

Kingston Single Malt Society

www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com

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

October 27th, 2017

VOLUME 11; NUMBER 4a



This evening's menu celebrating HIGHLAND PARK in the Company of Marc Laverdiere



MENU

Amuse Bouche Surprise

- THE SINGLE MALT WHISKY SOCIETY: HIGHLAND PARK 1989, 24 YEAR OLD "HUNTING HOUND ON HOLIDAY" VINTAGES 620211 | 750 mL bottle Price \$225.00 Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey, Single Malt Scotch 51.3% Alcohol/Vol

1st Course: Sunchoke Soup with Blue Cheese & Walnuts

- HIGHLAND PARK LEIF ERIKSSON VINTAGES 157743 | 700mL bottle, Price \$100.00
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 40.0% Alcohol/Vol.

2nd Course: Burrata, Fig, Mustardo, Pistachio, Pickled Fennel, Arugula

- HIGHLAND PARK 16 YEAR OLD SINGLE MALT VINTAGES 157743 | 700mL bottle, Price \$100.00
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 40.0% Alcohol/Vol.

3rd Course: Lamb Shank, Charred Onion, Honey, Cumin Glazed Root Vegetables, Crispy Parsnip

- HIGHLAND PARK 21-YEAR-OLD SINGLE MALT VINTAGES 260216 | 700mL bottle, Price \$459.95
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 47.5% Alcohol/Vol.

Dessert: Olive Oil Cake, Honey Comb, Spiced Stone Fruit

- HIGHLAND PARK VINTAGE 2001 LCBO 11882 | 750 mL bottle Price: \$79.95
Spirits, Scotch Whisky, 43.0% Alcohol/Vol.

- HIGHLAND PARK 15 YEAR OLD SINGLE MALT VINTAGES 11882 | 700mL bottle, Price \$92.95
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 43.0% Alcohol/Vol.

- HIGHLAND PARK MAGNUS VINTAGES 11882 | 700mL bottle, Price \$64.95
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 40.0% Alcohol/Vol.

- HIGHLAND PARK VOYAGE OF THE RAVEN VINTAGES 157743 | 700mL bottle, Price \$100.00
Spirits, Whisky, Scotch Whisky 41.3% Alcohol/Vol.

- HIGHLAND PARK FULL VOLUME LCBO 534305 | 750 mL bottle, Price \$129.95,
Spirits, Whisky/Whiskey 47.2% Alcohol/Vol.

- HIGHLAND PARK HARALD LCBO 11882 | 750 mL bottle Price: \$84.95
Spirits, Scotch Whisky, 43.0% Alcohol/Vol.
-

Highland Park: a brand history

26th July, 2017 by Tom Bruce-Gardyne - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

Hailing from the Orkney Islands in the far north of Scotland, Scotch whisky brand Highland Park turned to its Viking ancestry to entice consumers.



As Scotland's most northerly whisky distillery, Highland Park was always playing catch-up when virtually all it produced was used for blending. Being on the archipelago of Orkney, its distance from the big blenders in the Lowlands must have bumped up prices, though the Scotch remained a valued 'top dressing' for a number of blends. In the late 1970s, the distillery began bottling its single malt in earnest, letting it forge its own identity. At that point its far-flung remoteness became a virtue.

In 2004, Michael Jackson, the whisky writer, not the self-styled King of Pop, declared it to be 'the greatest all-rounder' among single malts – a phrase endlessly repeated by Highland Park's owner, Edrington. Brand director Jason Craig was unconvinced, however, and felt 'all-rounder' implied you were 'a jack of all trades' with no stand-out qualities. When he met Jackson he said: "Your quote haunts my brand." As for the distillery's other claim to fame, that it is Scotland's 'most northerly', he says: "It was almost as if they didn't know what else to say."

For Craig: "The positive struggle for the brand is that it has always been a great liquid, but it lacks emotion. But if you go to Orkney there's loads of emotion. It's an amazing place and not like anywhere else." He felt the packaging and marketing did not reflect the complexity of the whisky itself. The question was how to give Highland Park a stronger personality.



