



## Object of the Newsletter

*To promote the appreciation of fine Scotch Whisky (and the drinking of it) amongst my friends and to spread the word on the joys of single malt. By the way, I do not profess to be an expert, I am merely expressing an opinion on the whiskies I am tasting. “Slange.”*

This issue I look at Ardbeg 10 year old, which I tried in the “STK” restaurant in the Cosmopolitan hotel on the Las Vegas strip. The Ardbeg 10 year old is as you would expect from an Islay malt, smoky and peaty, but also has a spicy sweetness that I like.

On the Ardbeg website ([www.ardbeg.com/ardbeg/the-ardbeg-range](http://www.ardbeg.com/ardbeg/the-ardbeg-range)) they have an interactive flavor wheel to help you match your personal tastes to their whiskies, which I enjoyed trying.

The fact that I intend to add this to my whisky collection should tell you all you need to know, as to what I think of it.

### Tasting Notes;

**Color** - Straw

**Nose** - Smoke, peat, toffee, chocolate sweetness, cinnamon, pear drops and vanilla.

**Palate** - Smoke, peat, salty, light spice, coffee and (maybe) liquorice

**Finish** - Long smoky and sweet

*“Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them.”*

*If you have a personal favorite and you would like it to feature in future “Slange” newsletters, please let me know. I can be contacted at my website <http://www.scot-talks.com>*

*“Slainte Mhath”  
Paul Bissett*





## A wee bit of History

The Ardbeg distillery was founded in 1815. For most of its history, Ardbeg's whisky was produced for use in blends, rather than as a single malt. Production was halted in 1981, but resumed on a limited basis in 1989 and continued at a low level through late 1996, during the period when Ardbeg was owned by Hiram Walker. The distillery was bought and reopened in 1997 by Glemorangie plc with production resuming on June 25, 1997 and full production resuming in 1998.

The name Ardbeg is derived from the Scottish Gaelic: *Àrd Beag*, meaning *Little Height*.

Ardbeg's offerings have garnered an array of awards at international spirit ratings competitions. For example:

Jim Murray's *Whisky Bible 2008* awarded the 10 year old expression the title of 2008 World Whisky of the Year and Scotch Single Malt of the Year. The 10-year also won a series of medals at the 2006-2010 San Francisco World Spirits Competition, winning two gold and three silver medals over that five-year stretch.

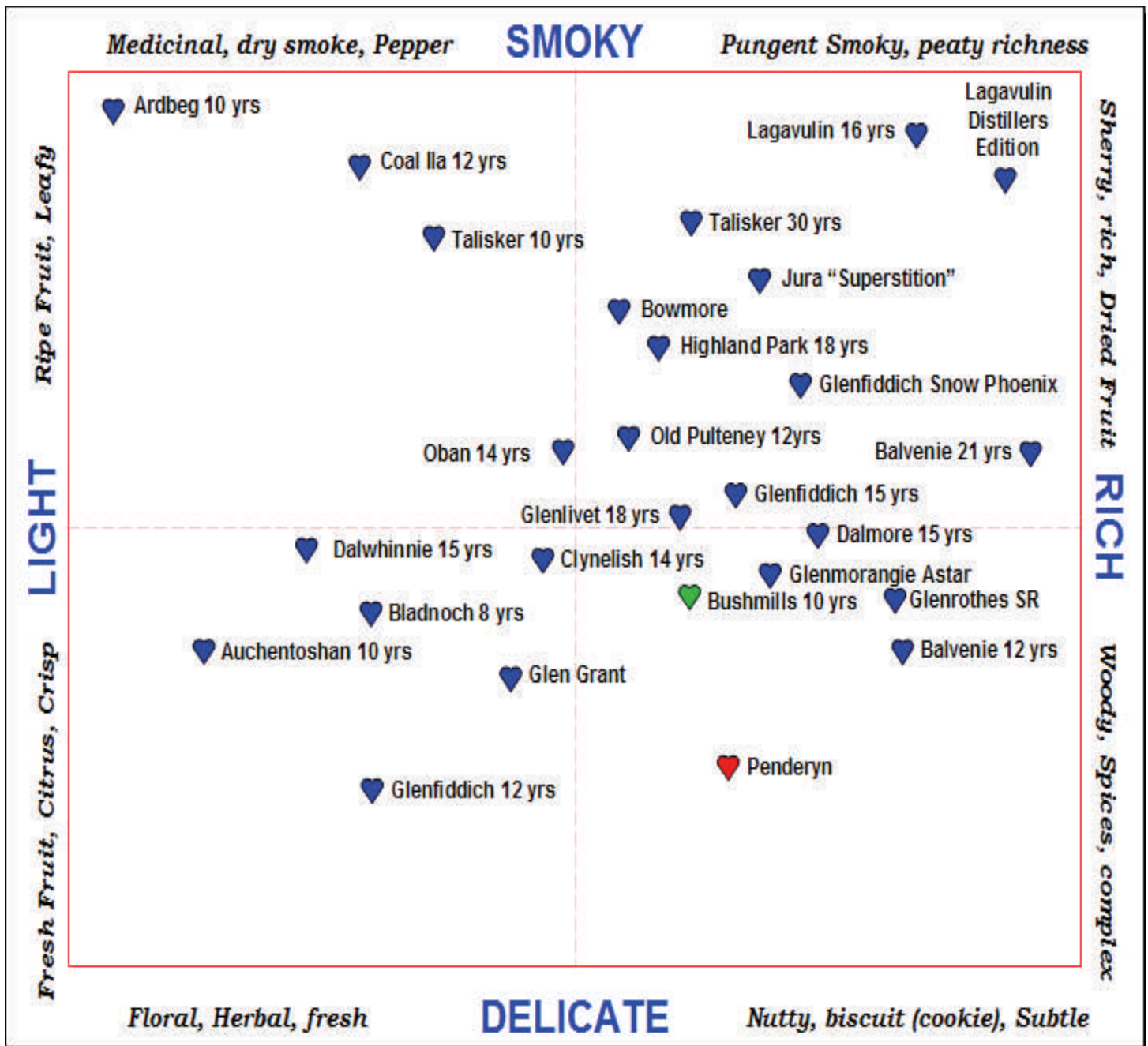
Jim Murray's *Whisky Bible 2009* and *Whisky Bible 2010* awarded the Uigeadail expression the title of 2009 and 2010 World Whisky of the Year and Scotch Single Malt of the Year. The San Francisco World Spirits Competition awarded the Uigeadail a double gold, two gold, and two silver medals between 2006 and 2010.



