



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 do not profess to be an expert, I am merely expressing an opinion on the whiskies I am tasting. "Slainte."

In this issue I look at Compass Box "Peat Monster" a blended malt scotch, made with Caol Ila (more recently, Laphroaig) and Ardmore malts, which Jeff at Liquor bank (Paradise & Chico, California) gave me to try. "Peat Monster" an intriguing name and not as much of a monster as you would assume, if for instance you compared it side by side with Lagavulin 16, the Lagavulin would blow it out of the water (in my opinion) as far as the taste of peat goes.

I find this whisky to be a triumph of marketing over taste, it's not that it's bad, it's not, but it doesn't live up to it's name. For me (a peat fan), the flavor is there, but it disappears too quickly on the palate, a problem I tend to find with most (not all) blended whiskies.

Would I buy it? Yes, it's relatively inexpensive and if you're not expecting a "Peat Monster" it's quite a nice dram.

You can buy Peat monster for around \$40.00 a bottle.

Tasting Notes;

Nose - Peat, Medicinal, fruity

Palate - Peat, smoke, oak & a hint of fruit

Finish - Peat, oak and sweet spice

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 www.scot-talks.com

"Slainte Mhath"

Paul Bissett





A wee bit of History

Compass Box Whisky was founded in 2000 by American John Glaser, a former marketing director at Johnnie Walker. To promote his new whiskies he travelled around London, visiting bars giving out samples.

Compass Box Whisky does not distil any of the whiskies used in its product blends. The company's whisky makers select high-quality distillates from a number of existing Scotch whisky distilleries. The selected distillates, chosen for their individual flavors and characteristics, are then blended together and for some whiskies the resulting blend is put through further stages of maturation in order to create the desired characteristics of each final product. None of their whiskies are chill filtered or have coloring added and all are married in American oak. The company's motto is 'Share and Enjoy'.

