



Object of the Newsletter

To promote the appreciation of fine Scotch Whisky, the area from which it comes, the people that inhabit the land and it's history. By the way, I am merely expressing my opinion on the whiskies I am tasting, as you know, everybody has one.

I now take a look at the Glenfiddich 26-year-old "Excellence" which I tasted at the bar, in the Glenfiddich Distillery.

Does, standing at the bar in a kilt in the Glenfiddich distillery, drinking an aptly named "Excellence" whisky make the whisky taste even better. No, probably not, but damn! It felt so right! And the whisky was just stellar! I have tasted a number of Glenfiddich whiskies (that would probably be an understatement).

I have to say, I haven't had a bad one, and I've certainly had a number of great ones, and this one would be one of the greats.

If I had to try and compare the flavor to another whisky that you may have tried, I would say that it has some similarities to the Highland Park "Ice" edition, which was also stellar.

So, would I buy it? That would have to be a definite yes!

You can buy Glenfiddich 26-year-old "Excellence" for around \$450.00 a bottle.

Tasting Notes

Nose - Floral & fruity

Palate - Pineapple, toffee & Vanilla

Finish - Pineapple crumble

"Slainte Mhath"

Paul Bissett





The bullshitter's guide to whisky

Everything you need to know

At the launch for Chivas Regal's prestige blended whisky The Icon, we spoke to Phil Huckle, Brand Ambassador for Chivas Regal & The Glenlivet, who gave us his take on how to impress your friends and acquaintances with a boundless knowledge of whisky you're yet to actually have.

How to drink whisky

Drink your whisky with water

"I would recommend drinking it with just a little dash of water. The water enhances the flavour of the whisky, it releases all the esters and the flavour compounds, it takes a little bit of the heat off the alcohol, and helps you discover all the wonderful flavours in the whisky."

Even if you like it neat, add a tiny drop

"Even if you are one of those people who like to drink their whisky neat, and there's nothing wrong with that, I'd say get one of those pipettes that you can buy on the high street and just put the tiniest drop of water in it. Your senses, your palette will not be able to tell at all any difference in the ABV of the whisky but even that tiny drop of water enhances the flavour."

You can drink it with ice, but not too much

"You can drink whisky with a small amount of ice but, remember, ice essentially kills flavour. Keep it room temperature – one cube of ice on a hot day, if you're sitting outside in your garden or you're abroad somewhere in a hot climate. One cube of ice is ok because it melts very quickly and it just releases the water into the whisky and enhances it."

