



Top Shelf Tasters

December 27, 2013





Glen Moray 25yr Portwood

n/a points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 43%

Bottle Size: 70cl

Glen Moray is situated on the western outskirts of the town of Elgin and takes its water from the River Lossie. A former brewery dating from 1815, Glen Moray Distillery was established in 1897. The distillery grounds contain Gallowcreek Hill, Elgin's former gallows. In 1962 when the distillery grounds were excavated in order to build a new warehouse, seven skulls were uncovered, one of which had a musket ball embedded in the jaw. The Distillery has a more peaceful existence these days! Although Glen Moray's sister distillery Glenmorangie has been a pioneer in finishing its whisky in red wine casks, the initial experiments in wood finishes were carried out at Glen Moray. Glen Moray since 1999 has been mellowing its whisky in casks which have previously contained Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc. A very pleasant distillery to visit

Notes from Glen Moray

Nose: Complex oaky nose

Palate: A spicy kick from the bourbon followed by a sweetness from the port finish.

Finish: Dark chocolate & creamy vanilla leaves a long lingering finish.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

Bruichladdich 2003 7yr Port Matured

85 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Western Highlands

Strength: 46%

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 malt-review.com

It's a 7-year-old whisky distilled in 2003, and rather than ending up in a bourbon cask – and not even finished in some obscure yet utterly fascinating rare wine cask – this whisky has been aged only in Port casks, and bottled at 46% ABV. Another intriguing experiments from the folks at Bruichladdich.

Nose: Sweet and creamy. A mellow, soft brie; or the occasional waft of dessert wine. Even a sweet rosé wine. Apples. Molasses. Pretty unusual and aromatic.

Palate: The classic, thick and velvety Laddie texture really shines through on this. Warming, plummy. Seville orange marmalade. Gentle and stately. Manchego or even a Wensleydale cheese. (Actually, something about this makes me think it would go very well with cheeses – not just the fact that I'm thinking of port and cheese together!)

Finish: There's a final warming, peppery tang on the back end. But it's a rather lovely – nothing to seep into your bones like an Octomore, but still very graceful, textured and nuanced.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Glendronach 15yr Tawny Port Finish

85 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 46%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The good news is that Glendronach's reopening in 2003 is no flash in the pan, and Allied are investing further funds into their second largest brand. It is the last coal-fired distillery in Scotland, but will have to switch by 2006 in order to comply with EU legislation. This means that coal-fired stills will exist in Japan, but not Scotland! Anyway, the distillery was built at Fergie, near Huntly in 1826, but was unfortunately burnt down in 1837 (perhaps they have a point in Brussels!) The distillery is very traditional and still has its own floor maltings, which provides about 20% of the malt required by the distillery. Two extra stills were added in 1962 after William Teachers and Sons had bought the distillery. The make at Glendronach is a key component of Teachers blended whisky but as a single malt it is highly regarded within the industry.

Notes from royalmilewhiskies.com

Introduced to the Glendronach range in 2011 the 15 year old Tawny Port finish continued the distillery's new owner's plans of taking the bourbon matured whisky from the old owners and bringing it more into line with their idea of the traditional taste of Glendronach. This one has spent the last few years of its time in cask in Tawny Port casks, picking up lovely red fruit flavours.

Official Tasting Notes

Colour: Prominent rose-wine hue, built around a light copper orange core.

Nose and Palate: Fruit shortcake drenched in vanilla custard, with a scattering of dried figs, dates and wild strawberries.

Finish: Smooth tannins and light acidity highlight a wonderfully long finish.

Comments: A fruit laden whisky to enliven the taste buds.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Bowmore Voyage

89 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 56%

Bottle Size: 70cl

House style: Smoky, salty and sometimes with a perfumed character.

Located in the town of the same name on the shores of Loch Indaal.

The oldest existing distillery on Islay, having been legalised in 1779. It was purchased by Brian Morrison in 1963 for £117,000. Bowmore has been 100% owned by Suntory since 1994 (they purchased a 34% stake in 1989).

The spirit that flows through its stills is one of the lighter of the Islay whiskies, despite using malt with a phenol content of 23 parts per million. Bowmore is notable for still having an operational floor maltings. The spirit can stand up well to fairly lengthy maturation in rich sherry casks and the highly sought after Black Bowmore is the perfect example of this. These bottles, which initially sold at around £100, are now fetching upwards of £1000 - when you can find one.