The answer came from Scandinavia. "I first worked on the brand from 2005 to 2010," says Craig. "At that time our Swedish importer always cheekily referred to Highland Park as 'the westernmost distillery in Sweden'." For centuries, Orkney and Shetland belonged to the Vikings until they were annexed by the Scots for the non-payment of a wedding dowry in 1469, equating to £9 million in today's money.

Highland Park's supposed founder was Magnus Eunson, who didn't wear a helmet with horns or carry an axe, but his ancestors may well have done. He was a lay preacher by day and a smuggler by night. The story goes that after he was arrested in 1798 he chose to become a legitimate distiller on the 'High Park' near the islands' capital, Kirkwall. Today, the distillery has a late-Victorian feel and appears to have changed little since its last big overhaul in 1907. It has retained its traditional floor maltings which supply one fifth of its needs.

Seeing the kilns and the smoke billowing from the pagoda roof is not just good for the visitor experience, says Craig. He believes it defines Highland Park because of the use of Orkney peat, which he says "burns longer and throws off more aromatics from the heather to give a softer smoke". The distillery has tried the cheaper option of peated malt from the mainland, but even from nearby Sutherland, the whisky was simply not the same. "There are cheaper, more efficient and less romantic ways of doing this," says Craig. "But the truth is great whiskies are not made on a spreadsheet. They're not created on Excel."



When he returned to Orkney after a stint at Cutty Sark, he says: "It dawned on me that what's underpinning the whole island is its Norse heritage. The modern-day descendants of Vikings are making our whisky, and one in three people here have Scandinavian DNA." He decided this had to be wired into the whole brand, not just a few special editions, though he admits he may have got slightly carried away



during "the teenage rebellion years".

In 2012, Highland Park unleashed its Valhalla collection, starting with Thor – the Norse god of thunder and lightning – followed by Loki, Freya and Odin. Today's Highland Park is more relaxed, and calls itself the Orkney single malt with a Viking soul. "It's a role we're comfortable with," says Craig. "We don't have to dress up in funny clothes and wear horny helmets."

That said, it depends on the market. Highland Park is huge in Sweden, second only to Laphroaig among single malts. It is growing rapidly in Denmark, is doing well in Germany, and is the fifth-best-selling single malt in the UK. In Europe there is no need to overplay what Craig calls "the Marvel-comic Viking", but in the US, he reckons: "You have to be a little more Kirk Douglas, a bit more old-school. In

America, we are still relatively new, we've been there for 10 years," he continues. "We're doing about 25,000 cases, which puts us with 10-15 whiskies all about the same size." Global sales total around 140,000 cases, up from 60,000 when he first worked on the brand, concentrated in northern Europe. Meanwhile, Asian markets are relatively untapped.

This fits well with Highland Park's stablemate Macallan, whose presence in Europe is relatively weak compared with in Asia and the US. With such a big beast hogging the limelight and Edrington's marketing spend, Craig admits to feeling overshadowed at first. "But as both brands have grown up, we've grown apart," he says. "We're very island, slightly rougher round the edges and a bit cultish."

Edrington's focus on the brand has sharpened, and 2017 looks set to be an exciting year, with new expression, Valkyrie, having launched in April, new packaging designs for a number of core expressions, and a revamped website with images from renowned Danish photographer Søren Solkær.

One early blender claimed he was converting to the idea that "Highland Park is the only whisky worth drinking, and that Johnnie Walker is only fit for selling to deluded Sassenachs". A juicy quote made all the sweeter, given that it comes from the striding man's grandson himself, Alexander Walker, in 1914.

1798 Highland Park is founded by Magnus Eunson

1826 The distillery gains its first licence

1898 The distillery is expanded to include four stills

1937 Highland Park is bought by Highland Distillers

1999 Highland Distillers becomes part of The Edrington Group

2012 The Viking-inspired Valhalla Collection is released

2017 The launch of new expression, Valkyrie

Highland Park honours founder with Magnus whisky

15th September, 2017 by Annie Hayes www.thespiritsbusiness.com

Edrington-owned Highland Park is celebrating the life and work of founder Magnus Eunson by launching a namesake whisky, exclusive to the US and Canada.



