



OUTTURN

Explore: August 2024

Issue 154

UNCHARTERED TERRITORIES
Straddling the line between a scientific and emotional response to whisky

ENDLESS DISCOVERIES AT 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



SPICY & SWEET

CHOCOLATE CRÈME BRÛLÉE WITH REDCURRANTS

CASK NO. 55.90

\$224.99



REGION	Highland
INITIAL CASK	Ex-Bourbon Hogshead
FINAL CASK	2nd Fill STR Barrique
AGE	15 Years
DISTILLED ON	21 September 2007
OUTTURN	278 Bottles
ABV	55.2%

The nose neat had aromas of charred carrots with apple and brown butter vinaigrette made using pine nuts and thyme next to sweet and sour candied plums, as well as linseed oil and Jamaican sorrel syrup. To taste, how about crème brûlée al cioccolato con ribes rosso – sounds a lot better than chocolate crème brûlée with redcurrants!

After reduction, we discovered apricot jam, hazelnuts and treacle tart, as well as walnut and raisin bread. To start it was spicier on the palate, as apple mustard with a hint of lemon peel ushered in sweeter notes of sugared cranberries and a sweet PX sherry-vinegar glaze. Following 12 years in an ex-bourbon hogshead, we transferred this whisky into a shaved, toasted and re-charred 2nd fill barrique.

JUICY, OAK & VANILLA

DRAMMING AT THE DAY SPA

CASK NO. 35-343

\$136.99



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>9 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>1 August 2013</i>
OUTTURN	<i>235 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>59.1%</i>

Initially we noted lemon meringue pie topped with vanilla custard. The big and generously sweet nose also suggested hawthorn, lime jelly, apple juice and freshly crushed malt – easy, straightforward and highly appealing. Reduction brought apple turnover, brown caster sugar, melted butter run through with orange zest and subtle notes of mint tea and vanilla shortbread.

The palate neat opened with cherry cough lozenges, candied hazelnuts, sweetened olive oil and dried banana chips; robust and mouth-coating. Water brought out softer tones of crème anglaise, fruit salad chews, granola, papaya and starched linens.

DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

COWPUNCHER RODEO DRAM

CASK NO. 140.14

\$209.99



REGION	<i>Texas</i>
INITIAL CASK	<i>Ex-Texas Rumble Barrel</i>
FINAL CASK	<i>1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>4 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>15 February 2017</i>
OUTTURN	<i>122 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>61.8%</i>

The nose delivered treacle, sherry and Big Red gum, red fruits and berries trampled by new cowboy boots and the after-sniff of Indonesian clove cigarettes. On the palate, the still-booted cowboy was smoking a cigar and tasting dried figs, port-soaked raisins and apples baked in brandy.

The reduced nose deepened our fascination with custard tarts, prunes, cinnamon rolls and toasted almonds. The palate now reminded us of Camp Chicory & Coffee Essence, baked bananas, candied orange dipped in chocolate, peppermint chewing gum and oak. After one year in an ex-Texas Rumble barrel this was transferred into a 1st fill ex- bourbon barrel.

FROM SCIENCE TO SENSORY DELIGHT

As an SMWS Tasting Panel chair, Kami Newton understands the need to assess whiskies as objectively as possible, while also embracing the flights of imagination and wonder that they can provoke. As he explains, it's a fine line between sensory science and the poetry of flavour hedonism – all while celebrating the curveballs, unpredictabilities and uncharted territories that come from our single casks

I closed my eyes as the aromas from the glass in my hand gently introduced themselves to my nose. And then there I was. In a moment of tranquillity. Perched beside a rockpool, watching seaweed sway this way and that as the smoke from a beach bonfire danced over barnacle-blanketed rocks.

Scotch whisky is evocative, immersive, and emotive in equal measure. It has the power to transport us to places that we have buried so deep within the brain bank that they have been all but forgotten. It's wondrous. It's a delight. But herein lies the problem.

