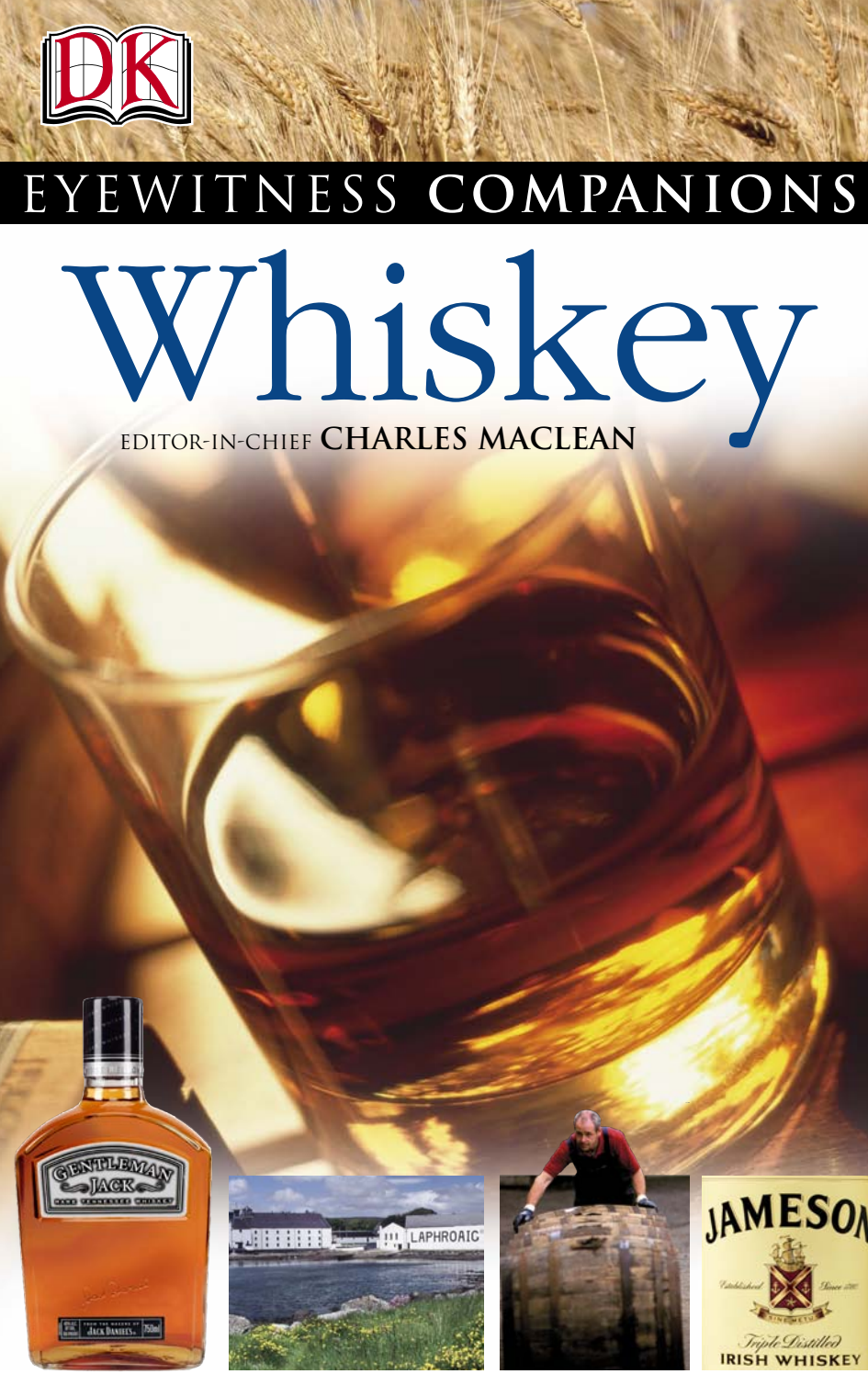
DK

EYEWITNESS COMPANIONS

Whiskey

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **CHARLES MACLEAN**



WORLD GUIDE • REGIONS • DISTILLERIES
MALTS • BLENDS • TASTING NOTES

EYEWITNESS **COMPANIONS**

Whiskey

CHARLES MACLEAN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DK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WASH STILL
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INTEREST IN WHISKEY HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER THAN IT IS TODAY, AND THE CURRENT LEVELS OF INVESTMENT IN ITS PRODUCTION AND MARKETING REFLECT THIS. WE ARE, INDEED, AT THE DAWN OF A GOLDEN AGE FOR WHISKEY.

The secrets of distilling are likely to have been known by scholars, physicians, and monks throughout Europe in the early Middle Ages. It is possible that the knowledge had already been introduced to Scotland by the early 14th century, with the arrival from Ireland of the MacBeaths. The members of this clan, or family, were known to be "wise doctors," and they quickly became hereditary physicians to the Kings of Scots and to the Lords of the Isles.

Glenfiddich took the ground-breaking step of marketing its single malt in the 1960s.

The first written reference to making "aqua vitae" in Scotland, however, is from 1494, and we do not find references to it being taken for anything other than medicinal purposes until the early 1500s. By the end of that century, though, whisky drinking was perceived as a problem by the Scottish government, which sought to curtail it in the Western Isles.

References to distilling during the 17th century are few and sometimes contradictory, but it seems likely that whiskymaking was widespread in Scotland and Ireland. Farming communities throughout Scotland gave over large proportions of their best arable land to growing barley for brewing ale. To prevent this turning sour—preservatives such as hops were unknown—much of it must have been distilled.

Whiskymaking remained small-scale and in the hands of landowners and local communities until well into the 18th century. Such "private" distilling from grains grown by the community and for their consumption (rather than for sale) was perfectly legal until 1781.

The first excise duty on whisky—a cunning imposition, learned from the Dutch—was imposed as early as 1641, which demonstrates that, even by the mid-17th century, whisky was, to some extent, being made commercially. The earliest reference to an "industrial" distillery dates from 1689, and during the 1780s such enterprises began to proliferate in Lowland Scotland.

Parallel developments were taking place in America, where Evan

Easter Elchies House stands at the heart of the Macallan estate, which includes arable land given over to the cultivation of barley for whiskymaking.

Williams established a large-scale distillery in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1783. When the nascent government of the United States attempted to impose tax on commercial distilling eight years later, the farmer-distillers rebelled, and George Washington had to muster an army of 13,000 men to restore order and the rule of law *(see p209)*.

Similar unease was manifested in Scotland, where small-scale "private" distillers defied the law, becoming "smugglers" (illicit distillers). By 1800 large, well-organized bands of smugglers openly flouted the authorities to bring their whisky to market, and by 1820 the situation had become anarchic. Licensed distillers and landowners pressed the government to revise the law so as to encourage small distillers to take out licenses, and make good whisky cheaply.

Glenlivet, a classic Speyside whisky

THE WHISKY REVOLUTION

The 1823 Excise Act *(see p47)* laid the foundations of the modern Scotch whisky industry. Many more distilleries were opened, often on the sites of former smugglers' dens. Some lasted only a few years, but others are with us still. They made malt whisky and grain whisky—the latter mainly in the Lowlands. After 1830, grain whisky was made in continuous stills, which had been perfected and patented by a former Inspector General of Irish Excise, Aeneas Coffey *(see p172)*.

Grain whisky is lighter in style, higher in strength, and cheaper to produce than malt whisky. The malt whiskies of the day were generally heavy, pungent, and variable in quality. It was logical, therefore, to mix them together to produce a drink that was more generally acceptable, and from the 1860s "blended" whisky came to dominate the market, and blending firms to control the industry.

Lagavulin was founded in 1817, though illicit whisky was certainly made in this area of Islay, off the west coast of Scotland, well before that date.

In its bricks and mortar, Bushmills, in Ireland, is very much a 19th-century distillery, but its whiskey-making origins go back to 1608.

BOOM AND BUST

The Scotch boom of the 1890s culminated in overproduction and a collapse in confidence by 1900. The industry's self-assurance returned only in the 1920s, with the amalgamation of the leading blending houses into the Distillers Company Limited (DCL), and (paradoxically) with the banning of the manufacture and sale of spirits in the US. Knowing that Prohibition could not last forever, the Scotch whisky companies made sure that the US was supplied with good quality Scotch through adjacent countries such as Canada and the Bahamas, laying the foundations of what would become the largest export market soon after Prohibition was repealed in 1933.

In the early years of the 20th century, Irish whiskey prospered as much as Scotch, but the Irish distillers had turned their backs on their countryman's invention, the Coffey still *(see opposite)*, and as blended Scotch became better, so the consumption of Irish declined.

Also, a taste for bourbon had been brought to Europe by American GIs in World War II. After the war, the demand for Scotch and bourbon was seemingly insatiable; Scotch, in particular, became the epitome of style and good taste in the Free World. Demand far-outstripped supply, and throughout the 1960s, distilleries were expanded and modernized, and new ones built. The boom was not to last, however. By the mid-1970s—largely owing to changes in fashion away from brown spirits in favor of white

Maker's Mark Distillery was founded in Kentucky in 1805, though its distinctive brand of bourbon originated in the 1950s.

spirits and wine—distillers contended with the potentially disastrous combination of a shrinking market and large stocks of mature whisky (known in Europe as "the Whisky Loch").

This had an upside, however, in that it led to a phenomenon that has done a great deal to increase interest in all kinds of whiskey throughout the world: the discovery of malt.

THE DISCOVERY OF MALT

Led by William Grant & Sons with their Glenfiddich Distillery, followed by other independents such as Macallan and Glenmorangie, distillery owners began to bottle and market their own malts for the first time. Of course, Scotch malt whisky had been around for at least 500 years, and small amounts had been bottled by spirits merchants and occasionally by the distillers themselves, but it had rarely been promoted. Such was the demand for malt whisky from the blenders—99.9% of the Scotch sold in the 1970s was blended—that there was little left over for bottling as single malt.

Though it still accounts for only around 8% by volume of total sales of Scotch (much less in the case of Japanese and Irish malts), malt whisky has spawned huge enthusiasm, appreciation, and enjoyment all over the world, demonstrated by the number of whiskey festivals, clubs, publications, and websites devoted to the subject. Appreciation of malt whisky has seen a corresponding interest in "small-batch" expressions (notably of bourbon and rye in the US).

CURRENT TRENDS

Recent years have seen a rise in the number of "wood-finished" whiskies—mainly malts, but also some blends and non-Scotch whiskies. These are simply whiskies that have been re-racked into different casks (usually fresh ex-wine barrels) for the last months or years of their maturation. The process was pioneered by Glenmorangie as a way of diversifying the range of products available from a single distillery.

Another trend has been the bottling of "non chill-filtered" whiskies, often at "cask strength" (typically around 60% ABV, as opposed to the more usual 40–43%). Chill-filtration removes certain compounds from the liquid in order to retain its clarity and brightness when ice or water is added. It is also

called "polishing" and happens just before the whisky is bottled, when the spirit's temperature is lowered to freezing and is pushed through a card filter. Most whiskies undergo such treatment, but some connoisseurs prefer the compounds to be left in, even if the liquid develops a haze when water is added.

BETTER WHISKEY

There is an old Scots saying: "There's no bad whisky. Just good whisky and better whisky!" And this applies to any well-made whiskey, from wherever in the world it comes. We are these days blessed with a great diversity of whiskey styles available to us from around the world, and each has its intrinsic qualities. "An American whiskey is not a failed attempt to make Scotch, or vice versa," to quote my late colleague Michael Jackson (to whose memory this book is respectfully dedicated by all of us who have contributed to it).

Canadian Club, a classic blended whiskey

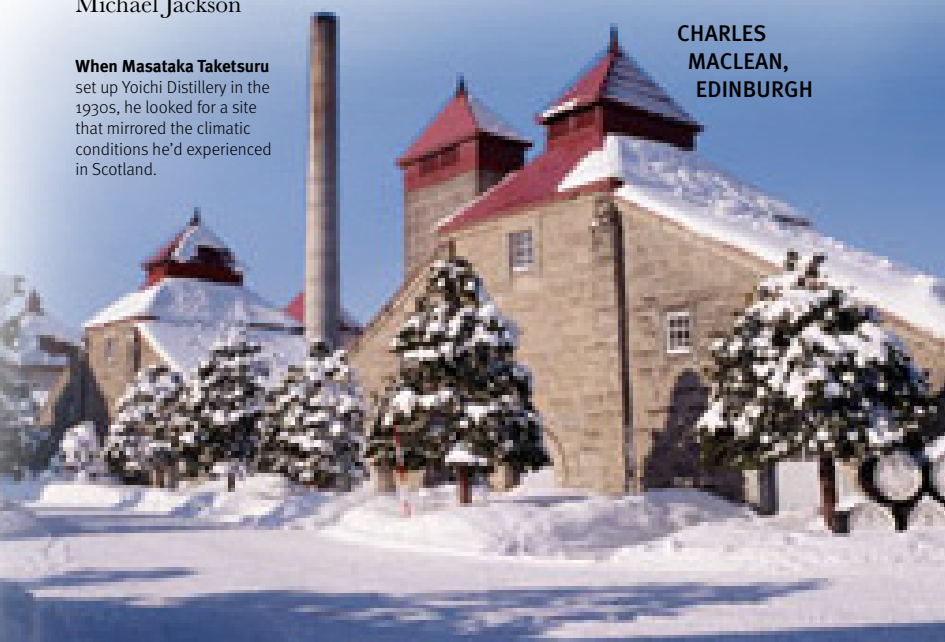
Over the past 20 years, the science underpinning the making and maturation of whiskey has developed hugely—although, happily, there are still gaps in our knowledge, which allow us to debate the relative importance of raw materials, processes, wood, and the intervention of the artisans who make the spirit.

Whiskey is the most complex spirit known to man. It rewards study and is worthy of contemplation—appreciation as well as simple enjoyment.

I hope this book will guide you, dear reader, on a rewarding journey of discovery into "the world's noblest spirit"—whiskey!

Slainte!

CHARLES MACLEAN, EDINBURGH



When Masataka Taketsuru set up Yoichi Distillery in the 1930s, he looked for a site that mirrored the climatic conditions he'd experienced in Scotland.

THE WORLD OF WHISKEY

THE WORLD OF WHISKEY

Many people drink whiskey without knowing much about it. While it is not necessary to be familiar with the intricacies of its production in order to enjoy a dram, a degree of knowledge adds considerably to the drinker's pleasure and satisfaction.

The ingredients that go together to create whiskey are few in number, and the basic processes that turn grain in a field into drink in a bottle are relatively simple. But the methods involved in the combination and interaction of the raw materials employed are full of subtle nuances and regional or national variations, each adding to the particular style of the finished whiskey.

In the following pages, we explore just where sweetness, peatiness, heather, smokiness, and saltiness in the aroma and flavor of whiskey come from, and address how such disparate characteristics are possible in something made only from grain, yeast, and water.

However, to these three ingredients can be added one more—wood—and, more specifically, the casks in which whiskey is stored during maturation. The casks in question are far from passive vessels. The interaction between wood and new spirit leads to a mellower and more well-mannered drink, and the length of time over which the spirit is allowed to mature in the cask will play a major part in its ultimate character, as will any previous contents of the cask. What is sometimes perceived as simply a period of "storage," undertaken once the whiskey is made, is actually crucial to the complex and multi-faceted business of creating whiskey.

Whisky from the stills at Abelour is used in blends such as Clan Campbell and also released as both a 10-year-old and cask strength single malt.

MAKING SPIRIT

At the core of the definition of "spirit" is the process of distillation, and there is a vast stylistic difference between whiskey made in pot stills and that produced in continuous stills. Particularly in the case of pot stills, variations in size, shape, and operational techniques play a major role in determining the whiskey's make up.

Although sometimes seen as less important than distillation, the earlier stages of mashing and fermentation are vital in developing a variety of desirable aromas and flavors that will carry through right into the bottle.

At the very beginning, of course, there is the selection of grain. Whiskies are created from one or more of a number of different grains, and the choice of which type and which strain plays a central role in shaping the profile of the whiskey into which it will eventually be transformed.

So, although the production of whiskey from just three principal ingredients may initially seem to be a straightforward process, resulting in a spirit that we might imagine would possess little variation, the reality is really very different.

INGREDIENTS

Making whiskey is actually a comparatively simple process using a small number of ingredients. Yet the permutations of equipment, practice, and raw materials allow for an incredible number of variations in the whiskey that finally finds its way into the bottle.

GRAIN

Of all the diverse factors that determine the ultimate character of the whiskey we buy, none comes close in importance to the type of grain from which that whiskey is distilled. Whiskey may be made from barley, corn, rye, and wheat, with only barley being used in isolation. All other whiskies embrace grains in various combinations and proportions.

Malted barley is used in Scotch malt whisky, and a percentage is included in the multigrain mashbill of most whiskies, in order to promote fermentation. Malted barley is the most expensive grain, while corn gives the highest yield per ton.

In terms of flavor, barley contributes malty, cereal, biscuitlike notes to whiskey. Corn gives sweet, spicy, and oily notes, while rye contributes a full-bodied, pepper and spice character, along with dried fruit on the palate. Wheat provides mellow notes of honey, which balance the bolder characteristics of other grains when used in the production of bourbon. Of all the grains employed in the creation of whiskey, only corn is indigenous to North America. Barley, wheat, and rye were all cultivated in Europe prior to their introduction to America by European settlers. Barley is one of the longest-established grain crops to be grown in Britain and Ireland, and it is thought that Neolithic man was growing the crop between 5,000 and 10,000 years ago. Inevitably, from a historical perspective, distillers tended to work with whichever grain grew most successfully in their vicinity.

The permitted combinations and percentages of various grains within each designated type or style of whiskey *(see p34)* are usually enshrined in law. For example, "straight rye" whiskey must legally be distilled using a minimum of 51 percent rye *(see p186)*.

YEAST

Yeast is a single-cell organism that feeds on sugars and produces alcohol and carbon dioxide as a result. It is probably the least discussed element that affects a whiskey's profile, yet it is essential, not only in the creation of alcohol, but also in its contribution to a spirit's character. At one time, virtually all distillers in Scotland and Ireland used a mixture of

The grains used for whiskey are barley and wheat, which are used for all Scotch and Irish whiskey, and corn and rye, which are widely used in the States.


