



Top Shelf Tasters

May 4, 2012





White Birch "Tavern Ale" 7.9% New Hampshire

Butter's Tavern was a fixture of Concord, NH in the eighteenth century. Inspired by their loggerhead ale, we've created a Smoked Imperial Brown Ale. Hearty malts, with a nuanced smokiness and smooth finish create our interpretation of this historic ale. We hope you enjoy this slice of New Hampshire history.

About the Brewery

White Birch Brewing is NH's first nano-brewery. They started making beer in June of 2009 in 15 or 20 gallon batches. The advent of their first calendar year saw them go from about a barrel a day brewing to about two barrels a day. Thanks to the continued interest in their beers they have pushed harder and on some batches reached three barrels. It's all done by hand in their modest brewery in Hooksett, NH.

They are also well underway with the change over to full operations with the new seven barrel brew system. The first batches have been brewed and things are working well.

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White Birch Tavern Ale



White Birch Brewing
Hooksett, New Hampshire
Beer style: Smoked
Ref: ratebeer.com Mar2012

Common descriptors are

dark **brown** tan
smokiness malts **smokey** sweet caramel
smoke burnt smoky smoked chocolate

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Laphroaig Cairdeas 2008

84 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 55%

Bottle Size: 70cl



Drinking aggressively smoky Scotch isn't typically a summertime pursuit (a troubling failure of imagination). But when Laphroaig—possibly the most distinctive of all heavyweight malts from the isle of Islay—releases a special bottling, we take note, seasonal biases be damned. Càirdeas (CAR-chuss) means friendship in Gaelic; for the last several years, the distillery has released unique and very limited Càirdeas editions of Laphroaig during the Fèis Ìle, or Islay Festival. Enjoy this as we did in Scotland at the distillery last year.

Laphroaig Cairdeas (pronounced more or less like 'gorgeous' and gaelic for 'friendship') was a limited edition for the 2008 Feis Ile (Islay festival). It's a blend of quarter casks (up to 9y) with a few older sherry butts (17y).



Nose: Gentle peat and a peppery undertone. Creamy. Quite fruity and nutty. Coal smoke. Medicinal - iodine and hints of antiseptic cream. Hints of smoked fish. Vanilla and possibly some lemon loiter in the background.

Palate: Sweet peat and a little dusty. Fairly salty, peppery and fruity. Slight notes of iodine. Subtle sherry, liquorice and honey. Very slightly mentholated.

Finish: Quite sweet, peaty and fruity, with abundant amounts of smoke. Becomes a little honeyed after a few seconds. Lingering creamy, medicinal notes.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Laphroaig Cairdeas 2009 12yr

88 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 57.5%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The 2009 Laphroaig Cairdeas was the first cask chosen by distillery manager John Campbell. Like the previous Laphroaig Cairdeas 2008 (a big hit at Feis Ile), this 12 year-old is bottled at cask strength and the remaining bottles were made available for Friends of Laphroaig after the festival. It was matured in Makers Mark bourbon barrels.

Nose: Starts off on mellow peat smoke with woody undertones. Young wood, "pencil shavings" as Robert Hicks describes it. Some refreshing citrus, banana and red fruit. Very nice. Like last year's Cairdeas: almonds and marzipan. Overall very creamy and rather sweet, with hints of burnt sugar.

Palate: Starting on lemon, growing sweeter and more candied. Lemon pie. Roasted almonds, some espresso. Some liquorice and more spices than the Cairdeas 2008. Good stuff with a good balance (although on the dry side).

Finish: Long with diminishing sweetness, leaving the peat smoke behind and getting very dry in the end.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Laphroaig Cairdeas 2010

88 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 57.3%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The 2010 release is tagged "Master Edition" because it's created by the Master blender Robert Hicks. The recipe is 50% of bourbon hogsheads (11 years old) and 50% of first fill bourbon (15, 17 and 19 years old).

