



Feints and Foreshots



WELCOME TO

Feints and Foreshots #28

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MWSOA WHISKY DINNER ANNOUNCED

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LIBERTINE WHISKY DINNER REVIEW

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MUSINGS FROM THE CHAIR

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MWSOA Whisky Awards 2009 – Top Ten

The MWSOA conducted their whisky judging competition on Sunday 2 August 2009 at the Fountain Inn in Adelaide. All the scores have been collated and while we won't announce the Trophy winners and the all the medal winners until the Awards Dinner on 8 September 2009, I've decided to publish the Top Ten in the interests of informing the members of what the judging panel thought were exceptional drams.

In alphabetical order the top ranked whiskies out of the 48 submitted for judging were:

- ☛ Ardbeg 10 YO
- ☛ Benromach Peat Smoke 6YO
- ☛ Glenfarclas 30 YO
- ☛ Glenfarclas 15 YO
- ☛ Glenfarclas 12 YO
- ☛ Isle of Jura Superstition NAS
- ☛ Lagavulin 16 YO
- ☛ Lark Distillery Cask #39
- ☛ Talisker 10YO
- ☛ Talisker 25 YO

Members who have followed the awards since 2003 will recognize some familiar high scoring malts. The Glenfarclas 30, Lagavulin 16 and Ardbeg 10 have been consistently well credentialed performers however it's good to see some new names amongst the crème de la crème such as the Benromach Peat Smoke and the Isle of Jura Superstition along with an excellent cask release from Lark Distillery. And there are strong candidates for best value for money malts in the Glenfarclas 12 and Talisker 10 as well.

The ranking by score order will be revealed in the next Issue of **Feints & Foreshots** or you can find out at the Awards Dinner on 8 September. More information on the Awards Dinner is at page 10.



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☞ MWSOA EVENTS AUGUST - DECEMBER 2009 ☞

- * MWSOA Whisky Awards 2009 – Dinner and Trophy Presentation – Rob Roy Hotel ,Adelaide 8 September 2009
- * Talisker Vertical – Member Tasting – October 2009 – Venue and date TBA.
- * 5 Pleasant Surprises from the MWSOA Whisky Awards – Whisky Tasting 7 October 2009 – Melbourne, venue to be advised.
- * MWSOA AGM & Christmas Tasting, (Adelaide) – tentative date Thursday 10 December 2009, date to be confirmed, venue to be advised.

New on Retail Shelves

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EVENT REVIEW

Whisky Matching Dinner, Libertine Restaurant Melbourne, June 2009

Review by Franz Schuerer



This is a charming restaurant in North Melbourne, reminding me of *Claude's* in Sydney when Tim Pak Poy ran it. It surely has the best short wine list in the country and Nick Creswick's food is amazing. Zoe Ladyman, who runs the floor, is all charm and professionalism with a warmth rarely encountered. The whisky dinner was sensational and the food and whiskies kept coming in absolute unison: perfect timing. Here is the menu of that Friday night:

Scotch Cured Rainbow Trout, Soused Vegetables & Blini
Glenfarclas 15 y/o 46% a/v

Roquefort Soufflé, Roasted Hazelnut and Pear Salad
Nikka White 43% a/v

Smoked Ham Hock, Lentil & Pancetta Terrine
Benriach Birnie Moss 48% a/v

Caramelised Pork Belly, Beetroot Compote & Horseradish
Longrow Gaja Barolo 7 y/o 55.8% a/v

Beef Cheek, Stout & Bourgogne Garnish
Craigellachie Cask #3962 12 y/o 57.4% a/v

Butterscotch Ice Cream, Walnut and Date Pudding
Ardbeg Renaissance 10 y/o, 55.9% a/v

The match of the night, in my opinion, were the Beef Cheeks with the Craigellachie and the whisky of the night was the Longrow Gaja Barolo followed by the Ardbeg Renaissance.

Libertine 500 Victoria Road North Melbourne Tel.: 03 9329 5228



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WORLD WHISKY DESTINATIONS PART 1:

We all know about Scotland as a must-see destination for whisky fans. But have you ever thought of putting Stockholm on your list? The Glenfiddich Warehouse in Stockholm's old city, Gamla Stan, may just have you thinking twice. 170 Single Malts to choose from, plus reindeer, venison and salmon on the menu.