Barley


Wheat


Corn


Rye

Barley is one of the cornerstones of whiskey making. It is not only the key ingredient of malt whiskey, but is also used in the majority of mash bills.

a specific distiller's yeast and a much cheaper brewer's yeast (often collected from local breweries). Today, in the interests of greater bacterial control, some distillers use only distiller's yeast, while others believe that the mixture improves the flavor of the spirit. Certainly, different strains of yeast contribute a variety of aromas and flavors to the final whiskey.

Arguably, North American distillers have been aware of the importance of yeast in relation to spirit character for longer than their European counterparts, and many US distilleries pre-cultivate their own yeast strains on site. Modern yeasts are employed to promote a more predictable and less volatile fermentation than was sometimes the case in the past.

Yeast transforms the sugars in the grain into alcohol.

WATER

The production of malt whiskey revolves around the addition and subtraction of water at various stages in the whiskeymaking process. Moisture is removed from newly-harvested malting barley; water is added to the malt during steeping; and moisture is taken away again during kilning. Water is added during the mashing process, removed during distillation, and once again added before bottling to reduce the strength of the spirit. Water is also used for condensing the distilled spirit.

It is fair to say that the most important single factor in distillery location has always been the availability of a reliable source of pure water. Everything else is secondary. The water must be pure, but it must also be available in quantity. Distilleries take water from boreholes, natural springs, lochs, burns, and rivers, as well as from the public supply.

Illicit stills were frequently set up in isolated places, not just to hide them from the prying eyes of the excisemen, but also because such places were frequently where the best distilling water was to be found. If the distillers ultimately chose to operate within the law—as many did—they were often loath to leave their favored locations, hence the remote settings of so many distilleries, especially in Scotland.

If water is so crucial to whiskeymaking, it follows that the character of the water used can have a significant impact on the profile of the final spirit. Salts dissolved in water used to make wort *(see p25)* affect its flavor and provide trace elements which are vital in the propagation of yeast. It is often said

Distilleries such as Glenfarclas are found in isolated locations because of the whiskeymaker's search for abundant supplies of pure water.

that the best whiskey is made using soft water that flows over granite and peat. This is perhaps because granite is very insoluble, and so does not pass undesirable minerals into the water. Soft water is also a better solvent than hard water, and, because it contains very little calcium, yeast can work more vigorously in it and ferment the wort more efficiently. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to find examples of distilleries which make excellent whiskies using hard water. They include Glenmorangie, in the Scottish Highlands, and Highland Park, on Orkney.

The water of the Scottish Highlands is usually soft, however. It rises in red granite and often flows along its way through peat and heather, both of which can influence its character. It is sometimes argued that soft, peaty water, such as that used in distilling on Islay, makes for heavier whiskies, while the harder water of Speyside makes for a lighter style of spirit. This is a very broad generalization, however, for there are many other factors to consider, such as the size and shape of stills and the manner in which they are run.

Peat is a key ingredient of many Scottish and Japanese whiskies.

The limestone that dominates the principal whiskey-producing states of the US is rich in calcium, magnesium, and phosphate, and the hard water of Kentucky, for example, helps to promote efficient enzyme action during the mashing stage of production. The layer of limestone is also pitted with caverns, which act as reservoirs.

The kilns at Balvenie Distillery are fired up with the addition of peat to create a distinctive, phenolic characteristic in the whisky.

Water temperature is another significant variable in whiskeymaking. Even in the condensers this is the case, since the colder the water the more efficient the condensing, which speeds up the process of turning the alcohol vapor back into liquid. This may give a "cleaner" spirit than if the condensing process were slower. Water temperature, as well as availability, traditionally has been a factor in the existence of the "silent season"—the period when distilleries close down for a spell during the hottest and driest summer months.

Once distillation is complete, water remains important, since most whiskey is reduced to its optimum maturation strength prior to filling into casks. Deionized water is also usually used to reduce the spirit to bottling strength after maturation is complete.

The Scottish Highlands provide an abundance of water from mountain springs and streams.

PEAT

Peat is vegetable matter decomposed by water and partially carbonized by chemical change over thousands of years. It is usually found in wetland areas. The use of peat during the kilning stage of malt production tends to be limited largely to Scotland, Japan, and occasionally Ireland. Peat is added to the kiln fire to provide what is known as "peat reek" in order to promote phenolic characteristics. The influence of peat is most apparent in the single malt whiskies of Islay.

Maple wood is burned at Jack Daniel's Distillery to create maple charcoal, which is used for filtering the Tennessee whiskey produced there.

The location of the peat used in malting is significant, with peat produced from grass roots or sphagnum moss differing in character from that which has developed from bog myrtle—the latter produces a sweet, citric aroma when burned. It is sometimes argued that using peat which includes heather in its make up may add a "heathery" note to the whisky. Peat harvested close to the coast will be looser in composition than that further inland, due to the greater amount of sand it contains. It will also possess more salty, maritime aromas and flavors.

In the days before centralized, commercial maltings were a common feature of the industry, most distilleries cut their own peat or bought it from local suppliers to use in on-site kilns. It was said that the character of peat could differ significantly from distillery to distillery, even within one comparatively small island such as Islay.

Formerly cut manually, peat is almost invariably now harvested by machine. At one time, it was also used as fuel to fire the stills of rural Scottish and Irish distilleries, but now its use is restricted to kilning.

In addition to its malting role, peat may be an influence on whisky because the water used during production has previously flowed through peat, absorbing peaty characteristics as it passes. This is particularly the case on Islay, where up to 25 percent of the island's surface area is covered with peat. Indeed, the peatiness of the process water may influence the profile of the whisky produced even if the level of peating in its malt is comparatively low.

American white oak is used for the barrels at Jack Daniel's Distillery.

WOOD

With the exception of the type of grain used for distillation, the most significant factor that influences the character of the whiskey we drink is the manner in which it is matured. In effect, the wood in which whiskey is aged is one of the ingredients of whiskeymaking *(see p30)*.

However, in the case of officially designated Tennessee whiskey, wood plays a vital part prior to the process of filling the spirit into barrels. Central to the designation is the Lincoln County Process *(see p191)* in which new-make spirit is filtered through tanks filled with up to 12 ft (4 meters) of maple charcoal. The process takes four days and removes many of the more dominant congeners, as well as adding a slightly sweet note to the spirit.

PRODUCTION

Despite the variety of grains used and techniques employed, whiskey-making the world over is remarkably similar. Its principal stages can be boiled down to malting, mashing, fermenting, and distilling.

MALTING

This is the first stage of the malt whisky distillation process in Scotland, where only malted barley may be used. In many other countries, whiskey is produced using a variety of grains that are not malted. However, a percentage of malted barley is always used in their production in order to promote efficient fermentation.

The process of malting breaks down cell walls within the grains and activates enzymes which will convert the starch into sugar during the "mashing" stage. During malting, the grains are germinated by steeping in water and being spread onto a concrete floor. The grains then begin to sprout. Before they get the chance to grow too much, the germination is stopped by drying the "green malt" in a kiln with hot air. Sometimes peat is burned during kilning to add smoky flavors to the whisky. The quantity of peat used will vary, depending on whether the whisky is to be heavily or lightly peated.

Phenol levels of peating are measured in parts per million (ppm). Many Speyside distilleries use malt peated to just one or two ppm, while the most heavily peated Islay whiskies will use malt with a phenolic level in excess of 50ppm. Once dried, the malt is ground in a mill to produce a rough "grist," after which the process of mashing can begin.

Not many distilleries still use old-fashioned "rake and plow" mash tuns, such as this one; most now use stainless-steel Lauter tuns.

Today, only a handful of distilleries still malt their own barley, with the vast majority buying in malt prepared to their specification by commercial maltsters in large, automated plants. Although such facilities were developed in Scotland only from the 1970s onward, commercial maltings have been used in the US, Canada, Ireland, and other European countries since the early 20th century.

MASHING

During mashing, the grist is mixed with hot water in a large vessel known as a mash tun. This is a circular, metal container, and since the 1960s, many

Mash tuns are used to mix grist (ground malt) with warm water to make worts; an inspection window (below right) is used to monitor the process.

On a traditional maltings floor, such as this one at Balvenie, the grain is turned by hand to aerate it and so promote an even rate of germination.

distilleries have adopted the "Lauter" tun. It is made from stainless steel, and has revolving arms to gently stir the mash. The starch in the grains is converted into a variety of sugars by enzymes within the grains, and the sugar goes into solution in the hot water, to be drained off through the base of the mash tun. This liquor is called "wort." The husks of the malt create a "bed" in the bottom of the mash tun, through which the sugary wort can drain.

Traditionally, three waters, or "extractions," were used for mashing in Scottish distilleries. The first water—which is, in fact, the third water from the previous mash—is heated to 145–7°F (63–4°C), then mixed with the grist. The temperature is crucial: if it is too hot, it will kill the enzymes; and if it is too cool, extraction from the malt will be limited. This liquid is drained off, then the second water is sprayed onto the mash at around 167°F (75°C) and the remaining sugars in the wort are drained off. To ensure there are no useable sugars left in the mix, a third water, called "sparge," is then sprayed on, at around 185°F (85°C). This is then transferred to a tank to be used as the first water of the next mash.

Modern Lauter tuns continually spray water onto the bed of grist after the first water has been drained off. This is more efficient in extracting sugars, permits faster drainage, and creates clearer wort, with fewer solid particles. Clear wort allows for a greater range of flavors to be developed during the fermentation process.

The husks and other solids remaining in the mash tun are known as "draff," and are removed and, as they are rich in protein, are converted into cattle food. The wort passes through a heat exchanger to reduce its temperature to below 68°F (20°C), which is necessary in order to prevent the yeast being killed off immediately during fermentation.

Where nonmalted grain, such as corn, is used in distillation, it is crushed in a mill and "cooked" in a cylindrical tank or pressure cooker to break down the cellulose walls and allow the starch within to absorb water during mashing. The starch then gelatinizes, enabling the grain's enzymes to convert the starch into sugar.

Traditional wooden washbacks are still in use in many Scottish and Japanese distilleries. In them, the wort is fermented to create wash.

The sight of smoke plumes from a distillery is now a rarity, being restricted only to those sites that still use kilns to malt their own barley.

FERMENTATION

From the heat exchanger, the wort is pumped into a number of fermenters, or "washbacks" as they are known in Scotland. Traditionally they are made of Oregon pine or larch wood, but are now often constructed of stainless steel.

As the wort enters the fermenter, a measured amount of yeast is added. Yeasts survive for years in a dormant state, but in the presence of sugars, warmth, moisture, and an absence of air, they multiply at an astonishing rate. The yeast consumes the sugars in the wort, and converts them into alcohol and carbon dioxide. At this point, the wort becomes what is known as "wash."

The reaction during fermentation is violent, with the temperature increasing to around 95°F (35°C). The wash froths dramatically, and mechanical "switchers" revolve over the surface, breaking the foam and preventing the wash from overflowing. The increasing temperature and rising alcohol level causes the yeast multiplication to slow down after some 12 hours. By this stage, there will be a considerable increase in the amount of bacteria present, principally lactobacillus.

There follows a period of bacterial fermentation, which is important for the development of flavor compounds and the degree of acidity in the wash. Longer fermentations produce a more acidic wash, which reacts beneficially with the copper in the wash still, producing a cleaner, more complex spirit. By the time fermentation is complete, the wash contains between six and eight percent alcohol, its acidity has increased, and around 80 percent of the solids in the wash have been converted into alcohol, carbon dioxide, and new yeast cells. The remaining solids pass over with the wash into the wash still.

In many US distilleries a "sour mash" process takes place during fermentation. An amount of residue from the still, known as "backset" or "stillage," is pumped back into the fermenter in order to maintain the desired level of acidity. This helps to control the level of natural bacteria.

DISTILLATION

The process of distillation takes place in pot stills or continuous stills. In both cases the principle is the same. Alcohol boils at a lower temperature than water, so when the wash is heated, alcohol vapors rise up from the still first to be condensed back into liquid ready for collection.

CONTINUOUS DISTILLATION

Virtually all bourbon, rye, Tennessee, and Canadian whiskey, along with grain spirit for Scotch whisky blending, is produced using a method of continuous distillation. Irish distillers use both pot stills and continuous stills. Grain spirit, usually from corn, is produced in

"Man doors" are a feature of pot stills. They can be opened up to inspect and clean the insides between distillation batches.

In tall stills, such as these at Glenmorangie, the vapor has to climb a greater height, and consequently more falls back as "reflux."

continuous stills, while what is termed Irish "pure pot still whiskey" is made in pot stills from a mix of both malted and raw barley *(see p168)*.

Although there are technical differences between the many continuous stills in use around the world, they all work on the same basis, and none are far removed from the original Coffey still, patented in the early 1830s by Irishman Aeneas Coffey *(see p172)*.

Compared to malt whiskey distillation in pot stills, the production of whiskey in a continuous, column, or patent still —as it is variously known—is significantly closer to an industrial process. The stills making grain spirit are large, versatile, and highly efficient, as they can work continuously, whereas malt whiskey distillation in pot stills is a "batch" process, requiring time-consuming cleaning between each period of production. A much greater quantity of grain whiskey can be distilled in any given period, and the

Squat stills, such as these from Midleton in Ireland, allow more "congeners" to remain in the final spirit, as the degree of "reflux" is limited.

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF COPPER

Pot stills are made from copper, as it is an excellent conductor of heat, and is malleable and therefore comparatively easy to fabricate into the many and varied shapes of pot stills. With the exception of the output of the Canadian Mist Distillery *(see p223)*, which employs stainless-steel distilling equipment, all whiskies produced in continuous stills are also exposed to copper during the whiskeymaking process.

It was not until the early 1980s that scientists began to fully comprehend just how important copper was in the creation of fine spirits. It acts as a catalyst in removing foul-smelling, highly volatile sulfur compounds, and also assists in the creation of desirable fragrant, fruity notes, which are known as "esters."

The more contact the spirit has with copper, the lighter and purer it will be. When the alcohol vapor reaches the head of the still, the still's design and the manner in which it is operated can either encourage the vapor to condense quickly, or to trickle back down into the body of the still and be re-distilled. This is known as "reflux," and makes for greater copper contact and therefore increased purity.

Column stills consist of two connected cylinders, a rectifier and an analyzer: the rectifier performs the initial distillation, the analyzer the second.

unmalted grain which is predominantly used is significantly cheaper than malted barley.

The continuous still consists of two large, connected, parallel stainless-steel columns, called the analyzer and the rectifier. The fermented wash enters at the top of the rectifier column, where it is warmed by hot steam and is able to descend over a series of perforated copper plates. These plates serve the purpose of holding back heavier compounds, which flow from the bottom of the still.

The desirable volatile compounds are vaporized and pass over into the second column (the analyzer) at a strength of between 10 and 20 percent ABV. Here the vapors are cooled as they rise up the column, eventually condensing and being collected in liquid form. It is possible to distil spirit to a strength of just below 95 percent ABV in a column still.

In North America, wash is referred to as "beer," and the first column of the continuous still is known as the "beer still." The second distillation takes place in what's called a "doubler" or "thumper" still, which is not dissimilar to a pot still. The beer or wash that enters the beer still contains solids, whereas in pot still distillation, the wash enters the still in clear liquid form.

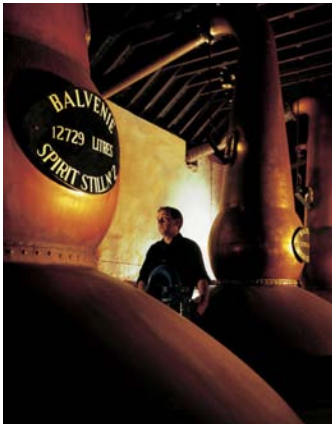
POT STILL DISTILLATION

In this traditional method of distillation, the wash is pumped into the first still, called the "wash still," and is brought to the boil. The boiling liquid forms a foam that climbs up the neck of the still. The stillman then adjusts the heat to make sure that the foam does not reach the top of the still and carry over into the condenser.

There are three basic shapes of pot still: plain (or onion) stills tend to create heavier spirits than the lamp-glass and boil-ball stills.

Plain still

Lamp-glass still



Boil-ball still

After a short while, the foam subsides and the operator can turn up the heat and drive off the spirit until the strength of the liquid left in the still (about half of the volume it was charged with) is down to around two percent ABV. This is called "pot ale" and, after evaporation, can be used for cattle feed.

The vaporized spirit driven off the stills must be condensed back into liquid form, and this takes place in either modern "shell and tube" condensers or in "worm tubs." Shell and tube condensers are tall copper drums filled with dozens of narrow-bore copper pipes through which runs cold water. The spirit vapor enters the drum and condenses on the cold copper pipes. The worm tub is a coiled copper pipe of diminishing diameter, set in a deep vat of cold water outside the still house. Until the 1970s, all distilleries used worm tubs, but today only around a dozen Scottish distilleries still employ them.

In a spirit safe, samples from "the run" are taken and analyzed to check the spirit's level of purity.

The liquid (condensed from the spirit produced by the wash still) is called "low wines." It is pumped into a "low wines receiver" before passing into the second "low wines" or "spirit" still, along with the residue of the previous distillation. The liquid is boiled in the same way as in the first distillation, but with two significant differences. The first spirits to come off are known as "foreshots." They are high in strength (around 75–80 percent ABV), pungent, and impure, and are directed to a separate receiver tank. The later spirits, known as the "aftershots" or "feints," are also unpleasant in aroma and flavor, and go into the same receiver tank as the foreshots. Both are added to the next batch of low wines for redistillation.

Only the "middle cut" of the run from the spirit still is directed to the "intermediate spirit receiver," to be filled into casks or barrels. "Cut points" vary from distillery to distillery, and the skill of the stillman is to know when to start saving spirit and when to stop. In some modern distilleries, however, cut points are computer controlled.

The spirit from both stills passes through a brass box with a glass front called a "spirit safe." Inside are glass jars containing hydrometers to measure strength. The stillman manipulates handles on top of the safe to fill these jars and add water. When the spirit is impure it turns cloudy, but once it remains clear, he turns another handle and starts saving it. A similar operation is performed when the feints begin to flow, and the stillman comes "off spirit." This mix of pure spirit and impurities, or "congeners," is different in every distillery, and plays a vital role in determining the character of the whiskey produced. The still continues to be run until its contents are around 0.1 percent ABV. This final residue is called "spent lees," and is run to waste.

