



*Top Shelf Tasters*

February 22, 2013

## Goose Island "Bourbon County" Stout 15% IL



Goose Island Brewery is located in Chicago, Illinois, and began as a single brewpub known as Clybourn, which was opened in May 1988 by John Hall in Lincoln Park, Chicago, Illinois. The larger brewery (as we know it today) was opened in 1995, while the second brewpub, Wrigleyville, was opened in 1999. On March 28, 2011, Goose Island announced that it will sell its 58% stake in Fulton Street Brewery LLC (the legal name of Goose Island Brewing) to distribution partner Anheuser-Busch. The remaining 42% stake, owned by Craft Brewers Alliance LLC, is also to be purchased by Anheuser-Busch. Goose Island produces several year-round and seasonal styles of craft beer, the best-known of which are 312 Urban Wheat Ale and Honker's Ale. Goose Island also offers Root Beer and various sodas including Orange Cream and Grape soda. The beers are distributed across the United States and the United Kingdom, after a large stake of the company was sold to Widmer Brothers Brewery in 2006, and the brewery was able to expand into different markets. The brewer began distributing Matilda west of the Rockies in March 2010. Goose Island outsources the production of some of its beers. Honker's Ale and IPA sold on the east coast is now brewed under contract in New Hampshire.

"I really wanted to do something special for our 1000th batch at the original brewpub. Goose Island could have thrown a party. But we did something better. We brewed a beer. A really big batch of stout-so big the malt was coming out of the top of the mash tun. After fermentation we brought in some bourbon barrels to age the stout. One hundred and fifty days later, Bourbon County Stout was born-A liquid as dark and dense as a black hole with a thick foam the color of bourbon barrels. The nose is a mix of charred oak, vanilla, carmel and smoke. One sip has more flavor than your average case of beer. It overpowers anything in the room. People have even said that it's a great cigar beer, but I haven't yet tried a cigar that would stand up to it."

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Goose Island Bourbon  
County Stout



Goose Island Beer Company  
(AB-InBev)  
Chicago, Illinois  
Beer style: Imperial Stout  
Ref: ratebeer.com Dec2012

Common descriptors are

black coffee thick chocolate  
vanilla tan malts great **dark** sweet  
brown via buddy smooth oak fruit

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

## Alaskan Brewing Co "Smoked Porter"

### 6.5% Alaska



*The Alaskan Brewing Company was founded in 1986 by Geoff and Marcy Larson. The brewery was the 67th brewing company opened in the United States and the first to open in Juneau since Prohibition. Alaskans had been brewing beer throughout its history. The Larsons took that history and turned it into a business. After moving to Alaska, Geoff and Marcy had the idea of opening a brewery suggested to them. While researching brewing in Alaska, Marcy found the shipping records from the Douglas Brewing Company, which existed from 1899-1907. These records listed the ingredients for the popular beers it made, along with a newspaper article that explained the brewing process. Geoff brewed one of the beers and they both enjoyed it. That beer is still brewed today and is called Alaskan Amber. Alaskan Amber became the first beer the company produced. The brewery officially opened in December of 1986, with Geoff and Marcy, as well as ten volunteers working on packing beer. Today, the Alaskan Brewing Company is the Great American Beer Festival's most award-winning craft brewery. The company has expanded its distribution to thirteen other western states and in 2011, the Alaskan Brewing Company was ranked number 14 on the Brewers Association's "Top 50 Craft Brewing Company" list, which is based on beer sales volume.*

The dark, robust body and pronounced smoky flavor of this limited edition beer make it an adventuresome taste experience. Alaskan Smoked Porter is produced in limited "vintages" each year and, unlike most beers, may be aged in the bottle, much like fine wine.

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Alaskan Smoked Porter



Alaskan Brewing Company  
Juneau, Alaska  
Beer style: Smoked  
Ref: ratebeer.com Dec2012

Common descriptors are

bitter **black** smoky tan

**malts** chocolate coffee roasted **dark**  
wood brown

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



## Bowmore Surf

79 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 40%

Bottle Size: 70cl

*Bowmore is the oldest of the eight distilleries currently operating on the famous whisky making island of Islay in Scotland. It was founded in 1779 by John Simpson, which also makes it one of the oldest in Scotland. The name of Bowmore translates as 'sea rock' from Gaelic. Bowmore one of only a few distilleries which still produces its own floor malted barley, hand-turned by a traditional wooden malt shovel and lots of hard back-breaking work. Water used to make their whiskies comes from the local Laggan River which runs over richly peated grounds, the same peat that is used to fire their kilns. The distillery is currently owned by Morrison Bowmore - a subsidiary of the Japanese company Suntory, who also own the other Scottish distilleries at Auchentoshan and Glen Garioch. Bowmore has an annual production capacity of two million litres and is one of the biggest selling single malt whisky brands in the smoky, peaty style.*

### *Notes from bowmore.com*

Bowmore Surf takes its inspiration from the sea - the waves that constantly pound Islay's 130 miles of coastline, the salt spray that's driven far inland to saturate our peaty soil and the sea-salt tang that finds its way into our celebrated Single Malt. Bowmore Surf is a fitting tribute to the sea that shapes it.