Photo: Nic Lowrey

Glenfiddich Warehouse
Västerlånggatan 68
111 29 Stockholm
Telephone 08-791 90 90

Do you have a photo of a great whisky destination? Send it in to: fnfeditor@mwsa.org.au



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A MORNING AT THE BALVENIE

Words and photos by Andrew Derbidge

The Balvenie is one of those whiskies that often flies under your radar. You know it's there, you see it on the shelves at your local bottle shop, and yet your attention somehow gets drawn to other malts. Meanwhile, it paces on steadily as the quiet achiever. On a recent trip to Scotland, I was keen to go behind the scenes and see what this enigmatic distillery was really about.

As a distillery and as a whisky, The Balvenie looks over its shoulder to its big brother, Glenfiddich. William Grant founded Glenfiddich in 1886, and he added Balvenie on the same site six years later in 1892. Both still remain in the hands of the founding family, now William Grant & Sons Ltd, although often referred to in the industry simply as Grants. Despite being a family affair, Grants is one of the true heavyweights of the industry, with Glenfiddich arguably being Scotland's biggest distillery, at least in terms of litres of spirit produced annually. Grants also owns two other malt distilleries: Kininvie (on the same site as Glenfiddich & Balvenie), and the new Ailsa Bay, which is housed on the same site as their grain distillery, Girvan, down south on the Ayrshire coast. (Some readers may be aware that Girvan previously housed one of Grants' other malt distilleries - the ill-fated Ladyburn, which closed in 1975).

For many years, there was almost a tacit understanding amongst single malt enthusiasts that Balvenie was Grants' nod in their direction: Kininvie was made for blending, Glenfiddich was made for the masses, but Balvenie was made for the *real* single malt drinkers.

Courtesy of the good folks at Suntory, Australia, I visited the distillery last May and was shown around the plant on one of their special tours by Rob MacPherson. MacPherson is a semi-retired, former distillery manager who spent his career with Chivas – including a significant stint as manager at Benriach. And while Benriach holds a special place in his heart, he readily admits that Balvenie was a malt he always

felt partial to. When the opportunity came up to lead tours around the distillery, he was first in line.



We meet at the main visitor centre at Glenfiddich, where we climb into an old Land Rover and drive down to Balvenie. We enter an old office cottage which has been renovated into a very welcoming lounge, shop and tasting room, and as the door opens, I'm immediately greeted with the delicious aroma of freshly brewed coffee. I settle into a very comfortable leather lounge with my cup of coffee and a tasty plate of shortbread biscuits, thinking immediately that every distillery tour should start this way.

With morning tea nicely taken care of, we walk across to the maltings. Balvenie is one of just six distilleries left in Scotland to still malt their barley on site in the traditional fashion on a malting floor. Despite the large size of the malting floor and the copious rows of grain laid out and germinating before me, I'm informed that the maltings only provides 10% of Balvenie's total needs. However, this isn't unusual – Laphroaig's maltings provides only 15% of its needs, and even the busy maltings at Bowmore accounts for just 38% of their total requirements.

Balvenie's malt is peated to 2-3ppm phenols, and the kilning process takes around 44 hours, with peat being burnt only for the first 12 hours. Balvenie's kiln is unique in that it has two separate furnaces, one for coal and one for peat. Both burn separately,



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Andrew Derbidge - A morning at Balvenie.... continued.

and the smoke from the peat fire is combined with the heat from the coal fire over both furnaces before being drawn up into the kiln floor above. I'm fortunate enough to have timed my visit to coincide with the peating, and we walk into the kiln and traipse across the barley with the glorious smell and cloud of peat smoke around us.

We cross the courtyard and enter the mash house, where I'm confronted with two impressively sized, seemingly identical, stainless steel mashtuns. It turns out that one of them is actually for Kininvie. For Balvenie, each mash requires 11.8 tonnes of malt, of which one tonne is the locally malted grain. Four mashes are completed every day, each lasting six hours...yes, the distillery is in production 24/7. Each mash produces 50,000 litres of wort, and the output from one whole mash is transferred directly into one whole washback – meaning that each washback is a full batch running six hours behind its predecessor.



