Single Malt Scotch Whisky
Regions, Characteristics and Tastings
Overview

- Review
- Taste and Influences
- Whisky Appreciation
- Whisky Regions of Scotland
Review

SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

Malt whisky produced at an individual distillery in Scotland. This can be blended from multiple ages, expressions and varieties of malt whisky produced at the same distillery. By law Scotch must be aged in oak casks for a minimum of three years.
Taste and Influences

EXTREME VARIETY

Single Malt Scotch Whisky has an incredibly wide range of tastes for the same class of alcoholic beverage. These differences are dependent on where the whisky is made, the way it is made, how long the whisky is matured, and if the whisky is blended with other variations to create new flavors.
Taste and Influences

ONLY TWO INGREDIENTS

- **Water** - What is the water source? What is the geology and topography of the area? Is the area flowery and grassy, or rocky and rugged?
- **Malted Barley** - What kind of barley was used? Was the malted barley dried with or without peat in the kiln fire?
Taste and Influences

OTHER INFLUENCES

- **Stills** - What was the size and shape of the stills used to produce the whisky? How many times was it distilled?
- **Wood** - What kind of casks were used for maturation? What did they previously contain? How long was the whisky matured?
Taste and Influences

OTHER INFLUENCES

- **Climate** - *What is the climate like where the distillery is located? Is it on or near the coast?*
- **Blending** - *Were different types of wooden casks used for maturation? Were a variety of ages of whisky blended together?*
Taste and Influences

FLAVORS

● **Cereal** - From the barley *(cookies, breakfast cereal, bran, malt extract, corn mash)*

● **Fruity** - From the wood during maturation
  ○ Fresh fruit *(apples, pears, peaches)*
  ○ Citrus fruit *(oranges, lemons, tangerines)*
  ○ Tropical fruit *(pineapples, bananas)*
  ○ Dried fruit *(raisins, figs)*
  ○ Hard candy

● **Floral** - From the water source
  ○ Scented flowers *(rose, lavender, heather)*
  ○ Grass *(clippings, dried grass, flower stems)*
Taste and Influences

FLAVORS

● **Smoky** - From the peated malt when drying (*smoked meat, fish and cheese; bonfires, burning leaves; peat smoke; tobacco; soot, coal; tar*)

● **Medicinal** - From the iodine in seaweed in some Islay and coastal malts (*mouthwash, antiseptic*)

● **Woody** - From the wooden casks during maturation
  ○ New wood (*sap, pine, bark, fresh oak*)
  ○ Scented wood (*cedar, cigar boxes*)
  ○ Pencil shavings
  ○ Sawdust
Taste and Influences

FLAVORS

- **Wood Extract** - Also from the casks during maturation, from the vanillins and tannins in the wood
  - Vanilla (*vanilla, ice cream, custard, cake, pastry*)
  - Spicy (*nutmeg, clove, cinnamon, ginger*)
  - Caramel (*toffee, fudge, cotton candy*)
  - Honey
  - Cocunut
  - Winey (*sherry, port*)
- **Oily** (*butter, fat, cream, cheese, leather polish*)
- **Sulfury** (*rubber, struck matches, yeast, cooked vegetables*)
Taste and Influences

FLAVORS
Taste and Influences

SPIDER DIAGRAMS

These diagrams were created to illustrate how a particular whisky tastes, and to compare to other whiskies. They visually graph a matrix of many flavors and characteristics, rating them each on a common scale.
Whisky Appreciation

The 5 Steps to Appreciating Scotch Whisky

- **Color** - *Is the whisky light gold, bright copper or rich amber in color?*
- **Body** - *Does the whisky have a light, medium or full body?*
- **Nose** - *Which aromas do you recognize when you nose the whisky? Is it malty, smoky, fruity or chocolatey?*
- **Palate** - *What characteristics do you notice on the palate? Is the whisky sweet, rich and fruity? Or is it spicy and peppery?*
- **Finish** - *Does the flavor remain for a long time or does it disappear quickly? Is there a warming finish?*
Whisky Regions of Scotland

REGIONS

- Speyside
- Highlands
- Islands
- Lowlands
- Islay
- Campbeltown
Whisky Regions of Scotland

**SPEYSIDE**

This is the area around the River Spey in Northeast Scotland. This region has the most distilleries, representing over half of all the distilleries in Scotland. Speyside malts are typically light and sweet, and are frequently made with sherry casks, giving a sweet, fruity or creamy taste. Speyside malts are not usually characterized as smoky or peaty. *(Macallan, Balvenie, Aberlour, Glenrothes, Glenlivet)*
HIGHLANDS

This is by far the largest region in area, and also covers a wide variety of terrain. Similarly, whisky from this region covers a wide variety and cannot be easily generalized. Often the region is subdivided into quadrants. The whisky in this region ranges from bold, smoky and peaty, to light, sweet and fruity. There are fruity, dry malts, and there are rich full-bodied malts with cereal sweetness. Some of the coastal maritime malts are salty and peaty. (Dalmore, Glenmorangie, Aberfeldy, Old Pulteney)
Whisky Regions of Scotland

ISLANDS

Technically, the Islands are part of the Highlands region, and not officially recognized as a region by the Scotch Whisky Association. The Islands include distilleries in the Orkney Islands, the Isle of Skye, and the Isles of Arran, Mull and Jura. All of the malts from these islands are typically salty and known as maritime malts, being located on the sea. That aside, there are quite a few differences in taste between the Island malts. *(Talisker, Highland Park, Arran, Isle of Jura)*
Whisky Regions of Scotland

LOWLANDS

The whiskies of this region are generally characterized as gentle and floral. Often whisky in this region is triple distilled, making them even lighter. The whisky distilleries of this region have earned the nickname "The Lowland Ladies" for their delicate whiskies. Often, Lowland whisky will be younger (8 years), as the longer maturation periods can take away from the delicate floral notes. (Auchentoshan, Glenkinchie, Bladnoch)
Whisky Regions of Scotland

ISLAY

The malts from Islay are characteristically very peaty, smoky and salty. These whiskies often have an iodine or medicinal flavor to them as well. Laphroaig, Lagavulin and Ardbeg are the most well known, but there are other distilleries that make lighter, less peated malts, such as Bruichladdich and Bunnahabhain. (Laphroaig, Lagavulin, Ardbeg)
Whisky Regions of Scotland

CAMPBELTOWN

This region is on the western coast of Scotland, on the Kintyre Peninsula. Once a major producer of whisky, and home to as many as 34 distilleries, but U.S. Prohibition hit the region hard. Campbeltown now only has 3 remaining active distilleries. The malts of this region are known for their dryness, pungency and slight saltiness. (Springbank, Glen Scotia, Glengyle)
Taste!