Ardbeg distillery



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. With each issue of the newsletter I will add in another Whisky to the flavor map. This Issue; **Ardbeg 10 year old**. For more information go to [www.ardbeg.com](http://www.ardbeg.com)





## *The Quaich*

### **Background**

The Quaich (pronounced "quake", from the Gaelic word "cuach") has a rich heritage in Scotland - indeed, they are a uniquely Scottish invention, having no apparent connection to any other European drinking vessel. This traditional Scottish drinking vessel was used to offer a guest a cup of welcome and also as a farewell drink, usually a dram of whisky. Travelers were known to carry a quaich with them.

### **Origins**

They were used for whisky and brandy but there was also larger quaichs which were used for ale. (The largest surviving examples having capacity of about 1.5 pints).

It is believed that one of their ancestors was the scallop shell, in which drams of whisky were taken in the Highlands and Islands.

Like the shells, quaichs were always wide and shallow. The distinctive shape has been fixed now for possibly more than four hundred years.

### **How Were They Made?**

Traditionally made of wood (picture on page 6), it is a shallow circular-drinking vessel for whisky, with a pair of small lug handles projecting horizontally from opposite sides of the rim. The lugs, though functional, are of a unique carved style giving the quaich much of its special character.

The centre of the bowl was usually decorated with a silver coin or an engraved disc or 'print', with coat-of-arms, initials, motto or familiar phrase such as 'drink up'.

### **The Quaich Moves Up-Market**

Quaichs began to be made in metal (picture on page 6), whether pewter or silver and gold, in the late seventeenth century. Silver quaichs for example are first mentioned in the 1660s. When silversmiths began to make quaichs, they carefully and deliberately engraved radiating lines on the bowl in imitation of the staves of wooden quaichs and horizontal rings to represent the withy bindings. They also copied the lug handles in every respect.



## *The Quaich* (cont.)

Quaichmaking was a highly regarded profession in 17th century Scotland. Quaichmakers probably made all sorts of wooden eating and drinking vessels, but took the name of their profession from their best work, much as workers in silver and gold called themselves goldsmiths.

As with all things, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Quaichs became so highly regarded that the upper-crust just had to have them made from precious metals. This posed something of a problem, since wooden quaichs are solid and quite thick at the bottom - it would be a bit difficult for a fine Scottish lady to sip delicately from a solid silver ale quaich the weight of a small boulder. The answer was to make the quaich of sheet-silver, so that the sides were of constant thickness. This allowed metal quaichs to imitate the outer form of wooden quaichs, but made the inner cavity much deeper and more bowl-like.

The earliest quaichs were single-timber, meaning that they were made of a single piece of wood turned on a lathe. The lugs were sometimes covered with silver, providing a place for initials. It was a passion in 17th century Scotland to place your initials everywhere: on your silverware, your furniture, the lintel, ceiling, and panelling of your house, and of course on your quaich.

The Quaich in 1745 travelled from Edinburgh to Derby with the Scottish Army in Bonnie Prince Charlie's canteen. Its bottom was made of glass so that the drinker could keep watch on his companions.

A more romantic Quaich had a double glass bottom in which was kept a lock of hair, so that the owner could drink to his lady love; and in 1589 King James VI of Scotland gave Anne of Norway a Quaich or "Loving Cup" as a wedding gift.

### **Modern Quaichs**

In more recent times, the Quaich has been used as a favor at many Scottish weddings, being presented to all at the top table. A symbol of the shared love and partnership between their hosts. Also at christenings (in Kilmuir in Scotland, there is a wooden quaich which was formerly used as a baptismal font, thus the quaich has become a traditional baptismal gift), or even births, to drink the health of a bairn and to share the love and celebration of that new life.



## *The Quaich* (cont.)

### **The Quaich in Scottish Culture**

The Quaich has a rather unique history and is surrounded by myth and mystique. In ancient time, during the Celtic period, it is believed that the Druids filled the quaich with blood from the heart of sacrificed humans.

It has a special place in the heart of all who know something of its history and is a prized possession of many people who have an association with Scotland. And will always be remembered in its traditional use as a visitor's welcome or farewell cup by proud clan chiefs, worthy merchants or humble crofters, and in this, the quaich has kept its simple but beautiful shape and friendly purpose.

