



## 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 the Glenmorangie "Quinta Ruban" 12-year-old. A Gold Medal winner in the International Wine and Spirits Competition in 2008 and 2009. The Quinta Ruban is an intense, dark whisky in the extra matured range from Glenmorangie. It first spends 10 years in American oak, then another two in Port pipes and is non-chill filtered.

While drinking this I'm reminded of the Balvenie 21 year old and the Macallan "Director's Edition", lots of rich fruit. Of the three whiskies I mentioned in the previous sentence which one would I buy on a regular Basis; I'd have to go with the Quinta Ruban. Why? Although initially enamored of the Macallan, I'm now finding it a little heavy, as for the Balvenie, I find no fault with it's flavor, but at around \$200.00 per bottle, sorry, I'll pass. Been there, done that, too many whiskies to try. That's why I'd go with the Quinta Ruban.

You can buy Glenmorangie "Quinta Ruban" for around \$48.00 a bottle.

### Tasting Notes;

**Nose** - Spicy chocolate & Citrus

**Palate** - Caramel, nuts, raisins

**Finish** - Sweet, fruity & long

*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](http://www.scot-talks.com)*

*"Slainte Mhath"*

*Paul Bissett*





## Scotch Whisky 101

By Ray Pearson

Scotch whisky's family tree spans thousands of years. It's hard to pinpoint how the secret of distillation made its way to Scotland – the Phoenicians, Celts and Irish monks could all be potentially responsible. All we can be sure of, is that the documented reference to “eight bolls of malt wherewith to make aqua vitae”, recorded in transactions of the court of James IV, dates back to 1494. The Latin term ‘aqua vitae’ (water of life) and aqua fortis (strong water) date back even earlier to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Translation into Scots Gaelic gave us the term uisgebeatha (“ooska bah”), meaning “water of life”. During the 1500s, the pronunciation of “ooska” morphed into “ooski”, and eventually to “whisky”.

### **What is the difference between “Scotch”, “whiskey”, and “whisky”?**

“Whiskey” is a generic term for a distilled spirit made from grain. These grains are usually corn, wheat, rye, or barley. Depending on which grain is used, and in what country the whiskey is distilled and aged, it has different names and spellings. Scotch whisky can be made from any type of cereal. Scotch single malts are made from malted barley, Scotch grain whiskies are made from either wheat or corn, to which some malted barley is added. Scotch whiskies must be distilled and aged in Scotland, and the spelling (protected by law) is without the ‘e’, as it is in other countries such as Japan and Canada. Interestingly, Maker's Mark American whisky is spelled without the ‘e’ in deference to the owners' Scottish heritage!

### **Why is it called single malt?**

“Single” means the liquid in the bottle is the product of a single distillery. Every drop came from just one distillery – the one listed on the label. Single malt is one of the two main classifications of Scotch. If a Scotch whisky is not a single malt, it could be a ‘blended Scotch’, meaning a blend of single malts and grain whisky or a ‘blended malt’, meaning a mix of single malts. In addition to these two main classifications, there are also single and blended grain Scotch whiskies.

### **What is malt?**

Malt or ‘malting’ is the name given to the specific process that is used to trigger the conversion of starch into fermentable sugars. To do this, the barley must be ‘tricked’ into thinking that it is time to start growing so that it produces the enzymes necessary for conversion. Traditional malting methods dictated that barley be harvested, soaked in water for a few days, then drained and spread over a large floor to germinate. The germination process is stopped by the introduction of heat and the now ‘green’ malt is dried in a kiln. At this stage, the malt can be ‘peated’ by burning a peat fire underneath the perforated floor of the kiln. Not all malts are peated.



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; [Glenmorangie "Quinta Ruban"](#) For more information go to [www.glenmorangie.com](http://www.glenmorangie.com)





## Cont.

Not all malts are peated. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the malting process would be done ‘in-house’ by distilleries; today, the bulk of distilleries use malt produced in large commercial ‘drum’ maltings.

### **What is peat, and how does it make some Scotch smoky?**

Peat is an organic material, comprised of decomposed and compressed mosses, leaves, roots, and branches, found in marshy bogs. The peat is dug from the bogs and dried. Smokiness is determined by how much peat “reek” (smoke) is infused into the barley as it dries. Whether lightly smoked, heavily smoked, or not smoked at all, the barley is ground into grist, then goes on to other steps in the process of making the whisky.

### **Mashing**

Once the malted grains are ready, they are ground into rough flour known as ‘grist’ and blown into a vessel known as a mash tun. The grist is mixed with hot water – the vital element used to trigger the now-ready enzymes to convert the starches present into fermentable sugars. Distilleries tend to use water from their own sources – the names of which often add to their lore, with some of the most well-known being Glenlivet’s Josie’s Well, Glenfiddich’s Robbie Dhu, and Glenmorangie’s Tarlogie Springs, and Highland Park’s Catty Maggie’s. The mashing process is completed by drawing off the sugary liquid that comes from flushing hot water through the grist, known as wort. Distillers can manipulate their wort at this stage if they want to produce a spirit with a particularly malt-driven flavor.

### **Fermentation**

Yeast is added to the wort and fermentation begins as the sugars are consumed by the yeast and converted into alcohol, in the space of 48 hours, giving a liquid of 7-10% abv called ‘wash’. Fermentation is a key influencer on flavor.

### **Distillation**

Most Scotch malt whisky is double distilled. Distillation takes place in copper stills that vary widely in shape, size and volume and play a vital role in determining the character of a spirit. In very simple terms, the longer the alcoholic vapor is in contact with walls of copper, the lighter the spirit will be. During the second distillation, the stillman will make his ‘cut’, separating the heads (the volatile part of the spirit that rises first) and the tails (the heavy, oily part that rises last), retaining the heart of the spirit. Each distillery will make the cut according to its own house style.



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### Where does Scotch get its color?

As the final part of the production process, the distilled spirit that will become Scotch whisky goes into the cask. At this point, it is completely clear. Colors from pale yellows, through rich ambers to deep golds develop over years, due to the interaction between the wood of the cask and the liquid. Traditionally, two types of wooden casks are used to age Scotch. American white oak (*Quercus alba*) casks, previously used to age American whiskies, make up the majority of the “barrel recipe”. Casks previously used to age sherry, made from European oak (*Quercus robur*), are the second component of the barrel recipe. Some single malts are aged only in American oak, and some only in European oak, but most single malts are comprised of liquid aged in both woods. Spirit can only be called Scotch whisky once it has spent three full years maturing in cask.

### Let the angels rejoice!

Maturation occurs over many years in a variety of warehouse configurations. The most traditional is called a dunnage warehouse, with earth floors, thick stone walls, and casks stacked no more than three high. During maturation, while the casks breathe in the local atmosphere, some whisky vapors are lost by evaporation. This earthly loss is called “the angels’ share”.

### Strange but true

There is actually more water in single malt whisky than there is alcohol. By law single malts must be bottled at a minimum of 40% ABV (alcohol by volume), leaving about 60% as water.

Ray Pearson – The Whiskymeister

[www.whiskytastings.com](http://www.whiskytastings.com)

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## "A Cowboy's Guide to Life"

When you give a lesson in meanness to a critter or a person, don't be surprised if they learn their lesson.