The product of the spirit still is called the "new make" or "clearic." It is a perfectly clear liquid and around 70 percent ABV. Before it can be put into casks or barrels, its strength must be reduced by dilluting it with water to achieve an ABV of around 63 or 64 percent, which is considered the optimum strength to begin the maturation stage.

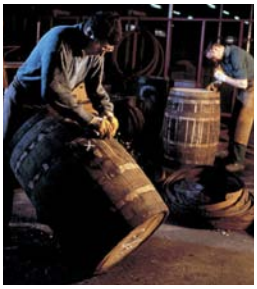
A spirit safe is essential for monitoring "the run" and deciding on the dividing line between the foreshots, the middle cut, and aftershots.

MATURATION

The influence of maturation in the creation of good whiskey cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, some authorities consider that whiskey acquires up to 80 percent of its final character in the cask. The cask cannot make bad whiskey good, but it can make a good whiskey great.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OAK

Oak has long been the wood of choice for whiskey maturation, and it is specified in the legal definitions of many whiskies around the world. The advantages of oak are that it is able to impart beneficial flavors and aromas to the contents of the cask, and its tight grain prevents leakage while its pores allow the contents to breathe. It is also a very durable wood, and may be bent when heated without cracking.



The Glenfiddich Distillery uses a mixture of European oak and ex-bourbon American oak barrels to mature its range of whiskies.

Whiskey is usually matured in casks constructed either of European oak *(Quercus robur)* or, more commonly, American white oak *(Quercus alba)*, which has largely superseded its European form. American oak is more widely available, and therefore considerably cheaper. Today, the Scotch whisky industry uses around 95 percent American white oak.

Spanish sherry casks are made of European oak, which is richer in tannins than American oak and able to impart more complexity to the whiskey.

EUROPEAN OAK

The most commonly-used form of European oak, especially in Scotland, comes from Spain, principally because of Britain's long association with shipping sherry from Spain in casks and bottling it in the UK. The desirability of "sherry wood" for the maturation of whiskey is recorded as long ago as the 1860s, but as the popularity of sherry declined during the 1970s, fewer such casks were available. The problem was compounded in 1983 when shipping sherry in bulk was banned by the European Commission.

Today, whiskey companies requiring Spanish casks sometimes buy their wood while it is still growing ("on the tree," as it is known), and have it staved and coopered in Spain. They must then make arrangements with Spanish *bodegas* to have casks "seasoned" with sherry before importing them.

AMERICAN WHITE OAK

The wide availability of casks made from American white oak has its origins in a deal brokered between the US coopers' unions and the country's distillers in the mid-1930s. The terms of the agreement were that whiskey must be filled into new casks if it was to be designated as bourbon or rye. The result of this was that large numbers of used American white oak barrels became available in the years after World War II.

Penderyn Distillery in Wales uses top-quality American oak to mature its whiskey, but, to add complexity, finishes it off in Madeira casks.

Bourbon is matured in barrels (which hold around 44 gallons, or 200 liters). Some are shipped from the US intact as "American Standard Barrels," but most are broken down into their staves and arrive in bundles called shooks. In Scotland they are reassembled in a slightly larger, 55-gallon (250-liter) format called a re-made hogshead.

THE USE OF OLD CASKS

With the exception of whiskey made in the US, very little spirit is filled into new casks. Most casks have previously contained other spirits or wine. Whiskey matures better in a used cask, and the first contents "seasons" the wood by removing some of its most obvious woody flavors, while adding its own desirable traces of spirit or wine.

In Scotland, the first time a cask is filled with spirit, it is known as a "first-fill," and thereafter it is referred to as a "refill" cask. The more often it is refilled, the less impact the wood will have upon its contents. It will impart less color and flavor, and extract fewer undesirable flavors from the spirit. After being filled three or four times (depending upon how long it held whiskey during each filling), the cask is considered to be exhausted, and is either discarded by the whiskey industry or "rejuvenated."

Rejuvenation involves scraping out the inside walls of the cask, and scorching the wood again—a process called "de-char/re-char" in American casks. This serves to reactivate the layer of wood immediately beneath the charred walls of the cask, but it does

New American white oak is charred prior to use, the char acting as a purifier and removing unwanted compounds.

A MATTER OF AGE

Many legal designations of whiskey around the world specify a minimum maturation period. In Scotland, Ireland, and Canada, this is three years, and in the case of bourbon and rye in the US, two. Scotch whiskies may be used for blending purposes at quite young ages, but very little single malt is bottled at less than eight years of age.

US whiskies tend to be released at much younger ages, but the higher temperatures that they experience allow them to mature quicker. Whiskey also matures at different rates depending on the cask in which it has been filled, where it has been stored, and on the character of the spirit itself. Some lighter bodied, less complex whiskies may reach their optimum level of maturity several years sooner than "bigger," more complex spirits.

There is a common belief that the older the whiskey, the better it must be, but age does not necessarily guarantee quality. If left in a cask for too long, the wood can turn against the spirit, giving it sour and "woody" notes.

WHICH OAK IS BEST?

Casks made from European oak and American white oak affect their contents in significantly different ways. American white oak casks are higher in vanillin (giving sweet toffee and coconut notes to the spirit); European oak is higher in tannins (giving fruity, complex, and astringent notes). Also, European casks are usually twice the size of American white oak casks and mature their contents more slowly. The smaller the cask, the greater the surface area exposed to the spirit, and the more rapid the rate of maturation.

not make the cask as good as new. A rejuvenated cask will not mature its contents in the same way as a first-fill, and most of the whiskies matured in such casks are used for blending.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEAT

In order to be bent into a barrel-shape, the staves must be heated, and that heating process alters the chemical structure of the inside surface of the cask. Indeed, without heating, the spirit will not mature, but merely acquire a "green," woody note. European casks are "toasted" to bend them into shape, while the carbon char on American white oak casks acts as a purifying agent, removing "immature" characteristics and extracting compounds from the new spirit, principally sulfur-based molecules.

The first time casks are filled with new make whiskey, residues of the previous filling will be present in the walls of the cask. These leech out into the maturing whiskey, adding character to the spirit. Gradually, the color also changes, principally due to tannins in the wood. European oak is more tannic than American white oak, and so imbues its contents with a deeper hue. The degree of color becomes progressively lighter, the more times the cask has been filled.

Oak wood is semiporous, which allows the contents of an oak cask to "breathe" and interact with the air outside. This leads to oxidation, which removes harshness, increases fruitiness, and enhances complexity. Over the years, a cask usually loses both volume and strength—volume loss being known in Scotland as "the angels' share."

STORING THE SPIRIT

The interaction between the wood and the atmosphere is the least understood aspect of maturation. It is also the one most affected by the microclimate of the warehouse in which the cask is placed during maturation.

In the cooperage of Balvenie Distillery, casks are constructed from the staves of former bourbon barrels, shipped over from the US.

Racked warehouses, such as this one at Woodford Reserve in the US, allow barrels of whiskey to be stored on their sides on multistory racks.

It follows that both the type and location of warehouses in which casks are stored are significant in terms of whiskey maturation. During maturation there is evaporation of ethanol and water, and the ingress of oxygen through the cask. The amount of bulk loss depends upon temperature and humidity levels, as does the speed of maturation. In high temperatures spirit expands, causing it to extract flavors from the wood at a comparatively fast rate. In damp warehouses the amount of liquid in the cask remains high, while the alcoholic strength declines. In dry warehouses the opposite occurs.

In Scotland, traditional dunnage warehouses—usually constructed of stone, with an earth or cinder floor—hold casks stacked three high on wooden runners. Due to constraints of space, large, multistory warehouses have been constructed in more recent times. They are fitted out with steel racks to hold casks, up to 12 rows high, closely packed together. For ease of operation, palletization has also been introduced in many warehouses. Here casks are stacked not on their sides, as tradition has dictated, but on their ends on wooden pallets, up to six high. This facilitates handling by forklift trucks.

Compared to most modern facilities, dunnage warehouses have fewer temperature variations, as their heavy construction insulates them better. But, whatever the type of warehouse, there are also differences between casks stored close to the ground, where it tends to be cooler, and those stored close to the roof, where the warmth increases the pace of maturation. To ensure consistency, casks from different parts of a warehouse are often vatted together prior to bottling.

US distillers tend to use either brick or corrugated metal, racked warehouses. The latter are usually sited on exposed ground, which allows them to utilize the seasonal differences of temperature and humidity to the best effect.

THE FINISHING TOUCH

Variously known as "wine finishing," "cask finishing," "double maturation," or even "additional cask evolution," this is the process by which a whiskey that has been matured in one type of cask—usually a refill—is re-racked into another, usually a first-fill or wine-treated cask, for the final months or years of its maturation. The whiskey takes on additional layers of aromas and flavors, and many distillers now employ finishing as a means of extending their product range.

In a palletized warehouse, casks are stored in an upright position, rather than on their sides, so that several at a time can be moved by forklift trucks.

TYPES OF WHISKEY

As whiskey making has developed over time and in different parts of the world, so distinct styles have emerged. These regional varieties are often dictated by the most readily available grains, but they are also based on climatic conditions and traditions too.

SCOTCH WHISKY

To be called Scotch whisky, a spirit must conform to the standards of the Scotch Whisky Order of 1990 (UK), which states that it must be distilled at a Scottish distillery from water and malted barley, to which only other whole grains may be added. It has to be processed at that distillery into a mash, fermented only by the addition of yeast, and distilled to an alcoholic strength of less than 94.8 percent ABV to retain the flavor of the raw ingredients used. It also has to be matured in Scotland in oak casks for no less than three years. It should not contain any added substance other than water and caramel coloring, and may not be bottled at less than 40 percent ABV.

SCOTCH MALT WHISKY

Malt whisky is distilled from 100 percent malted barley and is usually distilled in a pot still. Single malt Scotch whisky is the product of just one distillery *(see p45)*.

BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY

Blended Scotch whisky is a mixture of single malt whisky and grain whisky. The constituent whiskies are from a number of different distilleries, and any age statement given on the bottle must refer to the youngest whisky in the blend *(see p116)*.

BLENDED MALT WHISKEY

Previously known as "vatted malts," blended malts consist of two or more single malt whiskies mixed together. As with blended whiskies, any age statement given has to refer to the youngest whisky in the blend.

GRAIN WHISKEY

Grain whiskey may contain unmalted barley or other malted or unmalted grains, such as wheat and corn, and is generally distilled in a continuous still. Most grain whiskey is used for blending. However, single grain Scotch whisky is sometimes bottled, and is the product of just one distillery *(see p110)*.

IRISH WHISKEY

Irish distillers use both pot and column stills, producing grain spirit, usually from corn, in the column stills, while what is termed Irish "pure pot still whiskey" is traditionally made in pot stills from a mixture of both malted and raw barley. Typically 40–50 percent of

Single Malt Scotch | Blended Scotch | Blended Malt | Single Grain Whiskey | Single Malt Irish Whiskey | Pot Still Irish Whiskey | Blended Irish Whiskey

the mash bill is malted barley, though this isn't a legal requirement *(see p168)*. Traditionally, Irish whiskey is triple-distilled. Blended Irish whiskies are made from a mixture of pot and column still spirits. Like Scotch, Irish whiskey must be distilled and matured in the country of origin for at least three years.

BOURBON WHISKEY

By law, bourbon must be produced from a mash of not less than 51 percent corn grain, and is usually made from between 70 and 90 percent corn, with some barley malt plus rye and/or wheat in the mash bill. Legally, bourbon has to be matured in new, charred, white oak barrels for at least two years *(see p186)*.

TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Essentially bourbon-style spirits, Tennessee whiskies do, however, undergo a distinctive filtration through sugar maple charcoal. This is known as the Lincoln County Process *(see p191)*.

RYE WHISKEY

Legally, rye whiskey has to be made from a mash of not less than 51 percent rye and, as with bourbon, virgin charred oak barrels are required for maturation. To be called "straight rye" it must be matured for at least two years *(see p186)*.

CORN WHISKEY

Corn whiskey is distilled from a fermented mash of not less than 80 percent corn at less than 80 percent ABV. It is the one American whiskey that does not have to be aged in new charred oak barrels, and no minimum maturation period is specified *(see p186)*.

CANADIAN WHISKEY

Virtually all Canadian whiskey is distilled in column stills, and in most cases, rye is blended with a comparatively neutral base spirit—sometimes with the addition of bourbon-type whiskey and corn whiskey. Unlike US bourbon and rye, pre-used casks may be employed for maturation. As with Scotch and Irish, Canadian whiskey must be matured for a minimum of three years. It is permissible to add small amounts of fruit or alcohols such as sherry to the whiskey *(see pp222 & 225)*.

JAPANESE WHISKEY

Japanese distillers take Scotland as their model, distilling malt whiskey in pot stills and grain whiskey in column stills. As with Scotch, blended Japanese whiskey is a mixture of both malt and grain spirit, often containing a percentage of imported Scotch malt whisky *(see p241)*.

INDIAN WHISKEY

Much of the "whiskey" produced in India would not qualify as whiskey elsewhere. Most Indian whiskey is ENA (extra neutral alcohol) whiskey, produced in continuous stills using buckwheat, rice, millet, or molasses, and generally sold unaged. A number of Indian single malts and blended malts are also produced, and these tend to conform to classifications widely used in the European Union *(see p276)*.

Bourbon Whiskey

Tennessee Whiskey


Rye Whiskey


Corn Whiskey

Canadian Whiskey


Japanese Single Malt

Indian Single Malt

BLENDING AND BOTTLING

There remains an unwarranted degree of snobbishness regarding blended whiskies. Too often they are perceived as the poor relations of single malts, yet a well made blend is at least their equal. And remember, over 90 percent of all Scotch consumed is blended whiskey.

If blends did not sell in such large quantities, many of the distilleries producing highly-prized single malts would surely have fallen silent long ago.

Sam Bronfman, head of the former Canadian distilling giant, Seagram, famously declared, "distilling is a science, blending is an art," and today's practitioners of the "art" of combining malt and grain spirit strive to maintain consistency in an ever-changing whiskey world. Consistency and harmony are at the core of all good blending. It is no use creating the finest blended whiskey in the world today if the blender is unable to reproduce it tomorrow.

WORLD BLENDING

In the US, blends are produced using bourbon, rye, or other "heavy" styles of spirit, along with grain whiskey or neutral grain spirit. Unlike in Scotland, US distillers are allowed to add up to 2.5 percent of sherry or wine to help enhance the character of the blend. Canadian blenders may legally mix the components of their blends prior to filling into cask for maturation. Irish and Japanese blenders face the problem of a comparatively small malt base with which to work, and the Japanese have, for many years, solved this by importing Scotch malt whisky to give greater variety to their blends.

Nosing whiskies at the Seagrams in the 1970s

Blending involves contending with many variables, including practical changes at distilleries, which might affect the spirit being produced and the overall stock position. It may be necessary to substitute some whiskies with others from the same stylistic "family" from time to time. The blender also has to take into account the different types and condition of casks in which the various whiskies are maturing, along with the manner and location in which they are stored.

Modern "wood management programs," which are designed to monitor closely the casks in use by the whiskey industry, give the blender greater confidence in the quality and likely character of component whiskies than used to be the case, and the increased consistency of new make spirit being produced also makes the task a little easier.

THE NOSE

The blender's principal tool is the nose, and only rarely are constituent whiskies actually tasted. The reason for this is that while humans have some 9,000 taste buds, our olfactory receptors number 50 to 100 million. Smell is undoubtedly the most important sense when it comes to analyzing whiskey.

At one time, blenders would work with as many as 40 malts for any one blend, but today that number has been reduced to between a dozen and 25 in most cases. Of course, the quality of a blend does not depend on the number of malts in its composition. It need not even depend on the percentage of malt in its make-up, though, as a general rule, the higher the percentage

Blending whiskey is all about balance—combining whiskies, often with markedly different characters, into a harmonious ensemble.

of malt in a blend, the better its flavor. Most of our best-known blended whiskies will have a malt content of between 30 and 40 percent.

When producing a blended whiskey, the blender will have to take into account not only the style of whiskey, but also economic factors. If developing a blend for a specific "price point," proportions of the component whiskies will be adjusted accordingly. As a basic rule, the more malt in a blend and the older the whiskies it contains, the higher its price. A "deluxe" blend will normally carry an age statement, usually 12 years or more, and can be expected to have a higher malt content than a "standard" blend.

In assessing whiskies, the nose is the blender's most valuable tool.

Stylistically, there has been a gradual shift from full-bodied, peaty blends toward lighter-bodied whiskies such as Cutty Sark *(see p127)* and J&B *(see p137)*. The blender may use a higher proportion of lighter malts, perhaps from Speyside, in order to create such a blend, and may also reduce the percentage of malt used and increase the amount of grain spirit.

Most blenders are employed by comparatively large companies which own several distilleries. For the sake of economics and availability, they are expected to use sizeable amounts of their "house" malts in the blends they create. However, they will also acquire malts from other companies, usually by way of "reciprocal trading" of stocks, with no money changing hands. It is only a very few large distillers that are sufficiently well resourced to be self-sufficient in terms of both malt and grain whiskies.

The blender will usually utilize a number of different grain whiskies to help achieve harmony in the blend, and none of today's generation of blenders regard grain whiskey as merely a cheap "filler" to bulk out the blend, as was sometimes the case in days gone by. Grains are recognized as crucially important in drawing together the various malts and allowing their best qualities to shine.

THE COMPONENTS OF A BLEND

Blenders tend to categorize the component malts in their blends as "packers," "core malts," and "top dressing." The "packers" may make up half the malt content of the blend and add bulk to it. They are chosen to combine well with the other malts, but without adding a great deal in terms of final flavor. "Core malts" are often from distilleries owned by the blender's own company, and tend to define the overall character of the finished blend. "Top dressing" malts are high-quality whiskies that are used for adding depth and "top notes" to the mix.

A traditional Scotch blend is normally constructed around a mix of high-quality Speyside malts, which may make up approximately 50 percent of the malt total. Some 10 percent of Highland and Islay malts are added to "dry out" the blend and add complexity, though the powerful Islays rarely contribute more than two percent of the malt total or their effect is too dominant. The remaining 40 percent of the malt component are "packers." These are decent malts, but have a low aromatic intensity—the "supporting cast" of the malt world.

