

Feints & Forseshots

Old No.

The at times
not so official
organ of the
Malt Whisky
Society of
Australia

April 2006

7

Marvellous Melbourne It Is

Date set for 24—26th August 2007

MELBOURNE it is. Hot on the heels of the 2006 Commonwealth Games, The Formula 1 Grand Prix and the Procrastinators Biennale, the membership in of the MWSOA has supported Australia's sporting capital as the next venue for the 2007 Australian Malt Whisky Convention.

According to the MWSOA returning officer, Mr William Harris, well over 30% of members voted, "we are very pleased with the turn out, now we can plan knowing that we have the full confidence of our membership".

Speaking from Adelaide, Chairman Daniels said, "To be hardnosed, Melbourne was always the logical choice and yet Melbourne has always been a tough market for us. However with the support of our members, sponsors and friends, I'm sure we'll rise to the challenge and make the third Convention bigger and better once again".

Early exit polling indicated a massive



MWSOA Decides: And it's a real BBQ stopper as Daniels declares Melbourne the winner at a recent MWSOA Committee meeting.

swing to Melbourne but late postal and country based votes provided late encouragement for Hobart.

But it wasn't enough to get the "Belle of The South" over the line.

The membership were also asked about preferred dates for the convention. Not surprisingly the majority of voted opted for the "any date" option.

According to Harris, "the Committee then made the decision to accept the next most popular date, which was 24-26 August 2007."

Harris went onto say

that, "there was a lot comment by members to have the Convention in the cooler months, with one member waxing lyrical about the possibility of having an "extreme" tasting in the snow on top of Mt Wellington, now this may have to be done on Mt Dandenong"

Now planning will start in earnest on Australia's **T h i r d W h i s k y** Convention.

The final vote was 60-40 in Melbourne's favour while 49% voted for any date along with 26% opting for the August option.

Sharing The Passion:

**MWSOA starts charm
offensive across
Australia**

LOVE is in the air as MWSOA Committee members traverse this wide and brown continent spreading the word about the joys of whisky.

Public tastings in Brisbane and Hobart, pressing the flesh at the brewers and distillers conference in Tasmania and attendance at an important Springbank tasting in Sydney plus two specialist dinners hosted by MWSOA ambassador Franz Scheurer in Adelaide have been a feature of the MWSOA's charm offensive in 2006.

"Members are just lapping these activities up" declares the Society's treasure Matt Rosenberg, "and it just shows that the Society is more than just a Convention."

See inside for a full report on the Adelaide Grange & Shanghai House whisky matching dinners.

Inside Issue 7...

- Food & whisky frenzy in Adelaide
- Springbank Millennium tasting
- Glenfarclas gets distiller of the year
- Latest tasting notes from Paul R.
- Members have their say

Musings From The Chair



Oh! For an old Springbank

Springbank Millennium Tasting - Sydney 18 February 2006

Thanks to Foundation member and huge Springbank fan, Shane Kalloglian (pictured below with hypodermic full of precious fluid) I had the opportunity and privilege to taste some rare and exceptional malts from one of the world's best distilleries. Below are my tasting notes for all the whiskies we sampled from Springbank. It was great and an experience that will live in the memory for many a long day. Thanks once again to Shane.

Springbank 10 46% (B circa 2005) (OB) 78/100

Nose: delicate hint of smoke, some pine wood and a bit of spirit prickle. Vanilla cream, dry wood and a growing hint of sulphur lurking in the background

Palate: Toffee and a hint of barley sugar

Finish: Waft of toffee, hint of smoke and wood. Starts well but sulphur notes spoil the party.

Overall Comment: OK early on but some sulphur crept in at the death. Still held together for quite a long time

Springbank 10 100 proof 57% (B circa 2003) (OB) 81

Nose: Butterscotch and some cooking oils, then cream & hot spirit. Spirit is clean though let down by some tired wood

Palate: Hot, slightly fruity, some malt and some woodiness.

Finish: Continues hot with dry wood and a little bit of liquorice and some fuzzy metal

Overall Comment: Spirit stays very clean, but there's some tired wood in the mix. Lacks any depth of character.

Springbank 15 46% (B circa 2003) (OB) 79

Nose: Coconut and caramel, toffee, vanilla and hazelnuts

Palate: Smooth some sour sherry, nuttiness and peat, but there's a big disconnect between the nose and the palate and some earthy farmyard notes develop. The sherry is forward but the quality of the barrels is dubious.

