

Newcomers Whisky Club

*Inaugural Evening:
A Tour of Scotland's Whisky Regions*

May 27, 2012



Menu

Auchentoshan

12 year-old, 40% abv
Lowlands

Springbank

15 year-old, 46% abv
Campbeltown

The Dalmore

12 year-old, 40% abv
Northern Highlands

Cragganmore

12 year-old, 40% abv
Speyside

The Balvenie Double Wood

12 year-old, 40% abv
Speyside

Talisker

10 year-old, 45.8% abv
Islands (Skye)



Auchentoshan

12 year-old, 40% abv

This is a classic Lowland distillery, not only in its location, but also in its adherence to triple distillation. Light-bodied whiskies result; light in flavor, too, but by no means bland. If you fancy single malts, but do not care for intensity, Auchentoshan offers the perfect answer: subtlety; Stan Getz rather than Sonny Rollins, Vivaldi, as opposed to Beethoven.

Auchentoshan ("corner of the field") is pronounced "och'n'tosh'n," as though it were an imprecation. This distillery is at the foot of the Kilpatrick Hills, just outside Glasgow. There are suggestions of a distillery on the site around 1800, but 1825 is the "official" foundation date. The distillery was rebuilt after World War II, re-equipped in 1974, and further overhauled ten years later, when it was acquired by Stanley P. Morrison. The acquisition provided a Lowland partner for their Islay and Highland distilleries, Bowmore and Glen Garioch. The company is now called Morrison Bowmore, and is controlled by Suntory. The Japanese cherish the distilleries, and the upkeep is superb. Much has been done to highlight the equipment at Auchentoshan and to show how the whisky is made. (*Complete Guide to Single Malt Scotch, 6th Edition, Michael Jackson*)

Miscellaneous reviews:

This lovely dram pours a healthy, if pale (nice little contradiction there), gold. The nose offers an insanely nice and invigorating mix of caramel, light brown sugar, sweet apple cider, fresh vanilla, light honey and creamy loveliness. If there ever was such a thing as a nostril orgasm, this would likely be what caused it – the way all the scents come together is sublime. I really, really wish I could say that the palate is as outstanding as the nose. But, alas, it is not. That does not, by any means, make it less than gorgeous, however. With a delicious caramel and honey sweetness, a bit of lemon zing and a hint of spice and ginger, the palate, too, is really ruddy good. And I do mean really. What makes it slightly less impressive than the palate is the relative "simplicity" of the sweetness. Do, please, note the use of the word relative. (www.whiskycritic.com)

Auchentoshan 12 Year has a vibrant, refreshing aroma that will evoke the back room in a florist's shop. There are the floral notes but also a whiff of the green, stemmy parts and a distinct bit of clove. It smells snappy and clean. This clean sensation continues on the palate into a very spirited, sweet, menthol infused finish. The colour of this 12 year is a pale honey, and although it is bottled at 40% and does finish well balanced, the pure spirit character and lack of sweetness makes it seem a little stronger than it is. (www.aspiringgentleman.com)

Nose: _____

Taste: _____

Comments: _____

Enjoyment Scale:

0 = once is enough, 5 = I like it, pour me another, 10 = Where do I buy a bottle?

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Springbank

15 year-old, 46% abv

Springbank Distillery is unique. It is the oldest independent family owned distillery in Scotland. Founded in 1828 on the site of Archibald Mitchell's illicit still, the Springbank Distillery is now in the hands of his great-great-grandson, Hedley G. Wright.

Owned by Mr. Wright's J&A Mitchell & Co Ltd, Springbank is the only distillery in Scotland to carry out the full production process on the one site. 100% of the traditional floor malting, maturation and bottling is done at the distillery in

Campbeltown. It produces the most handmade whisky in Scotland, with traditional production methods being used throughout the process, and human involvement at each and every stage. It is the only distillery in Scotland to have never chill-filtered, nor do we add any artificial colourings to any of our single malts. It is the only distillery in Scotland to produce three different single malts, Springbank, Longrow and Hazelburn, using three different production methods.

