



# OUTTURN

Explore: September 2024

*Issue 155*



ENDLESS DISCOVERIES AT [SMWS.CA](http://SMWS.CA)

## GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE SMWS FLAVOUR PROFILES

Exploration is the greatest joy of Society membership, roaming the broad vistas of flavour and aroma represented in our vast selection of whiskies. But exploration without a map can be frustrating.

So we have 12 distinct flavour categories, each represented by its own colour, from Young & Spritely to Old & Dignified; Light & Delicate to Heavily Peated. These 12 categories offer an alternative to the more traditional method of categorizing whiskies by their region of origin (Islay, Speyside, etc).

Our flavour map gives whisky lovers a far better way to navigate our endless and ever-changing selection of bottlings, many of which are not typical of their region.

**YOUNG & SPRITELY**

**SWEET, FRUITY & MELLOW**

**SPICY & SWEET**

**SPICY & DRY**

**DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS**

**OLD & DIGNIFIED**

**LIGHT & DELICATE**

**JUICY, OAK & VANILLA**

**OILY & COASTAL**

**LIGHTLY PEATED**

**PEATED**

**HEAVILY PEATED**



## JUICY, OAK & VANILLA

### NEVER JUDGE A DRAM BY ITS COLOUR

CASK NO. 60.36

**\$137.99**



|              |                                   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| REGION       | <i>Highland</i>                   |
| CASK TYPE    | <i>2nd Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i> |
| AGE          | <i>9 Years</i>                    |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>3 April 2014</i>               |
| OUTTURN      | <i>224 Bottles</i>                |
| ABV          | <i>59%</i>                        |

The first thing we noticed, pouring the samples, was the very pale colour which would indicate very little influence from the cask. But far from it, as warm, oaky, vanilla notes met citric fruits such as kiwi and lime, as well as floral aromas from a millefiori honey.

This was fresh and clean, with plenty of zing on the palate, like a wake-up call with the sweetness of a marble chiffon cake, plus cocoa and vanilla swirls in the background. Water added a New York lemon cheesecake, elderflower and rhubarb pavlovas, and spicy gooseberry chutney on the nose. The taste had a peppery, cinnamon spiciness combined with menthol sweetness and a hoppy finish.

## SWEET, FRUITY & MELLOW

### LAWN MOWERS RUN AMOK IN AN ORCHARD

CASK NO. 39.288

**\$169.99**



|              |                                   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| REGION       | <i>Speyside</i>                   |
| CASK TYPE    | <i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i> |
| AGE          | <i>11 Years</i>                   |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>5 December 2011</i>            |
| OUTTURN      | <i>218 Bottles</i>                |
| ABV          | <i>61.3%</i>                      |

The exuberant nose recalled all the fruit candies of the world – jelly babies, gummy bears, fruit gums etc., cassis, Pink Lady apples and cherry blossom. The palate, with a sparkly tingle of joy, brightened our lives with bubble gum, rhubarb, pineapple and Norwegian apple and grape soda, plus hints of garibaldi biscuits, ice cream and chocolate chip cookies.

The reduced nose had orange peel, juniper, banana bread, dried apricots and lawn mowers running amok in an orchard. The palate now had Danish pastries, vanilla, mellow calvados and juicy pomegranate – then a slightly chalky finish, with suspicions of cinnamon and liquorice.

## OILY & COASTAL

### FURTIVE GHERKIN

**DISTILLERY 149**  
**RARE RELEASE**

**\$199.99**



|              |                                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| REGION       | <i>Highland</i>                    |
| CASK TYPES   | <i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrels</i> |
| AGE          | <i>8 Years</i>                     |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>11 September 2015</i>           |
| OUTTURN      | <i>1764 Bottles</i>                |
| ABV          | <i>62.4%</i>                       |

The Panel were immediately plunged into scrubbing an old barbecue grill. But on the side were lemons, buttery samphire, tangy pickles and chutney, and crackers with sea salt and black pepper. We also got whiffs of smoked ham and a summery coastal tang. Reduction brought out delicate threads of smoke, distant beach bonfire embers, engine oil and kippers smashed on to toasted brioche.

When neat, the palate was sweetly lemony and smoky, with fish pâté, pickled cornichons, charred fennel, jalapeños in brine and clam broth. Water added layers of texture and thickness in the mouth, while bringing out grist-y porridge notes, and other elements including lavender honey and a gherkin lurking in a dirty martini. Bottled for the Highland Whisky Festival 2024.

# SCOTCH AND SHERRY

## Made to order

*Since legislation changed in Spain in the 1980s to determine that all sherry had to be bottled there before it was exported, there's now no such thing as a sherry 'transport' cask. That has led to a whole industry dedicated to building and seasoning casks with sherry, specifically for the whisky industry*

The process of seasoning, or conditioning, a newly constructed cask is essential so that the vessel can impart precisely the right flavour and character that the Society is looking for when it comes to maturing our own whisky.