Nose: Peat smoke, light zesty fruits and a hint of fresh sea air.

Palate: Warm smoke, oak and delicious sweetness, balanced with a hint of zesty lime.

Finish: A robust and warm finish.

### *Notes from allthingswhisky.com*

Nose: Notes of smoked meat, a bit of tangy citrus and earthy peat up front. There are notes of chocolate, though none too bold, and salt. Kinda more 'sweat' salt as opposed to 'briny' salt. Yeah... exactly. Not quite as bad as you'd think though.

Palate: Hints of dry and bitter dark berries (on both the nose and palate), and quite bitter greens (again...they show up across the tongue and on the nose). Smoke on the palate, some gritty, briny grainy-ness.

Finish: Has some staying power and fortunately those more pungent and bitter notes mellow into something a little softer and caramel smooth after a few moments. Pleasant and natural oak-leeched caramel, that is.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



## Arran Machrie Moor (peated)

79 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islands

Strength: 46%

Bottle Size: 70cl

*The island of Arran was once famous for its whisky, however for over 150 years there was no legal distillery. This changed in 1995, when Scotland's second newest distillery opened at Lochranza, and was commissioned by the current distillery manager Gordon Mitchell. Interestingly, the charming Mr Mitchell was involved at the beginning of Cooley/Connemara. Does this make him the only living man to have commissioned two malt distilleries? The quality of the Arran whisky shows he got it right (again!), with stocks developing well.*

The first batch of peated Arran single malt is here, and as with all recent Arran releases, it's beautifully presented. The dog on the bottle is Bran, the faithful companion of Arran's legendary warrior giant Fingal, who tethered the animal to one of the stone circles that dot the Machrie Moor, the ancient peat bog on the west of the island.

*Notes from royalmilewhiskies.com*

Staff Tasting Notes

Nose: Smells young but really interesting. Grass, sweet malt, yeast, toast, vanilla and chocolate notes at the start. Gets fruitier after a while with citrus (lemon, lime and grapefruit) and artificial (but delicious) apple, pear and summer fruit notes. After a little more time some more savoury notes start to come through subtly with earthy, smoky bacon and peat ember notes topped off with BBQ and smoked hickory.

Palate: A big sweet hit at first then gets gradually bitter and drying like dark chocolate. Quite spicy as well until the finish which has a slightly cooling effect with a bitter liquorice taste. There is a very subtle earthiness throughout with a modest peat level.

Comments: An appealing if slightly simple whisky with a fantastic nose. The low (non-Islay) peat level lends itself well to the whisky.

Official Tasting Notes:

Aroma: Subtle and elusive initially. Hints of fudge, coconut & spice with a teasing touch of the glorious peat reek to follow.

Palate: Classic Arran at first with notes of citrus, orchard fruits and cardamom spice mingling in a rich melting pot. At the back of the palate peat smoke finally emerges to whip up a storm.

Finish: The peat reek takes centre stage leaving a rich, warming glow like the burning embers of a bonfire. Master Distiller James MacTaggart has skillfully combined all of the elements at work to create a harmonious blend of malt, peat and cask.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

## Old Pultney WK499 "Isabella Fortuna"

**85 points**

Country: Scotland

Region: Highlands

Strength: 52%

Bottle Size: 70cl



*Old Pultney is an under-rated whisky. The Distillery was built in 1826 in the town of Wick (or Pulteneytown), close to John o' Groats in the far North of Scotland.*

*It has been in the hands of Inver House Distillers since 1995 who have produced the current single malt. It has been well worth the effort.*

*Notes from [whiskynotes.com](http://whiskynotes.com)*

Isabella was the name of a sailing ship launched in 1890. Later on, it was fitted with an engine and its name was changed to Fortuna. The herring trawler has been restored under the name Isabella Fortuna and it is currently the last drifter in Wick Harbour.

The sales figures and popularity of Old Pultney have gained a lot in recent years. Their products are marketed as the "genuine maritime malt" and in January 2010, they launched this WK499 (the registration number of the boat) as a tribute to the Isabella Fortuna. The whisky doesn't have an age statement, but is said to be less than 10 years old and is only available in travel retail.

**Nose:** Fresh and crisp start with vanilla and quite some fruits, mostly apples and pears. Some citrus. A hint of sweet coconut and more vanilla. After a while, the typical Old Pultney saltiness comes through with notes of wet grains and limestone. Slightly youngish but really attractive.