We move through to the tunroom, where nine huge Douglas Fir washbacks sit brewing the beer. I'm pleased to see the washbacks are timber (stainless steel washbacks make for a somewhat cold and clinical tunroom) and we peer into a few of them, each at a different stage of fermentation. It's fascinating to compare the difference between the serene wash at 6 hours old with the aggressive, seething wash at 36 hours. Fermentation is unusually long at Balvenie (around 68 hours), resulting in a more fruity and estery beer that tails off at around 8

– 9% ABV. As we head towards the stillhouse, I sneak a quick glance through a doorway that opens into the adjacent tunroom for Kininvie, where another 10 timber washbacks sit anonymously. Add all this to the 24 washbacks up the hill at Glenfiddich, and you suddenly realise just how massive the Grants' site is and their significant contribution to Scotland's total production. Balvenie's stillhouse has an odd layout, presumably due to expanding over the years and finding that their additional stills couldn't fit in the original building. There are 5 wash and 6 spirit stills, all steam-coil heated, and I'm delighted to learn that the decision to switch the flowing spirit from foreshots to the middle cut is actually determined by the stillman with the water test. This means the spirit is actually being checked for quality before they start collecting, and it is in stark contrast to many distilleries that simply start collecting their cut based on time, strength, or flow rates. As a result of this, the cut comes on anywhere between 75 and 72% ABV, and they stop collecting when the strength hits 64%. I taste some of the new make spirit in the tasting room afterwards, and it struck me as being *extraordinarily* sweet – no doubt a function of the longer fermentation employed here.

Between the three distilleries on this site, some 850,000 casks holding over 120 million litres of spirit are maturing on site. Not surprisingly, cask management and maintenance plays a major part in the system here, and Grants have their own cooperage. We take a quick detour down the road in the Land Rover again to the cooperage, and stand on an observation deck where you can see the coopers busy at work repairing casks. With an enormous number of casks needed to mature the output here, they can't all be first and second fills, and so many tired casks are rejuvenated by being re-charred and given a new lease on life. I watch the process in action, and it's a fast yet fascinating display.



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Andrew Derbidge - A morning at Balvenie.... continued.



Maturation is the last part of the process and there is a huge range of warehouses over the site. The majority are steel-framed, industrial sheds featuring multi-tiered pallet racking, but we drive back to the distillery and pop into Warehouse 24 – an old traditional dunnage warehouse. One of the greatest experiences in whisky appreciation is to enter into a warehouse such as this – the air is thick with the rich, sweet, yet dank aroma of the angels' share, and you almost feel yourself becoming more refined with every breath.

We return to the lounge and tasting room where our morning started, and I note that the coffee and shortbread has been replaced with a good number of drams waiting to be sampled. It's often said that a whisky tastes best when you drink it at the place it's made, and this rings true once more as I enjoy a terrific line-up: Some new make spirit at 70%, the 12yo "Signature", the 12yo "Double Wood", a deliciously toffeed 15yo single barrel at 47.8%, the 21yo Port Wood, and the sublime 30yo. I've been fortunate enough to taste a surprising number of 30yo whiskies over the years, and this particular Balvenie bottling rated up in my Top 5.

It's been a wonderful morning, and I'm surprised to discover that three hours have elapsed since we started with the coffee. Rob asks me where I'm off to next. "Up the road to Benriach", I reply. He winks and gives a knowing nod, "Not a bad distillery, that."



Feints and Foreshots

FEINTS AND FORESHOTS

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MWSOA WHISKY AWARDS ANNOUNCEMENT

Keg makers SA Cooperage has come on board as sponsor of the 2009 Whisky Awards.

Roger Deaves, managing director for SA Cooperage, stated that he is pleased to be associated with the MWSOA and with this exciting new Australian industry of malt whisky production. He is looking forward to sampling some of the medal winning artisan Australian whiskies at the Awards presentation Dinner in Adelaide on 8 Sep and meeting both the end users and producers of a product that his company plays a pivotal role in creating.