To understand that process, we visited one of the warehouses of Bodegas Barón, a traditional family-owned winery that dates back almost 400 years. Headquartered in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, the coastal town near Jerez is the only place that the variety of sherry known as manzanilla can be produced – it's protected under Spain's 'denominación de origen protegida' or DOP regulations, and prized for the maritime character it gains from the town's microclimate at the mouth of the Guadalquivir river.



Bodegas Barón is one of many locations across the 'sherry triangle' that now offer an alternative business: seasoning casks with sherry specifically for use in the spirits industry in general, and the whisky industry in particular. The demand came from a change in legislation in the early 1980s, when the transportation of sherry in casks that could be bottled elsewhere was forbidden, meaning that all sherry had to be bottled in Spain prior to export. Before that, it was common for sherry to be shipped in cask for bottling in the market where it was going to be consumed.

Many a sherry butt would have sailed into the Port of Leith and likely would have spent time in the Society's very own Vaults building. Once the sherry was bottled, the casks could then be used by the whisky industry, to add complex layers to maturing spirit. The sherry historian, Manuel Gonzalez Gordon in his book *Sherry: The Noble Wine* notes that: "Historically, the Scots are lovers of sherry. To re-use casks rather than return them to Spain would have appealed to a nation with a reputation for financial astuteness – and what better than to employ them to store the national product."

That process of re-using shipping casks is no longer possible, hence the rise in the production of the new cask which is seasoned specifically for the whisky industry. Unlike bodega casks, which are exclusively made from American oak, these new casks are also being constructed from Spanish and European oak. That's because it is prized for its unique flavour contribution, the high tannin levels contributing deep spicy notes and dried fruits.

The sherry industry's governing body, the Consejo Regulador, introduced a new certification process in 2015 for seasoned casks, guaranteeing that they have held genuine sherry wine for a minimum of one year in a registered bodega within the industry's defined production zone. Casks must be filled to at least two thirds of their capacity during the entire period, and the certification should include information on the type of sherry used to season the cask.

From the cooperage, the casks arrive at bodegas such as Bodegas Barón to be filled with sherry wine. The variety is really up to whoever is buying the cask, but in the whisky world, the deeper, richer varieties of dry oloroso and sweet Pedro Ximénez sherries are the most common. The casks are filled and then stored for anything between one and three years, during which time tannins are extracted from the fresh wood and the interaction between wood and wine elevates these casks to something highly desirable for whisky maturation.

After being seasoned for the required length of time, the casks are shipped with between 5-10 litres of sherry in them, to make sure they don't dry out. Once in Scotland, they are emptied and checked for quality – the SMWS Whisky Team inspect and nose every sherry cask that arrives at our warehouse. Only when they are satisfied with what they see, and what they smell, does any whisky go in.

The sherry that was used for seasoning the casks can go one of several routes once the cask is ready to be shipped from the bodega. It can be sold in bulk and used for blending at the more affordable end of the sherry market. Another use is to distil it for alternative uses, such as liqueurs. Or it could be used to produce sherry vinegar.



At Bodegas Barón, there are rows of sherry hogsheads, each one stenciled with “SMWS” and indicating what kind of sherry is working its magic inside the wood.

Antonio Carrasco Gómez from Bodegas Barón offers to draw us a sample of oloroso from one of the Society's casks, demonstrating his skill as a 'venenciador' with the traditional venencia tool. It's used throughout the industry to extract the sherry and pour it from a considerable height into a narrow sherry copita glass – all without spilling a drop.

At Bodegas Barón the oloroso is regularly refreshed in these seasoning casks, meaning it never gets too overwhelmed by the new wood and will go on to have a life of its own as a sherry. Here in the bodega, you can immediately see why it's a favoured wine for casks that are going to go on to be used for whisky maturation: “It's dry, nutty, fruity – all the characteristics we're looking for,” says Euan of the SMWS Whisky Team. “Coupled with the toasted American oak, that's a great combination that works well with pretty much any type of whisky.”

The world of sherry casks has changed, there's no question. But with the ability to have them created to our specific requirements and seasoned exactly how we want them, the level of consistent quality is a world away from those transport casks that ended up being given a new lease of life in Scotland. The proof, as always, is in the glass.



*Dive into the Society's documentary [Scotch & Sherry: A Flavour Odyssey](#) to discover more about how we source casks and work with different varieties of sherry to season new casks, and also how we source casks from Andalusia's bodegas at the [SMWS YouTube channel](#), [SMWSSilverScreen](#).*

## DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

### THE DRUM MAJOR'S DRAM

CASK NO. 36.206

**\$234.99**



|              |                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| REGION       | <i>Speyside</i>                       |
| INITIAL CASK | <i>Ex-Bourbon Hogshead</i>            |
| FINAL CASK   | <i>1st Fill PX Ex-Bodega Barrique</i> |
| AGE          | <i>16 Years</i>                       |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>22 August 2006</i>                 |
| OUTTURN      | <i>207 Bottles</i>                    |
| ABV          | <i>58.1%</i>                          |

We arrived at the Highland games, the arena surrounded by blooming heather. The floral aroma intermingled with beer-simmered grilled sausages and venison burgers. The robust palate delivered sticky barbecue ribs as well as steak and ale pie.