Notes from whiskymagazine.com

Michael Jackson

Nose: Less obviously smoky than the Bordeaux finish. More perfumy. Drier. Dried fruit?

Palate: Smooth, light on the tongue. Develops some fruitiness.

Finish: Spicier. More lively. Seems crisp at first, but lingers very warmly, with late brown sugar and salt.

Comment: Port often leaves a toffeeish note, but not in this case. Perhaps needs a bit more maturity.

Jim Murray

Nose: Light and juicy, the peat is little more than a distant echo. Sweet malt adds weight, but not much.

Palate: Much more peat on the early arrival, several layers of oak and then a brilliant rush of fruit and then more clean peat and a wave of spice.

Finish: Medium length but remains clean, crisp and softly peated.

Comment: Really impressive balance and complexity. Very laid-back and understated. Great stuff.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Full Sail "Wreck the Halls" Hoppy Holiday Ale 6.5% oregon

Full Sail Brewing Company is a craft brewery in Hood River, Oregon, United States. Founded in 1987, Full Sail was the first commercially successful craft brewery to bottle beer in the Pacific Northwest for retail sale, and one of Oregon's early microbreweries. The first beer packaged was Full Sail Golden Ale, followed in 1988 by Full Sail Imperial Porter, Full Sail Amber Ale, and Wassail Winter Ale.

Notes from ratebeer.com

This annual favorite is a sublime hybrid of an American style IPA and a winter warmer. The result is a bold brew that celebrates the holidays with an intriguing blend of Centennial hops providing elegant citrus notes balanced by a backdrop of a rich caramel malt body. Dry hopped to amplify the aromas and flavor. Available in 22oz. bottles and draught. Gold medal winner at the 2010 World Beer Championships.

ratebeer™

93

Full Sail Wreck the
Halls



Full Sail Brewing Company
Hood River, Oregon
Beer style: India Pale Ale (IPA)
Ref: ratebeer.com Nov2013

Common descriptors are

amber **hops**

caramel **malts** spice citrus sweet

bitter white pine grapefruit

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Anderson Valley "Bourbon Barrel Stout" 6.9% California

Founded in 1987, the Anderson Valley Brewing Company brewed out of a 10-barrel brewhouse, located in the lower level of its brewpub, The Buckhorn Saloon. Gleaming stainless steel vats brewed and fermented barley and other specialty grains to create outstanding ales, porters, stouts, and wheat beers. These brews began as a dream of Kenneth Allen to create the smoothest tasting ales available anywhere. When the demand for our award winning ales exceeded the capacity of our 10-barrel brewery below the pub, we built our present 30-barrel facility at the corner of Highways 128 and 253, a mile from the center of Boonville. That was in 1996, and this brewery saw us through a dramatic period of growth, which included the introduction of a 12 ounce bottling line and a production level of 15,000 barrels in 1998, twice the amount brewed in 1997. Yet, the brewery's growth was outpacing its larger space and expanded capacity. (continued below)

Notes from ratebeer.com

Complexity. Aged for three months in Wild Turkey Bourbon barrels, this luxurious stout has a deep ebony hue and a beautiful mahogany head. The woody, vanilla-like notes imparted by the barrels mingle with aromas of fresh baked bread, toffee, and espresso and envelop the rich chocolate and roasted barley flavors with a fine bourbon character. Our exclusive partnership with Wild Turkey gives Anderson Valley a world class, consistent source of barrelage, allowing our brewers to explore new frontiers in barrel-aged craft beer.

ratebeer

97

Anderson Valley Wild
Turkey Bourbon Barrel
Stout

 Anderson Valley Brewing
Company
Boonville, California
Beer style: Stout
Ref: ratebeer.com Dec2013

Common descriptors are

dark brown coffee creamy sweet
vanilla black chocolate
roasted smooth tan oak malts

(continued from above)