Whyte & Mackay take the art of blending very seriously, marrying their malts before mixing with the grain, then marrying all prior to bottling.

In most instances, the selected casks of malt and grain whisky are "dumped" into a stainless-steel trough at the blending plant in accordance with the blend recipe. From there, they are transferred to a large blending vat, usually of around 5,500 gallons (25,000 liters), for thorough mixing. Demineralized water is then added to reduce the blend to bottling strength, generally 40 or 43 percent ABV. "Rough filtration" to remove particles of char from the casks is followed, in most cases, by chill-filtration, during which the temperature of the spirit is reduced to around 32°F (0°C) and passed through a fine filter. This practice removes compounds in the whisky which might cause it to go slightly dull or cloudy when ice or water is added. Small quantities of spirit caramel are sometimes added to ensure consistency of color from one batch of whisky to another.

Some companies will initially blend all their malts together and then add their blended grains. A number of firms maintain the old practice of "marrying" their blends for a number of months prior to bottling, either in well-used, inert casks or stainless-steel vats. Whyte & Mackay take this a stage further, however, by maturing their component malts in wood for several months before blending them with the grain whisky. They then marry the resultant blend for a further period before bottling.

The blender is not able to nose every component cask destined for a blend, but in most cases, casks are nosed prior to dumping by a member of the company's "nosing panel," who will also assess each vatting. Samples of the whiskies will also undergo lab tests to ensure they are "fit for purpose."

INDEPENDENT BOTTLINGS

Today, most whiskey, whether malt or blended, is bottled by its producers, in what are usually known as "house" bottlings. However, this practice is

THE BLENDER'S ART

"I compare a blender to a conductor or a musical arranger. The arranger will use his stringed instruments for melody, and the blender will use certain flavors such as fruity, floral, nutty, malty, fragrant, honey, for his theme. The arranger will use the woodwind section for his harmonies, and the blender's harmonies will be flavors such as leafy, grassy, spicy. The arranger also has his brass section and percussion to complete the composition. This could be compared to the blender's flavors such as peaty, smoky, and medicinal. Each arranger has in his own mind what his ear will hear as the finished symphony, so it is with the blender as to how his finished blend will impart aroma and flavor."

Retired Chivas master blender Jimmy Laing

Chivas Regal 18-Year-Old Blend

comparatively new. For a long time, it was principally independent bottling companies, such as Gordon & MacPhail in Elgin *(see p52)* and Cadenhead in Campbeltown, that undertook the bottlings of malt—sometimes on behalf of distillers, but more usually on their own initiative.

With the renaissance of malt whisky in the past two decades, the number of independent bottlers has grown, and now includes well known names such as Adelphi, Duncan Taylor, Signatory, and the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, in addition to long-established companies like Hart Bros and Douglas Laing of Glasgow.

One effect of this development is that, with increasing competition among "independents" and a tendency for large distillers to bottle more of their own malt themselves, good casks of malt whisky have become increasingly scarce and hard to purchase. This has led bottlers like Signatory and Ian Macleod Distillers Ltd. to acquire their own distilleries—Edradour *(see p82)* and Glengoyne *(see p84)*, respectively—in order to secure supplies for their own use and for reciprocal trading.

In order to differentiate their expressions from those of the major distillers and offer consumers a greater degree of choice, a number of independents have opted to bottle "single cask" whiskies, taken, as the name, implies, from just one cask. These are usually individually numbered and are often bottled at natural cask strength.

Some bottlers also make a virtue of not chill-filtering their whiskies, as the process removes compounds produced during distillation or extracted from the cask during maturation, and in so doing also removes some body and flavor. In order to emphasize the "natural" credentials of their product, independents also tend to avoid the addition of caramel. Many of the whiskies bottled by independents come from silent or demolished distilleries or are marketed at ages significantly greater than is commonly the case.

A few whisky producers object to independent bottlers using their distillery names, reckoning that they have insufficient control over the quality of the whisky. In response, some independents bottle whiskies with code numbers rather than names, along with information that hints at their origins. This practice was first adopted by the Scotch Malt Whisky Society of Edinburgh, which was set up in 1983 to offer cask strength, single cask malts at a time when the notion of such "pure" bottlings was still rare.

CLASSIC COCKTAILS

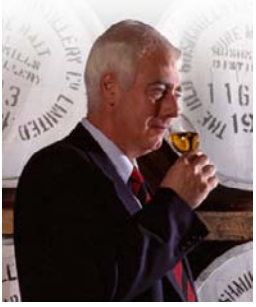
The purists may shake their heads in dismay, but let them—a great whiskey cocktail is a joy and a revelation as new layers of flavor in your favorite dram are there to be discovered, complemented by the other ingredients. You probably won't use your finest single malt, but don't economize on ingredients. A number of well-known brands and whiskey styles lend themselves admirably to the cocktails we've selected, and their recipes can be found in the section on Whiskey Nations, close to the whiskies that have been recommended for use:

Blue Blazer *(see p130)*
Buffalo and Ginger *(see p189)*
Canada Day Cocktail *(see p224)*
Flying Scotsman *(see p141)*
Game Bird *(see p132)*
Irish Coffee *(see p161)*
Ladies *(see p233)*
Maker's Mark Bourbon Manhattan *(see p198)*
Maple Leaf *(see p231)*
Mint Julep *(see p201)*
Rabbie Burns *(see p150)*
Rob Roy *(see p151)*
Turkey Collins *(see p199)*
Williamstown *(see p165)*

NOSING AND TASTING

There is an enduring school of thought that considers that whiskey should only be drunk neat. It tends to prevail more in Scotland than elsewhere, but still has the status of received wisdom. In fact, a modest amount of pure still water is beneficial.

Water served at room temperature can help to tease out aromas and flavors that might otherwise remain hidden in the whiskey. But, aside from adding water, just how should whiskey be drunk? The short answer is any way you choose. You paid for it, so you can consume it however you wish. One of the principal growth markets for Scotch whisky is China, where a fashion has developed for drinking whisky with green tea. Nonetheless, many connoisseurs consider an expensive malt whiskey or small-batch bourbon to be spoiled by the addition of anything but a small amount of water.



Nosing is the best way to evaluate whiskey, as our sense of smell is greater than our sense of taste.

For distillers there are many checks and comparisons to make beyond aroma and taste, including the viscosity and color of the whiskey.

It is important to serve whiskey in a glass that will do it justice, and for purposes of evaluation and comparison a stemmed copita, or tulip-shaped glass which tapers toward the top, is ideal. This serves to hold in the aromas, making it much easier to detect and analyze components by smell.

COLOR, NOSE, PALATE, AND FINISH

Professional tasters usually evaluate whiskey using four factors: color, nose, palate, and finish. The color of a whiskey should give clues to the type of cask in which it has been matured. If it is a deep rich copper color, it has probably come from a European oak cask, formerly used to hold sherry. A pale, straw-colored whiskey is likely to have been matured in an American white oak cask that previously held bourbon. Look at the "legs" of the whiskey as it rolls down the side of the glass. A well aged, full-bodied whiskey will have "longer" legs than a younger, light-bodied style of spirit.

A vocabulary of eight broad terms has been developed to describe aromas: namely cereal, fruity, floral, peaty, feinty, sulfury, winey, and woody. However, for the untrained nose, this part of the process may be principally about evocation: for example, a whiff of worn leather that transports the sampler back in time to childhood trips in an old car, or the smell of seaweed and tarry ropes that evoke the memory of a harbor.

In terms of taste and what is termed "mouth-feel," professionals may use the adjectives sweet, sour, salty, bitter, warming, cooling, prickly, viscous, and cloying. The "finish" is the lingering flavor of the whiskey in the mouth after it has been swallowed. Generally speaking, a long, lingering finish is a desirable feature, though some light-bodied whiskies benefit from a finish that is short and crisp.

During a tasting lids are put on top of the glasses to hold in the aromas eminating from the whiskey.

After an initial nosing, it may pay to take a small, preliminary sip of whiskey undiluted, in order to give a "baseline." Then add just a few drops of water before nosing again. Follow up with a second, comparative sip. It is also often instructive to leave the whiskey to stand for a few moments after your initial assessment. Sometimes it is surprising just how much the sample changes after exposure to the air.

When diluting whiskey, try to be consistent and dilute to the same degree. Comparisons can be made much more accurately that way. Younger and lighter-bodied whiskies will usually stand up to less dilution than older and big-bodied spirits. Also, beware the power of suggestion. If undertaking an informal tasting session with friends, it is advisable to ask each sampler to write down his or her reactions before discussing them. Smoking and wearing perfume should be discouraged, and it is advisable not to eat garlic or chili sauce before tasting!

Whiskey tasting glasses hold in the aroma of the spirit and also echo the shape of a pot still.

The more you practice, the keener your skills of whiskey assessment will become. And, most importantly, remember that the process should be about enjoyment and experimentation.

WHISKEY AND FOOD

For many years it was widely held that whiskey was too strong, assertive, and complex a drink to accompany food. But an increasing number of connoisseurs have come to realize that this need not be the case. Many whiskies can enhance meals, provided careful choices are made.

Consider the essential characteristics of a specific whiskey and decide which dishes it is likely to complement. A fresh, light-bodied Lowland single malt would probably pair well with a fish dish, while a heavier, more aromatic whiskey may be the perfect partner for beef or duck. Some of the lighter, fruitier Japanese whiskies, such as Yamazaki, are now being successfully paired with tuna and salmon in sushi and sashimi dishes—often being served slightly chilled. The secret to getting it right is in balancing the competing flavors and not allowing either the food or the whiskey to dominate. A smoky, peaty, or peppery whiskey is ideal with oysters and smoked fish, but contrasts such as "sweet and sour" may be equally effective. Chili heat can be matched to sweetness, or an acidic whiskey can cut through a very sweet dish. The same acidic match will also serve to neutralize excessive fat or richness.

A big, smoky, peaty, peppery whisky such as Talisker, from Skye, is ideal with seafood like oysters and smoked fish.

GREAT WHISKEY NATIONS

SCOTLAND

"A compound distilled spirit, being drawn on aromaticks; and the Irish sort is particularly distinguished for its pleasant and mild flavor. The Highland sort is somewhat hotter and by corruption in Scottish they call it whisky."

This early description of whisky appeared in Dr. Johnson's famous dictionary of 1755. The word came from the Gaelic *uisge beatha* (pronounced "oosh-key-ba"), meaning water of life, which the Scots had been making for years. With a long tradition of brewing, they may have discovered distilling by accident, while boiling up some heather ale that had gone bad perhaps. Or maybe they learned it from the Irish monks, who brought the secret with them when they sailed to Iona with St. Columba in the 6th century.

The first official mention of spirit produced in Scotland came in an exchequer roll of 1494, and concerned Friar John Cor, of Fife. There were soon references from across the country, as distilling spread to wherever there was access to grain, water, and fuel to fire the stills. Whiskymaking developed on the farm as a seasonal activity, whenever there was grain to spare after the harvest.

Drunk neat and unaged, the whisky would have been extremely rough, hence the need to compound it with sugar, herbs, and spices. Yet, it was definitely malt whisky, in the sense that it was distilled in a copper pot still. It was by no means exclusive to the Highlands either—there were said to be 400 stills in Edinburgh by the late 18th century—though it started to move that way as the Government sought to control whisky making through licenses and taxes.

When Scotland and England were joined under the Act of Union in 1707, it was decided that excise duty would be the main source of revenue. The English authorities proceeded cautiously at first, waiting 10 years after the Jacobite Rising of 1715 before they increased the tax on malt, which provoked rioting on the streets of Glasgow. With each subsequent move to raise revenue and stamp out smuggling, whisky became more and more the spirit of defiance.

Granite, heather, and location all play their part in creating the extraordinary diversity of Scottish malt whisky.

LOWLANDS v HIGHLANDS

In the Lowlands, distilling was part of the early industrial revolution, as commercial distilleries grew in scale to provide whisky for the masses. Laws came in to increase the minimum size of the stills, presumably to make them more visible to the authorities, while taxation was so heavy that many distillers had to run their stills flat out to make any profit at all. The result, according to one contemporary, was a spirit suitable only for "the most vulgar and fire-loving palates."

Macallan Distillery began to market its single malt in 1978; in keeping with trends in the industry, it now produces a variety of oak finishes for its malts.

The Highlands were another world, a place untouched by revolutions in farming or the industrial world, where distilling remained a cottage industry. From a weak wash slowly distilled in relatively small stills, the Highlanders produced whisky that would have been infinitely superior to the industrial spirit pumped out by the big Lowland distillers. The production was on a very small scale, just enough to provide for family, neighbors, and any passing trade. The more successful farm distilleries were often near droving routes, where cattle were taken from high pastures to market.

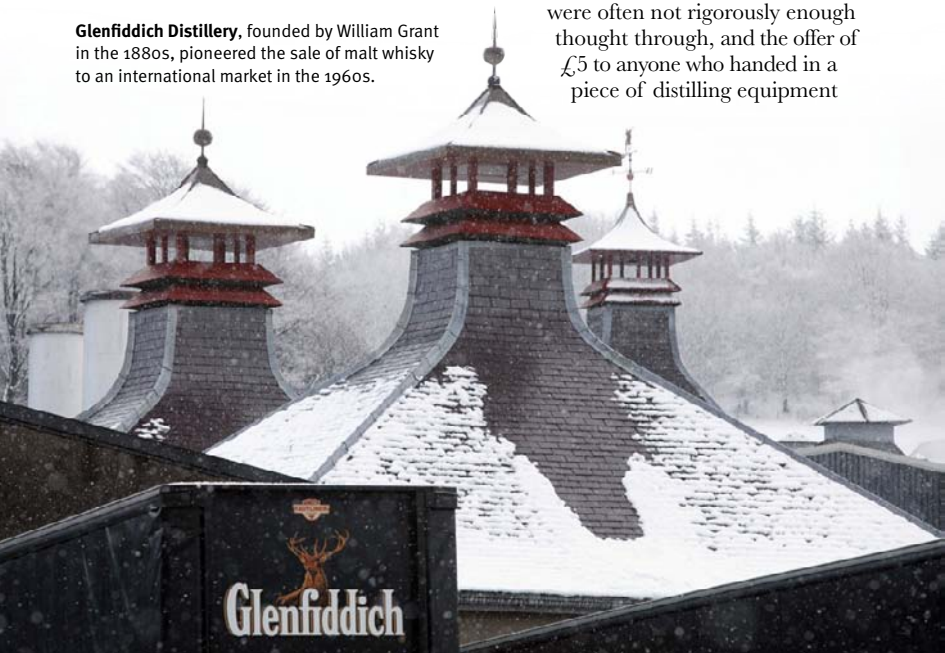
This national difference was recognized by the Government in the Wash Act, of 1784. Henceforth, Highland distillers would be excused malt tax and could use smaller stills so long as they did not try to export their whisky below the "Highland Line." Inevitably, it did seep southward as demand grew. The licensed, tax-paying distillers were incensed and claimed that the production of moonshine was 10 times that of legal whisky.

The crackdown that followed, as the Government tried to claw back its lost revenue and bring the Highlands to heal, only served to raise the price of illicit whisky. A nefarious activity turned into a profitable business. In the early 1800s, Glen Livet became a one-industry glen almost overnight, with plumes of smoke rising from every isolated bothy.

CHANGES IN THE LAW

The odds seemed firmly in favor of the illicit whiskymakers rather than the poorly paid excisemen who were drafted in from outside to stamp out smuggling. The Government's initiatives were often not rigorously enough thought through, and the offer of £5 to anyone who handed in a piece of distilling equipment

Glenfiddich Distillery, founded by William Grant in the 1880s, pioneered the sale of malt whisky to an international market in the 1960s.



was quickly seized upon by the makers of moonshine as a way to pay for replacement parts. But, with more troops, the authorities gradually began to drive the underground industry deeper into the Highlands.

The real change came with the Excise Act of 1823, when illicit distillers were offered the chance to go straight by taking out a £10 license. Within two years, the number of licensed distillers leaped from 111 to 263. Smuggling continued for a time, but the balance now lay in favor of legal whisky, and it was in the interests of the majority of distillers to create what became the modern whisky industry.

The long-lived Black & White brand once had Dalwhinnie malt at the heart of its blend.

Suddenly, it was no longer an advantage to be hidden in some desolate farmstead. It was far more important to be near a market. As a result, the first building boom of new distilleries was in Campbeltown, on Kintyre, which was a short boat ride up the Firth of Clyde to Glasgow.

By the second half of the 19th century, the "market" for malt whisky had become the blenders, who were often licensed grocers, such as the Chivas brothers in Aberdeen. Using a base of grain whisky made in a continuous still, the blenders mixed in malt whisky and developed their own house style. With entrepreneurial flair, the advent of mass communication, and modern bottling lines, some of these early blends became internationally recognized brands.

THE BIRTH OF SINGLE MALTS

The story of Scotch is often portrayed as a conflict between blended whisky and malts, but the reality was rather different.

The blenders created the demand for Scotch, first in England and then abroad, and it was this that inspired the late-Victorian distillery boom that engulfed the Highlands, particularly Speyside. The big blenders often bought or built their own distilleries as their brands grew—though they were rarely, if ever, self-sufficient in malt. Malt distilleries became part of the food chain supplying the blends. Aside from friends of the distillery manager and a tiny band of devotees, the world never got to hear about single malts. Malt whisky had, of course, been made in Scotland for over three centuries before anyone had even thought of blending it, but in the modern, commercial sense it was an invention of the 1960s.

Glenfiddich led the way, selling its first bottle of malt in England in 1965. Slowly, other distilleries, such as Macallan and Glenmorangie, began to bottle their single malts, until eventually the great white whale of the whisky business—DCL (now Diageo)—decided to create their own "Classic Malts" in the late 1980s.

Even then, there were plenty who thought the robust flavors of malt whisky would be too much for anyone beyond the wilds of Scotland. The thought that it would catch on among American bankers, Spanish students, and Taiwanese businessmen seemed absurd. Yet, that's exactly what happened.

