



## COST OF THE MALTS

I know members are always interested in the cost of the single malts we taste. Plus the \$75 Special Occasion Permit and the 16% levy charged by the LCBO for all alcohol served at the dinner.

- 8 YO HAZELBURN SINGLE MALT (SPRINGBANK DISTILLERS) VINTAGES 180380 | 700 mL bottle Price: \$ 94.95 Spirits, Scotch Whisky 46.0% Alcohol/Vol.

- LONGROW CV SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY (SPRINGBANK) VINTAGES 180158 | 700 mL bottle Price: \$ 79.95 Spirits, Scotch Whisky 46.0% Alcohol/Vol.

- LONGROW 10 Year Old 100 Proof VINTAGES 708362 | 750 mL bottle Price: \$ 102.47 Spirits, 46.0% Alcohol/Vol.

## SEPTEMBER - KSMS Financial Statement

(Money from 51 September attendees @ \$60) = \$3060.00  
September dinner 51 persons = \$33.50/ea = \$1708.50  
(Money remaining for buying Single Malt) = \$1351.50  
Special Occasion Permit = \$75.00  
Cost of Single Malts: = \$805.46  
Cost of Pours per Person = \$17.80  
KSMS Monthly operational balance = \$471.04  
Cost per person 51 attendees (All inclusive) = \$50.76

## Membership and Dinner prices for 2010-2011

Membership Fee:	\$40 (singles) \$60 (couples)
One Time Initiation Fee:	\$15
Standard Dinner Fee:	\$60 (member) \$70 (non-member)
Dinner only - No Single Malt:	\$50 (member) \$60 (non-member)
Robbie Burns Dinner Fee:	\$70 (member) \$80 (non-member)
	(includes \$5 donation per attendee to RMC Pipes & Drums with Highland Dancers)
June BBQ Dinner Fee:	\$70 (member) \$80 (non-member)

## Upcoming Dinner Dates

November 15, 2010 – Campbeltown / Speyside  
December 13, 2010 – Speyside  
January 24, 2011 – Speyside / Isle of Arran - Robbie Burns  
February 14, 2011 – Highland – Valentine's  
March 21, 2011 - St.Patrick's (Irish)  
April 18, 2011 – Island  
May 16, 2011 – Islay  
June 20, 2011 - BBQ (Final Exam)  
July 18, 2011 – International  
Thursday September 1, 2011 – 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Premium Night

This evening's menu  
in the company of Single Malts from  
**CAMPBELTOWN**

Soup: Curried Pumpkin Bisque

1st Nosing: **HAZELBURN 8 YEAR OLD**  
(introduced by: Conrad Falkson)

Salad: Greek  
Dressing: Greek

2nd Nosing: **LONGROW CV**  
(introduced by: Sylvain Bouffard)

Entree: Stuffed Pork Loin with Cranberry Dressing  
Vegetables: Seasonal  
Potato: Saffron Flavored Rice

3rd Nosing: **LONGROW 10 YEAR OLD**  
(introduced by: Sylvain Bouffard)

Dessert: Homemade Apple Crisp

---

## **Malt Advocate News**

### **Top 10 rated whiskies in the next issue of Malt Advocate magazine**

As a WhiskyNotes subscriber, we wanted to provide you with an advance copy of our rated whiskies in the upcoming issue of *Malt Advocate* magazine's Buyer's Guide. Below is the list of the top 10 highest rated whiskies. Some of the items in the Buyer's Guide are limited edition whiskies, so hopefully getting this information early will help you stay ahead of the pack.

#### **95 Glenfarclas, 40 year old, 46%, \$460**

Glenfarclas has a proven track record for aging very well. I've enjoyed some amazing 25 and 30 year old expressions, in addition to some older vintage offerings. Does this new 40 year old follow suit? Absolutely! It's complex and well-rounded, with great depth and no excessive oak. Lush, candied citrus (especially orange), old pot still rum, maple syrup, fig, roasted nuts, and polished leather, with hints of mocha, candied ginger, and tobacco. A bit oily in texture (which I find soothing) with good tannic grip on the finish. A classic, well-matured Glenfarclas - and a very good value for its age.

