

A Scotch Tasting Guide

Orkney Islands

Highland Park 15 years: \$14

Highland Park matures their whisky in ex-Oloroso sherry barrels crafted from American oak as opposed to the Spanish oak casks of the 12- and 18-year releases. The barrels are toasted instead of charred, yielding a unique flavor experience, especially when compared to the more common charred ex-bourbon barrel releases of competing distilleries. On the nose notes of citrus, more lime than lemon or orange, light oak tones, sherry, & a light peat smoke. Taste sweet vanilla, dry sherry, and citrus which gives way to peat smoke just before the finish. It has a medium-oily mouthfeel. The brightness of the sherry and boldness of the peat combined with the fullness of the mouth feel makes for a fun drink.

Islay

Laphroig 10 years: \$10

From the water's edge on the Southwestern Island of Islay where the seaweed laps at the warehouses and the medicinal iodine smell of the kilns burning the sea infused peat gives flavors of salt, iodine, seaweed, and a smokiness like none other. Golden colored with a malty, floral, vanilla flavor. You can taste the sea.

Lagavulin 16 years: \$15

Right up the road from Laphroig rests this other Islay treasure. This whiskey has an especially peaty dryness. The seascape behind the distillery lends to wondrous influences on its aroma and flavor. The fast flowing burn also lends to its nuances.

Caol Ila 12 years: \$11

Located overlooking the strait between Islay & Jura it was founded in 1846. Caol Ila is one of the lighter Islay whiskies, pale in color, with peaty, floral and peppery notes. The clean nose shows subtle citrus fruit with just a puff of smokiness. It begins sweetly and then yields to a fragrant smokiness and a sweet smoky lingering finish.

Skye

Talisker 10 years: \$16

The only whiskeys from the Isle of Skye off the western coast near the Hebrides, this sea-influenced liquid has a peppery nuance with hints of myrrh. A soft smoky nose introduces its deep sweet taste, which is rich in barley-malt. At first, enticingly smooth & golden – yet growing in intensity, this is a robust malt with a huge long finish.

Middle Highlands

Dalwhinnie 15 years: \$12

Famously cold distillery in the middle highlands. The Distillery sits upon the eastern edge of the Western Highland mountain range. It provides a clean, lightly peaty whiskey. A light honeyed body and delicate warmth. One of our lightest single malts.

Western Highlands

Oban 14 years: \$15

Gateway to the Isles they say; the western highland character of elegance and nautical wispy-ness. The mellowed structure of this 14 year aged Scotch belies its sea influenced nature. The caves which house the barrels impart a rich distinctive aura to this wonderful brew.

Northern Highlands

Glenmorangie 18 years: \$24

This spicy and salty malt comes from one of the biggest selling distilleries in all of Scotland. Glenmorangie sits by itself near the northern highlands right off the coast of the Moray Firth near the town of Inverness. The taste is balanced between honey, malt and flowery scents. Dates and figs emerge in the background with a hint of wood smoke. The finish is long and enticing with the sweetness of dried fruit and subtle dryness of Oloroso nuttiness.

Speyside

- Glenfiddich 12 years: \$8** This distillery made single malts popular. Its pear like flavors adding creamier and nuttier notes than in the past. A light unobtrusive nose with balance and well breeding running throughout. It develops into a butterscotch cream with subtle malty overtones.
- Glenfiddich 15 years: \$11** Mellowed for 15 years in smaller than average casks. Baked apple notes that were once creamy pear tones develop over the extended aging process. Dried fruit, dates and candy peel exude over rich oak notes.
- The Glenlivet 12 years: \$10** Pale color resulting from its age in Limousin oak casks the same as age fine cognacs. On its nose spot damp oak woods and a flowery peach blossom flourishing. With a touch of water bringing out pineapple, coconut & vanilla pods. Pressed apples and a little cinnamon. Summer like fragrances.
- The Macallan Oak 15 years: \$18** The “chateau” farm and distillery on Easter Elchies estate stands above the Spey near Craigellachie. Known for its reputation as having been aged in fine dry sherry oloroso casks it has a distinctive fruity house character. There is more body than the color suggests. Taste sublime and fruity with a hint of rose and cinnamon. The palate delivers rich chocolate with hints of orange and raisin.

Irish

- Knappogue 14 years: \$12** The malted barley is dried in ovens without the use of peat, allowing the crisp, clean flavor of malted barley to come through without smoky overtones. Knappogue is distilled three times in traditional onion shaped copper pot stills. The use of two kinds of wood casks in Twin Wood has produced a whiskey which has a deep, complex, and very smooth taste. Knappogue is not chill filtered and, unlike many whiskeys, no coloring is added. The nose shows the orchard fruits like plum and apricot. The taste is rich and fruity with hints of green apple and the zest of grapefruit. The malt helps to bring out the quality of the wood – sweet vanilla with light tannins from the charred oak. The finish is lengthy, with full fruity notes transitioning to a dry, pleasant barley conclusion.

Vatted

Compass Box's

- The Peat Monster: \$14** John Glaser, the creator of Compass Box whiskies, has been one of the most progressive and innovative whisky “blenders” in this generation. He masterfully creates blends exclusively from only malt whisky (which has been referred to in the past as “vatted” whisky). The formula for this whisky is Laphroaig, Caol Ila, and Ardmore. This whisky demonstrates the layered complexity that can be achieved by marrying whisky from different distilleries—and different regions. The rich maltiness and oily texture that provide firm bedding and flavor contrast to the classic Islay notes—tar, boat docks, brine, smoked olive, seaweed, and kiln ash. More subtle cracked peppercorn, mustard seed, and citrus fruit add complexity, leading to a long, warming finish. It is a peaty, smoky malt with hints of fruitiness; a balanced whisky with great depth and complexity.

Compass Box's

- Spice Tree Extravaganza: \$16** John Glaser continues – (*read above*) the Extravaganza is a bumped-up version of the remade Spice Tree, which uses toasted new French oak barrel heads instead of inserted staves in accordance with regulation. Comprised of Highland malt blends of Clynelish, Dailuaine, Teaninich all aged approximately 13 years, Singleton of Glen Ord 20 years, Benrinnes 11 years, and Allt-a-Bhainne 19 years old, and various sherry barrels, bourbon barrels, and the Spice Tree “Hybrid” barrels (ex-bourbon barrels with toasted new French oak heads) at varying char levels. Bottled at 46% ABV, this is a spirit that's “decadent and playful on the nose, find notes of sherry wine, Butterscotch, and red fruits, and a very light touch of the nutty flavors of a fortified wine. Vanilla and milk chocolate show up on the palate, with baking spices, hay, some nuttiness, and black pepper. There's a long, spicy, but quite easy finish to enjoy as it meanders around with oak, more spice, and remaining red fruit notes. The trademark Spice Tree ginger and clove spice character and an endlessly long, spicy, substantial finish end things smoothly.