Finish: Sour sherry & cherries, nutty reprise definitely some first fill oloroso.

Overall Comment: Palate not as good as the nose and some dirty notes crept in, increasing the disconnect between the nose & palate: a dodgy sherry butt made it into the vatting. Shame because it started out as a beauty.

Springbank 25 Frank McHardy 46% Bottle # 225 (OB) 88

Nose: Tropical fruit, sherry, vine canes & resin, juicy fruit chewing gum, coconut, lemon cheesecake and a hint of liquorice.

Palate: Oak, liquorice and coconut – well rounded and smooth. Slippery and silky

Finish: More coconut and intriguing impression of fresh lime and a tiny bit of metal. Some zesty freshness.

Overall Comment: I love the tropical fruit from sherry in American oak - a classic style of whisky, more usual from Speyside. Still a minor classic and very nice dram.



Working up a sweat: Measuring out the Springers

Springbank 25 Limited Edition 46% (OB) 87

Nose: Fruitcake, sandalwood & cedar, coconut and pistachio ice-cream, great depth – becomes very vanillin and a tad too woody with an increasing scent of lanolin.

Palate: Oak, cream & coconut, some deep, dark forest floors and a wee bit of dark chocolate.

Finish: cream oak and vanilla – maybe the wood is exerting too much influence

Overall Comment: Nice and has lots of depth, yet funnily enough was the one where I felt the wood was taking over

Springbank 30 Limited Edition 46% (OB) 92

Nose: Wow – just about the perfect sherry nose. Oloroso nuttiness and lots of smoked sultanas. Intriguing mix of red berry fruit and five spice powder – incredibly oriental like a Chinese grocer. Intriguing with brilliant clarity.

Palate: Lots of sherry, fruitcake, leather and a reprise of that oriental spiciness – maybe a hint of Christmas tea

Finish: Warming and long with drying leather in the tail. Length is very impressive

Overall Comment: wonderful stuff – sparkling clear sherry nose and the finish was long and warming - minor classic

Springbank 35 Limited Edition 46% (OB) 90

Nose: Immediate impression of chocolate fudge, caramel, shredded coconut then candied citrus peel and marmalade, definitely has a whiff of the seaside, jetties and harbours, tidal pools – distinctly coastal and maritime.

Palate: Sherry ,meaty and gravy notes – very rich, with imperious presence yet never overbearing.

Finish: Leather and cream, then waves of cocoa/chocolate powder – indicative of refill oloroso sherry from Spanish oak.

Overall Comment: Incredibly complex stuff - the funky fudge & meaty notes reminded me of Bunny and Glenfarclas

Springbank 40 Limited Edition 40.1% (OB) 85

Nose: Curiously flat and slightly flattened – hints of cardboard, lots of cocoa, mocha and chocolate powder with the emphasis on the dry powder. Some people thought TCA, which is a possibility as I didn't get any sulphur (spent matches and cabbage water) which would indicate that the cask was spent, almost inert .

Palate: much more lively with mown grass and fields of bailed hay. Quite malty with more mocha into the back palate

Finish: Tired wood very much in evidence here – slightly metallic with musty old books – curious rather than good.

Overall Comment: TCA is a possibility, but the cocoa/chocolate as the secondary and subordinate flavour characteristics strongly indicate a tired refill sherry butt, almost certainly from European oak.

Springbank 45 Limited Edition 40.1% (OB) 90

Nose: Amazingly fresh and lively – nice gentle waft of peat, white chocolate, then a refined oiliness like almond or walnut oil. Also has an almost Bowmore like grapiness with cut vine canes and fresh vine sap. Incredibly complex and seductive

Palate: lots of cut grass with an almost classic sauvignon blanc profile – on the oily side, silky and slippery

Finish: Lovely layers of creamy oak refreshed by a nice citrus zestiness – quite superb – Could spend hours with this one.

Overall Comment: Gets my vote for Best Fun of the flight – I value the slightly odd conjunction of chocolate and cut grass.

Springbank 50 Limited Edition 40.5% (OB) 87

Nose: Very different from the previous ones – almost a lowland nose – lemon cheesecake, fresh fruit acid then a very light sprinkling of peat. Some crushed leaves, maybe celery tops and remarkably clean throughout. If someone said this was a 24 or 25 year old Rosebank or even Linlithgow I wouldn't have demurred.

