



THE SCOTCH MALT  
WHISKY SOCIETY

# OUTTURN

Explore: February 2025 Issue 160



WHISKY WITH  
EXPERT NOSES

ADVENTURES IN FLAVOUR AWAIT AT [SMWS.CA](https://www.smws.ca)

# WHISKY WITH A TASTE FOR ADVENTURE

The focus for 2025 is all about adventures in whisky – and that could mean adventures in the pursuit of different flavour experiences, or it could also mean taking our whisky off the beaten track and experiencing and bringing it to life in various ways.

Whether it's taking your drams outdoors, brushing up on your whisky knowledge or exploring flavour from the comfort of your couch – get 2025 off to a great start with a variety of whisky adventures, whether you're new to the Society or a seasoned flavour hunter.



## JUICY, OAK & VANILLA

### THE BRIGHTEST OF BARRELS

CASK NO. 35-347

**\$137.99**



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>10 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>28 June 2012</i>
OUTTURN	<i>234 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>60.3%</i>

The nose neat immediately suggested sugar-dusted grapefruit, orange barley sugars, cantaloupe melon and warm strop leather. In time we got freshly varnished timbers, new sneakers, cream soda and warm heather flowers. With water we found lemon bonbons, Moffat toffee (sweet caramel on the outside with a sharp lemony taste in the centre) and then earthy touches of turmeric, damp tobacco leaf and dried flowers in vase water.

The palate opened with spearmint, pollens and cloudy lemonade. The cask made its voice clear with assertive notes of cask char, cinnamon sugar, vanilla icing and candied citrus peels – rich, sweet and mouth-coating! Water revealed notes of young calvados, dessert wines, spice cake and apple pie.

## SWEET, FRUITY & MELLOW

### STROLLING, LOLLING AND SIPPING

CASK NO. 46.141

**\$154.99**



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>12 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>20 April 2010</i>
OUTTURN	<i>160 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>60.6%</i>

This one displayed a lightness of touch at first, with buttery popcorn, bergamot and bubble gum, alongside a pronounced pineapple note, plus citrus curds and yellow flowers in the background. Reduction brought vanilla-coconut custard, heather flowers, runny honey and oat bars.

The neat palate opened with a note of sweet mint tea, then more bubble gum, fruit salad juices and limeade. Water brought out additional flavours of mango lassi, banana chips, dried apricot and sandalwood.

## OLD & DIGNIFIED

### OVERPOWERING ENCHANTMENT

CASK NO. 9.288

\$244.99



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>19 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>11 September 2003</i>
OUTTURN	<i>135 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>52.7%</i>

The nose led us through a perfumed garden to a house made of sticky toffee pudding and malt loaf, where a pipe-smoking witch lured us with fruit pastilles, pear drops and yum-yums. She indulged our palates with battenburg cake, toffee waffles and crêpes suzette – so delicious we hardly noticed the finish of spiced plums, cinnamon swirls and crystallised ginger, seducing us softly to the dark side.

The reduced nose combined torments of fruit salad and lemon drizzle cake with teasements of prune juice and cedar wood. The palate's chocolate-coated raisin and banana chip sweetness was tempered by fruit skins, walnuts and after-dinner mints.

# SMWS TASTING PANEL

*The Society's Tasting Panel is fundamentally unchanged since it first formed in founder Pip Hills's kitchen in Edinburgh in the early 1980s, but more rigorous than ever. Its mission – to assess every sample before it can make it into a Society bottle, to create a name and tasting note and to uphold the Society's mission: to leave no nose upturned.*

*“It would be a shame to describe such lovely whisky in mere words. Perhaps a pibroch\* would do.”*

If a literary great such as Hamish Henderson struggled to find the right language to capture the complexity and depth of the whisky in his tasting glass, what hope for us mere mortals?

Hamish was a poet, songwriter, soldier – he personally oversaw the formal surrender of Italy in 1945 – folklorist, co-founder of Edinburgh University's School of Scottish Studies and passionate whisky enthusiast. He was also an acquaintance of SMWS founder Pip Hills, who invited him to participate in an early incarnation of what would become the Society's revered Tasting Panel.

The primary intention was around quality control – with the Panel's main purpose to sample various whiskies before deciding whether they were worthy enough to make it into a green Society bottle and be offered up to members. More than that, though, the Tasting Panel set out to actually describe the stuff.