Nose: In line with previous Cairdeas editions. The smoke and ashes seem a bit more prominent this time. Lemon and salt. Sweet marzipan notes and some banana again, but overall it seems quite a bit drier. The pencil shavings and soft vanilla that I found quite typical for the 2009 release seem to have diminished. On the other hand, the new edition is slightly more spicy and coastal. A hint of peppermint?

Palate: Quite dry smoke with citrus. Powerful earthy peat. Iodine. Getting oily and slightly peppery. Overall quite dry and sharp, lacking a bit of sweet, rounder elements in my opinion.

Finish: Long and dry, evolving on salty almonds and some liquorice.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Laphroaig Cairdeas 2011

91 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 50.5%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The 2011 is a lively eight-year-old, aged in Maker's Mark barrels stored in earthen-floor warehouses near the crashing sea. It's an uncompromising, burly blitz of peat and sea brine that finishes like a charcoal-fueled fire, leaving you with a lingering, bourbon-touched sweetness. A splash of water brings out candied fruit and toffee.

Nose: More than average. Peat, honey, iodine, citrus. Very closed nose. This whisky says very little about itself when you nose it.

Taste: Smooth, powerful, oily. peat, iodine, citrus, wood, coffee, pepper.

Finish: Longer than average. peat, citrus, herbs, pepper, iodine.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



New Holland "Dragon's Milk" 10% Michigan

Dragon's Milk is a 17th century term used to describe the strong beer usually reserved for royalty. This strong ale was aged in oak for over 120 days. The aging process extracts flavors from the wood, which contribute to its complex character. Hints of bourbon flavor perfectly compliment its roasted malts to produce a beer fit for a King. [Style changed to stout after message from the brewery.]

About New Holland Brewing

Established in 1996, NHBC has grown from a scrappy two-man start-up to a thriving regional microbrewery, recognized for its creativity and artistry. We are very proud of our accomplishments thus far, and believe in earning our place in the brewing industry and in our customer's hearts and minds everyday.

All of our beer is brewed in Holland, Michigan at one of our two locations. We brew, cellar and package the main brands for distribution at our production facility on the north side of Holland, at 690 Commerce Court. In response to our considerable growth, we opened the new brewery in October of 2006, replacing the original headquarters. We also brew beer and distill spirits in our pub. The pub is a great place for us to explore new ideas, meet our customers in a comfortable setting and provide a place of community for all who visit. The beers made here are typically special brews that rarely see their way outside of the friendly confines of our pub.

In 20011, we brewed and shipped just over 15,000 barrels of beer across 13 states (a barrel = 31 gallons) and shipped several thousand cases of spirits to more than 6 Midwestern states. We work hard to bring you an authentic, interesting and gratifying experience. We are proud to share our craft with you. Hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

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98

New Holland Dragons
Milk



New Holland Brewing
Company
Holland, Michigan
Beer style: Imperial Stout
Ref: ratebeer.com Mar2012

Common descriptors are

dark brown roasted **chocolate**
oak bourbon black tan **sweet** coffee
strong caramel **malts** vanilla creamy
bitter smooth

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Balvenie Signature 12yr Batch 4

88 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 40%

Bottle Size: 70cl

This is the latest release in the Balvenie Signature single malt range. Balvenie was founded in 1892 by William Grant, who wanted to build a new facility in the Speyside region next to his Glenfiddich distillery in Dufftown. Grant decided to renovate nearby Balvenie House and its outbuildings. Balvenie has a current annual production capacity of 5.5 million litres a year and is often described as 'the complete distillery', due to the fact that every process of production takes place on the site - they grow some of the barley on land next to the distillery (the only distillery to do this), have an active malting floor and their own cooperage. Balvenie has been one of the world's best selling single malt whiskies for a number of years and consistently remains in the top 10. The first batch of the Signature was released in 2008 to mark the 45th anniversary of Dave Stewart, the Balvenie's legendary Master Blender, working at the distillery. A new batch has been released roughly once a year since, with this one being the fourth. The whisky is named as such, because it is felt to represent the perfect 'signature' flavour and aroma profiles of Balvenie. All releases of the Signature, including this one, have been bottled at 12 years of age and using a combination of three different types of casking for maturation. These are ex-sherry casks and two types of ex-bourbon cask - first fill (ie, used for maturing bourbon but the first time it's been used for whisky) and re-fill (ie. used for maturing bourbon and then for whisky at least once). Batch No.4 is bottled at 40% ABV

