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RYE WHISKEY

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WORLD WHISK(E)Y
TAKETSURU PURE MALT
YAMAZAKI 12YR

WILLET POT STILL BOURBON

CATEGORY: KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON

BOTTLE: \$250

MEMBER PRICE: \$225

10Z TASTE: \$10

PROOF: 94

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

Though containing a percentage of sourced bourbon from neighboring distilleries, the Willet Pot Still is truly a small batch bourbon. Unlike the other big names in bourbon, Willet's whiskey is distilled in a pot still, versus the more commonly used column still, aka continuous still. Willet's own bourbon distillation is a one batch at a time process; a fact that qualifies it as small batch bourbon in many books.

Small batch bourbon is not clearly defined- it simply means 'more than one barrel' and 'less than the usual amount'. The usual amount, if you're a big producer, may mean the whiskey made in one year is the total amount a micro distillery may make in its lifetime. Willet, due to its pot still distillation, truly is small batch.



TASTING NOTES:

Soft, distinctly corn, round entry, leading to a mellow, alto toned middle, and tapering off in a lingering finish. Surprisingly soft at 94 proof.

EAGLE RARE 10YR BOURBON

CATEGORY: KENTUCKY 10YR STRAIGHT BOURBON

BOTTLE: \$200

MEMBER PRICE: \$180

10Z TASTE:\$8

PROOF: 90

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

In order to speak of Eagle Rare, one must speak of The Buffalo Trace Distillery, the company that produces the bourbon (BTD to differentiate the distillery from the namesake bourbon). BTD utilizes three bourbon mash bills:
-wheated mash bill (corn > wheat > malted barley)
-high rye mash bill (corn > rye > malted barley)
-low rye mash bill (corn >> rye > malted barley)

From just these three bourbon recipes, over thirty different brands of bourbon are produced. At first glance, it appears that marketers are trying to pull a fast one through the smoke and mirrors of labeling, packaging, and advertising. The reality? The different bourbons are, in fact, quite different. They taste different. Period.

How can this be if many share the same recipe? Well, there ain't no good whiskey without time and where that time is spent. If one were to lay down the same new whiskey in two neighboring barrels, they would taste a bit different after a few months, and quite possibly completely divergent in ten years' time.

Eagle Rare 10yr is from the low-rye bourbon mash bill. The breakdown is most likely 85% corn, 10% rye, and 5% malted barley and boy, is that corn evident.



TASTING NOTES:

Initial sweetness, followed by the 10 years in new oak barrels, exerting its vanilla and wood spice just enough to match the upfront sweetness

FOUR ROSES SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

CATEGORY: KENTUCKY SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

BOTTLE: \$200

MEMBER PRICE: \$180

10Z TASTE: \$8

PROOF: 100

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

Four Roses makes Bourbon unlike anyone else. Utilizing two different mash bills (E=high corn/low rye + B=low corn/high rye) and five different yeast strains (V=delicate fruit, K=slight spice, O=rich fruit, Q=floral essence, F=herbal notes), Four Roses produces ten distinct bourbons that are aged separately. For the everyday yellow label, all ten are married together. Conversely, the small batch combines only four of the recipes.

For the single barrel, only the low corn/high rye mash bill and the yeast producing delicate fruit is *typically bottled. Realize, this is a single barrel at a time, and if that barrel isn't top quality, it's not going to be bottled as a single barrel- essentially quality is guaranteed.

*look out for future FR hand-picked barrels made from the other combinations



TASTING NOTES:

High alto toned, delicate, especially at 100 proof, with corresponding wood notes. This is the higher ranged wood-wind section playing a sustained chord.

EVAN WILLIAMS SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

CATEGORY: SINGLE BARREL BOURBON

BOTTLE: \$150

MEMBER PRICE: \$135

10Z TASTE: \$6

PROOF: 86.6

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

Heaven Hill is the largest American whiskey maker that is completely family-owned. The Shapiro family have run the company since its inception, shortly after the end of prohibition. Concurrently, the Beam family have likewise served as continuous master distillers since its beginning. Talk about keeping it in the family.

Evan Williams single barrel is consistently listed on buying guides; it truly overdelivers for the inexpensive price it warrants. Made with the Heaven Hill bourbon mash bill (78% corn, 10% rye, and 12% malted barley), expect to find a bit of variation between bottlings, but also high quality, round bourbon with wonderful integrated wood spice notes. Nine years in barrel, each bottling is hand-picked to ensure quality.