Who are these fellas on either side of our Bill Lark? (Pic of World Whisky Pioneers projected onto Edinburgh's Salisbury Crag by Glenfiddich to promote a recent Edinburgh whisky event)



Photo courtesy of: Rory Steel, Director of Steely Fox Ltd



Feints and Foreshots

MUSINGS FROM THE CHAIR

by MWSOA Chairman Craig Daniels

August 2009

Where to from here?

As most of you should know the Committee made a decision to indefinitely postpone the Biennial Convention that was due to be held in Hobart in August 2009. That decision was prompted by a marked decline in industry support from October 2008 and while the decision was wrenching, there was more than enough feedback and analysis that suggested that the Convention format which we pioneered might be waning on the viability front. Convergence of the drop off in industry support and a suspicion that our 'model' might be passé really warrants a revisit of the Convention format and *whoever* is charged with taking the Society forward needs to review exactly what we're about and where we're heading.

Back in 2002 when the Society was born, what happened and when it happened was exclusively the whim of the foundation committee of 6 based in Adelaide. As we've developed and expanded over the years we now have a constituency that we have to address and accommodate and involve in the future direction of the Society.

The decisions that will be made about the future of the Convention and the Society will be made by the incoming committee to be elected in December 2009. I'd like to think that this new committee will have sufficient information to be able to develop and deliver a program of events supported by the members.

To this end we are planning to conduct a survey of the members and we'd really like you to let us know of any ideas you have about what we could do.

Some of the ideas under development are:

- ☞ Australian Malt Whisky Showcase at Tasting Australia (Adelaide) May 2010.
- ☞ The Inaugural Malt Whisky Tour – Tasmania –October 2010.
- ☞ Themed tastings in Capital Cities such as Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Hobart and Canberra, (Silent Stills, Speyside Exemplars, Best of the Islands, Missed Malts from the 1970s, Distillery Verticals)
- ☞ A Society bottling – an exclusive single cask, cask strength 20-25 year old bottling for the Society sourced through one of our sponsors much like the 2005 Convention Glenfarclas.
- ☞ Sponsor tasting nights run in conjunction with the Society.
- ☞ Running the Whisky Awards every year rather than biennially.

This is where you come in; we need your help. We haven't run out of ideas but we figure that it's about time we ask **YOU** about how you would like to see the Society develop and what **YOU** would like to see us **DO** and how well would you support what we come up with!

If you have any ideas that you would like included in a survey of the Membership or any other comments please forward to: chair@mwsoa.org.au



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MWSOA WHISKY AWARDS DINNER 8TH SEPTEMBER 2009

MWSOA invites you to join us for a tasting and dinner in Adelaide on the 8th of September 2009, to be held at the Rob Roy Hotel.

Tasting starts at 6:30, seating at 7:30

The menu for the evening is as follows:

WHISKY TASTING AND PRE DINNER CANAPÉS

ENTRÉE

TRADITIONAL SCOTTISH COCK-A-LEEKIE (CHICKEN AND LEEK) SOUP

SMOKED SALMON LASAGNA WITH HERB SALAD AND EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

MAIN

HERBRIDEAN CHICKEN BREAST STUFFED WITH HAGGIS, WRAPPED IN PROSCIUTTO
WITH NEEPS AND TATTIES, SILVERBEET AND CHICKEN JUS

EYE FILLET WITH HERB CRUST, GRILLED TOMATO, PARSLEY, POTATO MASH AND
RED WINE JUS

CHEESE

FROMAGE D AFFINIOS AND MAFFRA CLOTH WRAPPED CHEDDAR WITH
HOUSE-MADE PEAR PASTE, TOASTED ALMONDS, FRESH PEAR AND LAVOSH

*Over 40 whiskies to taste on the night, including all the medal winners.

*Meet Alistair Hart from Hart Bros.

*Lucky door prize on the night of a \$160.00 bottle of single malt whisky

for financial members. Not a financial member? Join on the night for the discounted price of \$25.00.

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