#### **95 Coffey Malt, 12 year old, 55%, £99**

Produced at Miyagikyo's grain distillery from 100% malted barley, this is rich gold in hue, while the nose is big and luscious with plenty of ripe banana, crushed hazelnut, and an intriguing green malt note behind. As it opens, there's the effect of a high-cocoa chocolate bar melting in your hands, as well as coconut, vanilla fudge, and basil. With water (and it needs it) there's honey on hot buttered toast. The palate is sumptuous; that banana's now flambéed. Super ripe and fascinating. A grain for malt lovers. - Dave Broom

#### **95 Yoichi 15 year old, 45%, £76.95**

Nikka's first distillery is located in the eponymous town on the western coast of Hokkaido. Here, power is the key. Deep and rich with a distinct oiliness - somewhere between linseed and cod liver - there's also plenty of smoke in the mix as well, and a little hint of black olives in brine with ripe apples lurking behind. I hate making comparisons between Japanese and Scotch single malt but if I was forced to, Yoichi reminds me most of Springbank (edging into Longrow). Water dampens the personality too much for me; best have it full-on and uncompromising.

Rather than the palate showing a slow procession of flavors along the tongue, this is a layered whisky; coal-like, oily, and richly fruited with a distinct saltiness on the sides, ably demonstrating that Japan has almost as much variety on offer as scotch. - Dave Broom

#### **94 Laphroaig Triple Wood, 48%, \$100**

This is the first time I've been up for reviews here so I had a game plan: play it cool, mark tightly, let everyone know I'm hard to please. Then they gave me this, the whisky equivalent to front row tickets to Neil Young on his current Twisted Road tour: not just a chance to get up close and personal with an old favorite, but to do so with an old favorite who's on fire. Laphroaig's owners are intent on ensuring a big peaty engine for any new release, but this is a monster by anyone's standards. It's essentially Quarter Cask finished in oloroso sherry casks, so in addition to the intense charcoal smoke attack there are rich fruity notes; blackcurrant and berries. It's an evening barbecue whisky. Grill that fish until it's blackened and crispy, drizzle on lemon, and as the smoke rears up in protest, sip this. Big, moody, broody, fruity, and rich: what's

not to love? (Travel Retail and some European specialist retailers.) - Dominic Roskrow

#### **92 Duncan Taylor (distilled at Glenlivet), 1987 vintage, 22 year old, 46%, \$110**

Whiskies distilled at Glenlivet might be easy to find throughout the world, but this is a good thing. Take this one from Duncan Taylor-it's delicious! It's elegantly complex, with a tropical accent (coconut, pineapple), strawberries with whipped cream, and caramel-dipped apple. The sweetness is never heavy or cloying, and it's balanced by lovely dried spice throughout (vanilla, ginger, soft mint, nutmeg), and especially towards the finish. Nicely done!

#### **92 Black Bull, 40 year old, 40.2%, \$250**

A whopping 90% malt and 10% grain whisky. Soft, with the oak remarkably restrained for its age. Soothingly sweet, with toffee apple, vanilla-spiked sponge cake, nougat, butterscotch, sultana, and cut grass. A dash of cinnamon and coconut throughout, with teasing, gentle polished oak on the finish. Deftly balanced and oh, so drinkable.

#### **92 Nikka From The Barrel, 51.4%, £24.95 (50cl)**

A high-strength blend that takes no prisoners. The color is full gold and the first thing that hits the nose is a complex mix of restrained smoke (sandalwood, cigar), fennel, and celery before semi-dried tropical fruits and orange peel take over. The palate also shows some of that mango character, but also crisp oak and a burst of sweet powdered spices on the finish. A malt-lover's blend. - Dave Broom

#### **91 Ichiro's Malt, Hanyu 23 year old "sherry casks," 58%, £450**

This oldie (from a distillery which closed in 2000) seems pretty straightforward compared to the Mizunara [see following review], but has less dried fruit than the sherry note on the label might suggest. Think dried peels rather than raisin, then stir in some freshly-polished floor. The aromas are saturated and heavy - almost as if they are drifting towards you on humid air. The palate shows light smoke and then a pleasant quinine bitterness mid-palate. This has the Japanese quality of laying flavors out very precisely on the tongue while also heightening their intensity. Water reduces the quinine effect, allowing the richness of the spirit to come through. Hanyu was a pretty big and firm (even rigid) whisky. Here that shell has cracked, allowing anise and blueberry to come through. - Dave Broom