REGIONAL STYLES

If early distilleries developed a regional style, it was because they were supplying the local market. Whisky had somehow to reflect the environment. A distillery like Talisker, on Skye, could have produced a gentle, understated malt like Glenkinchie, but few would have bought it—the windswept people of the Western Isles needed something more robust.

It was the blenders who split Scotland into different styles of malt, to help standardize their blends. This "regionality" endures today, even if there are plenty of exceptions.

Skye's Talisker Distillery produces a strong tasting whisky that's peppery and smoky.

SPEYSIDE

Whisky distilleries are scattered throughout the Highlands, but when you reach Speyside, they come at you thick and fast, with around 50 distilleries. Some are set in open country, while others cluster together in towns such as Rothes, Keith, and Dufftown.

There are several reasons why this region has become synonymous with whisky-making, and the first lies in the landscape itself. In winter, traditionally the best time for making whisky, Speyside seems to close in on itself behind the granite bulk of the Cairngorms. Not so long ago, isolated glens like Glenlivet would be cut off for months. But there was plenty of fresh spring water, sufficient barley, and enough peat with which to malt the barley and fire the stills for whiskymaking.

To these raw ingredients was added the incentive of defiance. After the Jacobite Rising of 1745 *(see p45)*, the Catholic religion and wearing national dress such as the kilt were suppressed. It was, therefore, not surprising that the Scots turned to whisky—and that meant illicitly produced whisky that the excisemen would find hard to trace. The fact that this home-produced spirit contributed not a penny in tax to prop up the regime "down south" made it taste all the sweeter. As an Irishman once said of poteen, it is "superior in sweetness, salubriety, and gusto to all that machinery, science, and capital can produce in the legalized way." Doubtless this was true of the Highland spirit also.

Demand for smuggled Speyside whisky, particularly if it came with the magic word "Glenlivet" attached to it, only increased as the Government cracked down on illicit stills elsewhere.

THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

This romantic image endured long after whiskymaking moved out of the farm and became a serious industry after the Excise Act of 1823 *(see p47)*. In truth, however, it was the advent of the railroads that really led to Speyside's distillery boom in the late 19th century. Before then the region was seriously disadvantaged by its distance from the major blenders. Those in Glasgow had a much closer source of malt whisky in Campbeltown on the Kintyre Peninsula.

Eventually the quality and consistency of Speyside won the blenders over and, since the 1890s, the region has provided the lion's share of Scotch malt whisky.

Glenlivet was one of the first Speyside distilleries to forge a strong identity, and to this day its malts are among the most famous in the world.

Aberlour was rebuilt at the end of the 19th century, after a fire destroyed the previous distillery.

ABERLOUR

✉ **Aberlour, Banffshire**
www.aberlour.co.uk
Open to visitors

The village of Aberlour was established in 1812 on the east bank of the Spey, close to where it is joined by the Lour, or "chattering burn." A Druid community based here and dating back to the Bronze Age was converted to Christianity by St. Drostan in the 6th century. He is said to have used the local well to baptize his flock, and, centuries later, it was the pure spring waters of St. Drostan's Well that attracted the first whiskymakers.

What was originally the Aberlour-Glenlivet Distillery was founded by James Fleming in 1879. The son of a tenant farmer born in 1830, Fleming knew the local distilleries well, having been a grain merchant supplying them with barley. With the growing popularity of Scotch whisky, he decided to set up on his own. He soon found himself up before the High Court in London, along with half the distillers on Speyside, to defend his use of the "Glenlivet" suffix—a case that was eventually won.

Despite Aberlour being described as "a perfect modern distillery" following a visit by the eminent whisky writer Alfred Barnard *(see p50)* in the 1880s, Fleming sold out to his agent R. Thorne & Sons of Greenock a few years later. Fleming became a local benefactor, paying for the village community hall and leaving money to fund a hospital and a bridge across the Spey. His motto, "Let the Deed Show," is displayed on every bottle of Aberlour.

In 1898 the distillery was badly damaged in a fire, most of its stocks being lost in the process. Charles Doig of Elgin *(see p59)*, the architect responsible for so many distilleries on Speyside, was commissioned to rebuild Aberlour into more or less what you see today.

Since World War II, as part of Campbell Distillers and now Pernod Ricard, Aberlour has supplied the heart of the Clan Campbell blend. In recent decades more emphasis has been put on Aberlour as a 10-year-old single malt, aged in a mix of bourbon and sherry casks. Sold in over 60 countries, it is particularly popular in France—the biggest malt whisky market in the world.

ABERLOUR 10-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV
Clean and fresh on the nose with a trace of pears and bubblegum, smooth and slightly spicy in the mouth, drying on the finish.

ABERLOUR A'BUNADH
A cask strength from selected Oloroso sherry butts, this is a rich, sumptuous full-bodied malt, with notes of ginger and dark chocolate.

Aberlour a'bunadh

ALLT A' BHAINNE

✉ **Glenrinnes, Dufftown, Banffshire**

From a distance, there is little to suggest any whisky is made in this modern, flat-roofed building a few miles south of Dufftown. It could be a sports arena or executive condos, but surely not a distillery? The name is Gaelic for

"the milk burn," which flows close by and is the place where local dairy farmers used to wash their equipment after milking—which presumably turned the water cloudy.

Allt a' Bhainne was built by Seagrams in 1975 for £2.7 million as a super-efficient production unit. Its purpose in life is to supply malt for blends, specifically Chivas Regal *(see p124)* and 100 Pipers *(see p118)*, though there are occasional independent bottlings of Allt a'Bhaine as a single malt. The distillery's current owners, Pernod Ricard, found it surplus to requirement in 2002, and its was closed. But three years later, it was cranked back to life and is now running at full capacity.

AUCHROISK

✉ **Mulben, Banffshire**

Like Allt a'Bhainne Distillery, Auchroisk—pronounced "Ath-rusk," and meaning the "ford across the red stream" in Gaelic—is another modern plant, having been built in 1975. For this one, however, the architects went for a more interesting design. At the front of the building is a curious, small turret where the yeast is stored; it pokes through the roof like the head of a rocket. Auchroisk was built to supply malt for the top-selling J&B blend, and its location, like that of all distilleries, was dictated by having a reliable source of pure water—in this case a spring called Dorrie's Well above Rothes.

A decade later it was decided to bottle the malt as a 10-year-old—called "The Singleton of Auchroisk" to help whisky drinkers get their tongue around the name. Now branded simply as "Auchroisk," it continues as a relatively rare single malt that is mellow, medium-bodied, and herbal in style.

ALFRED BARNARD

Between 1885 and 1887, while working for *Harper's Weekly Gazette*, Alfred Barnard managed to visit every distillery in Scotland, Ireland, and England, recording his travels in an epic tome called *The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom*. The book (which covers 162 distilleries in total; 129 of them in Scotland) is a mix of technical manual and travelogue, and was illustrated with sketches and engravings. A facsimile edition was published in the late 1980s, and an online version can be seen at www.peatfreak.com.

Aultmore's stills provide whisky for John Dewar & Sons, and occasional single malt bottlings.

Aultmore 12-Year-Old

AULTMORE

✉ **Keith, Banffshire**

With the late Victorian whisky boom in full swing, Alexander Edward established the Aultmore Distillery in 1895 on the flatlands between Keith and the sea. He was already well-established in the business, having, with Peter Mackie, built Craigellachie Distillery *(see p55)*. Before that, he had helped his father run Benrinnes Distillery.

In 1898 he acquired Oban, and renamed his company Oban and Aultmore-Glenlivet Distilleries Ltd. His aim was to supply malts to big blenders such as Pattisons *(see p142)*, but the timing proved terrible. Pattisons went bankrupt at the end of the same year, almost destroying the entire Scotch whisky industry. Aultmore had barely recovered before distilling was banned during World War I, and in 1923 the distillery was bought by John Dewar & Sons, with whose blends it has been associated ever since. Occasional independent bottlings of a gentle, smoke-scented, aromatic single malt can be found.

BALMENACH

✉ **Cromdale, Grantown-on-Spey, Morayshire**

In the early 1800s, James McGregor and his two brothers took a lease on

Balmenach farm. It lay in a dip in the hills between the Upper Spey and its tributary the Avon, near the village of Cromdale—scene of an early Jacobite battle in 1690. James is said to have established an illicit still before taking out a license in 1824. The distillery was described as "among the most primitive in Scotland" by Alfred Barnard after his visit in the 1880s.

Its chimney stack blew down on December 28, 1879, crashing through the roof and rupturing the stills. Miraculously the whole place did not explode, though if it had it would hardly have made the front page the next day—the same storm blew down the Tay Bridge sending all 75 passengers and crew aboard the Edinburgh train to their death.

Today, after a period in "mothballs" in the 1990s, the distillery is back in action, supplying blends and the occasional independent bottling as a single malt.

BALVENIE

Dufftown, Keith, Banffshire
www.balvenie.com
By appointment only

Within six years of building Glenfiddich in 1886, William Grant felt ready to invest in a new distillery next door. Balvenie, which cost £2,000 to build, was a measure of Grant's confidence in the whisky trade. He knew that there were many blenders now desperate for Speyside malts, as a fire at Glenlivet Distillery in 1891 had destroyed all its stocks. He also knew that he needed to protect his water supply, having heard that a local man was considering taking a lease on land next to Glenfiddich to build a distillery. Had he succeeded he would have been entitled to half the available water.

As with Glenfiddich, whose stills were bought second-hand from Cardhu, Grant looked around for a bargain. On hearing that there might be an old mash tun for sale, if somewhat larger than he wanted, Grant scribbled a gruff note to his son: "Don't be afraid of the depth of the mash-tun if otherwise suitable—a man does not need to piss his pot full unless he likes."

The stills came from Glen Albyn in Inverness and Lagavulin on Islay. Their tall-necked design has been faithfully copied ever since.

Balvenie Doublewood 12-Year-Old

Balvenie was originally distilled within Balvenie House—a Georgian manor house that was eventually knocked down in the 1920s. By then William Grant & Sons were bottling their own blends, such as Grant's Finest and Standfast (named after the battle cry of Clan Gant). The stones from the old manor house were used to build a new malt barn, where the grain was malted and dried above a kiln.

Today Balvenie is the only distillery on Speyside to have retained its floor maltings. As a result, smoke still seeps out from the original pagoda roof, giving the distillery a real traditional feel, even if most of the barley is brought in already malted to supply the needs of the eight stills.

BALVENIE DOUBLEWOOD 12-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV

After years in a bourbon barrel, the whisky is finished off in a first-fill sherry cask to give a sweet, sumptuous malt with a nutty-spicy character. Doublewood has replaced the original 10-year-old. Plenty of older expressions are aged in different casks.

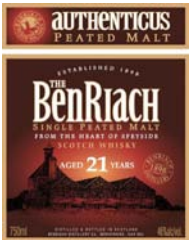
Balmenach Distillery is working once again, having fallen silent in the 1990s.

BENRIACH

✉ Longmorn, Elgin, Morayshire
🖱 www.benriachdistillery.co.uk

Having built Longmorn near Elgin in 1894, John Duff decided to add a sister distillery four years later. Benriach operated for just three seasons, supplying malt whisky to the Pattisons *(see p142)*, the biggest blenders of their day. When Pattisons went bust, Benriach promptly shut down and remained closed for the next 65 years.

It only survived because no one wanted to build a supermarket or parking lot on the site, and because its floor maltings were kept going in order to supply Longmorn next door. The distillery was brought back to life in the 1960s only to be mothballed again in 2002. It was bought two years later by an independent consortium led by Billy Walker, a veteran of the whisky industry. Today Benriach is available as a floral, honey-scented 12-year-old and richer, darker malts up to a 40-year-old. There are also a couple of heavily peated, Islay-style whiskies called "Curiositas" and "Authenticus."



Benriach Authenticus

BENRINNES

✉ Aberlour, Banffshire

The hump-backed shape of Ben Rinnes, heather-clad in summer and bare and bleak-looking in winter is a prominent landmark on Speyside. For years its many springs have provided local whiskymakers with crystal-clear water, so it is only right that this hill should have a distillery named after it.

The original distillery was called Lyne of Rutherie and was first licensed by Peter McKenzie in 1834. It was renamed Benrinnes in 1842, and after various changes in ownership was bought by David Edward in 1864. His son Alexander later founded the Craigellachie *(see p55)* and Aultmore *(p50)* distilleries.

Being located 700 ft (200 m) up on the north-facing slope of Ben Rinnes, it shares the same feeling of remoteness as Glenlivet and Glenfarclas *(see pp59 & 61)*. Its six stills are worked in tandem in a type of triple distillation that, after 15 years of maturation in sherry casks, produces a sumptuous, plum-pudding style single malt, occasionally available in the Flora & Fauna range.

BENROMACH

✉ Forres, Morayshire
🖱 www.benromach.com

Whatever else one can say about Benromach, this small distillery in the market town of Forres is certainly a survivor. It was established in 1898 by FW Brickmann, a spirit broker from Leith, and Duncan Macallum of the Glen Nevis Distillery in Campbeltown. Together they hired the famous distillery architect Charles Doig *(see p59)*. Benromach struggled on through the great whisky crash of 1900, two world wars, US Prohibition, and the 1930s Depression more or less in one piece. It changed hands many times along on the way, however, at one point being owned by National Distillers of America, whose stable included Old Crow and Old Granddad *(see p216)*. In 1953 it became part of the Distillers Company (DCL), Benromach's sixth owner.

Benromach Traditional

With just two stills and a production of 110,000 gallons (half a million liters) of pure alcohol a year, it always suffered from its size, and on March 24, 1983 it shut down, seemingly for good. The eight distillery workers on duty that day signed their names on the

GORDON & MACPHAIL

Benromach Distillery was bought and reopened by Gordon & MacPhail in 1993.

Founded in 1895, Gordon & MacPhail is a food and wine merchants based in Elgin on Speyside. Part of that business has always been the supply of quality whisky, and for Gordon & MacPhail that means independent bottling. More or less since its inception, the company has had a policy of buying new make spirit from distilleries and maturing it themselves—at least partly in their own warehouses—in casks that they have selected. The whisky is bottled only when they consider it to be at its best level of maturation. Currently, they work with around 80 different malts and offer somewhere in the region of 400 expressions of single malts, as well as some of their own blends.

Cardhu, once the spiritual home of Johnny Walker, now releases most of its output as a single malt.

filling room wall. The stills were ripped out and the building left empty to await potential developers. Ten years passed before the distillery was finally bought by Gordon & MacPhail, one of Scotland's leading independent bottlers.

Eventually, having overcome some major structural problems—which included having to dig up most of Forres to repair the pipe supplying spring water—the distillery was officially reopened by Prince Charles in its centenary year, 1998.

BENROMACH TRADITIONAL 40% ABV • Launched in 2004, this straw-colored whisky has a herbal, malty flavor with a whiff of peat smoke.

BRAEVAL

✉ **Nr Dufftown, Keith, Banffshire**

The Braes of Glenlivet were a hotbed of smuggling in the twilight years before whisky came in from the cold and went legal in the 1820s. It was the name chosen in the 1970s by Seagrams for a modern distillery, over 1,000 ft (300 m) up and a short drive from Tomintoul. In keeping with the romance, the outside design is traditional, with a decorative pagoda strapped to the roof. This may, in part, have been to emphasize that it was Scotch not bourbon being made here— its then sister distillery was Four Roses in Kentucky.

Edgar Bronfmann, heir to the mighty Seagram empire, cut the soil in 1972 and within a year the first spirit flowed. The name became Braeval when the company acquired Glenlivet five years later, and since then it has remained somewhat in the shadow of its more famous neighbor. Now part of Chivas Brothers *(see p126)*, little if any Braeval is bottled as a single malt.

CAPERDONICH

✉ **Rothes, Morayshire**

Major James Grant decided to build Caperdonich in Rothes in 1897. It was to be a replica of its successful neighbor Glen Grant Distillery, which had been built by his father and uncle in 1840. Indeed it was initially called Glen Grant No. 2, and used the same shaped stills and source of grain to replicate the exact same spirit. The authorities even insisted that it had to pass through Glen Grant's spirits safe via an overhead pipe, which, according to folklore, was occasionally tapped into by thirsty locals.

If true, that only happened for three years, because the new distillery shut down in 1901, as if for good. It finally reopened as Caperdonich in 1965, and capacity was doubled to 4 stills two years later. Its owners have never bottled it as a single malt, though there are occasional offerings from independent bottlers.

Cardhu 12-Year-Old

CARDHU

✉ **Knockando, Aberlour, Banffshire**

Open to visitors

In around 1810, John Cumming took a lease on Cardow farm near Knockando and soon began making whisky as a sideline to the farming. His wife, Helen, was in on the act too, and used to sell flagons of illicit whisky through the farmhouse kitchen window. She was said to be forever baking cakes known as bannocks to disguise the smell of fermenting barley, as well as to have something to offer any visiting

CARDHU AND THE PURE MALT RUMPUS

Thanks to its huge following in Spain, Cardhu almost became a victim of it own success in recent years. Between 1997 and 2002, sales grew by 100,000 cases and demand was set to outstrip supply. Rather than raise the price to restrict demand, Cardhu's owners, Diageo, embarked on a different course—one that was to cause the biggest storm to hit the whisky industry for decades, with public cries of betrayal and questions raised in Parliament.

It centered on the decision to re-christen the brand Cardhu Pure Malt and allow similar Speyside malts into the mix. Unleashed from being tied to a single distillery, it could expand production and potentially overtake Glenfiddich within 10 years to become the biggest selling malt of all. Not surprisingly Glenfiddich's owners were extremely alarmed and led a full-scale campaign to force Diageo into a humiliating climb-down and the removal of Pure Malt in 2003.

Cardhu Distillery and its prized malt whisky were at the heart of the dispute between Diageo and Glenfiddich.

excisemen. While they were tucking in to their tea, Helen would run into the yard and raise a red flag to warn any passing trade not to approach.

Meanwhile, her husband was often out smuggling and had a string of convictions to prove it. Years after he went legal and started operating as a licensed distiller in 1824, these convictions were framed and hung on the walls of the distillery manager's office. Cardhu continued to operate as a small farm distillery for the next 60 years.

By then, John's daughter-in-law Elizabeth Cumming was in charge. She remained so even after selling the distillery to John Walker & Sons in 1893. She was known as the "Queen of the whisky trade," and reached the ripe old age of 95. In the1880s, Elizabeth oversaw the complete rebuilding of Cardhu. The old stills, badly worn and patched up, were taken out and sold to William Grant to start his own distillery. That was Glenfiddich, the distillery with whom Cardhu would have a very public spat some 120 years later *(see above)*. Cardhu was rebuilt in the 1960s, more or less in keeping with the original design, and was known as the spiritual home of Johnnie Walker, since that is where most of the malt ended up. Today barely a teaspoon escapes into blends, such is the demand for Cardhu as a single malt, which, in the UK, is only available at the distillery.

CARDHU 12-YEAR-OLD
40% ABV This smooth sweet-scented Speyside malt is very approachable, if not overly complex.

CRAGGANMORE

Ballindalloch, Banffshire
www.malts.com
Open to visitors

When John Smith decided to set out on his own, he was one of the most experienced distillers on Speyside. Said to be the illegitimate son of George Smith—the man who founded Glenlivet in 1824—John had managed both Glenfarclas and Macallan. By 1870, he clearly felt ready to establish a distillery of his own, which he positioned at an old smuggler's bothy (hut) on the east bank of the Spey.

His plans were well-conceived, starting with the water source, which was the pure spring-fed Craggan burn (which also provided the distillery's power, via a water wheel, right up until 1950). He was close to good-quality barley and peat with which to malt. Crucially, he was also near Ballandalloch station, and Cragganmore became the first distillery in Scotland to be built beside a railroad with its own siding.

Craggamore 12-Year-Old

Besides whisky, trains were the other great passion in Smith's life—though, weighing in at 309 lbs (140 kg), he was a little too large to squeeze through the carriage doors, and so sat in

the guard's van instead. Sadly he died in 1886, a year before the first Whisky Special rolled out of Ballandalloch laden with Scotch.

John's son, Gordon Smith, took over, and in 1901 hired the leading distillery architect of his day, Charles Doig of Elgin *(see p59)*, to rebuild Cragganmore. But for a few new warehouses and a doubling of the original pair of stills, the place has changed little over the years. With its outbuildings arranged in a compact cluster, it has the self-contained feel of a small Highland distillery. Inside is the curious feature of two spirit stills, whose necks, rather than rising up like an elegant swan's, are lopped off halfway up. In the past, people speculated that this was to fit them in under the roof, but it seems unlikely that Smith made such an obvious mistake. Whatever the case, the design is always faithfully copied every time a still needs replacing for fear of altering the spirit's character.

Nor would anyone tamper with the old-fashioned worm tubs outside, which are used for condensing the spirit. With less copper contact than a modern condenser, a meatier, more complex spirit is derived. Today Cragganmore represents the region within Diageo's six Classic Malts, which is quite an accolade given how many Speyside distilleries the company owns.

CRAGGANMORE 12-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV • An intriguing herbal bouquet with a trace of honey and vanilla gives way to malty flavors in the mouth and a whiff of smoke on the finish.

Craigellachie supplies whisky for John Dewar & Sons, whose White Label is a big seller in the US.

CRAIGELLACHIE

✉ Craigellachie, Banffshire

In 1891 Peter Mackie joined a partnership to build Craigellachie with the highly experienced Alexander Edward as master distiller. Of all the great Victorian whisky barons, Mackie was definitely closest to the actual production of malt whisky, having completed his apprenticeship at Islay's Lagavulin Distillery. Craigellachie paired with Lagavulin provided the foundations of his famous White Horse blend, although some Craigellachie has always been sold as a single malt.

Mackie died in 1924, having bought the distillery outright, and three years later, his business was swallowed up by the Distillers Company (DCL), the forerunner of Diageo.

Today the distillery is hardly recognizable, after a comprehensive makeover in the 1960s which gave it a shiny metal chimney that rises high above the rooftops like a silver mast. All that

Cragganmore was built by the renowned distillery architect Charles Doig.

Craigellachie 14-Year-Old

remains of its Victorian roots are parts of two of the original warehouses. It seems strange that Craigellachie—named after a high crag where the Fiddich River flows into the Spey—has only the one distillery. It is certainly right in the midst of whiskymaking country, and its size grew five times on the back of Speyside's late Victorian rise to become the pre-eminent whisky region in Scotland.

Craigellachie became part of the stable of distilleries supplying malt for Dewar's White Label—the most popular blend in America. Both were bought in 1998 by Bacardi, who released Craigellachie as a 14-year-old single malt six years later.

DAILUAINE

✉ **Carron, Aberlour, Morayshire**

The small hamlet of Carron lies between Ben Rinnes and the Spey, near Aberlour. It was here, beside the approach road, that a local farmer called William Mackenzie built Dailuaine in 1852. When he died, his widow leased it to James Fleming, who went into partnership with her son Thomas Mackenzie in 1879. Later it teamed up with a famous whisky from the Western Isles to form Dailuaine-Talisker Distilleries Ltd. In 1884, Fleming and Mackenzie found the means to rebuild Dailuaine into one of the biggest malt distilleries in the Highlands, and the first in Scotland to have a pagoda roof—designed to draw smoke through the malting barley above the kiln. It was solidly built, and in 1917 survived a bad fire with its crenulated, mold-blackened warehouses intact—you can still see them to this day.

The ground beside the distillery was flattened to make room for a siding attached to the main railroad line that ran through Carron. The distillery had its own steam train, or "puggie," which meant all the raw materials, from the barley to the empty casks, could be delivered right to the door. When it was ready to leave, laden with casks of whisky, a call would be put through to the station master at Carron.

Most of what comes off Dailluaine's six stills goes into blends such as Johnnie Walker. There are occasional limited release bottlings of a single malt, most recently of a sumptuous, heavily sherried 16-year-old.

DUFFTOWN

✉ **Dufftown, Keith**

It was James Duff, the fourth Earl of Fife, who founded Dufftown in 1817, on a site where the Dullan water meets the Fiddich River. At first its plentiful supplies of pristine cold water attracted mill owners, who used it as a source of power to grind oatmeal. It was on the site of one such mill that the Dufftown-Glenlivet Distillery was built in 1896. By then the town already had five distilleries and was on its way to eclipsing Campbeltown

DALLAS DHU

In the pit of winter when other distilleries are radiating warmth and whisky, Dallas Dhu in Forres, Morayshire, remains cold. It has been that way since 1983, the distillery being a victim of widespread cuts to drain the "whisky loch" that was then full to the brim. Five years later, it was opened as a museum by Historic Scotland, who provide an audio-visual guide to the distillery's history. At the end of the tour you can even sample a drop of Dallas Dhu in the Roderick Dhu blend.

The distillery's name, meaning "black water valley" in Gaelic, was built by Alexander Edward in 1898 to supply malt for this once popular brand owned by Wright & Greig in Glasgow. Edward sold up after a year and the distillery struggled on, almost disappearing in a fire in 1939. With just two stills and a water wheel that provided the power up until 1971, the distillery never quite embraced the 20th century, which is perhaps why it became a museum—information about which you can find at www.historic-scotland.gov.uk.

Dallas Dhu closed as a distillery in the early 1980s and is now a museum dedicated to whisky.

The site of Glenallachie Distillery was chosen so that it could source its water from a snow-fed burn.

(see p47) as Scotland's whisky metropolis.
The partners who owned Dufftown included two Liverpool businessmen, a local lawyer, and a farmer who owned the nearby farm of Pittyvaich, which supplied the barley. Soon the solicitor had his work cut out in a protracted dispute over water rights with the distillery's neighbor, Mortlach *(see p72)*, where whisky had been made since 1824. Angry letters were traded by day, while at night the water course from Jock's Well in the Conval hills was constantly redirected.

In year two the distillery was bought outright by one of the Liverpudlians, Peter Mackenzie, who also owned Blair Athol. Most of the malt disappeared into Bell's—the popular brand owned by Arthur Bell & Sons of Perth, and they eventually bought both distilleries in 1933 *(see p122)*. When not performing for Britain's best-selling blend, Dufftown makes an occasional appearance as a green, herbal, slightly oily single malt.

GLENALLACHIE

✉ **Aberlour, Banffshire**

In 1967 Charles Mackinlay & Co., part of Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, decided they needed their own distillery for their Mackinlay blend. Having chosen a site near Aberlour, months were spent locating the perfect water source. In the end, a pipeline was built to draw water from a snow-fed burn which rises among the deep granite springs on Ben Rinnes. The distillery's architect was William Delmé-Evans, who was also responsible for Tullibardine and Isle of Jura. Glenallachie is a contemporary, gravity-flow distillery on one level, with a pond which steams up in the winter months when warm water is pumped in from the condensers.

Its brewery owners decided it was time to sell up in 1985 and Glenallachie passed to Invergordon and then to Chivas Brothers *(see p126)*. Though its owners have always used it solely for blending purposes, there are a fair number of independent bottlings.

GLENBURGIE

✉ **Forres, Morayshire**

Those traveling on the busy A96 to Inverness could easily miss Glenburgie, with just its rooftops poking above the trees in a valley between Forres and Elgin. Originally called the Kilnflat Distillery, it was established in 1829, though some place it as early as 1810. The fact that it did not survive in its original form may have had something to do with its size. If the stillroom really was below ground in the stone hut beside what is now the manager's office, little more than a trickle of Scotch can ever have been produced here. The trickle had already dried up by the time it was sub-let to Charles Hay, who rebuilt and renamed it Glenburgie.

The distillery passed through many hands until it was bought by the owners of Ballantine's *(see p121)* in the 1930s. It had the almost unique distinction of having a female manager—Miss Nicol. In the 1950s a pair of Lomond stills were installed. These were squat, round-necked, and quite unlike the existing pair, and produced a very different malt to the light, apple-scented Glenburgie. The new malt was called Glencraig after Ballantine's then production manager, Willie Craig—one of the few men ever to have had a malt named after him. However, this whisky disappeared when the Lomond stills were replaced in the early 1980s.

In his monumental book on distilleries of 1887, Alfred Barnard *(see p50)* described Glenburgie as "about as old-fashioned as it is possible to conceive." The old distillery was leveled in 2004 and replaced by a state-of-the-art distillery, which opened in June 2005.

GLENFIDDICH

William Grant founded Glenfiddich Distillery in 1887, and named it after the nearby Fiddich River. Having developed his knowledge of whisky at Mortlach Distillery, Grant set up Glenfiddich in good time to catch the late Victorian swell of interest in whisky.

Born in 1839, William Grant worked for a brief stint in a local lime quarry, after which he joined Mortlach, Dufftown's only distillery at the time, eventually rising from bookkeeper to manager. Despite having a wife and nine children to support on a salary of £100 a year, plus £7 he received as the precentor of the Free Church of Dufftown, he nursed ambitions to set up in business on his own. Initially he wanted to open a lime works, but slowly over time his dreams turned to whisky.

After 16 years at Mortlach he had saved enough to build a distillery for £650 using stones dug from the bed of the Fiddich River. For another £120 he acquired a pair of second-hand stills, a set of washtuns, a worm, and a water mill from Cardhu's lady distiller, Elizabeth Cumming. With the Robbie Dhu spring to provide water and a nearby burn diverted to power the malt mill, the site was well chosen.

Glenfiddich 18-Year-Old

The first spirit from Glenfiddich flowed on Christmas Day 1887. Now all Grant needed was a buyer.

Luckily there was a shortage of Speyside malt at the time, thanks to a fire at Glenlivet, and Grant began supplying a big blender in Aberdeen. Later he developed brands of his own, including "Stand Fast"—the battle cry of the Clan Grant. By the time of his death in 1923, the company's blends were being sold from Adelaide to Vancouver. They survived American Prohibition and began to thrive in the postwar whisky boom.

Today Glenfiddich is geared almost entirely to its own single malt, particularly the standard 12-year-old. Fans appreciate its smoothness. As one wrote, "it slips down the throat like Elizabeth Taylor in velvet trousers." It may not be the most complex of whiskies, but it has introduced millions to the world of single malt.

Glenfiddich pioneered the sale of single malt, and the whisky produced at this vast distillery remains the world's biggest selling brand.

GLENDULLAN

✉ Dufftown, Keith, Banffshire

By the end of the 19th century, the townsfolk of Dufftown were host to no fewer than six distilleries. Yet the Aberdeen-based blenders William Williams & Sons decided there was still room for one more whisky-making plant, and began building Glendullan in 1897. The distillery opened the following year and by 1902 had secured a Royal warrant from Edward VII.

In comparison to its neighbors, Glendullan fared well, only stopping production in the 1940s, when grain was rationed during World War II. By then, Glendullan whisky had become a key filling in Old Parr *(see p143)*, a Macdonald Greenlees blend named after a certain Thomas Parr, who died in 1635 at the age of 152—or so it was claimed. The blend, which comes in a raft of age statements, still sells well in East Asia and Paraguay.

In 1962, a new distillery was built next door. Architecturally, it resembles either an office building or perhaps, better still, a factory, with its flat roof and large plate-glass windows. For the next 13 years, the old and the new worked in tandem, with their own mash tuns, wash backs, and stills. The spirit was then vatted together, filled into casks, and used for blending. Then, in 1985, the old Glendullan was quietly dismantled. Its successor now has six stills and is Diageo's second-largest malt distillery after Dufftown.

As a malt, Glendullan has been bottled at various ages, from 8 years upward. As a straw-colored 12-year-old, it has a rich malty character, sweetened with oak.

GLEN ELGIN

✉ Longmorn by Elgin, Morayshire

The distinguished architect Charles Doig witnessed the late Victorian whisky boom at first hand. He had designed many of the region's distilleries, and, when called upon in 1899 to create yet another on the road from Elgin to Rothes, he predicted it would be the last on Speyside for 50 years. In fact, it was not until 1958 that another distillery was built—that being Glen Keith. Doig's client was William Simpson, a former manager at Glenfarclas, whose timing was terrible given that the market was awash with whisky at the time. Having spent £13,000 on it, he recouped just £4,000 when he sold the distillery in 1900. Glen Elgin also suffered from sharing the same water supply as its near neighbor Coleburn. Once this dispute was resolved and the distillery connected to the National Grid in the 1960s, Glen Elgin's future was assured as a key filling for the White Horse blend *(see p153)*.

Glen Elgin 12-Year-Old

GLENFARCLAS

✉ Ballindalloch, Banffshire
www.glenfarclas.co.uk
Open to visitors

From a distance, Glenfarclas resembles a remote farmstead more than a distillery, lying in open farmland beneath the hump-backed slopes of Ben Rinnes to the northeast. This gives a clue to its origins as a small rural distillery on the Rechlerich Farm near Ballindalloch, where Robert Hay, a tenant farmer, began making whisky to supply the cattle drovers who would stop there on their way to market in Elgin.

Having been licensed by Hay in 1836, the Glenfarclas distillery passed to John Grant when he took the tenancy of Rechlerich in 1865, adding to several farms he had nearby. The Grants have owned it ever since, making it virtually unique in an industry that is dominated by big corporations. That said, Glenfarclas was valued at only £511 in 1865, and was immediately sublet to a relative called John Smith. This left John Grant to concentrate on what he did best—breeding champion Aberdeen Angus cattle.

Five years later Smith left to set up Cragganmore, leaving Grant and his son George to run the distillery alongside the farm. By the time George's two sons inherited in 1890, the whiskymaking side of the business had become a lot more important. The brothers formed the Glenfarclas-Glenlivet Distillery Co. in partnership with Pattison Brothers of

CHARLES DOIG

Scotland's most famous distillery architect, Charles Doig, was born in 1855. At the age of 15 he was apprenticed to a local architect, and his first commission was to design Glenburgie Distillery in 1881. He later set up his own practice in Elgin, and in his lifetime drafted plans for no fewer than 55 distilleries. Doig's signature note was the pagoda roof, first designed for Dailluaine in 1889 to draw smoke through the barley from the kiln below. From then on practically every distillery in Scotland had one, though by the mid-20th century, they were purely ornamental.

Glenfarclas, with its low-lying medley of buildings, resembles a farmstead more than a distillery.

Leith, into whose blends most of the malt went. However, a little was bottled as "Pure Old Glenfarclas-Glenlivet Malt Whisky" from as early as 1899.

Disaster struck a year later when Pattisons went bankrupt *(see p142)*. As the Pattison brothers were sent to jail for fraud, the prospects for Glenfarclas looked decidedly grim. Somehow the distillery managed to survive as a private business called J&G Grant & Sons, which by 1914 was being run solely by John Grant's grandson, George. Perhaps the trauma of the Pattisons' crash taught the Grants never to go into partnership again, for the business has remained fiercely independent ever since.

Yet unlike other privately-owned distilleries, Glenfarclas is no boutique operation. Its six stills are the biggest on Speyside, and it also boasts a large visitor center, which opened in 1973. The center's reception room resembles one of the state rooms on the ship *Empress of Australia*, as Glenfarclas's former chairman, George Grant, heard it was about to be broken up and decided to buy the paneling.

GLENFARCLAS 10-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV • Straw-colored, gently spicy malt with notes of pear drops and sherry.

GLENFARCLAS 12-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV • Distinct sherried nose with spicy flavors of cinnamon and stewed fruit.

GLENFARCLAS 105 60% ABV • This intense, cask-strength whisky is infused with liquorice, molasses, and smoke.

GLENFIDDICH

✉ **Dufftown, Banffshire**
www.glenfiddich.com
Open to visitors

Although it comes from a late-Victorian distillery, the world's top-selling single malt is really a child of the 1960s. It was in 1964 that William Grant & Sons decided to launch an 8-year-old in a distinctive triangular bottle and market it in England.

It struggled at first because shopkeepers and barmen were reluctant to stock a drink that no one had ever asked for by name, but soon Glenfiddich was receiving plenty of media coverage. There were endless articles explaining how this "new" drink called single malt whisky was made. It hardly mattered whether they mentioned Glenfiddich or just the word "malt," since the two became synonymous for a time.

By 1970, UK sales had passed 24,000 cases and the whisky was beginning to venture further afield through duty-free sales. Only a year earlier the Scotch Whisky Association had questioned the wisdom of selling unblended whisky to the "Sassenachs," and many in the industry thought it would be a short-lived fad. Instead Glenfiddich pioneered the whole reinvention of single malts, and established a lead it has never lost.

Glenfiddich 12-Year-Old

GLENFIDDICH 12-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV • A pale straw-colored malt with a trace of pears, drying on the finish.