Nose: Malt and spice , cinnamon, wood and thick honey syrup. Sexy. Hints of "silane " and dates in addition to nuts and cocoa powder.

Palate : Sweet stuff. Great sherry style shining through. Tannins are high. Golden syrup. Sultanas, chocolate cake , raisins some butter too.

Finish : Butter, vanilla, toast.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Balvenie Cuban Selection 14yr

83 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 43%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The Balvenie Cuban Selection was a limited edition for the French market. It's one of their rum finishes, in line with the former RumWood and GoldenCask releases.

Nose: Indeed, the rum notes are easily noticeable. Some sweet pear candy. Some nectarines and oranges. Trademark honey and hints of vanilla cake. Some peanut butter. Apples and cinnamon. Very round and feminine.

Palate: Quite sweet again, with the honey coated fruits on the foreground and a few nutty notes in the back. Vanilla and cinnamon again. Butter toffee. Relatively soft and candied.

Finish: Medium length, warm and sweet.



Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Balvenie Sherry Oak 17yr

91 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 43%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The best known example of The Balvenie to have been matured solely in Sherry Casks was the 50 year old 'Cask 191,' just 83 bottles of which were filled in 2002 with a retail price of \$9900 per bottle. This 17 year old expression is altogether more affordable at \$125 per bottle, and has been held in European Sherry butts, previously used to mature Oloroso Sherry, and purchased from the bodegas of Spain.

Nose: Well worn leather upholstery, cloves, medium-dry Sherry and delicate liquorice.

Palate: Delicious on the rich, ripe palate, with flavours of fruity Sherry, nutmeg, cinnamon and tangy spice. Water releases pleasing vanilla and oak notes.

Finish: Lengthy, with stewed fruits, tasty spices and a hint of oak

Other tasting notes:

Dave Broom

Nose: Chocolate covered raisins, dried fruit. Heavily sherried. Varnish, black banana and toffee apple. Shows some power. Freshly polished oak. In time (and with water) the nose firms up. Furniture polish and antique shops. Hint of sulphur.

Palate: Sweet start, melting dark chocolate. Firm enough grip which slightly mutes the mid palate and hides the sweetness behind.

Finish: Long mixing light spice, dried fruit, drying tannin and a nutty honeyed note. Ultimately dry.

Comment: Good but the oak has leaned a little too heavily on the expressiveness of the whisky.

Martine Nouet

Nose: Sherried. Toffee, marrons glacés. Rich chocolate. A hint of rubber. Wet ground coffee. Maraschino. Walnut.

Palate: Smooth start with lots of chocolate fudge, then oak has its word, tightening up taste buds.

Finish: Woody and spicy.

Comment: The sherry influence conveys a certain dourness to the malt. Not fully convinced by this finish.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Balvenie Portwood 21yr

93 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 43%

Bottle Size: 70cl

To create The Balvenie PortWood Aged 21 Years, a marriage of rare Balvenie is transferred to port casks, or pipes, which have held fine port wines. Here it is sampled regularly by The Balvenie Malt Master to ensure that just the right amount of character is imparted by the port casks, enhancing and developing the single malt whilst preserving its original characteristics.

Nose: A perfume of fruity and ripe raisin notes, backed by a nutty dryness.

Palate: A malt of refinement and remarkable character, it is creamy and silky with fruit, honey and spice notes

Finish: Long and gentle nutty finish.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