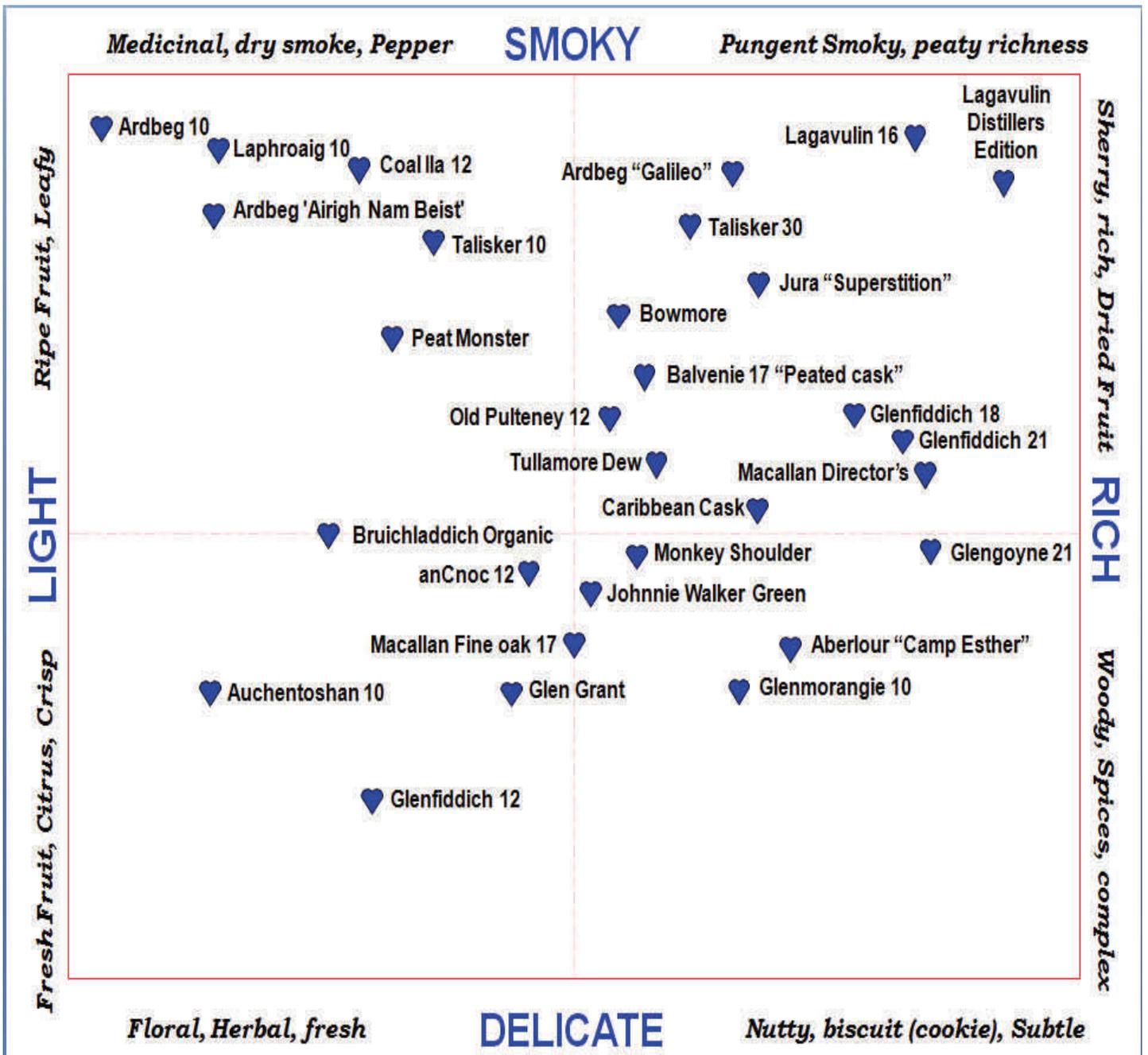


The compass Box signature range

**How do you disperse an angry Scottish mob?
Take up a collection.**



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; [Compass Box "Peat Monster"](#) For more information go to www.compassboxwhisky.com





Blended Bounces Back

Steve Morrissey

After years in the doldrums, the humble Blended Scotch wants you to know it's back back back. And not so humble either.

If there's one thing you can say about single malt whisky – it's had great PR. Over the past few years of “the great whisky boom” attention has been focused almost exclusively on malt, leaving blended whisky to get on with the heavy lifting unthanked. But there are signs that things are changing, that blended whisky, the Cinderella of Scotch, is about to go to the ball.

Sales of Scotch rose a huge 22 per cent in 2011 alone and in some parts of the emerging BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China) by even more. In terms of business focus, the premium and super-premium malts have stolen the limelight. But 90 per cent of all Scotch sold is blended, so it's no surprise that whisky producers have been innovating across the board.

Blended whisky does have an image problem. Many people have been put off whisky for life because of an unfortunate teenage experience with something cheap and nasty. Add to that the widespread notion that blended is nothing more than good single malt adulterated with cheap grain whisky. A view most often heard from new converts to single malt keen to set themselves apart from the pack.

With a significant proportion of the recipe being malt whisky, you can make gorgeous drinks.

The founder of artisanal whisky producer Compass Box, John Glaser, has another explanation for blended's poor image – “So many of them are boring.” But that doesn't have to be the case. “When you make them from very high quality component whiskeys,” says Glaser, “aged in very high quality oak casks, by blending carefully, with a significant proportion of the recipe being malt whisky, you can make gorgeous drinks.”

Compass Box is only ten years old and already something of a favorite with the cognoscenti. The start of their second decade sees them on a mission to restore the name of blended whisky. To do this they're not just launching a blended whisky but an entire blended range, Great King Street. First whisky out of the traps is Artist's Blend, which has just won the prestigious Blended Whisky of the Year award from US Whisky Advocate magazine – “perfectly placed to bring blends back into vogue,” they reckoned.



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If a return to the fray by independent producers such as Compass Box is part of the reason for the resurgence of blended, there is a wider picture. According to International Wine and Spirit Research's Insights Report 2011, there are three key drivers of the spirits market at the moment. First they identify "traditional spirits with innovative flavors," then "bargain hunting versus premiumisation" (hey, there's a recession on) and thirdly the great "brown versus white" battle, which the brown spirits are winning. All have positive implications for blended Scotch.

Quite why brown is winning is moot. But there is a popular theory to explain it – we tend not to drink what our parents drank. And if our parents rebelled against their whisky- and brandy-drinking parents by diving into vodka, that pendulum is now swinging back to the dark side.

It's not just Compass Box and craft producers who are picking up on this vibe. There's a profusion of new premium blends, artisan blends or, as Compass Box call them, "craft blends".

The redoubtable Johnnie Walker Black Label might have been flying the flag for blends for a long time but it's recently been joined by a Double Black and a Platinum Label blend. Over at Famous Grouse, they've brought out Black Grouse. In India, Teacher's have recently launched a 25-year-old blended in advance of a global roll-out. Meanwhile, Cutty Sark have just launched the distinctly deluxe blend, Tam O' Shanter, and Chivas have released Linn House Reserve.

At the more engaged fringe of the market, where malt mania usually rules, there's an Islay-heavy blend called St Isidore, created by whisky bloggers. And at the Masters of Malt website you can even *make your own blend*. In the world of blended, it seems, it's all kicking off. All part of an explosion of activity which is as true of Ireland, the USA, Canada, Korea, Japan, even Germany, as it is of Scotland.

"Single malt is for thinkers, blended whisky for drinkers," is how Ronnie Cox of the Glenrothes pithily puts it. A traditional – and thanks to the likes of Mad Men – reinvigorated idea that a single malt is the sort of thing you crack open perhaps late at night, in good company. But the end of a hard working day demands something more like a long cool Scotch and soda. It's this versatility of blended (long, short, in cocktails, with soda) that has given it the strength to ride out decades of unfashionability.

A trio of final facts worth remembering: it wasn't single malt whisky that exploded out of Scotland and conquered the world, it was blended. It is blended that bankrolls the entire whisky industry. It is blended that has made whisky the most popular spirit in the world. If blended is about to lose its Cinderella image then that can't be a bad thing, surely. Anyone for a highball?