Miscellaneous reviews:

This Springbank 15 year-old forms part of the core range and the nose smells good. There is a clear sherry cask influence with dried fruit (raisins and peel) and nuts (almonds, I think). It reminded me of Christmas cake! Then comes a whiff of woody bonfire smoke. On the palate this feels creamy and very pleasant. That fruitiness is there and it is complimented by the smokiness lingering in the background. There are some other very interesting elements present, with hints of vanilla, coconut, something spicy (imagine black peppercorns) and something tangy and salty. The finish is long with the smoke and vanilla prominent, although it did get very dry, woody and bitter right near the end. This is a very good whisky and would be a great one to introduce someone to the smoky flavours that whiskies can have, as the smokiness is not too prominent but compliments the other flavours very well. (whiskyforeveryone.blogspot.com)

Nose: Sophisticated. Dundee cake, vanilla, new leather, pipe tobacco, dried apricot, peat, tea. Body: Full and rich. Mouth-coating. Palate: European oak is there, but doesn't dominate. Sweet tobacco, nut, smoke in the background. Complex. Finish: Soot. Malt. (Michael Jackson)

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Cragganmore

12 year-old, 40% abv

Special releases in recent years have demonstrated just what a complex and special malt this is. Despite being one of the original six Classic Malt selections, this Speyside great still isn't as well-known as it could be. The distillery, founded in 1869-1870, is very pretty, hidden in a hollow high on the Spey. Its water, from nearby springs, is relatively hard, and its spirit stills have an unusual, flat-topped shape. These two elements may be factors in the complexity of the malt. The usual version from

refill sherry casks, some more sherried independent bottlings, and the port finish, are each, in their own ways, almost equally delights. Cragganmore is a component of the Old Parr blends. (Complete Guide to Single Malt Scotch, 6th Edition, Michael Jackson)

Miscellaneous reviews:

Nose: Beautiful nose. Incredible! Flowers, baked bread and the twinkle or zing of heather upon one's nose in a most wonderful fashion. This one of very few that claims to have a complex nose. Palate: On entry, malt, honey and marzipan. Moves quickly to smoke with a beautiful sweetness throughout. A tapestry of rich, smoky flavors, perfectly in balance, woven such that there are no unsightly seams. Truly heaven sent. Finish: Burnt toast, cinnamon, brown sugar and sea spray woven most intricately with wisps of smoke and gentle spices linger considerably upon the palate. Wow! Having drunk this, I know I am in the presence of greatness! General Impressions: This is smooth, refined, sophisticated and wonderful beyond its' mere 12 years of aging. I'd put this up against many 18 yr old single malts, and Cragganmore would come out on top hands down! Pretty much a total absence of peat flavors. If you dislike peaty scotch, then you will love Cragganmore 12 yr old. (www.jason-scotchreviews.blogspot.com)

Nose: Sherry oak, grapefruit, vanilla, a little rum cake...but most importantly, Juicy Fruit gum, and I mean that in a good way. A complex embracing nose. Palate: This one attacked the palate more than I expected, it was strong and surprisingly different than the nose. There were still sherry notes and caramel, and a Speyside floral-ness, but I found a muskiness and bitter fruit notes as well. Hovering over this all was a nice burnt leaves/dry smoke layer, the strength of which kind of surprised me. Finish: Medium-long, all of the above mingle and slide away, with the smoke sticking around the longest. Thoughts: Interesting, beguiling even. The difference between the smell and the taste was an appealing difference, not a stark, off-putting one. To quote my tasting partner, "this is a relatively simple, salt-of-the-earth Scotch that is dressed up for a fancy night on the town." (www.thecasks.com)

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The Balvenie Double Wood

12 Year-old, 40% abv

THE BALVENIE is unlike all other single malt Scotch whiskies, thanks to a unique combination of human craft and natural alchemy. Neither our craft nor nature’s mysteries have changed in over a century.

The Balvenie Double Wood is a 12 year old single malt which gains its distinctive character from being matured in two woods. Over its period of maturation it is transferred from a traditional oak whisky cask to a first fill European oak sherry cask. Each

stage lends different qualities to the resulting single malt ~ the traditional casks soften and add character, whilst the sherry wood brings depth and fullness of flavour.

