



## Object of the Newsletter

*To promote the appreciation of fine 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.*

I now consider a Rye whisky, Crown Royal "Northern Harvest", which I tried at 'Q' bar in the Fairmont Empress hotel in Victoria, British Columbia, on my first visit to Canada a couple of weeks ago. Crown Royal "Northern Harvest" Rye is the first Canadian Whisky to earn World Whisky of the Year in Jim Murray's Annual Whisky Bible 2016. For those of you that have been reading my whisky newsletters for a while, you'll know that I have taken issue with some of mister Murray's picks of "Best whisky in the world" over the years. I sometimes think he picks a whisky for shock value and to get his name out there, which obviously works. And to be honest, as much as I know a lot about whiskies, I would never presume to tell anyone that this or any other Whisky is the best in the world. I will say, this is the best Rye, that I have tried. Indeed, I bought a bottle to bring back to the USA for my bar, so yes, I really like it. "Best in the World?" that I don't know, but it is a fine whisky and I do recommend it highly, and the price can't be beat.

[You can buy Crown Royal "Northern Harvest" for around \\$25.00 a bottle.](#)

### Tasting Notes

**Nose** - Cereal & cinnamon

**Palate** - Butterscotch, oak & spicy vanilla

**Finish** - Cinnamon, oak & a little heat

*"Slainte Mhath"*

*Paul Bissett*





## 10 Common Misconceptions About Whiskey You Shouldn't Believe

by Nicholas Mancall-Bitel

Whiskey can be confusing. From the many different types made around the world to intimidating shelves upon shelves of labels dense with terminology, it's easy to make mistakes. (Given that whiskey makers can't even agree on a single spelling, we can't blame you for getting mixed up.) To get everything straight, we talked to two very different whiskey makers—Brian Kinsman, malt master at the 130-year-old scotch distillery Glenfiddich, and David Szlam, chef and founder of Virgil Kaine—about the most common misconceptions everyone has about whiskey.

### **The Best Whiskey in the Liquor Store Is Always on the Top Shelf**

A lot of factors go into where a whiskey lands on the shelves of your liquor store, and not all of it has to do with the quality in the bottle. Big companies have a lot of power when it comes to literal product placement, catching your eye by placing their brands at the center of the whiskey display, while some great whiskeys are left to collect dust in the shadowy corners. Szlam suggests you investigate a little further to find the right bottle for you, not the best marketed one. Kinsman similarly points to labels, age statements and price as other culprits that can mislead customers.