TASTING NOTES:

vanilla, coconut, and a prominent, integrated, and balanced wood presence. This is my living room bourbon.

BAT MASTERSON'S 10YR 100% RYE

CATEGORY: AMERICAN RYE WHISKEY

BOTTLE: \$300

MEMBER PRICE: \$270

10Z TASTE: \$12

PROOF: 86

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

Gambler, buffalo hunter, army scout, gunfighter and newspaperman; William "Bat" Masterson did it all and did it well. And what better way to honor such a rarefied man than with a truly exceptional whiskey. Crafted by artisans, distilled in a pot still and aged in white-oak casks for just over 10 years, it's the kind of drink that Bat would've surely raved about.

Masterson's is all rye and only rye, meeting the strictest definition of traditional rye whiskey. The rye is grown in the verdant Pacific Northwest, and only rye that exhibits the perfect combination of weight, plumpness and rich, earthy fragrance is chosen. These key characteristics, along with a meticulous distillation process, give Masterson's its uniquely smooth taste.

Oak barrels are one of the many ways Masterson's attains its unique taste profile. White oak has the tightest grain and is heavier than other types of oak, allowing the wood to maintain its integrity during the ten-year aging process while imparting a subtle but distinct flavor.

100% rye; an oddity. 100% rye from Canada, blended with Colorado-sourced water, and bottled in Sonoma, California.



TASTING NOTES:

Delightfully narrow smooth bandwidth of flavor; delicately spicy, as rye should be; well-made

RUSSELL'S RESERVE SINGLE BARREL RYE

CATEGORY: AMERICAN SINGLE BARREL RYE

BOTTLE: \$250

MEMBER PRICE: \$225

1OZ TASTE: \$10

PROOF: 104

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

Jimmy Russel is a living whiskey legend. Having worked for over 60 years in the American whiskey business, he could be credited with keeping bourbon and American rye whiskey alive. During the 1960's through the early 2000's, American whiskey was on the downturn. Brown spirit was out of fashion, and clear spirits were in. The 'clean is better' food movement leaked in to adult beverage. Vodka was king. 'Lite beer' was all the rage. Then, a rediscovery of flavor began in food and wine, crept into beer, and made its way to spirit.

With the rediscovery of flavor in food and beverage, and clean being an auxiliary versus the deciding reason, people began seeking flavor once again in distilled beverage. If you search for flavor in non-flavored spirit, one inevitably lands upon spirit aged in barrel. And the most iconic barrel-aged spirit is whiskey.

That's where Jimmy Russell comes in, and eventually his son Eddie. Jimmy's been making bourbon and American rye for over 60 years, during whiskies more recent dark age, hence maintaining the tradition that may have been lost otherwise. Jimmy and his son Eddie hand picks each of the single barrels. The mash bill breaks down to 51% rye, 37% corn, 12% malted barley, and comes across as such.



TASTING NOTES:

A hint of rye spice, followed by a sweet roundness, a finishing long with nice weight.

HIGHLAND PARK 12YR SINGLE MALT

CATEGORY: SINGLE MALT SCOTCH

BOTTLE: \$200

MEMBER PRICE: \$180

1OZ TASTE: \$8

PROOF: 86

COUNTRY: SCOTLAND

Highland Park single malts are revered for their masterful finish in sherry casks. The oak is left to air dry for four years in Spain before being filled with sherry for two to three more years. Only then are the barrels emptied and the single malt added to begin their own aging process.

After consecutive years of being voted the best Scotch single malt, Highland Park 18 was retired into master beverage taster F. Paul Pacult's Hall of Fame. The Highland Park 18 is what sherry-finished Scotch should taste like.



TASTING NOTES:

Perfectly balanced. Malt, smoke, and peat. A rich and round single malt.

BALVENIE DOUBLEWOOD 17YR SINGLE MALT

CATEGORY: SCOTCH SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT

BOTTLE: \$450

MEMBER PRICE: \$405

10Z TASTE: \$18

PROOF: 86

COUNTRY: SCOTLAND

David Stewart is the man when it comes to Scotch single malt. In 2018 he celebrated his 56th year as malt master, master distiller, and, in many's opinion, whisky master. That's a pretty darn good stretch of time for any type of tenure- It's safe to say he probably knows what he's doing. Furthermore, he was one of the first to adopt secondary maturation in a distinctly different cask, i.e. 'cask finishing'. By doing so he changed the whisky landscape forever.