Diluted, the opening march with the drum major leading the massed pipe band into the arena was truly spectacular as he demonstrated his mace flourish skills. At the end of the performance, we saw him taking a large gulp from his leather hipflask. After 13 years in a bourbon hogshead, we transferred this whisky into a 1st fill barrique from a privately owned small bodega, now in its ninth generation, that focuses exclusively on the Pedro Ximénez grape.



## SMALL BATCH BLENDED MALT

### UNDERWATER BARBECUE

CASK NO. N/A

**\$169.99**



|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| REGION       | <i>Orkney &amp; Islay</i>   |
| CASK TYPES   | <i>1st Fill &amp; Refill Bourbon and Spanish &amp; American Oak Barrels and Hogsheads</i> |
| AGE          | <i>12 Years</i>   |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>27 April 2011</i>  |
| OUTTURN      | <i>2505 Bottles</i>   |
| ABV          | <i>50%</i>  |

*This small-batch blended malt was created by bringing together the worlds of bourbon and oloroso cask maturation, along with spirit from the islands of Orkney and Islay. There are Spanish and American oak influences in here that complement the savoury smoke, leaving a post-barbecue glow. A gustatory dram, sure to delight peat heads and foodies alike.*

This had a bountiful aroma at first, one chock full of smoke-laced flowers, liquorice, smouldering heather, sweeter sherry impressions and singed orange peel. We also found deeper tones of barbecue smoke, coconut shavings, sunscreen and silky trails of distant peat smoke. Water brought wet moss, sandalwood, shoreline freshness, wet seaweed and wood-smoked ham.

The palate neat balanced sweetness and salinity very evenly, with rich umami broths, charred shellfish, dark chocolate-coated stem ginger, salted caramel and smoked butter. With reduction came seawater, soy sauce, peat embers, cloves, and fragrant wood smoke from a beach bonfire.

## DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

### TORONTO PRONTO

CASK NO. 41.160

\$165.99



|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| REGION       | <i>Speyside</i>                            |
| INITIAL CASK | <i>Ex-Bourbon Hogshead</i>                 |
| FINAL CASK   | <i>1st Fill Muscat Rivesaltes Barrique</i> |
| AGE          | <i>12 Years</i>                            |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>18 March 2010</i>                       |
| OUTTURN      | <i>258 Bottles</i>                         |
| ABV          | <i>57.9%</i>                               |

A bright, deep red henna colour greeted the Panel, and the nose was dark, rich, sweet and most unusual. One Panellist described it as salt sprinkled over the top of a hot, soft pretzel. Others mentioned cinder toffee, candied walnuts and peanut brittle bars. On the palate, we found salted caramel, roasted peanuts and umami-like miso soup with a touch of Spanish oxtail soup.

After reduction we had more of the same, along with even more intense gooey brownies, chocolate-coated raisins and balsamic-glazed ham. The taste was simply sensational – sweet and dry but at the same time with the subtle herbal bitterness found in a cocktail called Toronto. Following 9 years in an ex-bourbon hogshead, we transferred this whisky into a 1st fill Muscat Rivesaltes barrique.

## LIGHTLY PEATED

### SMOKE DEVIL MARRIES A DELICATE SWEET THING

CASK NO. 122.64

**\$279.99**



|              |                                  |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| REGION       | <i>Highland</i>                  |
| INITIAL CASK | <i>Ex-Bourbon Hogshead</i>       |
| FINAL CASK   | <i>2nd Fill Oloroso Hogshead</i> |
| AGE          | <i>17 Years</i>                  |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>21 March 2006</i>             |
| OUTTURN      | <i>260 Bottles</i>               |
| ABV          | <i>54.4%</i>                     |

The nose was a marriage between delicate sweetness (chocolate, candy floss and burnt custard tarts) and a more muscular smoke devil (dying bonfire embers and fish smokehouses). Things were similar on the palate as we found chocolate honeycomb bars, parma violets and sugar-coated fennel seeds on the sweet side, but the smoke, soot and ash were somewhat more subdued than expected.

The reduced nose conjured tarry driftwood and old Spanish galleons, coal cellars and Chinese roast duck. The palate had blackcurrant and lemongrass, humbugs, aniseed and ginger, smoked trout paté and twigs dipped in tar and honey. Following 14 years in ex-bourbon wood, this was transferred into a 2nd fill Spanish oak oloroso hogshead.



## **IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP COMING UP FOR RENEWAL?**

### **Here's how to save money on that!**

There's nothing like sharing the discovery of a good whisky with a good friend, so with this in mind we have our **Recommend-a-Friend program**.

For every new member who signs up on your recommendation, or for every gift membership you buy for that like-minded friend, **you'll receive \$20.00 off the cost of your next renewal fee** (up to a maximum of six referrals/gift memberships per membership year).

Visit [www.smws.ca](http://www.smws.ca) for more information.





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