### **All Rye Is Spicy**

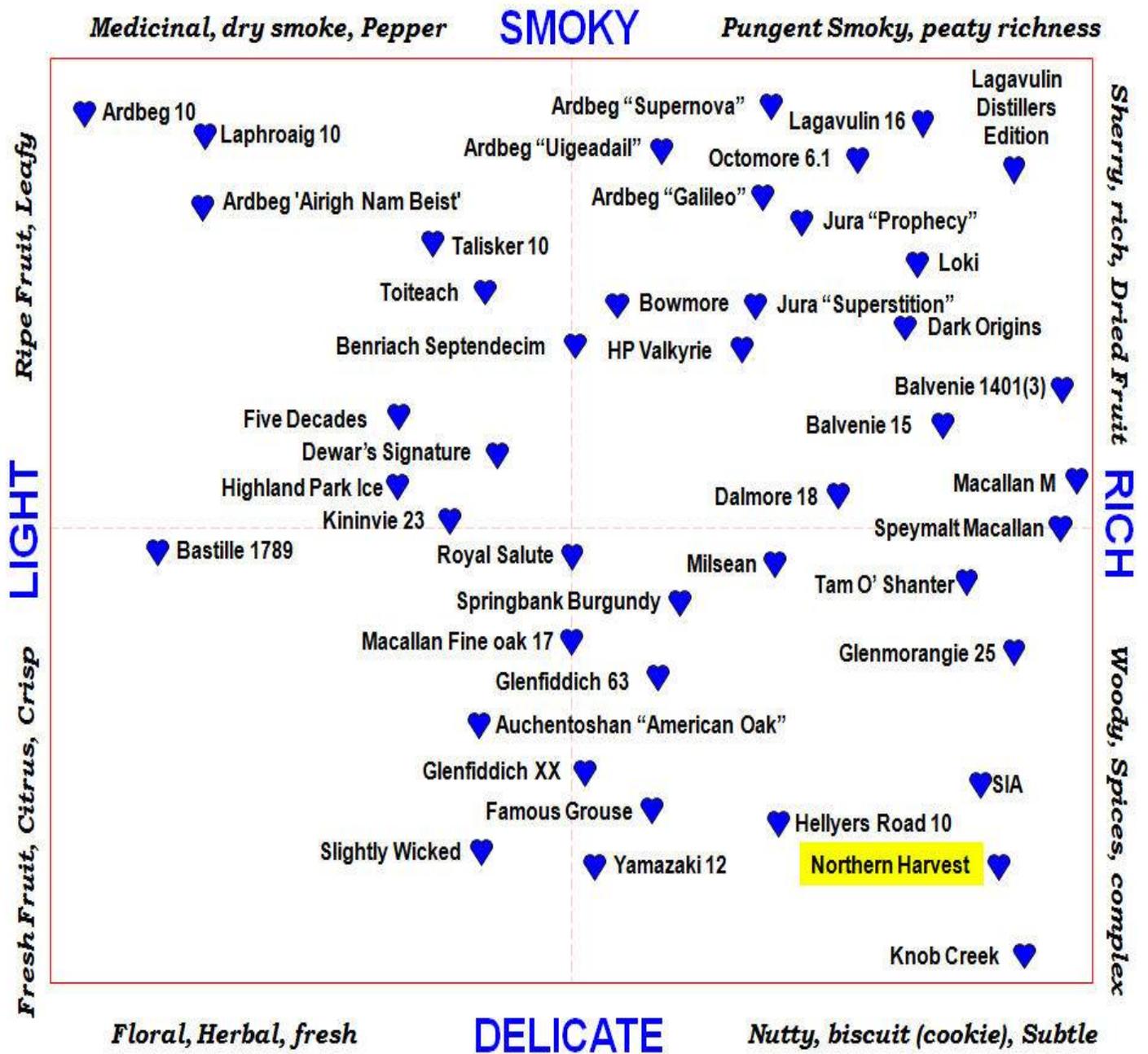
Some drinkers love rye for its heat and zip, but others fear a neat glassful for just that reason. But Szlam argues that rye also has a softer side. "Yes, rye can be spicy," he admits. "But it can also be tamed in a way that creates a really delicious mouthfeel. That's up to us as blenders to help that process, whether by using port or sherry or different ingredients."

### **All Bourbon Is Sweet**

"Some people think that all bourbons should taste a specific way—sweet with caramel notes or butterscotch flavor—but there are so many varietals and ingredients that play a part in how a bourbon is going to taste," Szlam says. "Ours is a high-rye mash bill, so you'll get a lot more spice than sweetness. We prefer that. So it'll be more scotch-like than bourbon-esque, in a sense." Even those rye-averse drinkers Szlam sees contemplating the Virgil Kaine high-rye bourbon may like it more than they think.



Below is a simple guide to help you choose your 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; [Crown Royal "Northern Harvest"](#). For more information on [Crown Royal](#) go to [www.crownroyal.com](#)





## 10 Common Misconceptions About Whiskey cont.

### All Scotch Is Snobby

Kinsman says one of the biggest hurdles the scotch industry faces is convincing people that they don't have to adhere strictly to tradition or pass some tasting test in order to enjoy a dram. "[Drinkers think] you've got to have all this knowledge, and people sit around a table and debate scotch and get quite serious about it," he says. "But the thing I hear from people who do this all the time is, 'We'll tell you how we *think* you should taste it. We'll tell you how you *can* maximize the flavor as you taste it. We'll try to *guide* you on what things taste like. But ultimately we're really keen for people to drink it the way they want to drink it and enjoy it the way they want.'" He and other scotch distillers are working to break down those entry barriers to enjoying whisky, reiterating time and again that the best way to enjoy scotch is however you please.

### Flavored Whiskey Is Sugared Swill

Virgil Kaine was founded on ginger-flavored whiskey, so Szlam is very familiar with how the TTB [The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau] lumps all flavored whiskey together no matter the quality, and the way many drinkers (wrongly) look down on the category. While Virgil Kaine followed their ginger number up with a rye and bourbon to prove the quality of their product to skeptical drinkers, he's still adamant that people should ignore their gut instinct about flavored whiskey and do their own research into the category. "Just because a whiskey is labelled as a 'flavored whiskey,' doesn't mean it's flavored in a harmful way," Szlam explains. "Ingredients are what make products, not labels or classifications."