#### **90 Ardbeg Supernova (2010 Release), 60.1%, \$130**

Very dynamic, complex, and powerful. Here's what I'm picking up, in somewhat descending order in taste profile: leafy smoke, coal tar, mocha fudge with dark chocolate chips, smoked olive, peppered seaweed salad, fruit (lemon, lime), genever, brine-tinged grass, and (with some coaxing) floral notes (violet?). Compared to last year's debut release of Supernova, this one is certainly comparable, but I feel it's a tad richer, with more leafy smoke and ripe barley. It also seems a bit more polished, less aggressive. I like it a little more than its predecessor (which I rated an 89).

#### **90 Miyagikyo, 15 year old, 45%, £76.95**

This single malt bottling shows Miyagikyo's emollient style at its best. This is all about super-soft orchard fruits; think apricot and sweet persimmon, though there's also a touch of sweet sawdust and even a whiff of pine sap and milk chocolate. It demonstrates the classic Japanese trick of being both clear and precise in its aromas, as well as being heightened in intensity. The palate is a little slow to start with, offering a mix of spruce and pine, then those soft fruits carry you onward.

---

---

## Twelve Outrageous and Unique Scotch Whiskies: Strictly for Whiskey Connoisseurs

With business comes pleasure so I decided to have a little fun by reviewing the most unique whiskies I could find. Did you think that all whiskey is more or less the same? Not by a long shot! Here are some of the most extreme luxury whiskies strictly for connoisseurs.

### 1. Golf Ball Whiskey

The old St Andrews Bruichladdich company has taken whisky and golf to a new extreme. The company has created a blended scotch whisky in a golf ball shaped bottle. This "Clubhouse" brand has been carefully made to appeal to both golfer and Scotch drinker



### 2. The Royal \$10,000 Whiskey

In order to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's visit to the 2007 Kentucky Derby in the US, Crown Royal created the most expensive version of their whisky. Incidentally, the original Crown Royal Canadian Blended Whisky was made for the current Queen's parents in 1939 to commemorate their Grand Tour of Canada. Crown Royal has created a new version of the whisky that uses remaining barrels of the original whisky. The Crown Royal XR Extra Rare Heritage Blend is not for sale but a suggested retail price would likely begin at \$10,000. Diageo commissioned Casey Hyland, a master glass designer at Louisville's Glassworks, to create a custom glass decanter, etched with 24 K gold leaf.



### 3. Ralph Lauren Whiskey?

Not quite, but Ralph Lauren has made this fine Leather-and-Crystal Decanter for sale in their webshop. Lauren claims it gives the whiskey a designer feel in a much improved decanter design. Click over and take a closer look at The Ralph Lauren site.



### 4. Most Expensive Blended Scotch

The 50 year old Chivas Regal Royal Salute is Priced at \$10,000 a bottle. Another whiskey released in 2003 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, its lead malt is the superb Strathisla, which accounts for the exceptionally rich and creamy character. Only 255 bottles of the Scottish whisky were released worldwide, which helps account for the high price.



### 5. Test Tube Whiskey

The Glenmorangie 21 Year Old Elegance Pot Still looks more like a test tube beaker than a bottle of whiskey. Glenmorangie Elegance is a 21-Year Old malt whiskey, one of the oldest malts to be released from the Glenmorangie Distillery. It has a complex mixture of smoke, sandalwood and mulled wine underlined with traces of oranges, nuts, and marzipan. Available only in this package, the unique decanter is hand-blown by Scotland's leading glassmakers, Caithness Glass in Wick, to replicate Glenmorangie's famous swan-necked pot stills at its distillery. Sells for about about \$500



### 6. Sea Horse Whiskey

Real Sea Horse Whiskey from Vietnam 125ml (collectors miniature bottle) Taking the worm in the tequila thing to the extreme, this rare whiskey is infused with a real farm raised Sea Horse. The whiskey is steeped for several months, which then imparts a unique flavour into the whiskey. They say it is an acquired taste but they don't say how you acquire it. The story is that this is used in SE Asia as an Aphrodisiac; and it also has medical uses, such as the treatment of back and muscle pain. Every bottle is unique in its own way so therefore the item purchased may differ slightly in looks but not size.