Highland Park is celebrating the life and work of founder Magnus Eunson with the launch of Magnus

A direct descendant of the Vikings that settled on Orkney hundreds of years ago, Eunson was a butcher and church officer by day, and a bootlegger by night.

Jason Craig, Highland Park brand director, said:

"Magnus Eunson set up his illicit still at a small cottage at High Park, overlooking Kirkwall and it remains the site of our home today. We say that our distillery was founded in 1798 – but in truth, that's just the year that the authorities finally caught up with Magnus – he was certainly making whisky before that!"

The label has been created in a decorative Viking art style called Urnes to complement the recently redesigned 12 and 18 Year Old packaging.

Based on Viking storytelling, the design features the legend of a lion locked in

battle with serpent-like dragons.

Gordon Motion, master whisky maker, said: "I wanted to create a whisky which had the lightly-peated characteristics familiar to the Highland Park family but with a sweeter and more profound vanilla flavour profile.

"The result is a whisky crafted using a high proportion of Sherry-seasoned American oak casks along with refill casks which give Magnus its citrus, vanilla and lightly smoky taste."

Bottled at 40% abv, Magnus is available from specialty spirits retailers and bars for the RRP of US\$39.99 for a 750ml bottle.

HIGHLAND PARK MAGNUS

4th October, 2017 - www.scotchwhisky.com

SCORE78

Scoring explained:

PRICE BAND: £ £ £ £ £

ABV: 40%

PRODUCTION TYPE: *Single malt whisky*

REGION: *Islands*

FLAVOUR CAMP: *Smoky & Peaty*

NOSE: Sherried notes kick things off: yeasty and *flor*-like, moving towards Vin Jaune, backed with a nutty, IPA-esque element with some fruity, orange accents. The smoke is low in the mix. As it develops, you get more concentrated fruits and an exotic hint of myrrh and ginger. Water nudges up the smoke a little as well as a rummy element, then comes cookie dough with dried fruit.

PALATE: Gentle (this week's theme, it would seem) and, though it loses impact in the middle, things pulse back into life on the back-palate, when some dried fruits (sultana, sweet date) come in, along with turfy smoke, turned earth and heather bank. Water tries to push all of this forward, but it remains reticent until that late burst of yeasty sweetness. FINISH: Drying, then apple and smoke.

CONCLUSION: A slightly hollow middle – the result of a low bottling strength? It's balanced, it's well-made, but I'm not sure what this adds to an already rapidly expanding portfolio.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME: The cookie monster in the bodega.

'SMOKIER' HIGHLAND PARK DRAGON LEGEND COMING

30 August 2017 by [Becky Paskin](http://www.scotchwhisky.com) - www.scotchwhisky.com

Orkney distillery Highland Park is to release a 'smokier, richer' single malt in the form of Dragon's Legend.

Highland Park Dragon's Legend is a no-age-statement expression made using a higher percentage of peated malt than the brand's core 12-year-old bottling.

Its name is inspired by the tale of Viking warrior Sigurd, who, having slain the serpent dragon Fafnir, drank his foe's blood and gained the powers of foresight and wisdom.

Presented at 43.1% abv, the release will be a limited expression launching exclusively in UK supermarket Tesco from September 2017 for around £40 a bottle.

However, it will be rolled out to additional European markets from 2018.

Jason Craig, brand director for *Highland Park*, said: 'This is a slight step up in smoke profile from our core 12 Year Old as we've used a higher percentage of peated malt stock but it is still very much recognisable as a member of the Highland Park family with its key characteristics – from the use of both European and American Sherry seasoned oak casks – of vanilla and warm spices complementing the richer aromatic peat smoke.'



The release of Highland Park Dragon Legend coincides with the rollout of *Highland Park Magnus* in the US, announced in April this year.

Named after the distillery's founder, Magnus Eunson, the release has a 'sweeter and more profound vanilla flavour profile' due to maturation in a high proportion of Sherry seasoned American oak casks.

Bottled at 40% abv, the expression is now available at retailers and bars across North America for US\$39.99.