### Anything Labeled "Single" Is Better Than Anything "Blended"

As anyone who's attempted to decipher a shelf of whiskey labels can attest, whiskey terminology can be confusing, irritating and, at times, downright misleading. A lot of the confusion comes down to two terms—single and blended—which are used in different ways in different categories in different nations around the world. The result, Szlam says, is that the term "blended" as been misconstrued as a negative. "[Blending] means someone is taking not only product from one barrel, but they're taking several barrels and blending it together to make the best tasting whiskey that you can possible have," Szlam says.



## 10 Common Misconceptions About Whiskey cont.

Of course, it's not that simple (this is whiskey we're talking about, after all). In Scotland, the term "blended whisky" refers to a mix of malt and grain whiskies from several distilleries, whereas in the States "blended whiskey" refers to a mix of bourbon, rye and, often, neutral spirits. Single malts in Scotland are made at one distillery from malted barley (while "single grain" whisky is made at one distillery from barley and either corn, wheat or a mix of the two), but even single malts are usually a blend of multiple barrels within the distillery. The same work of blending goes on within individual distilleries of popular bourbon and rye brands here in the U.S.

### **Locally Produced Craft Whiskey Is Better**

"A common misconception is that something like MGP of Indiana, which produces thousands and thousands of gallons, is somehow producing a sub-par product," Szlam says. "They know what the hell they're doing. They produce some pretty good whiskeys: Whistlepig, Angel's Envy, you name it. MGP make some good damn stuff."

And while many small, craft producers who don't tap one of the big guys for juice can be great, Szlam points out that some craft whiskey producers face serious challenges that can quickly lead to mistakes. "If you're new to distilling, it puts you in a pickle—you just purchased this beautiful distillery, all this expensive-ass equipment, you've got light bills and people working for you, and now you have whiskey or product that has been sitting for two years," he says. "What if you don't like it? Do you sell it or throw it away? The obvious answer is you find a way to sell it." So while some young producers are certainly worth the hype, not every up-and-coming brand is worth \$70.

### **Sherry Cask-Aged Scotch Tastes Like Sherry**

Sherry casks are a big factor in the scotch industry, and Kinsman acknowledges that distillers are partly to blame for the misconception that whisky aged in sherry casks inherits all of its character from the fortified wine that previously inhabited the barrel. While the sherry certainly does have some influence, it's not the dominant factor. "The sherry has picked up lots of influence from the cask, the cask is then giving influence, but the sherry and the whisky have almost no relationship at all, other than the commonality of the cask," Kinsman argues. "Whisky that's matured in sherry casks gets all of its flavor from the oak, not from the sherry. [The bottle] should say 'Spanish oak cask matured' or 'European oak cask matured.' The oak's the hero. That's where the flavor comes from."



## 10 Common Misconceptions About Whiskey cont.

### You're on Your Own in the Liquor Store

Walking into a liquor store and scanning the vast whiskey options that are now available to consumers, Kinsman can see why it's hard to make such a high-pressure choice, especially when consumers might be dropping serious cash on a bottle they might hate. His advice? Quit going it alone and ask for help. "I think more and more, especially in the U.S. where you've got dedicated liquor stores, you go into a store and there are going to be people in there who have got the knowledge," he says. "Start engaging them. Say what you like. Say what flavors you like. Talk about brands you've had in the past that you've enjoyed. There's more and more shelf talkers, little tasting notes and tasting maps, so use all of those queues." And don't think the staff at your local store are always basing their advice on the same info you have. Kinsman points out that the Glenfiddich team spends a lot of time educating sellers about their products so that they can help you. "If you've got a really great liquor store, chances are they'll let you taste it as well," he says. "Which is even more fun."

### Bourbon Drinkers Only Drink Bourbon, and Scotch Drinkers Only Drink Scotch

"If normally you drink bourbon, the first time you drink scotch can be such a change that you might think it isn't for you," Kinsman says. But you shouldn't be dismayed at your first sip. "It's almost around framing or calibrating yourself to drinking something quite different. They're just fundamentally so different that if you try to do a side-by-side comparison, it almost doesn't work. You've got to taste each for what it is. There will be some times that are a bourbon occasion and some times that are a scotch occasion." The same goes for rye and flavored whiskey (and Japanese and Canadian whisky, too). Try everything, then try it again just to be sure, but at the end of the day, drink what you want. [www.supercall.com/spirits/whiskey/whiskey-facts-fiction](http://www.supercall.com/spirits/whiskey/whiskey-facts-fiction)