### 7. Cherry Flavored Whiskey

I'm not sure flavored vodka will make it since there isn't that much of a flavor to begin with because whiskey is already a richly flavored drink. Phillips Union has recently launched whiskey that is a blend of Canadian and Kentucky whiskey with added cherry or vanilla flavors. If you are a Manhattan drinker this could be your new drink of choice.



### 8. Fireballs in your Whiskey

Dr. McGillicuddy's Fireball whiskey is corn whiskey flavoured with cinnamon. The whiskey smells like the red hot cinnamon hearts, but looks like plain whiskey. The cinnamon overwhelms the whiskey taste, but it makes it so easy to drink, since the cinnamon burn takes over most of the alcohol burn. It's like a fireball in your mouth. Dr. McGillicuddy really hit the mark with this one. The taste is clean and refreshing. The whiskey is the perfect compliment to the cinnamon.







### 9. Blackberry Whiskey

A blackberry flavored whiskey that balanced the sweetness of fresh blackberries with the subtleties of a refined American whiskey. Leopold Bros. starts with crushed and juiced blackberries that are harvested from throughout the Rocky Mountains in the US. The resulting juice is added to new-make whiskey and racked into used bourbon barrels and aged for up to one year. The understated complexities make this unique whiskey a favorite of both those that prefer the berry flavors of a liqueur and the whiskey connoisseur.

### 10. Whiskey in a book?

This Rutherfords Green 8 Year Old Single Malt is either a fancy means of hiding your favorite drink or a novelty that is more suited to collectors. I only have one question – How do they keep the pages from getting soaked? Price is about \$125



### 11. Hops Flavored Whiskey

It's not easy to combine beer with whiskey, but this double-distilling two row malted barley is a dream come true for both the whiskey and beer connoisseur. With the addition of aromatic hops and the rich spice of new American White Oak barrels, this Hop Flavored Whiskey is truly unique. Being at full barrel strength, uncut and not filtered, CHARBAY Hop Flavored Whiskey is best served on the rocks.



### 12. Pink Whiskey Liqueur

What Is Macallan Amber Whiskey Liqueur? Macallan Amber Liqueur is the first liqueur developed by Macallan. Macallan has taken a very interesting approach to Amber - they've used maple and pecan to flavor the Macallan single malt. The result is something fantastic.

In case you are not familiar with the concept of a whisky liqueur: A liqueur is class of spirit that is produced by mixing or redistilling spirits with fruits, herbs, spices, and/or cream. Liqueurs are sometimes referred to as "Cordials" and often served as a digestif (after-dinner drink).

Whisky liqueurs are not new - Drambuie, Glayva, Columba, Atholl Brose, Heather Cream, Cock O' The North, Stag's Breath and Drumgray are all whisky liqueurs.



Greg McVean Donald Trump, the American billionaire who is building the "world's greatest golf course" in Aberdeenshire, is turning his attention to another Scottish icon and creating his own brand of single malt whisky.

The flamboyant businessman is in talks with "several" whisky producers as he looks to develop his luxury merchandise brand in Scotland.

However if the new venture becomes a success, the tycoon will not celebrate with a dram as he doesn't drink.

Following the success of Trump Vodka in the US, he is now looking to expand his drinks portfolio and is keen to launch a range of whiskies as work on his £750 million golf resort gets under way on the Menie Estate.

Sarah Malone, executive vice-president of Trump International Golf Links, Scotland (TIGLS), said: "We will definitely have a few single malts in the years to come and perhaps a couple of special blends, too, once the clubhouse is up and running.

"We are meeting with companies regionally and nationally to identify the very best products for TIGLS and we look forward to commissioning and manufacturing a wide range of products over the coming years.