Palate: Wow – celery soup, vegetable stock, vanilla and cream – best example of umami on the palate I've come across

Finish: Soft peat, more clarified vegetable stock, cream and fresh rainwater. Lovely and soft. Overall Comment: Very, very interesting and lovely to try a 50yo, but the 30 yo and the 45yo stole my heart.



A question of ownership

THE fall out from the demise of Allied Domecq's distilleries has left many an industry expert confused.

Making an exhaustive list of the distilleries and their current owner is attempting the impossible. According to Jean-Marie Putz's information, the following distilleries that belonged to Allied Domecq and are now owned by the following global drinks concerns:

The new owners are
Ardmore Fortune Brands
Glenburgie Pernod Ricard
Glendronach Pernod Ricard
Glenlauriers Pernod Ricard
Laphroaig Fortune Brands
Lochside Pernod Ricard
Miltoduff Pernod Ricard
Scapa Pernod-Ricard
Tormore Pernod-Ricard
Imperial Pernod Ricard

From Jean Marie Putz – Whiskies et distilleries

Glenfarclas wins Distiller of the Year award

SPEYSIDE, 6 March; Glenfarclas was announced Distiller of the Year at the whisky industry's Icons of Whisky dinner held on Thursday night (2 March).

The prestigious award was presented to the company that has shown the most commitment to the development of whisky at all levels.

The shortlist for the sought-after award, included nominations from across the world. The list included Chivas Brothers, Diagio, Glenrothes, Inver House and Nikka, as well as Glenfarclas.

Key personnel from within the industry were invited to vote for the company they thought most deserved the award. Glenfarclas scooped the award "for being consistently good and staying true to its core values".

Commenting on the win George Grant, Brand Ambassador for Glenfarclas commented, "I am delighted with this award. Having produced our whisky for over 170 years, we are not a new kid on the block and it is fantastic that those within the industry recognise that we have continued to produce consistently good quality whisky".

Industry News



The very best: George Grant gratefully accepting the Distiller of the Year Award.

Scotch whisky renaissance as international sales soar

24th March 2006 By Sarah Routledge

GLOBAL sales of Scotch whisky grew strongly in 2005 driven by soaring demand for the drink in Asia, according to the latest figures from the Scotch Whisky Association

The overall value of Scotch whisky exports was up 4%, reaching GBP2.36 billion, the industry's third best annual export performance. Exports to Asia were up 24%, with China importing 86% more Scotch whisky over the year to GBP46 million.

Exports to the US, the industry's largest market by value, increased 10% to GBP35 million. However, within the EU export volume dropped 11% as the industry faced challenging conditions.

Richard Burrows, managing director of Pernod Ricard and chairman of the SWA said, "All the signs are that we are seeing a renaissance for Scotch whisky in its international markets. The industry is rising to the challenge of broadening the appeal of Scotch whisky to new consumers in new markets."

Despite the rapid growth of the new markets, the industry faces problems with trade barriers such as tariff and tax. Another problem with markets such as India is the prevalence of counterfeit Scotch whisky. The SWA estimates that there may be as much counterfeit whisky as real whisky in India, as an import tax for genuine Scotch of up to 525% makes the product unaffordable for many.

Rare whisky harvests high price

Dan Weiss with his prized purchase which will not be opened

A US businessman who has never visited Scotland has splashed out \$20,000 for a rare bottle of whisky.

Dan Weiss, 44, from New Jersey, was the highest bidder at an auction during Tartan Week to raise money for the City Harvest food charity in New York.

He paid £11,422 for the Glenfiddich, which was casked in 1937, the coronation year of George VI.

Mr Weiss said it would have to be a "heck of a special occasion" before his purchase was opened and drunk.

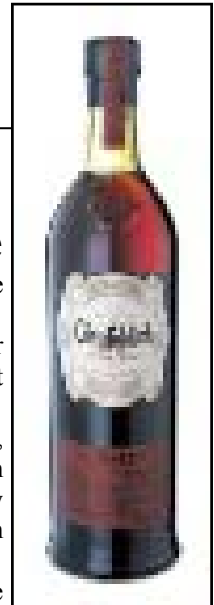
The bidding at the Scotland Village in Grand Central Station began at \$5,000 and rose in \$1,000 steps before Mr Weiss, a computer software director, entered the fray at \$19,000 and put forward his \$20,000 offer.