Use a curved glass

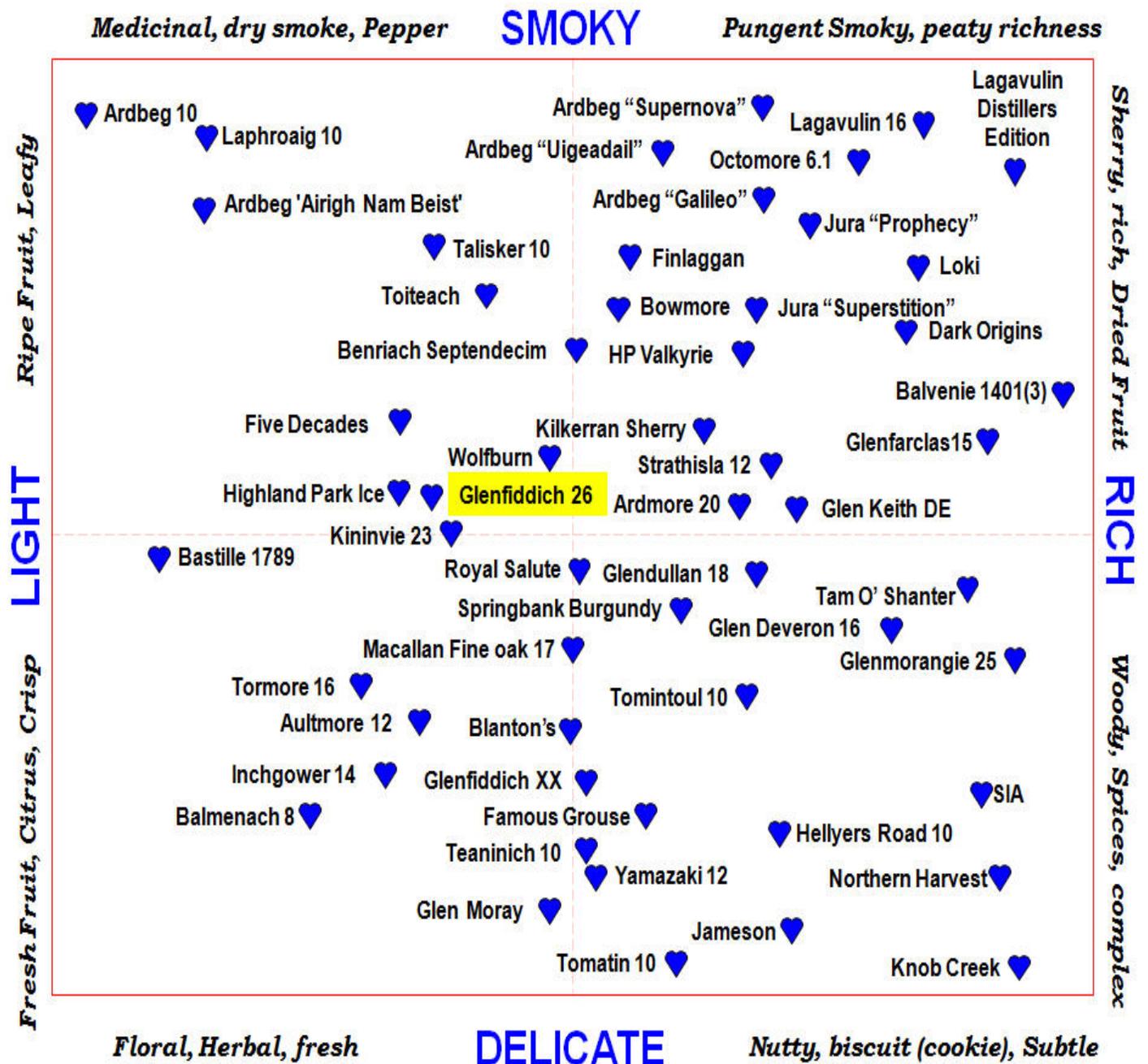
"Use a high quality glass if you can; an ISO whisky tasting glass, or something in which the glass is curved. So even if you're at home and you haven't got a whiskey glass to taste, even a wine glass is good, because it just captures the aroma of the whisky."

Nose your whisky

"Spend a lot of time nosing and savouring the whisky because your palette can only pick up four or five flavours, whereas your nose can pick up hundreds. To start with, nose the whisky gently because unlike wine, this is distilled it's over 40 per cent so it's very easy to overpower your senses."



Below is a simple guide to help you choose your single malt Whisky, and the flavor notes you should expect from it. Being Scottish I recommend you find a likely candidate and try it in a bar before buying the whole bottle. This Issue; [Glenfiddich 26-year-old](#).





The bullshitter's guide to whisky cont.

Take your time

“Have a little sip of the whisky neat. Hold it in your mouth for quite a few seconds, swirl it around, see what sort of flavours you're picking up, and then repeat the whole process with a tiny drop of water. You'll then have a different experience with a little bit of water. Repeat the process with a bit more water in the whisky – don't be afraid to go up to 2 parts whisky 1 part water, it's a great ratio to drink it at.”

How to talk about whisky

There are nine key flavour profiles

“In the wine trade they really go off on tangents, you know, like “you're skipping through a meadow on a summers day and the dew is rising” – all this bullshit. I think in terms of flavour profiles with whisky, stick to sweet, fruity, floral, spicy, herbal, oaky, nutty, dry and smoky. And all whiskies will have some or all of those flavours. And then that's your base, and from there you can then start thinking about more intricate flavours.”

Describe Scotch as “diverse”

“There are over 100 single malt distilleries in Scotland and there's hundreds of blended whiskies. Scotch whisky probably has the most diverse flavour profile of any spirit. If you're talking about single malt whiskies you can have the Islay whiskies which are very smoky, very peaty and then you can have Speyside whiskies, for example Glenlivet, which very sweet ripe fruit characteristics.”