"There are tremendous opportunities for Scottish suppliers and the Trump Scotland brand will be synonymous with Scotland's finest."

She added: "Mr Trump doesn't drink at all, but we're in the land of whisky so we think it would be really appropriate.

"We haven't done a deal yet, but as soon as we do we will be revealing who will produce it. We will be working with a leading distillery.

"I'm pretty sure we can have ourselves a single malt by 2012. We have a great opportunity to produce something very unique and distinctive."

A spokesman for the Scotch Whisky Association last night welcomed the move.

"Mr Trump is trying to create a location that will attract people from all over the world and nothing shows the quality of Scotland more than Scotch. So the two things would naturally come together.

"I am sure it will be top-of-the-range malt whisky."

While some experts recommend whisky is taken only with water, The Trump organisation may consider creating their own cocktails using their new product.

Perhaps The Millionaire (whisky, orange Curacao, grenadine, framboise and white of one egg); or the Nineteenth Hole (substituting rye whisky for Scotch, plus sweet vermouth and sherry); or even the Hole-In-One (whisky, vermouth, lemon juice and 1 dash orange bitters)

Mr Trump launched his self-branded vodka, produce by Dutch distiller Jacques de Lat, in 2006, selling 20,000 cases in its first year. Trump Super Premium Vodka retails for around £60 for a litre bottle.

## BILLIONAIRE'S BRANDS

NEED water in that new whisky? How about some Trump Ice spring water, already on sale in shops?

"The Donald" has not been shy in adding his name to products from menswear to furniture and leather goods to teddy bears. The Donald J Trump Signature Collection includes suits, dress shirts, silk ties, cuff links, belts, spectacles and sunglasses. The luxury homes owned by the billionaire tycoon inspired a collection of bedroom, dining, living room and office furniture and home entertainment equipment, including the Trump Home signature luxury mattress collection, a range of lighting, as well as vases, book ends and candleholders.

Trump pens, mugs, teddy bears, golf balls and chocolate are also available and there is even a range of merchandise tied to TV show The Apprentice, bearing Trump's "You're Fired!" catchphrase.

Rich, full-bodied and an acquired taste ...

Donald Trump tees up a tippie for the 19th hole

By JOHN ROSS of the Scotsman - 21 July 2010

IF it's anything like its sponsor it will be rich and smooth but hard-hitting and perhaps not to everyone's taste.

Donald Trump, who plans to create 'the world's greatest golf course' in Aberdeenshire, also has his sights on whisky. Picture:

# Whisky Recipe

Bourbon Bleu Burgers  
source: groupprecipes.com



## Ingredients

1 lb lean ground meat  
1/4 cu Italian bread crumbs  
1 whole egg, beaten  
2 oz bourbon  
1 pkg crumbled bleu cheese

## Directions

Combine the meat, egg,

bread crumbs, and bourbon in a large mixing bowl. Use your hands to mix everything together, being careful not to squeeze too much. Refrigerate mixture for about an hour. Form the meat into 8 flat patties and set aside. Form the crumbled bleu cheese into 4 patties. Put 1 bleu cheese patty between 2 meat patties and shape together into one burger. Grill directly over coals, about 3-4 minutes each side or until done. Goes great on a nice thick kaiser roll. Bourbon

## Reservation policy

- Our contract with the Officer's Mess Kitchen requires that we provide seven (7) business days notice for them to guarantee accommodation for our requested numbers. Each month an invitation will be sent out to all members of the Society in the first week of the respective month in which the dinner will be held. To accommodate the Kitchen's needs and meet our contractual obligation with them; our members are requested to respond to the emailed invitation seven (7) business days prior to the respective dinner to guarantee a seat at the dinner. After that members will be placed on a waitlist.
- For these individuals the process will be as follows, using the September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 dinner date as an example:
  - Dinner invitations will be sent out Saturday August 28th, 2010. Please respond to me (rdifazio@cogeco.ca). I will then acknowledge that you have a seat. Please understand that if you do not receive a response you are not guaranteed a seat at the respective dinner. In such circumstances (e.g., computer glitches) please e-mail me again or call me at (613-634-0397).
  - Accommodation at the dinner will be guaranteed for a member who responds by Saturday September 4th, 2010 midnight.