Allowing whisky to guide us through technicolour voyages of fantasy, discovery, and expression is the glue that bonds us together. However, behind closed doors the professional process of analysing whisky is far from emotional. In fact, great lengths are taken to reduce biases, partialities, or artistic license altogether.

Striking a balance between the cold objectivity of scientific rigour and the warm subjectivity of the human experience is therefore a dilemma that requires a unique set of skills. Allow me to explain further by prising open the door into the world of professional sensory analysis.



When creating whisky, it's crucial to quantify quality, consistency, and off-notes, faults or flaws. Technology such as Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) can dissect a spirit into its many chemical parts. Yet despite such advances, nothing can analyse the quality of whisky quite like the human nose.

However, a nose cannot work in isolation. We rely on a labyrinth of nerves and neural pathways to take whisky vapours and translate them into recognisable odours, aromas and pre-determined terminology. As such, the process is undeniably subjective and susceptible to emotional bias, fatigue and what you've last had to eat.

Hence, for sensory analysis, try to control the tasting circumstances. Nothing but water beforehand, special lighting, set temperatures and absolutely no noise or erroneous aromas. Everything is prescribed, from dilution with water, to sipping the sample and even the time between one sample and the next.

Like a sniffer dog at an airport, it takes training to calibrate one's sense of smell as a professional sensory analyst. The nose (and the brain) must be finely tuned to know what to look for. Sensitive enough to detect the faintest whiff of boiled cabbage, rancid butter, or bath soap in a sea of cereals, fruits, and flowers. Banished from this world are any emotive notions of orchard trees, honeybees or coal scuttles full of treacle.

Studying whisky with lab coats and stethoscopes plays a central role in the integrity of Scotch whisky. Its very purpose is to remove the colour and calligraphy from the tasting note in the interests of acquiring data. However, from a Society member's vantage point, such tasting notes are like touring Scotland with your face buried in the travel guide. Interesting and informative, but ultimately missing the view.

Therefore, the task of the SMWS Tasting Panel is a tricky one. On the one hand the Panel must assess each whisky as objectively as possible. On the other hand, it must embrace a sprinkling of imagination, fantasy and playful visualisation.

The middle way is always the hardest. Sitting between the binary code of sensory science and the poetry of flavour hedonism is where the SMWS Panel strikes a balance. It's the Panel's role to throw away your travel guide and replace it with a kaleidoscope to enjoy the view through the lens of magical wonder.

We simply ask one question – where would you like to go? Because whisky is a vehicle that takes you places. Places from your past. Places in the present. And places out of this world. It's an exciting whirlwind adventure that never visits the same place twice. Which is largely due to the imperfections of single cask whiskies.



Sensory analysis and tasting whisky serve two separate purposes. Sensory analysis exists to iron out the wrinkles and spot the imperfections, largely before the new-make spirit has even peeked inside an oak cask. In the opposite corner, tasting whisky is hedonism in action. The purity of enjoyment, gratification and emotional connection.

The joy of single cask whisky lies in the foibles, blemishes and eccentricities that slip through the scientific net. Those curveballs, unpredictabilities and uncharted territories that come without instructions or a map. Such imperfections stimulate the emotions and excite the senses in ways that are hard to explain.

What is it about the Deep, Rich & Dried Fruit intensity of a sherry cask that's so appealing? Or what's the big attraction to the sooty, ashy, and downright mucky mounds of coal dust that excite us from our Peated flavour profile? Certain other flavours are even harder to explain.

Why would anyone want to drink a spirit that tasted meaty, oily or even cheesy? How about a glass of smoked kippers or a bottle of old ship's tar? Yet it's often such idiosyncrasies that excite us the most. It's these imperfections that make a whisky perfect by bringing back childhood memories and flooding us with waves of emotions and feelings.