Both new expressions are presented in bottles *in keeping with Highland Park's new design*, which accentuates its Viking heritage.

Highland Park: Voyage of The Raven

<https://www.highlandparkwhisky.com/product/voyage-of-the-raven/>



Edrington-owned Highland Park has launched a limited-edition single malt whisky exclusively in global travel retail – called Voyage of the Raven.

BACKGROUND: VOYAGE OF THE RAVEN is a rich, dark and spicy single malt whisky, inspired by our Viking ancestors' thirst for exploration.

STORY: For our Viking ancestors, the raven was a powerful symbol of victory in battle, success on a voyage and loyalty to the god, Odin.

Intelligent and resourceful, ravens were the trusted guides of those those early voyagers as they left

Northern shores in search of new horizons, flying far out across the sea until they found land. Highly prized for their navigation skills, ravens became symbols of good fortune on many a longship sail.

The ravens sit on his shoulders and say into his ear all the tidings which they see or hear; they are called thus: Huginn and Muninn. He sends them at daybreak to fly about all the world... Therefore men call him Raven-God.

Matured in a high proportion of first-fill sherry seasoned oak casks, VOYAGE OF THE RAVEN delivers mouth-watering flavours of nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, black cherries and marzipan, overlaid with our distinctive aromatic smokiness.

This new expression marks the start of the transition between the current Warrior Series and a new travel retail exclusive range to be launched in spring/summer 2018.

"With only a fixed volume produced, combined with an eye-catching bottle and carton and a very attractive price point, we are confident that Voyage of the Raven will prove to be a highly desirable expression for Highland Park collectors and whisky connoisseurs as well as an attractive gift for shoppers in travel retail."

NATURAL CASK-DRIVEN COLOUR (NO ADDITIVES): Autumn leaves (average colour tint 15.5)

FLAVOURS: Nutmeg | Cinnamon | Peach skins | Aromatic peat smoke | Sweet vanilla | Black cherries | Ginger

ABV: 41.3%

VOLUME: 700ml

Highland Park Voyage Of The Raven is available now at an RRP of €65. Produced in fixed volumes, it is anticipated stocks will last 12-18 months.

Highland Park: Full Volume

<https://www.highlandparkwhisky.com/product/full-volume/>

BACKGROUND: FULL VOLUME is a perfect illustration of the fine skills of our Master Whisky Maker, ensuring that every individual wave of flavour finds its perfect place in the beautifully harmonised final spirit.

STORY: For musicians, amps and equalisers maintain critical balance at high volume by fine-tuning musical frequencies – at Highland Park, our Master Whisky Maker, Gordon Motion, does a similar job.

FULL VOLUME was created using 100% ex-bourbon casks rather than our traditional sherry-seasoned ones. During 1999, a combination of 481 casks – 200 litre barrels and 250 litre hogsheads – were filled at strengths of between 63.6% and 63.7%. The whisky was filtered at just over 4°C and delivers flavours of creamy vanilla and sweet citrus fruits from the bourbon casks, balanced by Highland Park's characteristic aromatic smokiness.

NATURAL CASK-DRIVEN

COLOUR (NO ADDITIVES): Light straw, clear and bright (average colour tint 6.5)

FLAVOURS: Vanilla | Coconut | Mango | Pineapple | Cedar Wood | Lemon peel | Vanilla pods | Light smoke

ABV: 47.2%

VOLUME: 700ml

PRICE: £80 RSP



The Macallan debuts Edition No. 3

4th September, 2017 by Nicola Carruthers - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

Edrington-owned The Macallan has collaborated with luxury perfumer Roja Dove to unveil Edition No. 3 – an aroma-focused single malt Scotch whisky.



The new limited edition expression is the third release in the Edition Series, a range of whiskies that focus on The Macallan's commitment to wood.

While Edition No. 1 and Edition No. 2 highlighted the influence each cask has on the taste and flavour of the final whisky, Edition No. 3 provides an insight into the "distinctive aromas that combine to build character and depth".

Dove teamed up with Macallan's master distiller Bob Dalgarno to create the expression, which is made from a high proportion of smaller oak casks to increase the contact between the spirit and the wood, delivering an "intense experience" of flavour and aroma.