He explained later that he and a friend began collecting Glenfiddich and Glenlivet whisky after the latter was served at the wedding of Princes Charles and Diana in 1981.

Mr Weiss had about 250 bottles in his collection when he stopped counting about five years ago.

Mr Weiss has never visited Scotland, although he has taken a virtual tour of the Glenfiddich distillery near Dufftown on its website.

Via the BBC



Master Chef, Master Whiskies

Top chef dispels major myth

Or how Franz was let loose in the Hilton's kitchen—By Paul Rasmussen

For those of you who remember fondly Franz Scheurer's culinary high jinks, matching food and whisky at the 2005 MWSOA Convention; and for those of you who implored that Franz should be given the chance to explore this concept further, I am pleased to report that the prototypic high level food and whisky matching event conducted at the Hilton International was commended by all participants of sound mind. How good was the combination of Australian Master Chef Cheong Liew's cooking with Franz's whisky matching flare: sometimes spectacular, sometimes seamless, unmissable and coming to a capital city near you.

This six dish/eight whisky extravaganza was memorable for both what it did and did not try to do. What it did try to do was put a really interesting range of whiskies on the table that complemented or contrasted the food and I think Franz should be congratulated for having the wherewithal to present the diners with whiskies that ranged from absolute garden variety material most enthusiasts probably would not drink unless forced, like the Glenmorangie Madeira finish; and other eclectic gems like the Alloa 40 y.o. single grain, making them work beautifully with the food. What it did not try to do was grab a bunch of really expensive and rare whiskies and then come up with food matches. Because Franz and Cheong are friends from way back, Franz had a keen sense of what Cheong's iconic dishes are/were and could concentrate on what whiskies might match.

Hard to believe the match of the night was probably the Glenmorangie Madeira finish with the broth containing scallop tofu mousse, drunken prawn and ginseng beard; although not far behind for me were the match of Ardbeg 10 with a trio of fish roe in canaroli rice and the Nikka pure malt 'White' with chocolate bonnet, macerated prune and anis parfait. It would be fair to say that not all matches impressed diners to the same extent but at the same time few would claim that any less than five of the matched dishes were really well chosen. This brings us to the bit that interests me, the conversations had when the sensory kaleidoscope is finished. Such was the honesty and modesty of Franz that the first serious conversation we had afterward started with Franz remarking, "I'm not quite sure what the reason is for doing this ... I haven't quite worked it out yet". Now this is where I am going to beg pardon and get a little abstract. If Franz asks himself the question about the whisky and food matching, how and why should this differ from the well-established matching of wine and food? I was discussing this with Bill Lark just prior to writing and trying to nail exactly what I was thinking.

Apart from the fact that wine has always traditionally been consumed with food and thus by default is a candidate for food matching what might the differences be? The first judgement call is that there are some common variables in wine and whisky production (ferment, yeast, wood) but there are fewer in winemaking (soil, variety vs soil, grain, water, peat, still) and thus in sensory terms less complexity and diversity within wine styles than within malt whisky. The second judgement call is that the contribution of the variables to the whole is less distinct within wine styles than within malt whisky.

Another way to say this is that I would equate food matching to wine with the matching of furniture to a coloured wall (where the various tints and tones that make up that colour all bleed into one and the furniture sits in front of it), whilst I would equate food matching to whisky with the matching of a bolt to several pieces of a Meccano set to form a functioning part (where the various bits of the Meccano set remain as distinct parts until united by the bolt to make something entire). Perhaps put more simply, whisky and food matching seems like a more intellectual and less aesthetic pursuit.

The Society will keep members posted on when and where they can go to make their own minds up. In the meantime, thankyou Franz for raising the bar and inviting us to join you.



