



OUTTURN

Dive in: July 2024

Issue 153



**MASTERING
MATURATION**
THE INFLUENCE OF OAK

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



GIN

YEARNING FOR BUBBLES*

CASK NO. GN6.3

\$114.99



GIVING SPIRIT BOTTLE

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| REGION | Edinburgh |
| CASK TYPE | 1st Fill Ex-Bourbon Barrel |
| DISTILLED ON | 10 September 2020 |
| OUTTURN | 255 Bottles |
| ABV | 49.6% |



At first we detected blood orange sorbet, lime zest, elderflower champagne and orange segments studded with juniper. A robust and lightly peppery profile. Some water brought suggestions of nettle tea, lapsang souchong tea, lemon curd and fruit flavoured popsicles.

The palate showed a spicier side with coriander seed, pine needles, grated carrot, and caraway. Some rose petal touches brought elegance. With water we noted poppy seeds, fresh coriander this time, cucumber juice and bergamot oil. A fresh and super lively gin!

***Giving Spirit bottle - 100% of SMWS Canada's profits from the sales of this bottle will go to The War Amps; read more on page 4**

JULY - THE *GIVING SPIRIT* PROGRAM

In January 2021 we introduced our “Giving Spirit” program: each quarter, SMWS Canada donates to charity 100% of its profit from the sales of a designated bottle.

January 2024 marked the 4th year of our program, and to date we’ve donated over \$18,000.00 to various charities thanks to the bottles you’ve purchased! This past April we chose The Ocean Cleanup and we have donated \$1829.30 from the sales of Cask No. 78.65 “Garbanzo’s Cajun Train Ride.”

This quarter we’re turning our attention to The War Amps: “Making a difference in the lives of amputees by providing financial assistance for artificial limbs, peer support and information on all aspects of living with amputation.”



Our Giving Spirit bottle this quarter is Cask No. GN6.3 “Yearning for bubbles” - a barrel-aged gin that’s perfect for summer sipping! We’ll donate 100% of our profits from the sales of this bottle to The War Amps (waramps.ca).

We hope you’ll continue to support the Giving Spirit program by buying a great bottle and supporting a great cause at the same time!

SPICY & SWEET

MOSEY ALONG THE PATHWAY

CASK NO. 35.360

\$154.99



| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| 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>90 Bottles</i> |
| ABV | <i>55.7%</i> |

We poured paint over a new concrete path, then soaked it up with blotting paper and a burlap sack as custard rained down from the sky. The palate was awash with orange fondant, damson jam, a light anise, cold lager and corn on the cob.

Water introduced pear drops to the nose, along with bergamot and new leather. The palate was now lemon-forward, followed swiftly by Irn Bru and bubble gum, shochu and a gentle spiced orange.

SMALL BATCH BLENDED MALT

SCARLETT MARZIPAN

CASK NO. N/A

\$153.99



| | |
|--------------|--|
| REGION | Speyside & Highland |
| CASK TYPES | 1st & Refill American Oak & Spanish Oloroso Butts |
| AGE | 10 Years |
| DISTILLED ON | 13 June 2013 |
| OUTTURN | 2798 Bottles |
| ABV | 50% |

This blended malt is the rather tasty result of a combination of Speyside and Highland whiskies. Fully matured in sherry seasoned butts, a balance is struck between the use of refill and 1st fill wood, and a fusion of Spanish and American oak influence.

On the nose neat we described it as a Scottish-Spanish alliance. Chewy highland toffee, oatmeal porridge with dried fruit compote and apple crumble were met by churros and a glass of oak-aged rioja. The initial taste certainly had those expected tannins but was almost immediately brimming with flavours of red fruits and toasted vanilla.

Following reduction, the aroma of terracotta pots, sautéed wild mushrooms and salted almonds, plus farmhouse cider and red wine pear frangipane tart, made this an utterly entertaining experience. The taste was like traditional Welsh cakes, a cross between a cookie, a scone and a pancake.

DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

“YEE-HAW”

CASK NO. 68.116

\$224.99



| | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| REGION | Highland |
| INITIAL CASK | Ex-Bourbon Hogshead |
| FINAL CASK | 1st Fill Oloroso Hogshead |
| AGE | 14 Years |
| DISTILLED ON | 3 February 2009 |
| OUTTURN | 222 Bottles |
| ABV | 55.6% |

We opened with burnt sugar on orange slices and shots of spiced rum alongside stewed fruits and mince pies, but also earthy notes of foraging mushrooms deep in the forest. Although very different, it did not disappoint on the palate either. Quite dry to start, with maple-roasted nut mix with turmeric and black pepper soon followed by caramel, chocolate-coated roasted hazelnuts and honeycomb.

Following reduction, how about the picture of a wrangler riding into a rickhouse smoking a pipe – but don't try this yourself! To taste, treacle tart with whipped cream and sour cherries. Following 10 years in an ex-bourbon hogshead, we transferred this whisky into a 1st fill oloroso hogshead.

SCOTCH AND SHERRY

The world of sherry wood

From specially commissioned seasoned hogsheads to ex-bodega butts, the world of sherry casks can be as confusing to get your head around as the varieties of sherry wine that might have filled them. In our continuing focus on sherry cask-matured whisky, Richard Goslan explores the wonderful world of sherry wood

You might think – given the country of origin – that Spanish oak would be the preferred wood for sherry maturation. Think again – at least when it comes to the casks used in the region’s bodegas for the long-term storage of sherry.

Casks in a bodega’s solera system, which could be used for decades, are almost exclusively American oak. They will also have already been used to ferment grape musts or to age young fortified wines before getting anywhere near a solera. That’s because sherry makers want to avoid too much wood impact or high tannin levels coming from the cask – so older and less active American oak is ideal as a long-term storage vessel for sherry. As Gonzalez Byass master blender Antonio Flores told me on my first visit to Jerez back in 2013: “We don’t want to produce what my father called a carpentry wine.”



Seasoned casks for the whisky industry are a different story. Here, whisky distilleries – and the Whisky Team at The Scotch Malt Whisky Society – can specify exactly what kind of oak is required, how long it’s toasted for, what kind of sherry should be used for seasoning, and for how long.

From our Whisky Team’s perspective, that gives variety in terms of the kinds of casks we can work with when it comes to maturing our stocks of SMWS whisky. “The main variables we can play with are oak species, wine type and length of seasoning,” says head of whisky creation, Euan Campbell. “So we tend to commission an equal mix of American and Spanish oak, seasoned equally with oloroso and Pedro Ximénez wines, with a handful of other wines on occasion. We then draw down from these casks at different times - between 12 and 24 months of seasoning with sherry. All this ensures that we are delivering a variety of flavours and styles, and that’s before we even consider the endless spirit types that we fill into the casks in Scotland and how long those are matured for.”

On a recent visit to Bodegas Barón, Euan and I walked between rows of sherry hogsheads, each one stencilled with SMWS lettering and indicating what kind of sherry was working its magic inside the wood.

“Right here we have 204 Scotch Malt Whisky Society casks made of American oak and 204 made of Spanish oak,” explained Nerea Román Gil. “Half of the American oak casks are filled with oloroso sherry, and the other half are filled with Pedro Ximénez – and it’s the same with the Spanish oak casks.”



According to Stuart MacPherson, former Master of Wood at The Macallan and now an independent consultant in cask management, the different wood types contribute different personalities to the whiskies that will go on to mature in those casks.

“It’s very much about the style and flavour character that you’re looking for,” he says. “If you’re looking for something that’s lighter in colour, a sweeter vanilla citrus style, then that’s more of a driver towards [American oak] *Quercus alba*. If you’re looking for sherry bombs that have much more dried spice and chocolatey flavours, then that’s more driven by [European/Spanish oak] *Quercus robur*. But then you’re looking at toasting temperatures, about how you break down these chemical compounds within these species of timber to drive flavour and colour.”