Whatever your own subjective foibles for flavour, a Society single cask whisky will take you on a journey. Sometimes you discover something new. Other times you rediscover something old. But it's always an adventure that explores a different path to others before it.

While such journeys are often shared, it's important to understand that the experience of whisky flavour is unique for each of us. We all have our own emotions, memories and lives packed with individual experiences.

It's the Society's mission to straddle both the scientific and the emotional. To embellish the binary code of sensory analysis with enough colour and magic to awaken your imagination and electrify your emotions with each outturn. It's a tough job, but someone must do it.

DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

TASTY TAPAS AND FLAMENCO FLAIR

CASK NO. 41.162

\$187.99



REGION	<i>Speyside</i>
INITIAL CASK	<i>Ex-Oloroso Butt</i>
FINAL CASK	<i>1st Fill Oloroso Ex-Bodega Butt</i>
AGE	<i>12 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>28 June 2010</i>
OUTTURN	<i>390 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>57.3%</i>

For nine years this was in a seasoned oloroso butt, before being transferred into a butt which had previously been used in a sherry bodega solera system. The nose suggested custard pastries and almond biscuits, new leather boots and a wood-panelled tapas bar (hams hanging from the ceiling).

The mouth impact was powerful: dried fruits, macaroon bars, caramel and honey, with lingering notes of pipe tobacco, bombay mix, leather, cinnamon and clove. With water, the nose picked up pescaito frito with lemon, demerara sugar and dark chocolate with orange and spice. The palate now brought raisins soaked in brandy, marmalade, spiced plums and pencil ends.

LIGHTLY PEATED

A WELCOME HOME HUG

CASK NO. 3.343

\$324.99



REGION	<i>Islay</i>
CASK TYPE	<i>2nd Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel</i>
AGE	<i>18 Years</i>
DISTILLED ON	<i>16 February 2004</i>
OUTTURN	<i>228 Bottles</i>
ABV	<i>56.4%</i>

We jived all night among sweet perfumes on a polished jazz joint dancefloor; then gratefully enjoyed lavender-scented foot rubs and rose and violet dark chocolate creams from someone who stubbed out yenidje cigarettes in a wooden ashtray. The palate was a welcome home hug – Granny’s perfume, hickory wood smoke and embers, lapsang souchong, orange blossom and seashore – with a teasing light astringency on the finish.

The reduced nose had us floating in a wooden boat on an Islay lily pond, with maltings smoke and sea breezes in the distance. The palate – grilled prawns and moules marinière, a tarry rope dipped in your sauvignon blanc.

PEATED

SOUPÇON OF SOOT

CASK NO. 16.71

\$143.99



REGION	Highland
CASK TYPE	Refill Re-charred Hogshead
AGE	8 Years
DISTILLED ON	2 July 2013
OUTTURN	207 Bottles
ABV	64.4%

The nose was a hillbilly honker – hay-smoked cloudy cider and beech-smoked cheese, apple skins, nutmeg and burning barns – oh, and ice cream cones for the kids. The palate had chalky textures, herbal hints, lavender and violets and tasty bittersweet flavours of apple chutney and pineapple crumble with a soupçon of soot drying the finish.

The reduced nose remained curious – blackcurrant leaf and jam, toffee and Caramac sweetness, sacks of green malt in an old shack and further herbal hints of menthol and mint. The palate became sweet and earthy – charred lemon, tree bark, ash and pork cooked in cider.



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 for more information.



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

THE STRATH ALE, WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS

919 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC

Phone: 250-370-9463

Email: whisky@strathliquor.com

www.strathliquor.com

LEGACY LIQUOR STORE

1633 Manitoba Street, Vancouver, BC

Phone: 604-331-7900

Email: Darryl@legacyliquorstore.com

www.legacyliquorstore.com

ARC LIQUOR

1973 Harvey Ave, Kelowna, BC

Phone: 236-420-4060

Email: kls@armstrong.coop

www.armstrong.coop/arc-liquor/