Crated from a combination of European and American oak casks, Edition No. 3 balances a heavier base derived from Tevasa casks and reflective of The Macallan character, with the "fresh cut oak and citrus" of Hudosa casks, the "vanilla ice cream" and "sweet, crisp green apple" flavours of Bourbon casks and the dry, "floral and vanilla" notes from European and American oak refill casks.

"Inspiration and innovation lie at the heart of The Macallan and in Edition No. 3 we have collaborated with one of the world's most

respected aroma experts to create a single malt whisky which pushes the boundaries and challenges convention,” said Dalgarno.

“The Edition Series provides the freedom to look beyond the cask styles typically used in other Macallan whiskies. There are great parallels between the worlds of whisky and perfume and it has been fascinating to work with Roja to explore the power of aroma in individual oak casks and its influence on the resulting whisky. Edition No. 3 is a remarkable journey of the senses, delivering an intense experience of flavour and aroma.”

Dove added: “We have worked together to master the balance of taste and aroma, resulting in an incredibly flavoursome, fresh and citrus whisky with enveloping sweetness. Edition No. 3 is an exceptional example of the whisky maker’s art, where Bob has interpreted my thoughts so accurately, when combined with the extraordinary power of scent.”

Bottled at 48.3% abv, The Macallan Edition No. 3 will be priced at an RRP of US\$95.00.

NEW BUZZ: MACALLAN CLASSIC CUT

www.maltymates.com - June 25, 2017

Based on the labels found on [TTB database](#), we may be looking at a new NAS (Non Age Statement) [Macallan](#) expression in the very near future – The Macallan Classic Cut.

TTB Public Registry has been a good source of information regarding the upcoming new spirits. It should also not be forgotten that there are always possibilities the whisky or any other spirit, even with label approval, may not make it to the market for any reason. Until we receive an official statement from the distillery itself, everything we discuss here should be treated as buzz...

The label shares some similarities with the old Macallan Cask Strength Edition. Especially the bold red ‘Classic Cut’ mark on the front label as well as the red border on the top and the bottom. The label suggests a high 58.4% ABV which may be the new ‘Cask Strength’ edition that has been asked by The Macallan fans for some time.

The front label on this ‘Limited 2017 Edition’ reads as;
“Exclusively matured in hand picked sherry seasoned oak casks from Jerez, Spain & Bottled to reveal the extraordinary character of a timeless spirit”



an extraordinary single malt to savor in your own time.”

Based on unconfirmed buzz, The Macallan Classic cut is expected to be released in early fall of this year with a price range around 100 US\$.

According to the information provided on the back label;
“The Macallan Classic Cut reveals the unrivaled commitment to the mastery of spirit and wood for which The Macallan has been known since it was established in 1824. Exclusively matured in oak casks seasoned with Oloroso sherry from Jerez, Spain, The Macallan Classic Cut has been bottled by The Macallan Master Whisky Maker to bring forth the full character of this timeless spirit. With its full, heightened flavors of creamy vanilla, sweet ginger and warming oak, this is

Macallan 30-year-old cask breaks auction record

4th October, 2017 by Nicola Carruthers - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

A full 30-year-old cask of The Macallan has set a new world record for the most expensive whisky cask sold at auction after fetching HK\$2,928,000 (US\$375,000) at a Spink auction in Hong Kong.

The Macallan 30-year-old cask has beaten the world record for most expensive whisky cask sold at auction

The Sherry hogshead was filled on 13 April 1987 by the Macallan Glenlivet Distillery, and has been allowed to mature quietly in the distillery’s warehouse.

The sale beat Spink’s previous record of HK\$1,952,000 in 2014.

It is also the most expensive per bottle cask sold in auction worldwide as it only produces 288 bottles, priced at HK\$10,166 per bottle.

“We estimated that it would sell for around HK\$2.3-2.4 million as it is very rare to see an aged Macallan Sherry cask, never before has anything like that been offered to the public, as after all – it is a rather small barrel yielding less than 300 bottles even if you flip the cask upside-down,” said Angie Ihlo Fung, auctioneer and whisky specialist at Spink.