## Cancellation policy

- Using the same example as above, anyone who cancels anytime prior to Saturday September 4th, 2010 midnight will be removed from the list.
- Anyone cancelling between Saturday September 4th, 2010 midnight and Monday September 20th, 2010 will be expected to pay for the cost of the dinner and scotch (\$60). It is the responsibility of the member who cancels their reservation to find a replacement. If I can substitute an individual from the wait-list, then the member will not be asked to pay for their cancellation.
- Anyone who fails to attend the Monday September 20th, 2010 dinner without having cancelled and been successfully replaced will be expected to pay the full cost (\$60). The member will be responsible for their guest's cancellation.
- If a member asks to be included at the dinner between Saturday September 4th, 2010 midnight and Monday September 20th, 2010 your name will be placed on a wait-list and you will be accommodated on a first-come first-serve basis.

# Win Me !!

*LINKWOOD 1974 SINGLE MALT*

*WHISKY RARE MALT SELECTION 30 Year Old*

*Distilled: 1974; Bottled: 2005; Age: 30 Year Old; 700mL; Price: \$229.50;*

*54.9% Alcohol/Vol*

Starting September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 tickets can be purchased for a chance to win this bottle. Tickets will be \$3 each, two tickets for \$5, or \$20 for an arm-length. Tickets will be on sale at each dinner until the January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Robbie Burns dinner when the bottle will be raffled. The winner must successfully answer the skill testing question: What country does single malt come from?



Just a note because we care.



Please understand that for the purpose of each event you are advised to drink responsibly and refrain from excessive consumption. The dinners hosted by the Kingston Single Malt Society are sampling events. By agreeing to pay and thereby attend the dinner you agree to release from legal responsibility and hold harmless Kingston Single Malt Society, its President Roberto Di Fazio, and any other volunteers from liability or claims arising from these events.

If you have any questions or comments please free to contact me.

Thank you for your understanding,  
Roberto



Kingston Single Malt Society

Roberto Di Fazio, President

827 Old Colony Road

Kingston, Ontario, K7P 1S1, Canada

613-634-0397

rdifazio@cogeco.ca

<http://www.kingstonsinglemaltsociety.webs.com>







## The Role Of The Cask

**“YOU CAN MAKE GOOD SPIRIT,”** the old saying goes, “but if you don’t fill it into good wood you won’t get good whisky.” The word “wood,” of course, refers to the barrel, the hogshead, or more generically, the cask that the whisky ages in. Depending on who you talk to, between 60% and 80% of the character of the whisky in our glass is due to the influence of casks during maturation.

It has been known since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century that spirits stored in wooden casks improved in quality, but distillers were much less fussy about the choice of casks than they are today. Modern distillers employ rigorous wood management programs, designed to produce optimum-quality whisky, and recognize the true importance of the cask. Half a century ago, for many producers the prevailing philosophy was “If it doesn’t leak, fill it!”

In the world of whisky, the cask has a dual role, acting both as a container and as an agent for maturation. Such is the importance of the latter function that by law Scotch whisky must be matured for a minimum of three years in oak casks with a capacity of no more than 700 liters. The restriction on size underlines the need for optimum contact between spirit and wood. Generally speaking, the smaller the cask, the faster maturation occurs: in small casks, the surface of the wood interacts with a comparatively modest amount of spirit.

‘Interaction’ is at the heart of maturation. Oak is specified, as it is a hard wood with the porous quality necessary to allow the spirit to ‘breathe,’ and in the prevailing Scottish climate a reduction in both strength and volume occurs as time passes, with an average evaporation loss of around two percent per annum — often referred to as the angels’ share.

During maturation, many changes occur to the spirit due to the dialogue between liquid, wood, and external atmosphere. Pungent sulfur compounds diffuse out from the cask, while air diffuses in, promoting a series of chemical



In the world of whisky, the cask has a dual role, acting both as a container and as an agent for maturation.

reactions, with a proportion of the higher alcohols being transformed into esters and other complex compounds which have a beneficial effect on the character of the maturing spirit.

