam warehouse](#) in Kentucky – thought to have been started by a lightning strike – damaging 45,000 barrels of whiskey.

INTRODUCING ABERLOUR A'BUNADH ALBA

Speyside's Aberlour distillery is best known for its use of sherry casks in its flagship whisky brand [Aberlour A'bunadh](#). A'bunadh, a cask strength single malt, was first released in the 1990s. Now, Aberlour has unveiled the first line extension within the A'bunadh franchise: [Aberlour A'bunadh Alba](#). Instead of aging in ex-sherry casks as the original Aberlour A'bunadh does, A'bunadh Alba matures in first-fill American oak bourbon barrels.



Aberlour A'Bunadh & Aberlour A'Bunadh Alba / Photo Credit: Aberlour

The name "A'bunadh" means "of the origin" in Scotch Gaelic, while "Alba" means "Scotland". It also refers to *Quercus Alba*, the species of white oak used in the barrels that Alba matures in.

Aberlour A'bunadh Alba is non-chill filtered whisky bottled at a cask strength of 57.1% ABV, and is exclusive to the United States. Bottles are already showing up on shelves across the country and carry a suggested retail price of \$90 per 750ml bottle.

Fettercairn to launch two GTR-exclusive whiskies
9th September, 2019 by Amy Hopkins

Whyte & Mackay is to launch two travel retail-exclusive single malts from its Highland Scotch whisky distillery Fettercairn.



The two new whiskies are travel retail exclusives

Two new expressions – a 16-year-old and 23-year-old – will be available in the first quarter of 2020 for an RRP of £80 (US\$99) and £200 (US\$247) respectively. Both will be unveiled at the upcoming TFWA World Exhibition & Conference in Cannes.

The launch follows Fettercairn's "[premium range revamp in 2018](#)", which saw the introduction of four age-statement single malts: a 12-year-old, 28-year-old, 40-year-old and a 50-year-old, which has an RRP of £10,000 (US\$13,500).

The new range is now widely available in travel retail, however, the new 16-year-old and 23-year-old will be exclusive to the channel. Richard Trimby, travel retail director at brand owner Whyte & Mackay, said: "We are answering the travellers' thirst for newness. We know that single malt consumers in [global travel retail] like to

discover new flavours and find hidden gems, especially ones that are unique and exclusive to the channel.

"We're building on the momentum of the Fettercairn relaunch last year with these two new travel retail exclusives and by committing additional support in the channel for the established expressions. "To grab the attention of whisky enthusiasts, we have worked hard on making our expressions stand out on the shelf with our distinctive storytelling and new brand identity, bottle and packaging."

The Fettercairn range will be showcased alongside Whyte & Mackay's The Dalmore, Jura and Tamnavulin Scotch brands in Cannes.

SCOTCH MAKERS MUSTN'T GET TOO GREEDY

09 September 2019 by Rupert Patrick

Scotch whisky brands must refrain from escalating their prices too quickly or risk losing loyal fans, says Rupert Patrick, CEO of WhiskyInvestDirect. Instead of being driven by short-term profits, he argues, companies should take a long-term approach.

If you look at the Scotch whisky industry and the issue of giving consumers fair value, there is an underlying truth to consider. In real terms production costs have gone down over the past 20-30 years, so we can make Scotch cheaper than we have ever done. Of the three Ws – the whisky, wood and warehousing – none have really gone up in cost and we've become more efficient, with the big companies getting bigger and enjoying greater economies of scale. Even though successive governments, certainly in the UK, have hiked up tax on whisky, I believe we can still give great value to the consumer. We really don't need to be short-term and greedy. It's a subject that got me thinking outside the Scotch whisky box. In my 20s, when I was working in the wine trade, it was often the case that if the price of a top Bordeaux got too high you were better off buying the second wine. In the case of Château Latour, it was Forts de la Tour, which used to represent brilliant value for money because the value of the brand wasn't so much in the name. I suppose that is my benchmark of great value – where brand premium is not all being paid for upfront.

In my formative years in the whisky industry with [Ian Macleod Distillers](#), the firm's [Isle of Skye](#) eight-year-old blend was extraordinarily good and well priced back in the 1990s. I think that formed my views about value in Scotch whisky – this knowledge that you could produce great stuff at a fair price for the consumer. Since then there has been an upward spiral, with brands competing to outdo each other on price and gain a higher ranking on some whisky league table.

There is no question that the top is pulling up the bottom, and it's a bit like boardroom pay or London house prices. When the top apartments are going for tens of millions of pounds, it does have an effect on everything else and explains why the first rung on the property ladder is totally out of reach of anybody earning a reasonable wage of say, £30,000-50,000. We mustn't let whisky fall into that trap, and we won't.