For Stuart, toasting is also a key aspect of how the cask will go on to contribute to flavour. Unlike bourbon casks that are charred, sherry casks undergo a level of toasting that can be specified by whoever’s going to end up using the cask in question. The levels range from light, medium or heavy, but could be for between 40 and 60 minutes at a heat of around 240-250 degrees centigrade.

He says the toasting regime can play a huge role in determining the character of the cask. “The biggest single influences on spirit development, in my opinion, are not only in wood species but in toasting temperatures,” he says. “They go hand in hand. With research and development, you can start to influence not only the flavour characteristics, but also the colour. That’s why making casks to [The Macallan’s] own specifications rather than buying them off the shelf was such a benefit for us.”



Of course, where the cask is actually going to end up is also a consideration. A one-year seasoned Spanish oak cask, for example, might work very well when it’s used in the colder Scottish climate, but would likely result in a highly tannic whisky in a hot and humid country with more intense extraction.

I’m reminded of what Miguel Martin, of Bodegas José y Miguel Martin, told us about the world of sherry casks and wood varieties when Euan and I visited in 2018: “It really depends on what you’re looking for, there’s no right or wrong, no better or worse. They are just different.”

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 Andalucia’s bodegas at the [SMWS YouTube channel](#), [SMWSSilverScreen](#).

PEATED

ROCKING THE GRAVY BOAT

CASK NO. 53.453

\$201.99



| | |
|---------------|--|
| REGION | <i>Islay</i> |
| INITIAL CASKS | <i>Ex-Bourbon Hogsheads</i> |
| FINAL CASK | <i>1st Fill Oloroso Ex-Bodega Butt</i> |
| AGE | <i>9 Years</i> |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>3 April 2013</i> |
| OUTTURN | <i>612 Bottles</i> |
| ABV | <i>57.5%</i> |

Lashings of leather, tar, camphor, burning pinecones and smoked teas – all sloshed down with pickled seawater, brisket burnt ends and root beer syrup mixed with barbecue sauce. Powerful, concentrated and brilliant! With water we got shoe polish, mineral salts and pungent kipper smoke along with a tang of beef extract and smoky bouillon powder.

The neat palate opened with a distinctly gamey and leathery vibe, plus some very salty Dutch liquorice, natural tar extracts, game salami with hot chilli and smoked black teas. Reduction enhanced the leathery aspects and brought aged Belgian lambic ales, pickled tarragon, iodine and a whole box of gravy granules. At the age of 7, we combined two hogsheads from the same distillery into an ex-bodega sherry butt.

PEATED

CHORIZO INFERNO

CASK NO. 10.255

\$199.99



| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| REGION | <i>Islay</i> |
| INITIAL CASK | <i>Ex-Bourbon Hogshead</i> |
| FINAL CASK | <i>2nd fill PX Hogshead</i> |
| AGE | <i>9 Years</i> |
| DISTILLED ON | <i>17 October 2013</i> |
| OUTTURN | <i>236 Bottles</i> |
| ABV | <i>58.6%</i> |

An antique sea chest made the perfect dinner table beside a peat bog. We got the barbecue coals smouldering and listened to shrimps and honey-glazed pork chops sizzle over the flames. Flames licked the tongue also, with an inferno of hot sauce and sticky smoked molasses. Water was surely required.

Now the peat and barbecue smoke filtered through sphagnum moss before merging with fine ash and tar stuck to sweet toffee. The heat was tamed to reveal chorizo sausage served in a hot cross bun with kelp seaweed, tobacco leaves and a glass of salty manzanilla sherry. After 5 years in an ex-bourbon hogshead this was transferred to a 2nd fill Pedro Ximenez hogshead. ***Sister cask to 10.241 “Sound of singing sand” from last month.***



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/