Scotland is what makes Scotch so special

“What makes Scotch whisky very special is the environment of Scotland. The air gets into the casks – they're water tight – not air tight and so whilst the whisky is seeping into the oak and it's drawing flavour, character and colour from the barrels, air also gets into the cask and influences the flavour. For example, if your barrel is ageing by the west coast of Scotland, by the sea air, you get these salty seaweed notes coming through on the whisky. Something like Glenlivet, however, sits in this beautiful natural valley in the Cairngorm National Park. The mountain air will then influence the flavour of Glenlivet.”

Describe American whiskies as “sweet and spicy”

“American whiskies will certainly lean more towards the sweeter, spicier side of whisky but you have to remember that American whisky is actually made from wheat, rye and corn and they use new casks so the production methods are also different.”



The bullshitter's guide to whisky cont.

Know your alternative whisky producing countries

“Scotland, Ireland, America, Canada and Japan all have their own style of whiskey. The Japanese have been making whisky since 1923, and essentially their first influence came from Scotland, when the first Japanese distiller worked at the Longmorn distillery and then went back to Japan... There are many countries around the world that are making great whiskey now. There's great whiskies being made in Germany, there's a great one called Kavalan made in Taiwan, in Australia they're also making really good whiskies.”

Single malt isn't always better than a blend

“Single malt whisky itself was not really sold in any great quantities around the world, or in the UK, until the Eighties. There was then a big whisky recession, so the blenders didn't need the single malts to blend with. Whisky companies then released single malt whiskies into the UK market – they became very popular, and the high quality blends got exported. And so you have the situation today, where a lot of UK consumers associate single malt whisky with much more expensive, superior whiskey. If you go abroad, very little Single Malt whisky is sold around the world. It's only about 8 per cent of the global market, whilst 92 per cent of whisky is blended, and some of this blended whisky can be very, very expensive and very high quality. Blended whisky is much smoother to drink than single malt. It contains the lighter grain whisky as well as the single malt. It's all about the skill of the blender.”

Expensive isn't always best

“You're not necessarily going to prefer an 18 year old whisky naturally over a 12 year old whiskey... Of course an 18 year old whisky has to be much more expensive than a 12 year old whisky because of the time it's spent in the cask... It doesn't mean though that you're going to prefer the older whiskies. It's a very personal thing.. So it's not like if you're buying a suit or a car for example, generally more expensive is better. But with whisky it's a personal thing about how much you love the whisky.”

How to make a whisky cocktail

Don't go cheap just because you're mixing

“For cocktails, you don't want to use really expensive whisky because that should be savoured on its own. Aim for the £25-£60 price point for cocktails, but don't go into the cheap stuff because I'm mixing it with X, Y and Z, therefore it doesn't matter, because it really does...The quality of the whiskey, the quality of the spirit is going to dictate the quality of the drink.”



The bullshitter's guide to whisky cont.

Don't go smoky

"You want to use a whisky that is not smoky to make cocktails, and so you want something which has got that sweet, fruity, floral Speyside style. I find that generally works better in cocktails. And so Chivas Regal 12 of course is not the only brand, but because it comes in at quite a nice price point, about £30."

Embrace old favourites

"My personal favourite is a Blood and Sands. It's one of those forgotten classics which is making a big comeback now and all the good cocktail bars in London and the UK know how to make it. It's essentially equal parts of Scotch whisky, sweet vermouth, cherry brandy and freshly squeezed orange juice. And you would think that those flavours wouldn't go together but it's a wonderful combination."

What to say to really convince them...

Ester: An organic compounds formed by the reaction of an alcohol with a carboxylic acid. They are formed in fermentation and contribute a fruitiness to whiskey.

ISO: An acronym for "International Standards Organisation", the ISO tasting glass is specifically designed for tasting wine and other alcohols, including whisky. It allows for swirling without spillage and is rounded to maximise aroma intake.

Cask: The barrel in which the whisky is stored and aged.

Nosing: Smelling with intent.

Angel share: Whisky evaporates over the ageing process, at approximately 2% a year. This is partly what necessitates a higher price for older whisky.

Is it spelled "Whisky" or "Whiskey"?: Either! The Irish and the Americans prefer "whiskey" and the Scottish, Canadians and Japanese will plump for "whisky" Neither is wrong!

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