A tale of two menus

Shanghai House, Nth Adelaide
7th March 2006
with Chef Jacky Zhang

COLD PLATTER

Braised squid with soy sauce
Lightly smoked small yellow croakers (freshwater fish)
in liquor sauce
Boiled chicken with Shaoxing wine
Fragrant pork
Sweet and sour cabbage Shanghai-style
Stewed duck Shanghai-style
Pork kidneys
Spicy beef tendons Szechwan-style

Glenfiddich 15 y/o Solera Reserve, 40% a/v

ENTRÉE

Steamed dumplings Shanghai-style (Xiao long bao)

Forty Creek Premium Barrel Select, 40% a/v

SOUP

Tofu soup with fortune sea moss and dry scallops

Laphroaig Quarter Cask, 48% a/v

MAIN COURSES

Crystal freshwater river prawns
Sautéed king prawns (in the shell) with hot sauce
Sliced beef with cabbage and vermicelli in chilli sauce
Stewed pork with Chinese vegetables
Crispy skin chicken
Fried xiangling (bean curd)
Chinese broth with fresh abalone and bok choy
Chinese mushrooms and bamboo shoots in liquor sauce
Steamed whole coral trout with pickled vegetables and
bamboo shoots

Glenmorangie 15 y/o, 43% a/v

Cú Dhub, 40% a/v

DESSERT + FRUIT

Talisker 1990 Distiller's Edition, 45.8% a/v

The Grange, Adelaide Hilton
28th March 2006
with Chef Cheong Liew

Boidheach Boreannach Cocktail
Macallan 12 y/o, Sherry Oak, 40% a/v

Shark Fin Pumpkin Cream
Dailuaine 16 y/o, 43% a/v

Scallops Tow-Fu Mousse, Drunken Prawn and
Ginseng Beard in Broth

**Glenmorangie Madeira Wood Finish, 43%
a/v**

Bourbon KI Marrons Marmak-style with
Spätzle

**Hart Brothers – Alloa Distillery Single
Grain 40y/o, 42.5% a/v**

Spit- roasted Magret Duck, Duck Neck Sau-
sage

Glenfiddich 21 y/o Gran Riserva, 40% a/v

Trio of Fish Roe
Ardbeg 10 y/o, 46% a/v

Chocolate Bonnet, Macerated Prune with Anis
Parfait

Nikka Pure Malt 'White', 43% a/v

Members Page

Ever heard of Kininvie?

Hi Graham,

Kininvie is the third distillery owned by the Grants with the other two being Glenfiddich and Balvenie.

It is not bottled as a single malt, and I believe the Grants are yet to release it or make it available to the public in any manner at all. Unless you get in touch with Mr Jackson or Mr Murray, you are unlikely to find anyone who's actually tasted the stuff!!

The Grants are also fiercely against independent bottlings of their products. Hence, any time a cask of Glenfiddich leaves their warehouse, a tiny token amount of Kininvie is added to the cask so that it cannot be on-sold as a single malt.

I recall Strathclyde was recently upgraded by Allied, because they knew they were shutting down their Dumbarton grain distillery, and therefore had to up-production at their other grain distilleries.

Cheers,
Andrew

Ed: I believe there is some in Monkey Shoulder

Loud & clear!

It's great to be a member of the MWSOA, particularly when you are from Adelaide!!!!

When you live in Sydney the opportunities are more limited!!!

Kind regards

Jean-Marie Simart
Sydney

Ed: Jean-Marie was referring to the two very successful food & whisky dinners the MWSOA held in Adelaide last month (see centre pages). And he has a point, the MWSOA is an Australia-wide organisation, so over to you Franz, Andrew, Bruce, Shane et al, let's do a big show in Sydney! You may not have Cheong, but you still have some good chefs.

Old Aussie Charmers

Hi Graham

I was exploring the MWSOA website on behalf of my husband who is a single malt whiskey fan (I have downloaded the membership form) and thought you may be the person to ask about an old bottle of Australian Whiskey in our family that I can find no information on.

My dad got it from his dad and for years I have been trying to find some information about it and maybe it's history. It is a full (unopened) bottle of "MILNE'S well matured specially selected whiskey"

I think the seal around the top is lead. The only other information on the bottle and label is....
Milne & Co Ltd distillers Adelaide, 1 pint 6 fluid ozs
Awarded First Prize Royal Centenary Show

Any information you could give me or even if you could point me in the right direction I would be grateful. About 12 months ago I wrote to the SA Heritage Society asking if they knew anything of the distillers and have not heard anything since.

Regards, Rachelle Timms

Craig Daniels replies...