At the heart of the Balvenie Doublewood is the process of cask finishing. First matured in American oak barrels, vanilla notes are imparted. It is then transferred to European sherry oak casks, adding rich, spicy flavors, and depth and fullness. And at 17 years in barrels, this whisky has been there for 30% of David Stewart's ongoing career. I wish I could be there for .01% of that time (that's almost two days by the way).

Built by the Grant family in 1892 as a sister distillery to Glenfiddich next door. It now has eight stills, which some think is the key to its nutty, honeyed style – they are fat and have short necks, thus producing a full and rich new make. David Stewart's ability to transform bold to delicate is testament to his craftsmanship and artistry.



TASTING NOTES:

Rich, full, with dried fruit, and impossibly light and delicate

GLENFARCLAS 17YR SINGLE MALT

CATEGORY: SCOTCH SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT

BOTTLE: \$325

MEMBER PRICE: \$292.50

10Z TASTE: \$13

PROOF: 86

COUNTRY: SCOTLAND

Translated, Glenfarclas means valley of the green grass and it is a true family business, a rarity in today's whisky landscape where most are owned by quite large corporations. Five generations of the Grants have successfully run the distillery. Five generations. I can hardly keep up with what I got going on today.

Glenfarclas is a classic Speyside whisky, if not The Classic- fruity, round, rich, honeyed and heathered. This is what a Speyside single malt should taste like.

George S. Grant, 5th generation and Director of Sales, once sat at the Franklin Room Bar. Of the choices offered- 10yr, 12yr, 15yr, 17yr, 25yr, and 40yr- George ordered the 17yr. Having deduced who he was through his accent and his choice of drink, I politely inquired, "Why the 17yr sir?"

Mr. Grant replied, "That is where the intersection of flavor and price meet for my personal taste." One cannot argue against that.

If Mr. Grant ever comes through again, we will kindly ask him to sign your bottle. And you are always welcome to take your (empty) bottle home.



TASTING NOTES:

Honey and heather, caramel, long finish

GLENROTHES BOURBON BARREL RESERVE

CATEGORY: SCOTCH SPEYSIDE SINGLE MALT

BOTTLE: \$300

MEMBER PRICE: \$270

10Z TASTE: \$12

PROOF: 80

COUNTRY: SCOTLAND

The Glenrothes was established in 1879 by the burn (i.e. river) of Rothes. They have been producing characteristic Speyside single malt for over 130 years. Unlike many whisky producers, the maturity of The Glenrothes whisky is determined not by age but rather by maturity. In other words, the whisky tells them when it's ready. The regular line up is vintage dated and is typically aged in a quarter new oak, and a combination of Spanish and American oak seasoned with bourbon, sherry, and malt whisky.

For the Bourbon Barrel Reserve, the Glenrothes matured whisky in only ex-bourbon American oak. The result, an abundance of vanilla and coconut working harmoniously with the soft and mellow characteristics the Glenrothes is known for.

I often bring this to people's homes for it can truly please a crowd. A perfect bridge for the bourbon drinker looking for familiarity in a Scotch.



TASTING NOTES:

Fresh and floral, with familiar hints of vanilla, soft and mellow, refined and elegant

REDBREAST 21YR

CATEGORY: TRIPLE POT STILL IRISH WHISKEY

BOTTLE: \$750

MEMBER PRICE: \$675

10Z TASTE: \$30

PROOF: 92

COUNTRY: IRELAND

When studying whisk[e]y, or alcohol for that matter, one soon realizes much of its history is dictated by necessity and adaptation. Irish whiskey is no exception.

The Irish are credited with inventing whisky.

'We can make beer stronger? And it will last longer?'

Perhaps stated an Irishman. 'Well yes, we should do just that.'

When the English ruled the Irish, they began taxing the Irish whiskey being produced. With distillation being a home tradition, the Irish were incredulous and did what they could to avoid the exciseman collecting. Clandestine distillation began. Clever taxation was the counter.

Part of the malt whisky making process includes the malting of the barley; essentially germination of the seed of barley, which takes time, and space. The English exciseman's counter was to tax this part of the whiskey making process. The Irish distiller's response? 'Fine, we'll just malt half of the barley.'

Irish Pot Still whiskey is exactly this style- part malted barley and part unmalted barley, matured in a mixture of bourbon barrels and first-fill oloroso sherry casks, resulting in a rich and complex whiskey.



TASTING NOTES:

Lingering deep oak spice coupled with vanilla, well-lively nose with tropical fruit, dried fruit, leading to a soft vanilla, sherry nuttiness, leading to a lingering, seemingly forever, finish; an alto belting out quite the note.