We might take that for granted nowadays, but in the early 1980s the language to talk about whisky barely existed, although an early version of the whisky 'flavour wheel' had recently been created by scientists at Pentlands Research, now The Scotch Whisky Research Institute. At the time, whisky was invariably described only in basic terms of how old it was or where it came from, but with little reference or even interest in its actual flavour. All that was about to change, with or without Hamish Henderson's input.



Whisky writer Charlie MacLean was an early member of the Tasting Panel and a subsequent long-serving chair. He recalls the Society's groundbreaking role in defining how we discuss whisky and flavour.

"The SMWS was the first organisation to focus on flavour, and really invented a new language to talk about whisky," he says. "The whole point of the Society's single cask bottlings is in their variety, they can be so extraordinarily different, and the Tasting Notes need to reflect that."

Poet and songwriter Robin Laing is another mainstay of the Tasting Panel, having racked up 25 years of sampling whiskies and creating bottle names and tasting notes. He brings his own poetic sensibility to the task.

"People say they can tell my notes because there's an element of humour or wordiness in them," he says. "First and foremost I'm a songwriter and a poet, so I do things with words that other people maybe don't, or bring in odd words or different figures of speech. Words are my living and my craft – although I've also had people ask me, 'Who writes this nonsense?'"

"People like Charlie and me are guys of a certain age who grew up in Edinburgh and a lot of time when you are nosing and tasting whiskies, it brings back childhood memories," says Robin. "Those memories can be specific, often to do with medicines that you had as a child, or Scottish sweeties."

Not all the references are particular to Scotland, however. The Tasting Panel has always been multinational and includes both women and men – so everyone brings their own points of reference to the whiskies. "The main thing is that the Tasting Notes have to be informative, relevant and accurate," says Robin. "But it's also good to have a bit of fun."

Yes, a bit of fun. But a discerning nose and the ability to judge a whisky are key attributes for any panellist, as well as impartiality in their opinions.

"People come in and they don't necessarily know the history of the cask or what project it's a result of, like we do in the Whisky Team," says the Society's head of whisky creation, Euan Campbell. "That gives us a chance to put whiskies in front of other expert noses for their opinion. It also means we can cast our net wide because everyone has different sensory abilities, so we're utilising that across a wider pool of people."

"I think our Tasting Panel is unique in the sense that while we're looking at it from a quality point of view, we also look at it from the point of view of a member sitting in their armchair pouring a dram. So we have this balance between the technical quality factor and the enjoyment factor, which perhaps some other panels don't have as much focus on."

Julien Willems from the Whisky Team co-ordinates the Tasting Panel and arranges each session and who will be participating in each one from the wider pool.

"Having a multicultural Panel and different experiences brings a lot of wealth into what we can put forward," he says. "Not everything is to everyone's palate, but the Society aims to satisfy the widest number of members across different cultures and around the world."

So whether your Society whisky inspires a poetic flight of the imagination or a pibroch, let's celebrate the work of the Tasting Panel and the outstanding quality of the whiskies they allow to pass under their scrupulous noses and into our bottles.

If you're feeling adventurous, why not set up your own informal Tasting Panel with some friends and try the experience for yourselves? It might just inspire you to some whisky-related poetry – or maybe even a pibroch.

\*Pibroch: an extended solo composition played on the bagpipes

## BOURBON

### HOISIN DUCK SKIN

CASK NO. B4.9

**\$176.99**



REGION	<i>Chicago</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill 30 US Gallons Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>4 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>6 July 2017</i>
OUTTURN	<i>100 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>60.1%</i>

Delightfully sweet aromas of maple syrup, caramel wafers and cherry sweets merged with pencil shavings mixed with peppermint oil, before burnt banana bread was served with strawberry jam and a vanilla milkshake. The palate was opulent and rich, with shortbread, marzipan and baked pineapple joining cinnamon and nutmeg toffee apples, while hoisin sauce mixed with peanuts and sesame oil.

With a few drops of water came wild strawberries and Turkish Delight with the heightened oiliness of linseed, orange oil and toasted pine nuts. Hazelnut and walnut oil then joined the party alongside ground coffee, burnt orange skin and mango jam, before eucalyptus and peppermint returned on the long finish.



## DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

### RICH, DARK & SUMPTUOUSLY SWEET

CASK NO. 85.94

\$191.99



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
INITIAL CASK	<i>Ex-Bourbon Hogshead</i>
FINAL CASK	<i>1st Fill STR Oloroso Barrique</i>
AGE	<i>14 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>2 March 2010</i>
OUTTURN	<i>280 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>58.5%</i>

The nose delighted us with fruit cake (majoring on golden sultanas), milk chocolate (with hazelnuts), pumpkin pie (with nutmeg), and acorn-fed ham. The palate neat was robust and impressive, delivering deep flavours of wine-soaked oak, fig rolls, caramel and grilled pineapple, before a finish of cinnamon, burnt leaves and strong menthol lozenges. The reduced nose got treacle toffee, moist gingerbread and orange marmalade on burnt buttered toast.

On the palate, we now found ripe fig, pomegranate molasses, whole wheat soda bread, roasted chestnuts and root beer – a rich, dark and sumptuously sweet combination. After 11 years in ex-bourbon wood, we transferred this into a first fill oloroso barrique.

## PEATED

### A RIVER OF COMPLEXITY

CASK NO. 138.19

**\$183.99**



REGION	<i>Taiwan</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>4 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>23 March 2018</i>
OUTTURN	<i>210 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>57.1%</i>

Deep and complex for its age – the nose had fresh peppermint, cut grass and the banks of a river nearing the sea; we also found hints of smoke and balsamic. On the palate, the smoke was more obvious and intensified with time – accompanied by toffee apples, liquorice, treacle and wood char, plus teasing touches of elderflower, mango and herbs tossed on a barbecue.

Adding water brought lemon bonbons to the nose and evoked the sea, with lobster pots drying in the sun. The mouth-coating, chalky palate had clean flavours of lemon zest, sea purslane and carbolic with an ashy finish.

## PEATED

### THE FINESSE OF A FRAGRANT FURNACE

**DISTILLERY 3  
RARE RELEASE**

**\$359.99**



<b>REGION</b>	<i>Islay</i>
<b>CASK TYPES</b>	<i>2nd Fill Bourbon &amp; Oloroso Hogsheads</i>
<b>AGE</b>	<i>18 Years</i>
<b>DISTILLED ON</b>	<i>16 February 2004</i>
<b>OUTTURN</b>	<i>1173 Bottles</i>
<b>ABV</b>	<i>56.9%</i>

A fine bouquet of fragrant flowers and scorched watermelon mingled with molten wax before it dripped onto tarry ropes. There were also iodine elements of seaweed scattered on a shellfish platter. The palate had fine finesse - juicy with charred pineapple, but devilishly good as butter melted over toasted coconut and just a nuance of eucalyptus converged with powdery coal tar.

What could a dash of water do? Now wonderfully clean smoke engulfed the maritime familiarity of walks along the beach. Flowers were dotted about the sand dunes and herbal notes morphed into sweet phenols and antiseptic cream on peach skin.



# WHERE TO BUY

*The exclusive retail stores of The Society in Canada:*

## **KENSINGTON WINE MARKET**

1257 Kensington Road NW, Calgary, AB

Phone: 403-283-8000 (1-888-283-9004)

Email: [scotchguy@kensingtonwinemarket.com](mailto:scotchguy@kensingtonwinemarket.com)

[www.kensingtonwinemarket.com](http://www.kensingtonwinemarket.com)

## **KEG N CORK LIQUOR COMPANY**

3845 - 99th Street, Edmonton, AB

Phone: 780-461-0191

Email: [ordering@kegncork.com](mailto:ordering@kegncork.com)

[www.kegncork.com](http://www.kegncork.com)

## **THE STRATH ALE, WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS**

919 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC

Phone: 250-370-9463

Email: [whisky@strathliquor.com](mailto:whisky@strathliquor.com)

[www.strathliquor.com](http://www.strathliquor.com)

## **LEGACY LIQUOR STORE**

1633 Manitoba Street, Vancouver, BC

Phone: 604-331-7900

Email: [Darryl@legacyliquorstore.com](mailto:Darryl@legacyliquorstore.com)

[www.legacyliquorstore.com](http://www.legacyliquorstore.com)

## **ARC LIQUOR**

1973 Harvey Ave, Kelowna, BC

Phone: 236-420-4060

Email: [kls@armstrong.coop](mailto:kls@armstrong.coop)

[www.armstrong.coop/arc-liquor/](http://www.armstrong.coop/arc-liquor/)