The clear ‘new make’ spirit filled into the cask takes on color during the period of maturation, and that color will depend on several factors, including the number of times the cask has been filled in the past, the length of time the spirit spends in it, and what the cask has been filled with prior to its adoption for Scotch whisky.

That previous content is highly significant, and the vast majority of casks used by the Scotch whisky industry have previously contained either bourbon or sherry. However, casks which formerly held other alcoholic drinks, such as wine, are also used at times, most notably to ‘finish’ whiskies which have been matured for the bulk of their existence in more conventional casks. The ‘finishing’ process involves transferring the whisky into secondary casks, where it remains for anything from a matter of weeks to a couple of years, ultimately providing producers or bottlers with variations on customary ‘house’ styles.

Until the years following the Second

World War, most casks used for Scotch whisky had formerly housed sherry, but gradually producers switched to ex-bourbon casks, which were comparatively cheap and plentiful, due to the law which states that bourbon must always be matured in new, charred oak barrels.

An ex-bourbon barrel currently costs in the region of \$74, while a sherry butt will sell for ten or twelve times that sum. Not surprisingly, some 90 percent of all casks now used by the Scotch whisky industry formerly contained bourbon.

Casks that previously held bourbon are made from American white oak (*Quercus alba*) and will have been ‘charred’ or fired internally for anything from 30 seconds to four minutes. This process creates a layer of carbon which aids the removal of undesirable sulfur compounds from the spirit.

Bourbon barrels contain approximately 200 liters of liquid and are the smallest casks regularly employed by the Scotch whisky industry. A hogshead holds some 250 liters of spirit, and is constructed by adding extra staves to a barrel, with the barrel usually being dismantled for transport from the US. to the UK and then rebuilt and expanded.

The largest cask in regular use for Scotch whisky is the butt, which holds around 500 liters. Butts are usually made from European red oak (*Quercus robur*) and previously contained sherry, most commonly *oloroso*, which interacts particularly well with more robust Scotch whiskies.

When a cask has held bourbon or sherry prior to its acquisition by Scotch whisky distillers, it is referred to, slightly confusingly, as a ‘first-fill’ cask. A ‘second-fill’ cask has been used once to mature Scotch whisky, while a ‘refill’ cask has had a minimum of two previous whisky fillings.

Not surprisingly, a first-fill cask has the most overt influence on the spirit within, as each filling of whisky diminishes the impact and influence of its original contents, whether bourbon, sherry, or wine.

*Continued on page 86*

*Continued from page 36*

A cask may have a lifespan of half a century, depending on how many times it is filled and for how long the spirit remains in it on each occasion. ‘Exhausted’ American oak casks which have been filled several times may be rejuvenated by being reamed out and re-burnt, a process known as ‘de-char/re-char.’

Broadly speaking, a first fill ex-bourbon barrel will impart more toffee, vanilla, and caramel notes to the whisky maturing in it, while the influence of a second-fill barrel will be altogether subtler. Similarly, a first fill ex-sherry cask will lend a rich, dark color to the whisky, and full, bold flavors of raisins, prunes, spice, and sherry. A refill sherry butt can be quite unpredictable, but tends to give dried fruit, leather, oily, and even savory notes.

In rare circumstances, new charred American oak casks are used for Scotch whisky maturation, and they deliver sweet vanilla, oak, and very spicy characteristics to the whisky. Additionally, casks constructed from other oak varieties, such as Japanese, Swedish, and Scottish, are sometimes used for new cask construction, and each will affect the flavor profile of spirit matured in them in varying, subtle ways.

Each single malt differs in the optimum time it takes to reach its peak, with lighter-bodied whiskies generally maturing earlier than full-bodied ones, though it should always be remembered that no two casks, however apparently similar, give identical results, meaning that the variables of maturation are almost infinite.

Although the ‘science’ of maturation has come to be much more fully understood during recent years, it is still difficult for anyone to be absolutely dogmatic about all the nuances of the process, which is good news for those Scotch whisky drinkers who like to think there is a little bit of magic in their glass. —