In 1998, construction began on a state-of-the-art, three-story Bavarian-style brewhouse. The centerpiece of the brewhouse are gleaming 100- and 85- barrel copper brew kettles rescued by Ken Allen from a defunct German breweries during a trip to Europe in 1995. The new brewhouse went online in August of 2000. By 2010 Ken Allen decided to retire and began to search for a successor to continue the Anderson Valley commitment to quality. In April of 2010 the brewery sold to industry veteran Trey White. In September of that year Fal Allen (former general manager 2000 – 2004, no relation to Ken) returned to the brewery as brewmaster. White has focused on innovation and quality, introducing the Bahl Hornin' Series, expanding the barrel aged program, and increasing brewing capacity.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Talisker Port Ruige nas

points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 45.8%

Bottle Size: 70cl

Today Talisker sits in a huddle of white buildings close to a shoreline covered in seaweed at low tide. Little of the old distillery remains, thanks to a recent re-fit and a fire in 1960, when spirit trickled out of a still through a brass valve onto a coal fire below. The still-house was set ablaze along with the stills, which were afterwards replaced exactly, apart from being fitted with internal steam coils to prevent another fire. As the sole survivor of the island's distilleries, Talisker has evolved in isolation. Without a community of other distillers to turn to, it has had to rely on its own ingenuity. A possible example of this can be seen outside the back of the distillery, where a pair of pipes appear through the wall, soar in a giant U-bend and then plunge into two wooden worm tubs brimful of cold water. The pipes, known as lyne arms, connect the top of the stills to the copper worms where the spirit is condensed. They look like two enormous question marks on their side, and are quite unique to Talisker.

Notes from talisker.com

Official Tasting Notes

Nose: Instant. A burst of spent match; the astringent and dusty tang of sulphur dioxide sits above a bed of oaty, cranberry flapjack. The sulphurous note quickly dissipates to reveal a comforting heart of honey, malt and creamy toffee. Then, consolidation: a beautifully structured, and subtle, interplay of pine resin, traces of menthol, refreshing top notes of tropical fruits and red berry sharpness; hints of drying, oaked red wine (Chianti or Brunello), with restrained tannins coming through as dark-chocolate shavings and playful hints of vanilla. Superbly balanced. (Much later, nut-toffee notes and a subtle kirsch acidity).

Palate: Smooth and cooling at first; rapidly developing across the palate. Earthy South American cocoa notes – perhaps in a tarte au chocolat – are balanced by a fruity, cherry acidity; then a wave of softly drying sulphurous smoke and coal tar notes; and later, superb, chewy, brewers' chocolate-malt. (Guinness malts?)

Finish: Masses of intense, cocoa-rich chocolate. Drying; growing bituminous with the implication of salt and suggestions of tart, mixed fruit jam. Later, phenolic and resinous, leaving the breath smoky and juniper-accented. A gloriously long, warming and sustaining finish. (Much, much later, the palate becomes charged with sweet, bruised, red apple notes.

Comment: Stunning. Unassailably Talisker; reassuringly volcanic. Bold and confident yet with impeccable balance and enormous restraint. A remarkably affirming whisky.

Precise and pleasingly accessible at cask strength, a transformed identity is manifest with water: equally nuanced, it offers a softer and more fused character, somehow more organic in composition, and releases hitherto subsumed classic Talisker notes.

Altogether, a perfect balance of sweet fruit-acid notes; drying cocoa-rich tannins; floral and resinous topnotes; and appetising, savoury, sulphurous smoke. Very fresh, clean and possessed of a consistent lightness throughout, it remains a very precisely engineered whisky.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Laphroaig Cairdeas 2013 Portwood

93 points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 51.3%

Bottle Size: 70cl

The Johnstons started farming at Laphroaig around 1800, and soon after messers Charles and Willie Doig were asked to do some 'work on a distillery' at Laphroaig. By 1815 Laphroaig's reputation had spread and the tax man was getting suspicious so they 'officially' established 'Johnston & Johnston' and the legend of Laphroaig had begun. Today's Laphroaig is famously peated, using malt of 35ppm phenol levels but tasting like much more. The whisky is distilled in seven stills, each unique by virtue of their unusual flat sides & base. They are all small stills and are of varying ages. The 'peat freaks' have ensured that this malt always does well at auction and official bottlings have been relatively rare. They tend to mature their whisky in ex-bourbon casks, but 2007 sees the release of some sherry cask matured whisky.

Notes from connosr.com

Friends of Laphroaig and the Ardbeg Committee frequently send out newsletters offering their members 'special' deals on limited bottlings. Normally I look at these and choke on the three-figure sum, (as much as I'd like to buy them). However, when offered this first ever port cask Laphroaig at £47 I jumped at the chance. The question was - do I drink it or wait a couple of years and sell it for three or four times the price? After 10 seconds thought, it got opened!