GLENFIDDICH 15-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV • The use of sherry wood adds texture and color in the 15-year-old.

GLENFIDDICH 18-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV • An altogether richer, more complex style, with flavors of spicy baked apples and cinnamon.

GLENFIDDICH 21-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV A rich, indulgent malt finished off in rum casks to give a toffee sweetness.

Glenfiddich whisky is matured in the cool, damp conditions of traditional warehouses.

The gardens at Glen Grant have recently been restored to their late Victorian glory.

GLEN GRANT

✉ Rothes, Morayshire
Open to visitors

With its thick, red sandstone walls and pair of pepperpot turrets, the oldest surviving distillery in Rothes appears reassuringly solid. Glen Grant was founded in 1840 by two brothers—James Grant, a solicitor in Elgin, and John Grant, a local grain merchant whose knowledge of whiskymaking allegedly came from supplying the region's illicit distillers.

They certainly picked a good site with the Glen Grant burn to provide water for the mash and power for the machinery, and plentiful supplies of good-quality barley from the flatlands of Moray nearby. Before long the distillery also benefited from the railroads, which reached Rothes in 1858. Three years later Glen Grant became the first industrial works in the Highlands to install electric lighting.

James Grant's son, known to everyone as "the Major," took over in 1872. He was the quintessential Victorian gent, clad head-to-toe in tweed with a superb walrus moustache. At the time the distillery was primed to ride the surge in whisky's popularity; Scotch was still very much a local vice with per capita consumption in England one third that of Scotland. Glen Grant remained in family hands until 1977 when it was sold to Seagram. As a 5-year-old single malt it became hugely successful in Italy, and the distillery now belongs to the Italian group Campari. Visitors should explore the beautifully restored gardens after seeing the distillery. The Major used to take after-dinner guests to a narrow ravine in the garden where he would unlock a safe embedded in the rock to produce glasses and a bottle of Glen Grant. If anyone required water, they had only to dip their glass in the burn as it rushed past in the moonlight.

GLEN KEITH

✉ Keith, Banffshire

In 1958 Seagram decided to build a new distillery in Keith across the road from Strathisla, its recently acquired flagship. As this was the first new malt distillery on Speyside for almost 60 years, it was a significant move by the Canadian giant, seeming to signify the end of postwar austerity and the start of a golden age for Scotch.

It was built on the site of an ancient malt mill in a fairly traditional style, using local stone and a decorative pagoda on the roof. Almost the entire production of Glen Keith disappears into blends, notably Chivas Regal *(see p124)* and Passport *(see p146)*. Given the success of both in Asian markets—with Chivas booming in China—the distillery's role seems set to continue.

GLENLIVET

✉ Ballindalloch, Banffshire
www.theglenlivet.com
Open to visitors

Today Glenlivet is the second-biggest-selling single malt in the world and is especially popular in the US. New French owners, Pernod

THE GHOST OF BIAWA

With the day-to-day running the distillery delegated to others, James Grant ("The Major") spent many months big-game hunting in Africa. On one trip he returned with an orphan boy. The Major christened him Biawa and sent him to the local school, prior to employing him as his butler. The Major died in 1931, and Biawa lived for another 40 years. He is buried in the town cemetery, opposite Glenrothes Distillery, and his ghost has occasionally been spotted in the vicinity. He left his gun and fishing rod to his beloved Rothes Football Club, for whom he had once played.

Ricard, who acquired the distillery in 2000, seem keen to challenge William Grant's leviathan for poll position. They have some way to go.

Glenlivet entered the 20th century as by far the most famous distillery in Scotland, yet it then appeared to rest on its laurels while others traded on the Glenlivet name. It was only after US Prohibition that it was finally sold in bottle rather than cask.

Glenlivet formed a partnership with Glen Grant and Longmorn until all three distilleries were bought by Seagram in 1977.

GLENLIVET 12-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV
Light and delicate, with an oaky sweetness and a faint hint of apple peel.

GLENLIVET 15-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV • Riper floral notes are here underplayed by the sweet smack of vanilla.

Glenlivet 12-Year-Old

GLENLOSSIE AND MANNOCHMORE

✉ Elgin, Morayshire

These two distilleries lie just beyond Elgin and have worked side by side, sharing the same workforce, since Mannochmore was built in the 1970s. Glenlossie was built a century earlier in 1876 by Glendronach's former distillery manager, John Duff. From the start it was an efficient, self-contained unit with its own reservoir to supply cold water to condense the spirit and power the waterwheel. There was a railroad siding to connect to the line from Rothes to Elgin, and houses were supplied for Duff's staff—employed not only to run the distillery but also to look after his herd of cattle, which were fed on draff from the distillery.

Glenlossie was gobbled up by the giant DCL in 1919 and over the years the number of stills has been increased to six, with purifiers on each of the stills to produce a more delicate spirit than its neighbor. Mannochmore was briefly responsible for a "black whisky" called Loch Dhu, the result of heavy tinting with caramel.


Glenlossie has worked with neighboring Mannochmore since the 1970s.

GLEN MORAY

✉ Bruceland Road, Elgin
www.glenmoray.com
Open to visitors

The Ancient Royal Burgh of Elgin is the official capital of Speyside, though it sits slightly on the edge of the main bustle of whiskymaking activity, which is concentrated closer to the river itself. Glen Moray Distillery stands far from the Spey on the banks of the Lossie River on the western edge of Elgin, beneath Gallow Hill where executions were carried out until the end of the 17th century. Like its sister distillery Glenmorangie, Glen Moray was originally a brewery.

Having brewed ale for over 60 years, it was a small matter to take the process one step further and turn the beer into whisky. Glen Moray was converted into a distillery in 1897 with buildings clustered around a courtyard in the style of a traditional farmstead. The timing could have been better, with Speyside already bristling with new distilleries eager to cash in on the late-Victorian whisky boom. Glen Moray survived the ensuing crash at the start of the 20th century, but had spluttered to a halt by 1910. That was the year it closed down, seemingly for good. There were occasional signs of life afterward, but by the end of World War I, the distillery was in liquidation.

Glen Moray was bought in 1920 by Macdonald & Muir, a large firm of whisky blenders in Leith, for £12,000, "less £700 for repairs to the roof."

Macdonald & Muir had been buying Glen Moray whisky for some time for their top-selling blend Highland Queen *(see p136)*. More recently, this classic Speyside malt has been a key filling in the newly reconstructed blend Bailie Nicol Jarvie *(see p119)*. Glen Moray was modernized in the 1950s. A pair of new stills were added, doubling capacity, and, shortly after, the distillery won a contract to supply single malt to Japan's All Nippon Airways.

Since then, however, Glen Moray has sunk back into the shadows of its stable mate, its fate forever to be "brother of the more famous Glenmorangie." The owners have certainly lavished a lot more time and money on their "glen of tranquillity" than on Glen Moray. Yet, mostly through supermarket sales, it remains a top-selling introductory malt in the UK.

GLEN MORAY CLASSIC 40% ABV
Pale gold, smooth, light-bodied with traces of oatmeal and shortbread

GLEN MORAY 12-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV
As above, with sweeter, floral notes coming through.

GLEN MORAY 16-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV
A richer, more honeyed expression of Glen Moray.

GLENLIVET

As one Victorian visitor to the Glenlivet Distillery wrote in the late 1800s, "a more lonely spot in winter, or a more delightful one in summer could not be found and, for those who like quietude and rest, truly it is very far from the 'madding crowd.'"

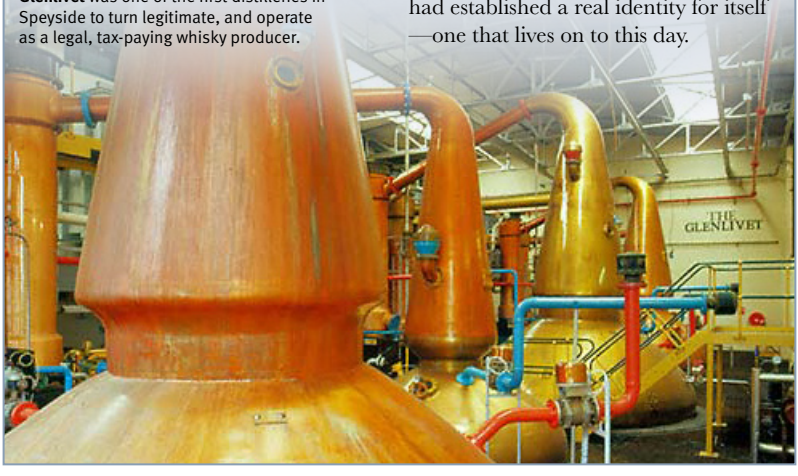
This sense of isolation remains largely intact as you stare south across an open bowl to the barren hills and braes of Glenlivet beyond. The romantic image is hard to sustain once you turn to face the distillery, however. This is no lonesome farm distillery. Today's Glenlivet is a substantial industrial unit, clad in shiny, corrugated steel, and with a large, steaming dark grains plant on site.

Yet, in the history of Speyside, there are few words so evocative as Glenlivet. As Government troops attempted to clamp down on illicit Highland distilling from the late 19th century on, whisky became a spirit of defiance. Nowhere was this more true than in Glenlivet, where "there were not three persons," according to a local farmer, "who were not engaged directly or indirectly in the trade."

Glenlivet 25-Year-Old

George Smith was no doubt making whisky on the side at Upper Drummin farm when he established Glenlivet Distillery in 1824. As the first distiller to go legal in a glen dedicated to producing moonshine, he made a lot of enemies and had to carry a pair of hair-trigger revolvers for his own protection. Meanwhile others on Speyside bolted the name "Glenlivet" on to their distilleries in the hope of a little reflected glory.

Smith began supplying Andrew Usher in Edinburgh, who pioneered the idea of blended Scotch with his "Old Vatted Glenlivet," launched in 1853. Soon afterward, Glenlivet slipped down the glen to its present site and increased in scale. At the time of Smith's death in 1871, the distillery was producing 4,000 gallons (18,200 liters) of whisky a week. While other distilleries were almost wholly anonymous, Glenlivet had established a real identity for itself —one that lives on to this day.



Glenlivet was one of the first distilleries in Speyside to turn legitimate, and operate as a legal, tax-paying whisky producer.

The Spey is Scotland's longest river, and gives its name to the the nation's foremost whisky-producing region.

GLENROTHES

✉ Rothes, Morayshire
www.glenrothes whisky.com

The small town of Rothes is strangely reticent about what it does best. It produces enough malt whisky to fill the equivalent of 50 million bottles a year, yet you wouldn't know it driving down the narrow High Street by day. Only by night do you get an idea of the scale of production, as clouds of steam billow up from the town's five distilleries. Among them, hidden in a tree-lined gorge beside the Rothes burn, is Glenrothes.

Once established *(see below)*, Glenrothes became a key filling in the Cutty Sark and Famous Grouse blends. The distillery expanded to keep pace, building a huge new stillroom in pink granite to house its eight stills. This has since been increased to 10, giving an impressive capacity of 1.1 million gallons (5 million liters) of alcohol. The flipside of being so popular with the blenders was that there was never any spare Glenrothes to bottle as a single malt. This finally changed in 1987 when a 12-year-old was released, followed by the first critically acclaimed Vintage Malt in 1994.

Glenrothes Select Reserve

THE GLENROTHES SELECT RESERVE 43% ABV
Sweeter on the nose than in the mouth, this malt develops into a long, creamy, and seriously smooth dram on the tongue.

GLEN SPEY

✉ Rothes, Aberlour, Banffshire

Having decided to pull out of the partnership behind Glenrothes in 1878 *(see below)*, James Stuart returned to Rothes to build a new distillery to add to his Macallan a few years later. He owned an oatmeal mill on the opposite bank of the Rothes burn beneath the ruined Castle of Rothes, and made the decision to make whisky on the site. Inevitably this led to disputes with Glenrothes as to who owned the water rights.

At some point it became a fully fledged distillery, and registered as Glen Spey in 1884. Three years later it was sold to the London-based gin distiller Gilbeys in one of the first moves into Scotch by a firm from the south. Years later, Gilbey's merged with Justerini & Brooks, by which time Glen Spey had become a key ingredient in their top-selling blend J&B *(see p137)*. Its 12-year-old malt is relatively rare.

GLEN SPEY 12-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV
A light, herbal Speyside with notes of vanilla ice-cream.

GLENTAUCHERS

✉ Mulben, Keith, Banffshire

Unlike many distilleries that only went in search of a market once they were built, Glentauchers was destined from the offset to supply malt for Buchanan's Blend (later known as Black & White, *see p123*). The distillery was built in a partnership between the whisky baron James Buchanan and the Glasgow-based spirits brokers WP Lowrie in 1897 on the edge of the Craigellachie forest, just beyond Keith.

Standing beside what is now the A95 and with a siding at the back that joined the main east-coast rail line from Aberdeen to Inverness, Glentauchers was certainly well connected. Once Buchanan took over the distillery completely in 1906, its future looked secure so long as Black & White continued to thrive. It suffered during the distillery closures of the 1980s, but was rescued by new owners in 1988. Today, as part of Pernod Ricard, its main role is to supply malt for Ballantines *(see p119)*.

GLENROTHES FALTERING START

Built in 1878 by James Stuart of Macallan Distillers, Glenrothes almost collapsed at the outset. An economic recession hit in the summer of that year, and Stuart pulled out to concentrate on Macallan. His partners, Robert Dick and Willie Grant, carried on, and the first spirit flowed on December 28, 1879. Somehow the pair staved off bankruptcy through loans from local supporters, and within five years, Glenrothes was turning a profit. But for one lost season during World War I, it kept working up until the start of the Great Depression in the 1930s, when it fell silent. A few years later, Prohibition ended, and Glenrothes was cranked back to life to capitalize on the American market. It has been distilling ever since.

Glenrothes Select Reserve 1975

IMPERIAL

Thomas Mackenzie built Imperial in 1897, siting it close by Dailuaine Distillery near Aberlour. Its name was intended to honor Queen Victoria in her diamond jubilee year, but sadly for Mackenzie his impressive red brick distillery proved less durable than the British Empire and fell silent within six months. It was reopened in 1919 by DCL (the Distillers Company), but they promptly closed it again because its mighty stills produced too much waste in the form of draff. For the next 30 years just the maltings operated. It was not until a method of compressing the draff into cattle cake was found in the 1950s that Imperial's stills were fired up once again. Since then, it has experienced both productive times and further silent periods. In 2005 it was taken under the wing of Pernod Ricard.

INCHGOWER

✉ **Buckie, Banffshire**

Inchgower is right on the edge of the region near Spey Bay and the town of Buckie, though in terms of style, it produces a classic Speyside malt. Originally the plant was situated at Cullen and known as the Tochineal Distillery. It had been founded in 1824 by John Wilson, and it was his son Alex who decided to move it a few miles west in 1867 to escape a doubling of the rent by his landlady, the Countess of Seafield, who disapproved of distilleries.

As a family business it survived until the recession of 1930. The stills remained cold for the next six years when the distillery was bought by Buckie Town Council for the princely sum of £1,000. Two years on, they sold it to Arthur Bell & Sons for £3,000, and ever since then, much of the malt has disappeared into the Bell's blend *(see p120)*. There are periodic bottlings of Inchgower as a dense, creamy vanilla malt.

Despite its proximity to the river, like all Speyside distilleries, Knockando uses water from a spring to make its whisky.

KININVIE

✉ **Dufftown, Banffshire**

If few of the many thousands of visitors to Glenfiddich Distillery each year have heard of its sister distillery Balvenie, virtually none know of Kininvie, despite the fact that all three share the same site at Dufftown. Kininvie is by far the smallest and began life in 1990 with the first spirit flowing on July 4. This being American Independence Day was probably no accident since William Grant & Sons are fiercely proud of being an independent family business.

In reality Kininvie consists of little more than a stillroom, as its washbacks and other distillery paraphernalia are housed at Balvenie. The result is a sweet, floral malt with a distinct note of barley sugar. It can mostly be found in William Grant whiskies, such as the recently launched Monkey Shoulder.

KNOCKANDO

✉ **Knockando, Morayshire**
www.malts.com

The distillery was set up by John Thompson in 1898 and was run on a seasonal basis as though it were an old-style farm distillery that only made whisky after the harvest. In other respects Thompson was up with all the latest technological advances, for Knockando had electric lighting at a time when most distilleries did not.

Knockando 12-Year-Old

Sadly he was caught in the speculative bubble that engulfed the whisky trade at the start of the 20th century, and was forced to sell.

The new owners were the London gin distillers Gilbeys. Knockando has remained in their hands since, though Gilbeys is now under the Diageo umbrella.

The low, stone-built dunnage warehouses at Knockdhu help it to retain a traditional feel.

Until recently the entire production went into blends, particularly for J&B *(see p137)*. Since the distillery ceased malting its barley in 1968, the malt barns have hosted endless sales conferences for the J&B global team. Whether its one-time salesman turned film star David Niven ever came here for a spot of corporate bonding is unclear, but the brand was certainly big in the US by the time he hit Hollywood in the 1930s. J&B began to slip in the US in the 1970s, but later surged in Spain, prompting a distillery visit from Mrs. Thatcher in 1985. The then Prime Minister handed over the Queen's Award for Export and received the billionth bottle of J&B in return.

Knockando is an Anglicized version of the Gaelic Cnoc-an-Dhu, "dark hillock," which guards a bend in the Spey. Despite being so near the river, it draws its water from a spring like all Speyside distilleries. In color it is noticeably pale, due to the use of American oak casks and a refusal to use caramel to tint the whisky and give an impression of age.

KNOCKANDO 12-YEAR-OLD **40% ABV** • Light-bodied, almost "Lowland" in style with a delicate, creamy texture in the mouth and a trace of toffee and hazelnuts.

KNOCKDHU

Knock, by Huntly, Aberdeenshire
www.inverhouse.com

Opened in 1894 in the village of Knock on the edge of Speyside, Knockdhu is small and traditional in style. It was the first of a handful of distilleries acquired by Inver House Distillers in 1988. The company has strived to preserve the character of Knockdhu by keeping its wooden washbacks, its worm tub, and granite, old-style dunnage warehouses. Of these, the most important is the worm tub, which tends to produce a richer, more meaty spirit than modern condensers that strip out sulfur compounds with great efficiency to give a fresher, clean-tasting spirit.