**Palate:** Fierce attack on dry grassy notes, salt and lemon. A bit harsh in that respect – like the salty first sip of a margarita cocktail. There's a malty sweetness but it's not big enough to find a pleasant balance. Maybe still a hint of vanilla in the background? Hints of peat as well.

**Finish:** Really dry and fairly bitter, with lemon and salt again. Medium long.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

## The Bruery "Smoking Wood" Rye Barrel Aged Porter 13% California

*A small craft brewery located in Orange County, California. Our name is a fusion of 'brewery' with our family name, Rue.*

*Our calling is to create beers with character and depth using the simplest and purest of means. We do not filter or pasteurize our beers. All of our bottled beers gain carbonation through bottle conditioning, allowing carbonation to naturally occur through a secondary bottle fermentation. We strive to use unconventional ingredients, and we will proudly state what we put in our beers.*



Smoked Imperial Rye Porter aged in Rye Whiskey Barrels. A rich porter layered with rye spiciness and earthy smoke, caramel-like flavors, roasty malt and oaky deliciousness. Brewed with beachwood and cherrywood smoked malt, and aged in rye whiskey barrels, Smoking Wood is a delicious demonstration of what wood has to offer when it comes to beer. This imperial smoked porter is brewed with a hefty amount of rye malt, contributing to a full body and light spiciness. Toasty oak, caramel and vanilla flavors balance the smokiness, contributing to an intense yet refined flavor profile. This is one of our favorite beers at the moment, we hope you agree.

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The Bruery Smoking  
Wood - Rye Barrel



The Bruery  
Placentia, California  
Beer style: Smoked  
Ref: ratebeer.com Dec2012

Common descriptors are

tan **smoke**

chocolate malts black whiskey dark  
smokey brown vanilla

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

## Fremont "Bourbon Barrel Abominable Ale" 9% Washington



*We are a small, family-owned microbrewery founded in 2008 to brew small-batch artisan beers made with the best local ingredients we can find. We use barley from Washington State, hops from a 4th generation hop-growing family in the Yakima Valley and water from the Cedar River Watershed in the Cascade Mountains. Located in the historic Fremont neighborhood of Seattle, you can drink our beer at our Urban Beer Garden, on draft at many fine bars and restaurants in the area, grab a bottle at your favorite bottle shop or grocery store -- or pick up a keg or growler to go.*

*Fremont Brewing was born of our love for our home and history as well as the desire to prove that beer made with the finest local ingredients – organic when possible --, is not the wave of the future but the doorway to beer's history. Starting a brewery in the midst of the Great Recession is clearly an act of passion. We invite you to come along with us and enjoy that passion -- because beer matters.*

Lovingly referred to by Fremonters as the B-BOMB, this bourbon barrel-aged edition of our winter ale has a warming spicy aroma and rich caramelly notes of bourbon, wood and vanilla added to dark roasty chocolatey malt flavors and subtle hopping.

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99

Fremont Bourbon  
Barrel Abominable Ale



Fremont Brewing Company  
Seattle, Washington  
Beer style: English Strong Ale  
Ref: ratebeer.com Jan2013

Common descriptors are

**dark brown black**

**vanilla** oak **chocolate** caramel  
sweet malts wood smooth coconut  
roasted

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

## Dalwhinnie Special Release 25yr

**86 points**

Country: Scotland

Region: Highlands

Strength: 52.1%

Bottle Size: 70cl



*An isolated distillery located by a stretch of the A9 with few signs of human life, Dalwhinnie is Scotland's highest distillery and certainly one of the most remote. It is not quite a Speyside, although its water source the River Truim runs into the Spey. It is classed as a Highland Malt.*

*Notes from [royalmilewhiskies.com](http://royalmilewhiskies.com)*

### Staff Tasting Notes

Nose: Lots of tropical fruits; mangoes, honeydew melon, paw paw. Sweet notes of vanilla custard, cinder toffee and honey. Freshly sawn oak shavings. Waxy. A lovely grassy/peppery note; watercress. Eucalyptus. Aloe Vera.

Palate: Waxy, mouth coating, chewy oakiness. Vanilla, honey, grassy and peppery. With water; toffee, syrup, still grassy but also a slightly mentholated note.

Finish: Cloves and liquorice, a little minty. Tannic. Medium length, cut shorter with water.

Comments: Lovely whisky, big fruit bomb on the nose a first, so much going on. Palate doesn't disappoint. The rejuvenated American oak cask used really makes its mark.