“As the action went on, we saw determination from buyers participating from different parts of the world, and it reached a price it certainly deserves, we are most content.”

The Macallan was once again the headline sale at a Bonhams auction in Hong Kong, when a [complete set of The Macallan](#) in Lalique Six Pillars Collection sold for HK\$3,797,500 (US\$485,244).

Macallan 1824 shelved for Quest Collection in TR

10th October, 2017 by Amy Hopkins - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

13 October 2017 by [Richard Woodard](#) - <https://scotchwhisky.com/magazine/latest-news/16442/macallan-quest-collection-for-travel-retail/>

The Macallan is to replace its 1824 range in global travel retail with a completely new no-age-statement collection – marking the brand’s most significant launch in the channel in 10 years.

The Macallan Quest Collection is the brand’s new GTR exclusive offering. The four variants – [Macallan](#) Quest, Lumina, Terra and Enigma – aim to celebrate the distillery’s ‘passionate and tireless quest for oak’.

The Macallan Quest Collection has been created exclusively for the GTR channel to showcase the Edrington-owned brand’s Sherry cask programme and offer drinkers an “exploration” of flavour.

From January 2018, it will replace The Macallan 1824 Collection, which includes the Select Oak, Whisky Maker’s Edition and Estate Reserve bottlings. The Macallan 1824 range has been the brand’s



exclusive GTR offering for the last 10 years.

Quest Collection was first unveiled at the TFWA World Exhibition & Conference in Cannes last week, where Scott McCroskie, managing director of The Macallan, said: “This demonstrates our commitment to travel retail as a channel.”

The first whisky in the range, The Macallan Quest (40% abv), has been created using four different cask types: European and American oak Sherry seasoned, American ex-Bourbon and hogshead casks. It is priced US\$64 for a 70cl bottle.

The Macallan Lumina (41.3% abv) uses three casks: European and American oak Sherry seasoned and hogshead casks, and has an RRP of US\$100.

The third expression, The Macallan Terra (43.8% abv), has uses exclusively first-fill Sherry-seasoned casks, sourced from the Tevasa and Vasyma families of wood suppliers from Jerez de la Frontera in Spain and is priced at US\$165.

The Macallan Enigma (44.9% abv) is described as the “pinnacle” of the range. The whisky, priced at US\$250, claims Spain as its inspiration, sourcing its first-fill Sherry-seasoned butts exclusively from Tevasa.

“For this character-led range, the liquids are phenomenal,” said Nick Savage, master distiller for The Macallan. “It’s succinct and coherent and we can tell the Macallan story through the casks we have used.”

Macallan master distiller Nick Savage said the new range was ‘a true homage to the extraordinary lengths taken by The Macallan’.

adding that it 'gives us the opportunity to reinforce the values rooted in the pure mastery of whisky-making'.

The Macallan Quest Collection will be presented in entirely new packaging, both bottle and carton.

The range will also feature 'tamper evident' closures, which create a visual sign of tampering. The closures will be rolled out across the rest of The Macallan's range at a later date.

According to McCroskie, The Macallan will launch localised TR versions of Quest Collection in the future.

Sixpoint creates beers to pair with Highland Park

29th September, 2016 by Amy Hopkins - www.thespiritsbusiness.com

Edrington-owned Highland Park has partnered with New York-based Sixpoint Brewery to launch two limited edition beers designed to "complement" the Scotch whisky.

Sköll has been created to pair with Highland Park Dark Origins

The two new beers – Rune and Sköll – will be unveiled at the inaugural Scottoberfest event in New York on 27 September.

Designed to be paired with Highland Park 12 Year Old, Rune is described as a "golden oat ale" with a "subtle sweetness" that "emphasises the honey and heather notes in the Scotch".

Sköll is described as a "dark and roast ale" with notes of "rich chocolate and coffee" that "complement the maraschino cherry and warm dark chocolate flavours of Highland Park Dark Origins".

Rune has been created to pair with Highland Park 12 Year Old



"Highland Park has been leading the charge in the whisky and beer pairing space for the last year with its Dram and Craft initiatives," said Gordon Motion, Highland Park master distiller.