Knockdhu's anCnoc Single Malt

KNOCKDHU'S AN-CNOC SINGLE MALT **40% ABV** • This is a relatively full-bodied Speyside, with notes of heather honey and lemon peel, named anCnoc after the Gaelic for the nearby "black hill," whose springs supply the water.

LINKWOOD

Elgin, Morayshire

Whiskymakers tend to be conservative by nature and adverse to change. Their mantra of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" was taken to extremes by one distillery manager at Linkwood in the 1930s. He was convinced that everything played its part in forming the character of the whisky, and that nothing, not even a cobweb, should be removed. The poor man would be spinning in his grave if he could see what has happened to Linkwood since—not that the lack of spiders has had any adverse effect on the quality of the whisky. It is a fine Speyside malt, much in demand from blenders.

Named after Linkwood House on the Seafield estate, the distillery was established in 1821 by the estate manager, Peter Brown, in what was then open country, but is now within Elgin. Today it is one of a cluster of distilleries between the town and the lower reaches

JOHN DUFF, LONGMORN'S PIONEER

John Duff had dedicated his life to making whisky before he set up Longmorn on the road to Rothes from Elgin, but it was a circuitous route, taking him from Scotland first to South Africa and then to the US before returning home.

After a solid grounding in distilling at Glendronach, where he was distillery manager for years, Duff initially left to run a hotel. Before long, however, he was back making whisky as John Duff & Co. at Glenlossie Distillery, which he set up with two partners in 1876.

The Benriach to Longmorn train was a shuttle service for ferrying whisky casks between the two sister distilleries.

Twleve years later he found himself in Cape Town with his family, and, after failing to set up a distillery there, he crossed the Atlantic to try his luck in the US. When that failed, he returned home in 1892, aged 50, to be the manager at the Bon Accord Distillery in Aberdeen, where he also became a partner in a local wine and spirit merchants.

In 1894, having seen all sides of the trade and witnessed the potential for Scotch whisky abroad, Duff felt the timing was right for yet another distillery on Speyside. Longmorn had plentiful supplies of spring water, access to some of the best barley from the Laich o' Moray, a waterwheel to provide all the power, and peat to kiln the barley from the nearby Mannoch hill. It also had its own station connected to the Great North of Scotland line, along which the raw ingredients came in and the finished whisky left. It cost £20,000 to build and had four stills, producing spirit that, according to the National Guardian, "jumped into favor with buyers from the earliest day on which it was offered."

In a word, Longmorn was well-conceived from the start, and its early success encouraged Duff to buy out his partners and build Benriach next door in 1897. Unfortunately he was a major supplier to the Pattison brothers, and when they were forced out of business and into jail in 1901 *(see p142)*, Duff soon followed them into bankruptcy.

Longmorn remained in private hands until the 1970s, when it was bought by Seagram; it is now owned by Pernod Ricard.

THE MACALLAN BACK STORY

The Macallan, with its famously sherried nose and rich mahogany color, has become one of Scotland's most highly rated single malts. It was not a reputation formed overnight, however, for the Macallan evolved slowly out of a small-scale 19th-century farm distillery.

Situated on the west bank of the Spey, Macallan was originally called the Elchies Distillery. It was first licensed to Alexander Reid in 1824, but was almost certainly distilling before then to supply drovers who would pass by on their way from Moray to the cattle markets of Falkirk and Perth. As a staging post, it was somewhere to gather before crossing the Spey and, no doubt, to pick up a few casks for the journey.

Macallan was bought in 1892 by Roderick Kemp, a wine merchant in Elgin and former distiller at Talisker. He was determined to make the most of Macallan, and six years later refused an offer of £80,000 to sell it. The bid came from its previous owners, two of whom set up Highland Distillers. That company did eventually buy Macallan —nearly 100 years later in 1996, and this time at a price of £180 million.

Macallan Eleganzia

The distillery remained more or less as it had been in 1896 until after World War II, passing through family hands to Gordon Shiach, an intelligence officer who interrogated Herman Goering at the Nuremberg trials. The distillery was completely rebuilt in the 1950s, and by 1970 had trebled production to over 1 million gallons (4.5 million liters). By now stocks were being laid down in preparation for the Macallan 10-Year-Old Single Malt, which was launched in 1978. Two years later Allan Shiach took over at the distillery, while continuing his career as a successful Hollywood scriptwriter. As Allan Scott, his scripts include *Castaway*, *Regeneration*, and *Don't Look Now,* in which Donald Sutherland pours himself a generous slug of Macallan after making love to Julie Christie.

Since its launch, the Macallan single malt has developed a loyal following.


The stills at Macallan have been producing whisky for their respected and popular single malt since the 1970s.

The Macallan uses a mix of European and American ex-bourbon casks for maturation.

of the Spey that have never received the recognition they are due. Far more attention is given to those upstream at Rothes, such as Macallan and Glenfiddich.

Under Brown, Linkwood was remarkably self-sufficient, growing its own barley in the adjoining fields and having its own cattle to gobble up the draff produced in the process. It was rebuilt in the 1870s by Brown's son William, who doubled the output to 50,000 gallons (227,500 liters) a year and re-christened the business the Linkwood-Glenlivet Distillery Co. Ltd. The company remained independent until 1933, when it finally sold out to DCL for £80,000—far more than most malt distilleries were worth at the time.

Having radically changed its layout in the early 1960s, Linkwood gained a whole new distillery alongside it with two pairs of stills in 1971. The operations ran in tandem until the Victorian stillhouse was closed down in 1985. Since then the original set of stills have been fired again and the spirit produced is vatted with that produced from the new stills.

LINKWOOD 12-YEAR-OLD 40% ABV
A supple and complex malt with the scent of fresh-cut grass and orchards. Sweet and then savory on the tongue, finishing long with a satisfying smoky twist at the end. There are a host of older expressions available from independent bottlers.

LONGMORN

✉ Elgin, Morayshire

From the distillery's outset *(see p69)*, Longmorn has maintained a reputation with blenders, and so has been in almost constant production since the late 19th century—unlike its sister distillery Benriach, which struggled from the start *(see p52)*. Having remained in private hands for over 60 years, Longmorn became part of Seagram in the 1970s. It has now passed to Pernod Ricard, who have started to promote Longmorn as a single malt in its own right.

Longmorn 16-Year-Old

LONGMORN 16-YEAR-OLD
A beautifully balanced cask-strength malt with a ripe, floral scent and honeyed texture that dries gently on the long finish.

MACALLAN

✉ Easter Elchies, Craigellachie
www.themacallan.com
Open to visitors

Since 2000, building on its strong history *(see over)*, Macallan has launched a number of new lines. For older vintages there is the Fine & Rare collection, including a bottle from 1926, which sold for £36,000 at auction. For those wanting a less heavily sherried Macallan, the distillery released its Fine Oak range in 2004. The Macallan has always taken maturation very seriously. Wood is bought "on the tree" in Spain, where it is seasoned, turned into butts, and filled with sherry in Jerez. After a few years, the butts are shipped to Speyside and filled with Macallan whisky. For Fine Oak, a mix of American and European oak is used.

Macallan 10-Year-Old

MACALLAN SHERRY OAK 40% ABV • The original 10-year-old has a mid-amber color and a scent of spice, orange peel, and fruit cake. The color and intensity of aroma deepen with older expressions, which include 12, 18, 25, and 30 year-old bottlings. The 12-year-old Eleganzia is aged in Oloroso and Fino sherry casks.

MACALLAN FINE OAK 40% ABV
Available in a raft of ages from 8 to 30 years, this is a lighter style of Macallan, with notes of coconut and vanilla to complement the richer sherry flavors.

MILTONDUFF

✉ Elgin, Morayshire

With plentiful supplies of water and some of the best barley grown on Speyside, the area south of Elgin was said to be home to over 50 illicit stills during the 19th century. One of the first to go legal and take out a license was Miltonduff in 1823. It is claimed that the distillery stands on the site of an old mill that belonged to Pluscarden Abbey, where the monks made ale of such sublime quality that "it filled the abbey with unutterable bliss." Whether the monks ever went further and distilled their beer into whisky is unclear, but they certainly used the same spring-fed water as the distillery. This flows into the Black Burn, which was blessed by an Abbot in the 15th century.

For over 60 years, ever since the Canadian distillers Hiram Walker took over the distillery in 1936, Miltonduff has been a key ingredient in Ballantine's blend *(see p119)*. This role keeps the six stills busy pumping out over 1.1 million gallons (5 million liters) of whisky a year, leaving little available for bottling as a single malt. Examples do appear from independent bottlers such as Gordon & Macphail *(see p52)*, along with the odd, extremely rare bottle of Mosstowie. This curiosity, which used special Lomond stills, was begun by Hiram Walker in the 1960s in an attempt to broaden their repertoire. The experiment was abandoned in 1981.

SPIRIT OF SPEYSIDE

Visitors to Glenfiddich

Spirit of Speyside is an annual autumn festival held in late September and early October, championing the local drink. Among the events are whisky tastings and auctions, as well as guided tours of the whisky country. There's also food, music, and of course traditional ceilidhs in the evenings. Details are available on the website www.spiritofspeyside.com.

Mortlach Distillery was founded on the site of a well where it is said moonshine used to be made.

MORTLACH

✉ Dufftown, Keith, Banffshire

Mortlach was established by James Findlater in 1823 on the edge of Dufftown around a well that had been used to make moonshine, or so it was said. Seven years later Findlater was forced to sell up for a mere £270 and there followed long periods of inactivity. When it was owned by J&J Grant of Glen Grant, the distilling equipment was removed and the disused granary given over to the local Free Church of Scotland in which to hold services. Later Mortlach became a brewery until it was finally converted back into a distillery by George Cowie in 1897, who turned it into one of the largest in the Highlands by doubling the number of stills to six. Within a year it was also probably the most modern, with a railroad siding connecting it to the main line, electric light, and a series of hydraulic lifts.

The distillery's most famous employee was William Grant, who spent nearly 20 years as Mortlach's loyal bookkeeper, then manager before handing in his notice in 1886 to strike out on his own at Glenfiddich *(see p58)*. This was the second distillery in town and was quickly followed by a stampede of others. Today there are seven distilleries here, making Dufftown the unchallenged whisky capital of Speyside.

Mortlach was effectively rebuilt in the 1960s, though much of its outside character as a late-Victorian distillery has been preserved, along with the use of an old-fashioned worm tub, which helps give the malt a richer flavor than many Speysides.

MORTLACH 16-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV
Well-rounded with notes of spice and a toffee sweetness that finishes dry.

SPEYBURN

✉ Rothes, Aberlour, Morayshire
www.inverhouse.com

Yet another classic Victorian distillery designed by Charles Doig *(see p59)*, Speyburn was built in 1897, as Queen Victoria was entering her twilight years. Despite not

being finished by the end of that year, the distillery manager ordered the stills to be fired up. With snow swirling in from the outside, as the stillroom lacked doors or windows, and the workers buttoned up against the cold, the first spirit began to flow. This was all to have at least one butt bearing the date of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Speyburn 10-Year-Old

The distillery stands on the edge of Rothes in a narrow tree-lined glen. As a result, Doig had to adapt his design and build upward to create a distillery on three floors, with its elegant pagoda roof peaking above the pines and clearly visible from the road to Elgin. The result is one of the most picturesque distilleries from the period. Unlike many, it survived the 1960s unscathed, partly because the cramped setting made any attempted makeover difficult to achieve. It fell silent during the 1980s when the "whisky loch" was full to the brim, and remained so until bought by Inver House in the early 1990s.

SPEYBURN'S MALT WHISKY

The majority of the malt is tankered away to Airdrie, where Inver House is based, though what is left is aged on site for bottling as a delicately fruity, aromatic 10-year-old and an altogether richer, more complex 25-year-old.

SPEYSIDE

✉ **Glen Tromie, Kingussie, Inverness-shire**

www.speysidedistillery.co.uk

At first sight, this tiny, boutique distillery could be one of those late-Victorian survivors that make up so many of the distilleries in these parts. Only the discreet modern smoke stack gives away its age. Speyside opened in 1991 with a solitary pair of stills able to produce 132,000 gallons (600,000 liters) a year, making it the second-smallest distillery in the region. It was no overnight creation, however, and took almost 30 years to build stone by stone on the insistence of its owner George Christie, a Glasgow-based whisky man. Sadly the funds ran out and the venture had to be sold to a Swiss firm four years after it went into production. Since 2000 it has been back in Scottish hands, with the Christie family still involved, producing a delicate 12-year-old with pronounced cereal notes and a slight trace of smoke on the tongue.

ROSEISLE

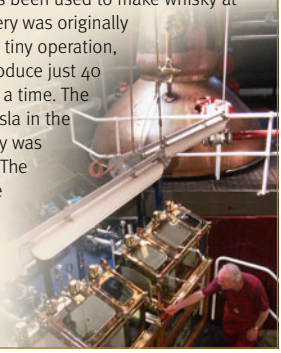
In 2007, Diageo announced they were building a new $81-million distillery on Speyside at Roseisle near the Moray Firth, between Elgin and Forres. Having talked up the huge potential for Scotch in countries such as China and India for some time, the whisky industry was finally putting its money where its mouth is. With an annual capacity of 2.2 million gallons (10 million liters) of alcohol from 14 stills, Roseisle is no boutique distillery. As the first of any scale since Seagram built Allt a'Bhaine in 1975, it will be Diageo's largest malt distillery by far.

After the grim years of whisky lochs and distillery closures in the early 1980s, it is a heartening declaration of faith in the future of Scotch whisky. It is also an example of real long-term planning, since it will be 2021 at the earliest before the first drop of Roseisle goes into deluxe blends such as Johnnie Walker Black Label. This is likely to be its main role, though there is bound to be some Roseisle set aside for a single malt.


Speyburn's stills remain intact, but the distillery no longer has its original maltings.

STRATHISLA'S BEGINNINGS

What drew the early distillers to a particular site was the same as what attracted the brewers before them—a reliable source of good, clear water. In the 12th century, Dominican monks in Keith used a well that was fed by the Broomhill spring to brew a potent heather ale. Whether they ever distilled the ale into something stronger is anyone's guess, but it is one theory about how distilling came to Scotland. What is known for sure is that since 1786 the well has been used to make whisky at Strathisla—though the distillery was originally called Milltown. It began as a tiny operation, with a pair of stills able to produce just 40 gallons (150 liters) of spirit at a time. The name was changed to Strathisla in the 19th century, and the distillery was bought by William Longmore. The distillery was destroyed by fire in the 1870s, but rebuilt by William's son-in-law.



Strathisla suffered two fires in the 1870s, but was rebuilt into the distillery you see today.

STRATHISLA

✉ Keith, Banffshire
⛵ Open to visitors

With its high-gabled roofs topped with twin pagodas, and its speckled stone walls like nougat, Strathisla is one of the most handsome distilleries in the Highlands, and boasts a venerable history *(see above)*. Before 1900 the whisky was available by the bottle from wine and spirit merchants, who bought it in 5-gallon (23-liter) stone jars direct from the distillery, while bars sold it on tap from glass decanters that were engraved "Strathisla Whisky."

To raise money for rebuilding following fire damage, William Longmore & Co. was floated, which allowed in outside investors. Eventually this meant ceding control to a crooked theatrical impresario, George Pomeroy, who was jailed for tax evasion in 1949. A year later it was sold to a church organist from Aberdeen for £70,000. The organist was simply a front for Seagram, who had recently bought Chivas Brothers and needed supplies of malt whisky. Strathisla has been the spiritual home of Chivas Regal ever since, and most of the production disappears into the famous blend.

STRATHISLA 12-YEAR-OLD 43% ABV
As a single malt, Strathisla is a soft-centered, syrupy whisky, with fruitcake notes.

STRATHMILL

✉ Keith, Banffshire

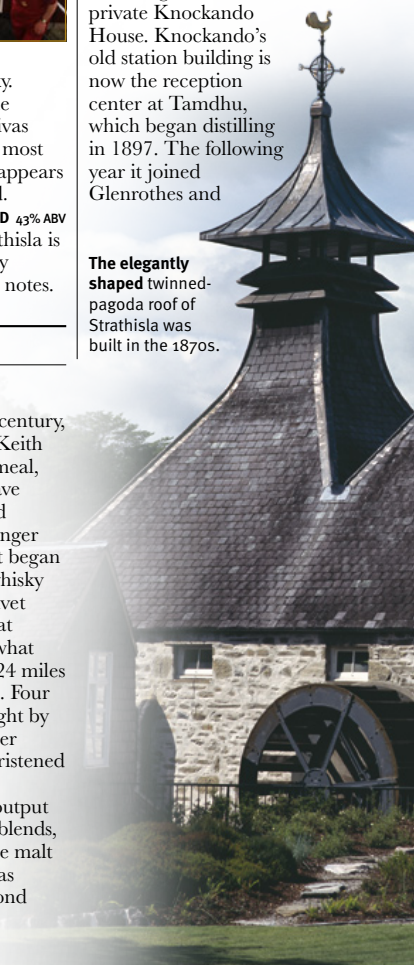
For most of the 19th century, the Strathisla mill in Keith had been milling oatmeal, though it may well have occasionally produced something a little stronger on the side. In 1891 it began officially producing whisky as the Glenisla-Glenlivet distillery—a name that stretched credibility, what with Glenlivet being 24 miles (39 km) away by road. Four years later it was bought by the London gin distiller Gilbey and was re-christened Strathmill.

While most of the output has always gone into blends, a first Strathmill single malt was released as early as 1909, though the second official bottling was not until 1993. The distillery was sympathetically modernized in the 1960s when it was the headquarters of Gilbey's Highland Distilleries.

TAMDHU

✉ Knockando, Aberlour
🖱 www.edrington.com

In 1863, the Strathspey railroad opened from Craigellachie on the Spey to Boat of Garten and soon distilleries were springing up along the line like homesteads across the American Midwest. The train chugged upstream for 30 miles (48 km), stopping at all the tiny stations en route, including one for the private Knockando House. Knockando's old station building is now the reception center at Tamdhu, which began distilling in 1897. The following year it joined Glenrothes and



The elegantly shaped twinned-pagoda roof of Strathisla was built in the 1870s.