Of course, the whisky people often point to is [Macallan](#). In its move upmarket I would imagine that some of those original Macallan drinkers have been left behind and I can think of a number of other brands that have been sucked into that whirlwind of escalating prices. But, while there's a tendency to talk a lot about such whiskies, I don't believe it's what's really happening in the market. There are plenty of examples of brands that are built on good value and pitched at the right level.

One of the first lessons I learned at business school was not to look at just an individual purchase from a customer, but to consider the potential lifetime value of that customer. If she or he is going to buy your product over five, 10 or 15 years, there is an extraordinary lifetime value you can build up. That's what the industry should be thinking about. Firms want to keep people in their brands and loyal to their whiskies, and you do that by being consistent with quality and fair with pricing. Once you have lost somebody, it's much harder to win them back. I know that from both the [James Eadie](#) blend and WhiskyInvestDirect.

It may be a generalisation, but I feel the brands that appear to offer the best value for money tend to come from the bigger companies, with the likes of [Johnnie Walker](#) Black Label, [Chivas Regal](#) or [Balvenie](#). These are really good whiskies that have been marketed and built up over centuries in a long-term way. Their owners know that if their production and sales are reasonably in sync, they will make good margins while at the same time being able

to give their consumers a fair price. The truth is Scotch can't operate in a vacuum. There are plenty of other whiskies and spirits out there if rising prices leave customers behind. Unfortunately, there has always been a disconnect between production and sales in the whisky industry and I suspect there always will be. In any big whisky company, the fastest turnover of staff is likely to be in sales and marketing. In an ideal world those responsible for incentivising the sales force would take the long view. If people were more accountable for the 5-, 10- or even 15-year performance of a brand, they would take fewer risks with price hikes. That said, I accept that with rarer, more expensive whiskies it makes sense to maintain a price that keeps the secondary market at bay. If you can cut out the middle man, the consumer does tend to get a much better deal. You only have to look at the supply chain for top Bordeaux wines which go from the château to the consumer via a courtier, a négociant, an importer and a retailer – that's five margins to look after. We also need to think about the historical context. If you go back to the 1980s and 1990s when Scotch whisky volumes began to pick up, 95% of it was blended Scotch, which was put under a lot of pressure. The value went down and so did the quality, thanks to a price war in the supermarkets. At the time we didn't give enough value to the real characteristics of Scotch whisky, that it is an aged spirit matured for at least three years. Hopefully we've learned lessons from that. However, I would argue that we have now probably [gone a little bit too far the other way](#). Maybe the pendulum needs to swing back towards the middle where Scotch whisky drinkers and the industry would be a lot more comfortable.

Does Whiskey Go Bad?

February 9, 2019

So there's this lone bottle of whiskey sitting in the pantry for as long as you can remember. It was probably bought in the '90s and sits there since. And sooner or later, you start to wonder: does whiskey go bad?

Or maybe you have a half-open bottle left from your birthday party last year, and you're not sure if it's still any good. It sits in the cupboard for over half a year already, so you expect that it might not taste good. And since you're definitely not a whiskey connoisseur, you're not quite sure if high-proof liquors go bad or not. You heard they last pretty much forever, but you'd prefer to know for sure before pouring yourself a glass.

If any of these wonderings and concerns sound familiar, this article is for you. In it, we go through storage, shelf life, and going bad of whiskey. If you think you could use additional info about this liquor, read on.

(credit:[eviloars](#))

How To Store Whiskey

Storing whiskey is similar to storing any other base liquor, like [vodka](#) or [rum](#). You should keep the bottle in a dark and cool place, away from sunlight and heat source. While neither of these factors will make the whiskey spoil, [they may affect the taste negatively](#). Thus you should avoid heat and often temperature changes.

When it comes to where exactly should the bottle sit, the pantry or a wine cellar are both perfect choices, but the kitchen works too. A liquor cabinet is another popular option, but make sure you do not keep the bottle on display, where sunlight can reach it.

Speaking of wine cellars, make sure you keep the whiskey [in an upright position](#), especially if it's a corked bottle. While that position is great for storing [wine](#), whiskey has much more alcohol in it than wine, and the cork won't be happy about being submerged in whiskey. Either the cork might disintegrate a bit, or the taste of whiskey will be affected, or both. If it's a bottle with a screw cap, that's less of an issue.

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Once you open the bottle, the most important thing is to seal it tightly each time you put it back into storage. And to retain the best quality, use the original cap or cork. If that's not an option, a wine stopper should do the trick, especially if you don't plan on keeping the bottle around for more than a few months. If the bottle is less than half full, and you don't expect to finish it anytime soon, pour the whiskey into a smaller one. This way it'll better retain its quality. As for where to keep the open bottle, nothing changes. It can still sit in the pantry, kitchen, or the cellar.