Nose: First thing I noticed is the almost luminous pink colour - very weird. A drop of water releases a minty-smoky nose. Quite like Kilchoman really. But there's something else too which I can't quite get - bananas and hay??? Seems mad for a Laphroaig but it could be my imagination running wild.

Palate: This has a very mellow smokiness on the palate, (this is tasting with water) with a fruitiness that reminds me most of plums. As it opens up further, a chocolatey edge is revealed.

I hate limited editions being this good. You know you're never going to get another bottle, (at least without paying super-inflated prices). But then again, if they weren't this good they wouldn't be limited. What a conundrum.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

Linkwood 1981 26yr Portwood



n/a points

Country: Scotland

Region: Speyside

Strength: 56.9%

Bottle Size: 70cl

Built on the outskirts of Elgin in 1821, by Peter Brown, the distillery takes its name from the near by Linkwood house, which was owned by the Brown family. James Walker & Co. ran the distillery from 1842 until 1868 when Peter Brown died and was succeeded by his son William. William completely rebuilt the distillery in 1872 and is said to have continued with the high standards of quality set by his father. In 1932 Linkwood came under the ownership of SMD and subsequently Diageo. In 1962, a rebuilding program began but great care was taken so that the new stills were exact copies of the existing ones. In 1971 a second distillery unit was set up at Linkwood which housed a further four stills, but with the intention of being a single make. The old side of the distillery was mothballed in 1985, however it reopened in 1990 and operates for a few months each year. Michael Jackson states that the spirit from the older of the two sides produces a slightly heavier spirit than the new side.

Notes from wiskyexchange.com

For this Linkwood 1981, 12 yo malt that had been matured in traditional casks was transferred to port wine casks for a further 14 years. Something of a departure for Diageo's Special Releases, releasing three malts from the same distillery in 50cl bottles.

No tasting notes available.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:



Bowmore 1989 23yr Portwood

n/a points

Country: Scotland

Region: Islay

Strength: 50.8%

Bottle Size: 70cl

House style: Smoky, salty and sometimes with a perfumed character.

Located in the town of the same name on the shores of Loch Indaal.

The oldest existing distillery on Islay, having been legalised in 1779. It was purchased by Brian Morrison in 1963 for £117,000. Bowmore has been 100% owned by Suntory since 1994 (they purchased a 34% stake in 1989).

The spirit that flows through its stills is one of the lighter of the Islay whiskies, despite using malt with a phenol content of 23 parts per million. Bowmore is notable for still having an operational floor maltings. The spirit can stand up well to fairly lengthy maturation in rich sherry casks and the highly sought after Black Bowmore is the perfect example of this. These bottles, which initially sold at around £100, are now fetching upwards of £1000 - when you can find one.

Edinburgh Whisky Blog Tasting Notes

Nose: A serious whisky with a deep and rich aroma. An initial floral sweetness greets the nose; gorse, heather and the typical Bowmore Parma Violet note. It moves aside for a richer salt-speckled caramel note, dark chocolate and rum soaked raisins. The last little kick brings BBQ smoked lamb, covered in pepper, honey and sweet spices.

Palate: The palate acts in reverse to the nose. First comes the briny, dry charcoal smoke. It covers the palate with hot BBQ smoke, frazzles and a slight citrus note poking through. Once the smoke leaves the sweetness is left, although it is still lightly salted, like honey glazed ribs sprinkled with ginger. It is quite peppery on the palate but eventually gives way to the floral sweetness. Parma violets come through with heather honey and a dry orange zest.

Finish: The dry smoke is lingering and accompanies the tangy orange zest for a long, warming finish.

Official Tasting Notes

Colour: Deep mahogany with a rich ruby blush.

Nose: Rich, smoky and very complex. Plum skins, black cherries and dark chocolate are interwoven with wood smoke and sea-salt, seductive sandalwood and walnuts thrown on a roaring fire.

Palate: A swathe of rich smoky velvet brings luscious layered autumn fruits, tingly winter spices, blood orange and sensual winter black truffles.

Finish: Long and rich with smoke infused blood orange, truffle and walnut oil.

Nose:

Palate:

Finish:

