



OUTTURN

Flavour Exploration: March 2024

Issue 149



**QUALITY AND
CREATIVITY**

SPOTLIGHT ON THE SMWS WHISKY TEAM

ENDLESS DISCOVERIES AT [SMWS.CA](https://www.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

BUBBLEGUM BUNS

CASK NO. 72.118

\$169.99



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>11 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>28 September 2011</i>
OUTTURN	<i>237 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>57.3%</i>

Apple segments played dodgeball against chunks of toffee armed with blackcurrants. A cloud of cotton candy lingered overhead, raining lemon juice over this sweetest of sporting events. On the palate we found chewy malt loaf with a chilli flake crust, pine resin and plaster of paris.

Water introduced more delicate sweet notes to the nose, beginning with heather honey and retro pear-flavoured bubblegum, then morphing to cold white bread and salt crystals. The reduced palate was refreshingly different, with coconut, sour plums, brioche buns and a gentle wood spice.

SMWS WHISKY TEAM - CASK CUSTODIANS

The Scotch Malt Whisky Society's Whisky Team is the beating heart of our club, planning years ahead to make sure our members will always be able to enjoy an exceptional variety of outstanding whiskies. Duncan Gorman pulls back the curtain to find out more about how the team operates.



It's no secret that The Scotch Malt Whisky Society prides itself in its exceptional variety of single malt whiskies, each one with its own character and representing a unique moment in time. But how does the Society produce such a diverse selection of Scotch every single month?

That comes down to our dedicated Whisky Team, where the Society has an exceptional roster of in-house expertise, specialising in spirit acquisition, cask selection, maturation, whisky creation and perhaps most importantly of all, quality control.

Whisky & supply chain director Kai Ivalo rounds it up nicely: "I and my team are responsible for sourcing whisky and spirits for Society members and for the maturation process that then takes place," he says. "That includes the selection of casks that we're maturing in, the occasional practice of transferring whisky from one cask to another in a process that we call additional maturation, and then the selection of whiskies, which we do through the Society's Tasting Panel. Once the Tasting Panel approves the whiskies that are suitable for bottling, the final stage is bottling itself, when we arrange for the single casks to go into these green bottles the Society is famous for."

The bottling of our whisky into these iconic green bottles has never been closer to home, with the Society opening its own bottling line and maturation warehouse last year at Masterton Bond near Uddingston in Scotland's Central Belt. "Our stock of whiskies is larger and more varied than it's ever been," says cask warehouse operations planner Ed Furmston-Evans. "And by bringing it into Masterton Bond, our bottling facility with in-house warehousing, we're able to be closely connected with it. Quality assurance and ensuring variety is a number one focus for us in the Whisky Team. Everything we do is about delivering a variety of excellent, flavourful whiskies."

A value at the core of the Society, and particularly the Whisky Team, is a sense of adventure and flavour exploration. Although our name ‘The Scotch Malt Whisky Society’ might lead you believe otherwise, the Society bottles a range of whiskies not only from Scotland but from around the world, as well as some other single cask spirits such as Armagnac, rum and gin.

The most important question the Whisky Team is faced with is ‘does this spirit meet our standards?’ No matter if it’s a rye, grain or bourbon whiskey, or if it’s from Scotland or Australia, if the Whisky Team and most importantly the Tasting Panel agree that it’s a spirit with exceptional flavour then we have no qualms about bottling it.

As Kai explains: “The Scotch Malt Whisky Society’s whisky proposition is really based on two things: flavour and variety. We’re flavour led, which means that the most important thing to us is interesting tasting whiskies, great tasting whiskies. Our main focus is on single cask, single malt whisky of course, but we also create whiskies that have undergone a period of additional maturation, and have developed a series of experimental blends as well. I don’t think there’s anyone else who offers the same depth and range of whiskies.



“But everything will always fit into that flavour-led philosophy. It also means that we consider other whiskies that we may not necessarily have looked at in the past. We’re open to looking at whiskies from different countries, different styles of whisky and then getting into selected other spirits as well, from time to time. We go in very much with an objective mind towards whisky. We’re open-minded about where it comes from, what the reputation of the brand is or what the distillery is.

“In fact, more than anything we’ve celebrated the opportunity to try and experience whiskies that you might not otherwise get a chance to try, because either they’re from small distilleries that haven’t yet managed their distribution, or more historically because they come from distilleries that put the majority of their spirit into producing blended Scotch, which obviously represents the largest part of the Scotch whisky industry.”

The upshot is that the Whisky Team is getting ever-more inventive, members are getting ever-more choice – and there’s never been a better time to be a member of The Scotch Malt Whisky Society.