If you prefer to serve whiskey chilled, put it in the fridge in the afternoon, so it's ready for the night. Of course, nothing ill will happen if you decide to keep the bottle in the refrigerator all the time. How Long Does Whiskey Last

The first thing about the shelf life of whiskey that you should know is that [whiskey doesn't age once bottled](#). All the aging is done in the casks. So there's no point in trying to keep it around for as long as possible. It won't get better or anything. In other words, if you bought a bottle of whiskey in the '70s and stored it properly, it should taste almost the same in 2000 and 2030. I've used the word almost, because even a perfectly sealed bottle, over many years, will let some air inside. And the access to fresh air [alters the taste of alcohols](#).

While some producers put a best-by date on each bottle, that's either a formality or to make the potential buyers trust the product more. Either way, unopened whiskey lasts pretty much indefinitely. As I mentioned earlier, it might very slightly change its taste over time, but it won't spoil.

Once you open the bottle, whiskey is exposed to air, and the process of taste change somewhat accelerates. And at some point, the shift in taste will be so pronounced, that you might find the bad and decide to throw it out for quality purposes. But there's no way of telling when exactly will that happen. What's pretty certain is that the more alcohol in the bottle, the slower the taste degradation process. So if you have a fifth of a bottle left and it sits in the pantry for two years, it probably won't taste anywhere near it used to. That's why I recommend pouring the whiskey into a smaller bottle when the original one is less than half full.

Having said all of that about whiskey and air exposure, many people find that they like the whiskey more after a few days of opening the bottle. Once you unscrew the whiskey for the first time, the alcohol releases some of the volatile compounds and evens out the taste over the next few days. Any many people like such whiskey more than drinking it straight after uncorking or unscrewing for the first time.

Please note that the period for opened whiskey is only a rough estimate for the best quality.

How To Tell If Whiskey Is Bad

As I mentioned already a few times, whiskey doesn't really go bad. But of course, life happens, so if the bottle is leaky, the cork heavily damaged or moldy, just discard the alcohol. Same thing if it has developed an odd or funny smell. Please note that chances of either one of these happening are slim to none.

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There might be some sediment at the bottom of the bottle. That's quite typical for whiskey that's not filtered, and it's nothing to worry about. It might look weird or somewhat gross, but that's about it. Make sure you don't drink those particles though.

If everything about the whiskey seems fine, give it a sip, and decide what to do with it based on the taste. If it's good enough to drink, feel free to continue using it. Otherwise, it's probably time to let it go.

Membership and Dinner prices for 2019-2020

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Membership Fee: | \$50 (singles) \$75 (couples) |
| One Time Initiation Fee: | \$15 |
| Standard Dinner Fee: | \$70 (member) \$80 (non-member) |
| Christmas Dinner Fee: | \$75 (member) \$75 (non-member) |
| Robbie Burns Dinner Fee: | \$75 (member) \$85 (non-member) |
| June BBQ Dinner Fee: | \$80 (member) \$80 (non-member) |

Reservation policy

- The agreement with the Kitchen's requires that we provide seven (7) business days notice for them to guarantee accommodation for our requested numbers. To accommodate the Kitchen's needs and meet our contractual obligation with them; our members are requested to respond to the emailed invitation seven (7) business days prior to the respective dinner to guarantee a seat at the dinner. Following the RSVP date members will be placed on a waitlist.

- For these individuals the process will be as follows, using the Monday September 23rd, 2019 dinner date as an example:
- Dinner invitations will be sent out Friday August 23rd, 2019. Please respond to me (rdifazio04@gmail.com). I will then acknowledge that you have a seat. Please understand that if you do not receive a response you are not guaranteed a seat at the respective dinner. In such circumstances (e.g., computer glitches) please e-mail me again or call me (613-532-5285).
- Unless otherwise stated accommodation at the dinner will be guaranteed for all members who respond by Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm.
- Once the RSVP date has been achieved I will e-mail a spreadsheet informing everyone of their status and amount due.

Cancellation policy

- Using the same example as above, anyone who cancels anytime prior to Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm will be removed from the list.
- Anyone canceling between Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm and Monday September 23rd, 2019 will be expected to pay for the cost of the dinner and scotch (\$70). It is the responsibility of the member who cancels their (or their guest's) reservation to find a replacement. If I am asked to find a substitute and one is found, then the member will be asked to pay for 50% of their dinner cost.
- Anyone who fails to attend the Monday September 23rd, 2019 dinner without having cancelled and been successfully replaced will be expected to pay the full cost (\$70). A member will be responsible for their guest's cancellation (\$80).
- If a member asks to be included at the dinner between Friday September 6th, 2019 @ 6pm and Monday September 23rd, 2019, their name will be placed on a wait-list and be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.

Assigned / Reserved Seating

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

Perfume / Cologne and Whisky

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

Dinner Payments

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

Just a note because we care.

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

any other volunteers from liability or claims arising from these events.



Kingston Single Malt Society

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