"Highland Park is proud to collaborate with Sixpoint to offer fans a chance to try two limited edition brews that perfectly pair with our single malt Scotch whiskies."

Keir Hamilton, Sixpoint brewer, added:

"The Sixpoint formulation method starts with a clear concept of what a beer could be, then uses a knowledge of the craft to turn that into reality.

"Here, our starting point was the complex flavours of Highland Park whisky and from there we used various ingredients and processes to make beers that emulate and also complement the whiskies."

Rune and Sköll beers will be available at select bars in New York for a limited time beginning in October 2016.

The beer and whisky worlds have moved closer of late – in September this year, [Glenfiddich released a new single malt aged in ex-IPA barrels](#) as part of its Experimental Collection.



WHAT ARE WHISKY BRAND AMBASSADORS GOOD FOR?

18 August 2017 by [Becky Paskin](#) - www.scotchwhisky.com

I've never met two brand ambassadors the same - their responsibilities differ from company to company, from personality to personality and market to market. Some have backgrounds in blending or distilling, while others have been bartenders, writers or enthusiasts in past lives.

Some have qualifications in whisky production, while others are just beginning their whisky journey. Where one ambassador can make a killer Whisky Sour or quote *The Savoy Cocktail Book* verbatim, another can intricately explain the continuous distillation process or name all of the enzymes involved in saccharification.

Usually, thanks to some form of in-house training and years already spent loving whisky, their presentations are informative and engaging. On occasion they can be blindingly brilliant – innovative, entertaining and eye-opening – but sadly from time to time – and thankfully it's relatively rare – our beloved ambassadors can get it wrong. Perpetuating tired marketing language, enforcing ways to hold a glass or drink a whisky, asserting opinion as fact – this is [one way myths are spread](#).

Nobody's perfect; everyone has a different approach and there's always something you won't know the answer to. Even David Stewart, Balvenie's master distiller who [at the age of 70 received an MBE for services to whisky](#), will tell you he still hasn't learned it all.

Inclusive message: Ambassadors have a duty to represent whisky as a whole, not just their brand.

No two are the same, but the one thing all brand ambassadors have in common? They're educators. They are whisky's mouthpieces. Whatever their knowledge, background or brand alliance, ambassadors have a direct link to consumers, bartenders, the trade and press. Their voices are powerful. They are listened to.

A cynic would argue that a brand ambassador's only job is to sell their company's whisky through any means possible. However an ambassador is not just a messenger for their brand, but for whisky as a whole. One cannot exist without the other.

You wouldn't expect an ambassador to bite the hand that feeds them and deliver a presentation that didn't support their brand's story, but allegiance should be with the industry, not just the brand. It would be foolish of them to communicate a message that's unbeneficial or, worse, damaging to the industry as a whole.

I'm proud to say I've never heard an ambassador disrespect their competitors (although I once had a rival brand's pen confiscated on a press trip – I got it back at the end. It was a nice pen). Those who do brand-bash eventually become blacklisted by their peers. For the majority the message is never 'our brand is better because', always 'our brand is different because', and surely variety is part of what makes whisky so fascinating and globally popular.

What are brand ambassadors good for? It always comes back to education, engagement and enjoyment. They ignite our interest, our curiosity, our passion.

[They are responsible for dispelling myths](#), particularly those damaging whisky's image as accessible and enjoyable, but they can also be responsible for spreading them too. The conversation should always come from a sound knowledge base, and never, ever turn to why one brand or style is better than another.

Varying USPs and brand marketing approaches, and contrasting viewpoints on production processes and maturation styles inspire debate and discussion. Are worm tubs better than shell-and-tube condensers? Do single malts offer more flavour than blends? [Is terroir really a thing?](#) They're provocative questions, and I hope nobody ever really agrees, because the day people stop talking about whisky is the day that whisky gets dull.



Kingston Single Malt Society

Roberto DiFazio, President

827 Old Colony Road

Kingston, Ontario, K7P 1S1, Canada

613-532-5285

rdifazio04@gmail.com

<http://www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.com>