I've been intermittently researching Australian whisky for the last five years. I can't find a reliable reference to Milnes. I have no doubt that your bottle is genuine, just that googling on Milnes doesn't generate any hits that lead anywhere. There was a distillery at Thebarton, but it is unclear from the historical references as to whether it was a whisky still - as Fauldings operated a eucalyptus still at Thebarton. The other problem, is that in common with the industry in Scotland, the address on the label almost always refers to the registered address of the company and not the address of the distillery of origin. My understanding is that the only whisky distilleries operating in Australia in the 1960's and 1970s were both in Victoria.

There may be some industrial historians out there who can tell you whether Milnes was a brand of either United Distillers or Gilbeys. I suspect that Milnes may well be a brand associated with Gilbeys (who made Gilt Edge) and which had the lion's share of the market in SA.

You may be able to track down a History of Gilbeys which might be able to confirm this. If Milnes was a Gilbeys brand then the whisky in the bottle was almost certainly distilled in Victoria rather than in Adelaide.

Continued over...

Tim Tibbetts honoured with first life membership of the MWSOA

THE motion read as follows: There being no impediment, that the following nomination for Life Membership of the MWSOA be accepted for Mr Timothy Tibbetts.

The vote was unanimous.

And why? Because of his dedication to the cause, his expert technical and planning advice and his marvellous ability to detect, as one member put it, "bullshit" at 50 paces, Tim was able to steer the MWSOA in the



The founding MWSOA members - from left - Matthew Rosenberg, Paul Rasmussen, Tim Tibbetts, Martin Brackman-Shaw, Graham Wright and Craig Daniels.

right direction in the early days when Conventions and a Society were but a dream.

Tim, his family and his amazing collection of malts will be sadly missed as he re-starts his life in Seattle USA.

Old Aussie Charmers cont'd...

I've also seen a bottle of Thebarton Whisky at an auction in Adelaide in 2001. It was impossible to tell when the whisky was bottled but my best guess would've been before WW2, probably in the 1920s or 1930s. All the bottles of Australian whisky that I've seen were distilled before 1976, because the volumes on the labels were expressed in imperial units rather than metric.

Australian whisky sales peaked in 1973 - it's no coincidence that the decline in Australian whisky's market share slumped upon the hike in excise imposed by the government around 1974.

Melbourne Tasting Group

Dear MWSOA,

Just a note to let you know that Melbourne has finally got a malt whisky tasting club up and running, but we are still looking for new members.

Can you give a little publicity please?

I look forward to seeing you all again and sharing a few wee drams.

Warm Regards

Stephen Harbour

Mob 0412 560 778

<http://www.melbournemalts.blogspot.com/>

Ed: sure can!

Members Page

Ask Dr Paul

Ed: this is an edited version of Franz's letter

Dear Dr Paul,

I was at a whisky tasting last night and the presenter raised the issue of TCA (cork taint) in whiskies.

He said that that it is impossible for bugs to live in high alcohol, ergo TCA could never happen in whisky. Well, to the best of my knowledge TCA is not a bug but a chemical reaction and I certainly have tasted whiskies with cork taint.

Feed back please?

Franz

Hi Franz

I read your comments with interest. As far as the specific point on TCA goes cork taint is caused by a number of extremely pungent compounds, the number 1 culprit being 2,4,6 trichloroanisole or TCA.

It can be detected on the human palette at extremely low levels (five parts per trillion or less !!) and is the result of enzymic reactions in common fungi such as *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium*.

These fungi are able to synthesise TCA from chlorophenolic compounds (that probably came from pesticides, timber preservatives and other such agricultural-



management chemicals) and if these fungi are living on the bark of a cork tree then the TCA taints the cork.

The TCA then leaches out into ANY liquid, regardless of alcoholic content, once it is bottled, taints it and is only detected when the bottle is opened. Indeed, a single tainted cork can contaminate a whole batch of corks in a packaged shipment - TCA from wooden palettes or crates can taint corks too.

That's about the limit of my understanding on the matter but your presenter is a mile off saying that the "bugs" have to be alive in the beverage to taint them - that's bollocks!

If it were true, the wine industry could remove their whole TCA problem simply by autoclaving the corks or soaking them in 70 % ethanol to kill the fungi.

Hope that makes sense, it does infuriate me when people who should know better spread untruths and folklore tales that mislead the public!