### Official Tasting Notes

Nose: Opens cautious and soft, with waxy honeycomb offset by fresh, gently tart fruit notes, but soon reveals an aromatic complexity beyond its age. Sweet wood-shavings. The trademark Dalwhinnie honeycomb is the keynote, with heather and natural moorland scents, then traces of cream soda. Later, a nutty dryness coats rich, textured Italian chocolate ice-cream. Water raises warm candlewax; the effect is of a gentle waft of sugared patisserie-fresh glazed fruit pastries, with top-notes of honeysuckle, and the nose-feel is now more peppery.

Palate: Best straight, when it is smooth, sweet, distinctly waxy and initially cooling (again, honeycomb), with a rich marriage of oily malt and light, drying winey notes. Later, elegant vanilla-laced tannins give balancing hints of spice. With water (just a drop) the texture remains smooth and 'teeth-coating'; the sweetness is still apparent. Finally dry and herbal (grassy freshness) with a hint of cleansing resin.

Finish: Rounded and medium to long. Warming, with a distinct rich, oaky spiciness in the aftertaste. With water, softer, shorter and less obviously spicy, the resin now transformed into late clove.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

## Aberlour Warehouse No 1 Cask 4934 Bottle 132

88 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 57

Bottle Size: 70cl



*The Aberlour distillery lies on the edge of Aberlour village, which has preserved much of its historical character. Original houses, built of stones taken from the bed of the Spey, mingle with more recent buildings and landscaped public gardens. The village and distillery of Aberlour lie in the heart of Speyside, where the Lour burn joins the river Spey. Founded on its current site by James Fleming in 1879. The distillery is very much a working one, but is open to the public if you call first. Built alongside the Lour burn, the Aberlour (Gaelic for 'mouth of the chattering burn') distillery uses pure spring water that rises through peat and granite from Ben Rinnes. The St. Drostan Well stone was erected to mark the location of the spring, which was used by St. Drostan to baptise the local population in the 7th century. Matured in a combination of bourbon and sherry casks it is the definitive example of a Speyside single malt.*

*No notes available*

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



## Octomore Edition 4.2 "Comus" 5yr

90 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 61%

Bottle Size: 70cl

*Pronounced "brook-laddie," Bruichladdich sits close to Port Charlotte on Islay. Apart from a break in the 1920's and 1930's whisky has been produced steadily until 1983 when production ceased briefly. In 1985, the future looked bleak when the distillery's owners, Invergordon, were taken over by Whyte and Mackay who chose to focus efforts on their flagship single malts, Dalmore and Isle of Jura at the expense of Bruichladdich. Thankfully the distillery's future is brighter since its purchase by the whisky independent Murray McDavid in December 2000. Jim McEwan and his team have breathed life back into the place, with Islay's first bottling hall also now installed. The whisky produced by Bruichladdich was traditionally one of the least peaty of the Islay malts, although ironically it is rated as the islanders' favourite. In the future we will see different whiskies from these stills: the traditional unpeated, the 40ppm Port Charlotte, the monstrous 82ppm Octomore, a triple- and even quadruple-distilled spirit, an organic spirit...the list goes on.*

Notes from [royalmilewhiskies.com](http://royalmilewhiskies.com)

### Official Tasting Notes

**Body:** Medium weight and well defined for a young Islander. The texture is rich, sweet and mellow and the viscosity of the sauterne brings balance to the power of the peat. This is a most sophisticated Octomore and it's kind of unbelievable to see "The beast" tamed a little!

**Nose:** The opening is a beautiful combination of peat smoke, bracken, leather, tobacco pouches, bog-myrtle & briny waves. Then little twists of home-made mint Toffee enter the system as do the nutty notes from the oaks – both french and american. And so the dance goes on but where is the french beauty? She waits patiently on the fringes then at exactly the right moment she makes her entrance from the epicentre of the spirit bringing aromatics and flavour the young ileach could only dream about. It's a brilliant engagement to experience. From deep in her soul she commits to this amazing relationship, the aromatics relay the message to the waiting taste buds to expect a whole new experience. The grand cru sauterne flavours of pear syrup, plump bursting grapes, guava, passion fruits and cantaloupe with a dusting of icing sugar; you have to wonder just how surreal this is, a super heavy peated spirit being seduced by the delectable classic french beauty – passion changes everything!

**Palate:** It's absolutely outrageous, the coming together of flavours so far removed from each other you would think it would be a disaster but once again we stand in awe of imagination and the courage to take the consumer on this incredible journey of discovery. The kaleidoscope of aromatics transcends beautifully onto the palate which is going crazy with excitement. The smoke is the perfect foil for the sauterne; this is bruichladdich at its best, walking on the wild side, bringing pleasure and excitement to those who have that sense of adventure and passion that comes only from people who are totally committed to tradition, yet fearless in their search for the ultimate dram.

**Finish:** This love affair should never have happened but it has and we are witness to its enchantment, passion, and joyfulness as the flavours linger long into the night, ending on a drift of peat smoke and the marine magic that is truly islay.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



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