SWEET, FRUITY & MELLOW

EFFERVESCENT SPARKLE

CASK NO. 5.96

\$239.99



REGION	Lowland
CASK TYPE	1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel
AGE	18 Years
DISTILLED ON	27 January 2003
OUTTURN	97 Bottles
ABV	57.8%

A lovely sweet, floral aroma permeated immediately the room as we poured this sample. That was followed by the refreshing scent of lemon meringue pie and honey-glazed brioche hot cross bun. On the palate, sparkling white grape, pear and apple juice alongside cracked black pepper pull apart biscuits served with strawberry jam and orange blossom honey.

Following reduction, we smoked an apple shisha with some Jaffa cakes and a mug of Earl Grey tea by the side. To taste, cinnamon baked apples with oats and brown sugar while in the finish soft honey nougat with almonds and pistachios.

SPICY & SWEET

A BREAKFAST LIKE NO OTHER

CASK NO. 79.10

\$176.99



REGION	Highland
CASK TYPE	1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel
AGE	11 Years
DISTILLED ON	2 April 2012
OUTTURN	215 Bottles
ABV	60.8%

We'd never had such a meal to start the day. Our noses found apple juice being poured over clotted cream, lemon icing and lavender. One Panellist had a side serving of toast too. To the palate, we were tucking into cinnamon buns dusted with teak wood shavings and dunked in bramble jelly as we wore wellie boots and a woolly jumper.

Water brought out wild strawberries, blueberry compote, redcurrants and damp soil on the nose, while the palate was treated to lemon zest, creamy vanilla and a touch of star anise and fennel.

FIRST APPEARANCE FROM THIS DISTILLERY FOR SMWS CANADA

SO WHAT IS SHERRY?

Our year-long exploration of sherry and whisky continues

There's a lot to learn when you start your whisky journey. But sometimes you have to broaden your horizons and dive into a whole new world to understand a little more about what's going on in your dram. If you enjoy a sherry cask-matured whisky, here's what you need to know about the Spanish wine and how it's much more than a sweet, creamy drink beloved by elderly relatives at Christmas time.



If you've been exploring the world of whisky for a while now, you'll be aware that the huge variety of styles, sometimes with completely different characteristics, can make the generic term 'whisky' feel a little inadequate. Now prepare to have your mind blown by a dive into the world of sherry.

Of course, we use the term 'sherry cask-matured' all the time, as a general description of what kind of cask a whisky has spent time in. If you're paying closer attention to a label, you might see a more specific descriptor – for example, that the whisky has spent time in an oloroso, or a Pedro Ximénez cask. Maybe even amontillado, palo cortado. Manzanilla or fino.

These are all styles of sherry wine – but with very distinct characteristics, and some are favoured more than others for whisky maturation.

There's a lot to cover here but we'll keep it as clear as possible. First of all, sherry is a wine that by law must come from within what's known as the 'Sherry Triangle' in Andalucía in the southwest of Spain, although it's more than just a triangle nowadays.

The main grape that's used is palomino, making up around 90 per cent of sherry production. Pedro Ximénez is primarily used to produce the sweet, thick dessert wines that cling to your glass. Moscatel is also used, but not as much.



As an overview of styles, sherry wine includes:

Fino: Dry wine, biological ageing process

Manzanilla: Dry wine, biological ageing process

Amontillado: Dry wine, biological and oxidative ageing process

Palo Cortado: Dry wine, biological and oxidative ageing process

Oloroso: Dry wine, oxidative ageing process

Pedro Ximénez (PX): Sweet wine, oxidative ageing process

Moscatel: Sweet wine, oxidative ageing process

The big difference between these styles of sherry comes down to how they are aged – biologically or oxidised. The lightest styles, fino and manzanilla, develop a natural protective layer of yeast in their casks, known as flor. That protects the wines from oxygen and allows these lighter, drier sherries to age biologically, producing a fresh, crisp and light wine.



Manzanilla is specific to the coastal town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, where the coastal environment influences its maturation.

In amontillados and palo cortados, that layer of flor is allowed to fade away, with some oxidisation leading to more colour and depth.

Oloroso, meanwhile, is allowed to deliberately oxidise and is fortified to a higher degree – making it one of the richest sherries and also one of the most popular styles for seasoning whisky casks.

Pedro Ximénez is a different beast altogether – it's been described as the sweetest wine in the world, perfect as a dessert drink, and bringing a rich sweetness to whisky.

There's one more style called 'cream' but it isn't a distinct sherry in its own right – it's a sweetened-up concoction produced by marrying oloroso with sweeter Pedro Ximénez or moscatel dessert wines, and probably the sherry you're most likely to associate with that elderly relative at Christmas time.

Distillers work with different styles of sherry to impart a variety of influences on the whisky that then goes into the cask. At the SMWS, that leads to a wide selection of whiskies under the 'sherry-cask matured' label – take *Cask No. 41.177: Dancing with summer* as an example. This came from two bourbon hogsheads that the Whisky Team divided between a first fill oloroso quarter cask and a first fill American oak Pedro Ximénez hogshead, and then combined again after at least three years. The result? A wide range of influences, a superbly complex dram, and different layers of sherry influence telling their own story. And that's before we even start talking about the wood...

DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

A REAL TONIC

CASK NO. 85.78

\$221.99



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
INITIAL CASK	<i>Ex-Bourbon Hogshead</i>
FINAL CASK	<i>1st Fill Oloroso Hogshead</i>
AGE	<i>14 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>13 December 2007</i>
OUTTURN	<i>284 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>57.6%</i>

We found ourselves walking through a pine forest eating parkin and golden syrup flapjacks before we made a break and started a barbecue with Texas-style baked beans and sausages. A wonderful texture on the palate neat, with the dark sweetness of cherry fondant chocolates, maple pecan pie and cinnamon butter.

After reduction we found that an enticing herbal note appeared, like in candied fennel seeds and ground coriander but also cocoa powder and a hint of sweet mint. To taste, we found rum and raisin fudge as well as toasted coconut and, in the finish, refreshing fresh ginger juice. Following 11 years in an ex-bourbon hogshead, we transferred this whisky into a 1st fill Spanish oak oloroso hogshead.

DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

MASSIVE OAK EXTRACTION

**DISTILLERY 24
RARE RELEASE**

\$257.99



REGION	Speyside
CASK TYPES	1st Fill & Refill Oloroso & PX Butts & Hogsheads
AGE	14 Years
DISTILLED ON	13 October 2008
OUTTURN	2554 Bottles
ABV	63%

The nose offered sherry, spiced wine and charcuterie; crème brûlée and chocolate raisin sweetness bumped into peppercorns, oak tannins and musk. Any sweetness on the palate (dark cherries in chocolate, peaches in syrup, cola, brown sugar, crêpes) was beaten into submission by massive hammerbeam oak, burnt heather, old cognac, espresso, cough medicine, cinnamon, ginger and chilli.

The reduced nose found cocoa powder; then cashews, macadamias and almonds embedded in spicy fruit cake. On the palate, the sweet/tannic balance improved – now cherry lips, pain aux raisins, walnut cake and hot chocolate fudge sundae confronted aniseed balls, balsamic, PX, cardamom and pencil ends. *Bottled for the Speyside Whisky Festival 2023.*

LIGHTLY PEATED

POISED PEAT

CASK NO. 4-349

\$204.99



REGION	Highland Island
INITIAL CASKS	Ex-Bourbon Hogsheads
FINAL CASK	1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel
AGE	12 Years
DISTILLED ON	29 October 2009
OUTTURN	240 Bottles
ABV	61.4%

The Panel felt this was a gorgeous and evocative nose full of white coastal flowers, chalk, lemon pith, sandalwood, green muddled herbs, a tang of sea air and a kiss of peat smoke. We also noted Earl Grey tea leaves and limestone. Some water brought out wintergreen, burlap, heather honey, shilling beers and olive oil.

When neat, the palate was beautifully peaty in an understated and very classy fashion; lots of soft, heathery and herbal Orcadian peat, then olive bread, herbal teas, sandalwood, bonfire embers and seaweed crackers. Reduction brought a light sootiness, some peat embers, bandages and gently refreshing briny qualities, with some lovely beeswax notes in the aftertaste. At eight years of age, we combined selected casks from the same distillery. We then returned the single malt into a variety of different casks to develop further. This is one of those casks.

HEAVILY PEATED

MIND THOSE CHILLI FINGERS

CASK NO. 10.246

\$204.99



REGION	Islay
INITIAL CASK	Ex-Bourbon Hogshead
FINAL CASK	Refill Hogshead Heavy Char #4+
AGE	9 Years
DISTILLED ON	17 October 2013
OUTTURN	214 Bottles
ABV	59.7%

A wonderful aroma came detailed with mentholated peat smoke, natural tar resins, fir wood extracts, camphor, bonfire smoke and hot paprika. Beyond that we also noted chilli oil, charcoal embers, smoky chipotle chilli paste and aniseed liqueur. Reduction brought pickled tarragon leaves, menthol tobacco, rosewood, iodine, black olive breads and dried seaweed.

The neat palate was massive – a heady thrill ride of exotic hardwood resins, shoe polish, sweet black liquorice, smoked black tea, putty, smoked treacle and pure iodine. With water we found it more mentholated, exhibiting dried mint and eucalyptus resin, then ointments, peaty waxiness, black pepper and hot barbecue sauce. After maturing in a bourbon hogshead for six years this was then transferred to a #4+ heavily charred refill hogshead.



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

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com

KEG N CORK LIQUOR COMPANY

3845 - 99th Street, Edmonton, AB

Phone: 780-461-0191

Email: ordering@kegncork.com

www.kegncork.com

ARC LIQUOR

1973 Harvey Ave, Kelowna, BC

Phone: 236-420-4060

Email: kls@armstrong.coop

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