MIDLETON VERY RARE POT STILL

CATEGORY: IRISH SINGLE POT STILL WHISKEY

BOTTLE: \$450

MEMBER PRICE: \$405

10Z TASTE: \$18

PROOF: 80

COUNTRY: IRELAND

“Just two Master Distillers have had the privilege of preserving the legacy of the world’s most sought-after Irish Whiskey. Created in 1984 by Master Distiller Emeritus Barry Crockett, Midleton Very Rare is the ultimate expression of his art and expertise. Once a year, Master Distiller Brian Nation honours Barry’s vision by handpicking the finest and rarest whiskeys available and carefully blends them to create each annual vintage of Midleton Very Rare. Only a select number of casks are deemed of sufficient excellence and rarity to bear the Midleton Very Rare name, making this The Pinnacle of Irish Whiskey.” (Dr. Midleton, 2017)

When it comes to Pot Still Irish whiskey, it is not law to triple distill. For the Midleton Very Rare, the conscious choice was made to pot-distill three times, therefore creating a lighter, muted new make whiskey. By employing a very tight hearts cut that retains the best part of the final distillation run, Midleton is able to capture flavor within this lightness of being. Perhaps Milan Kundera is a fan. One can easily make a metaphor to literal light- without weight, but full of substance.

The latest annual release available in the US is the 2017 vintage.



TASTING NOTES:

soft and pleasant on the nose, the palette entry is equally soft, with a medium weight density that floats through leaving a long, lingering finish. .

TAKETSURU PURE MALT

CATEGORY: JAPANESE SINGLE PURE MALT

BOTTLE: \$225

MEMBER PRICE: \$202.50

10Z TASTE: \$9

PROOF: 86

COUNTRY: JAPAN

Masataka Taketsuru is by all means the godfather of Japanese whisky. Charged as a young man to learn how to make whisky, he was sent to Scotland, arguably the best whiskies makers at that time. Unable to travel across Asia and Europe- Central and Eastern Europe was in turmoil- he voyaged across the Pacific, railed across America, and voyaged once again across the Atlantic. The story could end there and most likely be enough content for a television movie, but no, this was just the beginning of a multi-season melodrama. Having landed in Scotland, he began his whisky journey by attending Glasgow University to study organic chemistry- the academic title giving to studying whisky (well, at least in this case). After finishing the summer session, he approached every distillery he could looking for a job. Back then, many distilleries were family owned with methods passed down through generations. Would you willingly share your family secrets to a stranger, let alone a foreigner? Having been turned down multiple times, Taketsuru found his way to Campletown and worked odd jobs, including teaching martial arts.

Then Rita happened. Taketsuru fell in love with a young Scottish woman, and she him. With this, Takesturu became family, and soon found himself employed at the now defunct Hazelburn Distillery. It is here where he learned the art of whisky making. The meticulous notes he sent back became the foundation of all Japanese whisky.

Taketsuru Pure Malt is the namesake flagship of The Nikka Whisky Company. It is a marriage of peated single malt from The Yoichi Distillery, located on the north of mainland Japan, and fruit-forward single malt from The Miyagikyo Distillery, located on Hokkaido, Japan’s most northern island.

YAMAZAKI 12YR

CATEGORY: JAPANESE SINGLE MALT

BOTTLE: \$350

MEMBER PRICE: \$315

10Z TASTE: \$14

PROOF: 86

COUNTRY: JAPAN

The Yamazaki Distillery, established in 1923 on the outskirts of Kyoto, is the spiritual birthplace of all Japanese whisky for it is here that the first Japanese single malt was distilled. From their beginning, they have been methodically creating, experimenting, and have since produced a distinctly Japanese whisky. Yamazaki utilize the much-revered water of Japan and the hard-to-source Japanese white oak. Unlike their Scottish counterparts, the Yamazaki has many varying pairs of pot stills with different dimensions, lyne arms, and copper surface area. Couple this with an aging program consisting of ex-bourbon, ex-sherry, and Japanese white oak barrels, and the Yamazaki is able to produce many types of quality malt whisky.

The Yamazaki is the flagship single malt of the Suntory company (no, it is not just a fictitious company from Lost in Translation), with the 12 being more ex-bourbon, some sherry, and a little bit of mizunara aged whiskys.



TASTING NOTES:

Round, layered, and deep; this is an all-year, everyday sipper. Please enjoy for not much makes it to Chicago these days.