Cheers

Dr Paul

Under The Microscope: With the Ras Man



Macallan Realism

DEAR Readers,

Thanks to Maxxium and Andrew Skehan the MWSOA was delighted to be able to test all these Macallan expressions head-to-head in a very informative and sometime eclectic presentation put on at the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Adelaide. For the taste panel I would normally seek to integrate notes and results of the tasters but in this case I think that keeping the notes and scores separable will be far more informative. I signalled in the last competition report for the medal round that I believed Macallan were really trying to do something different with the Fine Oak range, that the styles were getting much drier and that woodiness was on the way out. I might now qualify this statement by saying heavy sherry wood treatment seems to be on the way out. I still maintain that Macallan deserves credit for trying to shake-up a venerable range of whiskies and present the market with something new and different.

Perhaps it is time that some of us stopped looking back to what we knew the 43% Macallan 12 to be and lamenting the fact that the range has moved on. I have noted quite some gnashing of teeth and breaking of pencils in correspondence and reviews of particularly the Fine Oak series, Mr Andrew Derbidge, being among the most severe of the Australian critics. From my perspective I think its time to take some of the nostalgia out of this debate and recommend that whisky enthusiasts approach the Macallans with an open mind (particularly you Derbidge: you are too young to be writing about sherried Macallans with 'Sepia-toned, when I was a boy' anachronisms - next time the kids are watching, listen to Spongebob when he says, "don't be so negative!").

Now to the whiskies; and shall we start with controversy first, the Macallan Fine Oak 18. Peter Godden from the Australian Wine Research Industry summed this up well for me when we tasted this in the competition, "this is a really fine whisky that I think some people will really hate ... I am going to go out and buy some". The American/white oak is really dominant in this whisky but I have to say that I think it works. I am not used to associating all those savoury notes with

Macallan 18 but I do not see anything wrong with using good Bourbon wood and coming up with a whisky that I think is far more interesting than the typical Macallan we could all roll off common descriptors for.

There is no argument that this whisky has become dominated by white oak ... but as I see it, in such an appealing way. All that savoury stuff makes me salivate before I even drink it and the characteristics imparted to the nose and palate mostly remind me of premium Shiraz wines with exemplary wood policy (Rockford immediately comes to mind). I also think the palate is great, really slick and full; and the sappiness at the end just rounds it out nicely. I would anticipate that this would be a dream whisky to match food to, especially spicy stuff (over to you Franz).

The Fine Oak 12 gets less than the thumbs up from me, although my tasting companion loved it. I find it a very 'junior' version of the 18' that is even more robust but has less class and complexity. If it were down to me I would be suggesting that this is where the wood gets too loose and starts to dominate the whisky. The massive woody phenols that almost give the whisky a carbolic finish left me at the gate.

The Replica's and Inspiration were more diverse than expected with the

1841 probably having the best palate and the 1851 the best nose. The nose on the 1841 was predominantly grapefruit to me but the palate progression from crisp acidity, to grain and chocolate, then dry and herbaceous at the end was really a delight. The nose on the 1851 was really fresh and enticing, I would not claim it to be incredibly layered but the interplay between the white oak lemon/sherbet/floral characters, the sherry wood chocolate and raisins; and from somewhere this ozone/ocean breeze just kept me swirling away at the glass.

The palate was also very classy, predominantly dry but very smooth with the aspirin/metallic zing to finish. The 1876 was the weaker of the replica's for me. I found it serviceable and of high quality but narrower on the nose and palate. The C/S I regard as a little bizarre, especially for a Macallan, I find weird tinctures on the nose that I just find disagreeable and if guessing I would say the wood that this bottle came from was not that flash, I hope it was just an example of the bad end of bottle variation.



Under The Microscope: The tasting

Macallan 1841 Replica

Nose: toffee, spearmint, jujube, grapefruit, marmalade, honeydew, lily, snowdrops, lemon butter, sandalwood, mineralaceous, sherbet

Palate: nicely acidic and dry on front palate, chocolate and grain in the middle palate, dry, herbaceous and slightly peaty finish

Score: 8.3



Macallan 18 Fine oak

Nose: tomato sauce, spiced vinegar, salt & vinegar chips, honeydew, resin, savoury, marshmallow, fresh mint, cream, rubber/bike tyre

Palate: slick and oily on front palate building to a very clean integrated strong spirit, sappy in the finish with woody phenols and slight peat

Score: 8.4



Macallan 1876

Nose: dry sand, mineralaceous, lime juice, hot, biscuit, potato, buttery

Palate: straight thru to a long full middle palate with a dry acidic finish like pickle