TASTING NOTES

NOSE: Sweet fruit and Oloroso sherry notes, layered with honey and vanilla. TASTE: Smooth and mellow with beautifully combined flavours ~ nutty sweetness, cinnamon spiciness and a delicately proportioned layer of sherry. FINISH: Long and warming.

Miscellaneous reviews:

The Nose: Rich, vanilla-caramel syrup poured over ripe orange slices. Really nice notes of malty, peanut butter cookies with melted chocolate. The sherry influence comes through with raisins, cinnamon candies, and oak. The Palate: The lushness of the nose is carried right through to the palate, a honeyed, raisin-y, orange-y sweetness that is quickly joined by nutty, slightly cocoa-fied notes that flow nicely into spicy, sherried wood notes, clove, cinnamon and the tiniest wisp of dry peat smoke. The Finish: The fruity, sherried spice lingers as does that trailing smoke. Thoughts: Yup, a true classic. There’s nothing earth-shattering about the Double Wood, the flavors are not at all unexpected. Here’s the thing, though, even with this familiar flavor profile, the Double Wood still absolutely delights. The fruit notes, the spice, the wood, the sherry, it’s all presented so well, with such balance and structure, it’s nearly impossible to find fault with. (www.thecasks.com)

First and second-fill bourbon casks, then six to twelve months in sweet Oloroso casks. Color: Amber. Nose: Sherry and orange skins. Body: Medium, rich. Palate: Beautifully combined mellow flavors: nutty, sweet, sherried. A very orangey fruitiness. Heather. Cinnamon spiciness. Finish: Long, tingling. Very warming. (Michael Jackson)

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Taste: _____

Comments: _____

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Talisker

10 Year-old, 45.8% abv

On the shores of Loch Harport, the village of Carbost is home to Skye's only distillery producing a wonderful, award-winning Island malt bottled at above average strength.

Talisker's soft, peaty process water is drawn from twenty-one underground springs that rise from Hawk Hill (Cnoc nan Speirag) beside the distillery. These same springs have fed Talisker from the beginning.

Talisker features five wooden "worm tubs", located outside the still house; its two wash stills, carefully recreated after the 1960 fire, are unique. The lye pipes leading off from the main neck are U-shaped, to trap vapours from the first distillation before they reach the outside worm tubs, whilst a small secondary copper pipe carries the vapours so trapped back to the wash stills for a second distillation.

Faithfully following the original design, it is believed that this double distillation ensures that all of Talisker's rich, deep character is captured first time. So there is, indeed, nothing withdrawn or reserved about Talisker, it embodies all the spirit of this rocky, storm-lashed island and its strong, steadfast people. Skye's only distillery this may be, but like the men of the island the malt has character enough for ten.

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Miscellaneous reviews:

Nose: Deep, warm sweetness of baked pears and sweet potatoes. Really incredible. Some creamy sherry with a sort of sourness that is sometimes in Chinese food. Sweet and spicy like red peppers and vinegar, Tabasco. A smoky element throughout that is thoroughly exciting, never out-powering any of the other scents, just complimenting them like smoke from a peat fire on the beach wafting down shore. Taste: Much more smoke on the palate. It almost billows in your mouth. Wow. Multi-dimensional. Raw almonds, vanilla and dough. Woody and peppery. Long finish of smoke, dried legumes (beans and stuff), raw green peppers. SUMMARY: I often forget how great this whisky is. It really impressed me today. It is big and satisfying and rich and dense and very well constructed in that it sits in great balance in the mouth, without any flavours ever being out of place or too overpowering. Also, in my experience hosting tastings, it is an amazingly approachable whisky for the new whisky drinker (once you explain to them that smoke is only an element in some whiskies and not to hold it against the spirit at large) before trying an Ardbeg or something. The only distillery on the Isle of Skye and the only one that combines the kinds of flavours that it does. Great value, too, especially for the 18yo. Second helpings, please? (www.drwhisky.blogspot.com)

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Taste: _____

Comments: _____

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