Score: 7.8



Macallan 12 Fine oak

Nose: perfume, syrupy, tomato sauce, very woody, resin, cut pine, icing sugar, mint, cream, marshmallow, cinnamon,

Palate: immediately sharp, dry and woody, no real palate progression, finishes phenolic and carbolic, ouch

Score: 7.4



Macallan 1851

Nose: dry, mineralaceous, lemon, sherbet, cyclamen, chocolate, raisin, salty, ozone, ocean breeze

Palate: smooth on front palate, good oiliness, dry and spirituous in the middle palate, then dries out even more with an aspirin kick and a little peat

Score: 8.5

Macallan C/S

Nose: damp clothes, formalin, caramel, ferric, floor polish, sour cherry

Palate: a left hook, big, full, spirituous and dry in one hit

Score: 7.9



Until the next time...Paul Rasmussen

The Backpage

Innovation corner

The Whisky PC Case Mod

I enjoy SoCo and Sprite every now and then, but Janos Marton takes Whisky to a whole other level. Marton loves to tinker with hardware, but has never seen a case for a PC as clever as a Whisky bottle.

For his own D.I.Y. project, Marton selected a 1.5 liter of Ballantines Scotch Whisky and found someone to drill two holes: one at the back of the bottle for CPU cooling and another at the left side for the hardware (then later drilled 6 more holes because it wasn't cooling enough).

Marton was clearly annoyed by the standard box-shaped PCs of today. And I don't blame him! It's all about the case mods.



The new face of computing... raw ingredients in, headaches out! Sound familiar?

There is something definitely in the air

CONGRATULATIONS go out to Miss Amanda Parker, well known MWSOA Committee member and website guru who has just announced her engagement to long time beau and local South Australian chef, Mr Alex Gordon.

Miss Parker was very coy about the honeymoon arrangements.



Adventurous English boost sales of haggis

By Geneviève Roberts of the Independent, 20 March 2006

Many squeamish Sassenachs would run for the door when confronted with a dish of sheep's lung, heart and liver stuffed into a stomach lining. But the haggis, Scotland's national dish, is enjoying a popularity boom in England with shoppers demanding the delicacy all year round.

The supermarket Sainsbury's said yesterday that it was trialling sales of the sheep and oatmeal dish across the country all year round in response to customer requests.

"We are running trials selling plain haggis across the country, and already sell a broad range, including spicy haggis and organic haggis, in Scotland.

"People's tastes have become broader over the last few years, and whereas they may have not even known about Burns Night a few years ago, now they are not scared to try something different, and have a taste for the dish all year round."

The mystique of haggis continues to fascinate many tourists visiting Scotland. A survey by Hall's, a haggis maker in West Lothian, revealed that more than 30 per cent of American visitors thought a haggis was a creature and a quarter thought they could hunt it.



New drink's got whisky fans tipped pink

ITS sickly pink colour and strawberry flavour would be expected to have whisky connoisseurs turning their noses up in disgust. But the new fruit-flavoured whisky concoction has received rave reviews from traditional whisky experts.

Now Strawberry Kiss whisky liqueur - made with a single malt - is to go on sale in upmarket stores such as Harvey Nichols, Jenners and the Whisky Shop, which has branches on Princes Street and Victoria Street.

The drink has been concocted by a pair of Edinburgh businessmen, who spent eight months in a home kitchen perfecting the whisky drink to a secret recipe.

Norman Brown and his colleague John Smith made the drink in Mr Brown's laboratory kitchen, said the drink would only be sold at exclusive stores.

"We decided we wanted something aimed at the younger, female drinker - we thought there was a real gap in the market," said Mr Brown. "We chose a 14-year-old Speyside single malt whisky after trying a lot of different ones and then worked at adding ingredients to make it into a liqueur.

"We were trying to move away from the highly-sugared liqueur and create something more subtle and flavoured. Strawberry Kiss has a subtle spicy flavour."

Dr Bill Lumsden, Master Distiller at Glenmorangie, said he had been impressed by the drink.

"I quite liked it and normally I don't have a penchant for sweet things like that," he said. "This drink isn't too sweet or cloying as I expected it might be when I saw the colour.



In the pink: Nice one Norman!

Whodunnit: Big G and the excitable crew at the MWSOA. E&OE and if anything goes wrong—it's not my fault!