



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 look at the Balblair 1997 single malt Scotch Whisky with an approximate age of 10 years.

Balblair has changed its core range from the - 2000, 1997 (shown here), 1989 and 1979 to a 12, 15, 17 and 25-year-old, with different packaging from the bottle shown to the right, though the old vintages can still be found quite easily.

I have tried most of the Balblair whiskies over the years and have always enjoyed them. So I expect that nothing will have changed other than the age statements on the bottles and the packaging.

Would I buy it, no I would not, it is a nice, gentle fruity Whisky, but the price is, for what it is, rather prohibitive.

[You can buy Balblair 1997 for around \\$100.00 a bottle.](#)

Tasting Notes

Nose - Berries & vanilla.

Palate - Fruity with Berries, cookies & vanilla.

Finish - Berry fruitiness, with cookies & vanilla.



"Slainte Mhath"

Paul Bissett



We Blind Tested Blended Scotches In The \$40 Range And A Clear Winner Emerged

By Christopher Osburn

Compared to single malt whiskies, blended Scotches don't really get the respect they deserve. But we represent for blended scotch around here (almost) as hard as we hold it down for single malts. So much so that we decided to put eight classic expressions to the test via a blind tasting.

Why blind? If you're not busy glaring at the label that says Johnnie Walker or Famous Grouse, you're probably going to spend more time actually nosing, tasting, and valuing the whisky in your glass. In doing so, you're going to have to identify what each whisky tastes like, without any preconceived notions. Which is a fun way to enjoy whisky, if nothing else.

While the eight blended Scotch whiskies we're tasting today aren't made by the same distillery, they're all around the same \$40 price point and are also all household names in the whisky world. Meaning they're easy to find at your local liquor store or bottle shop. If that errand sounds like a hassle but you find yourself thirsty, click on the linked prices to order online.

Part 1: The Taste

I selected eight blended Scotch whiskies for this blind tasting. They're definitely not bargain-basement bottles but aren't overly expensive either. They're all decent sipping and mixing expressions:

Cutty Sark Prohibition Edition

Dewar's White Label

Chivas Regal Extra

Copper Dog

Johnnie Walker Black

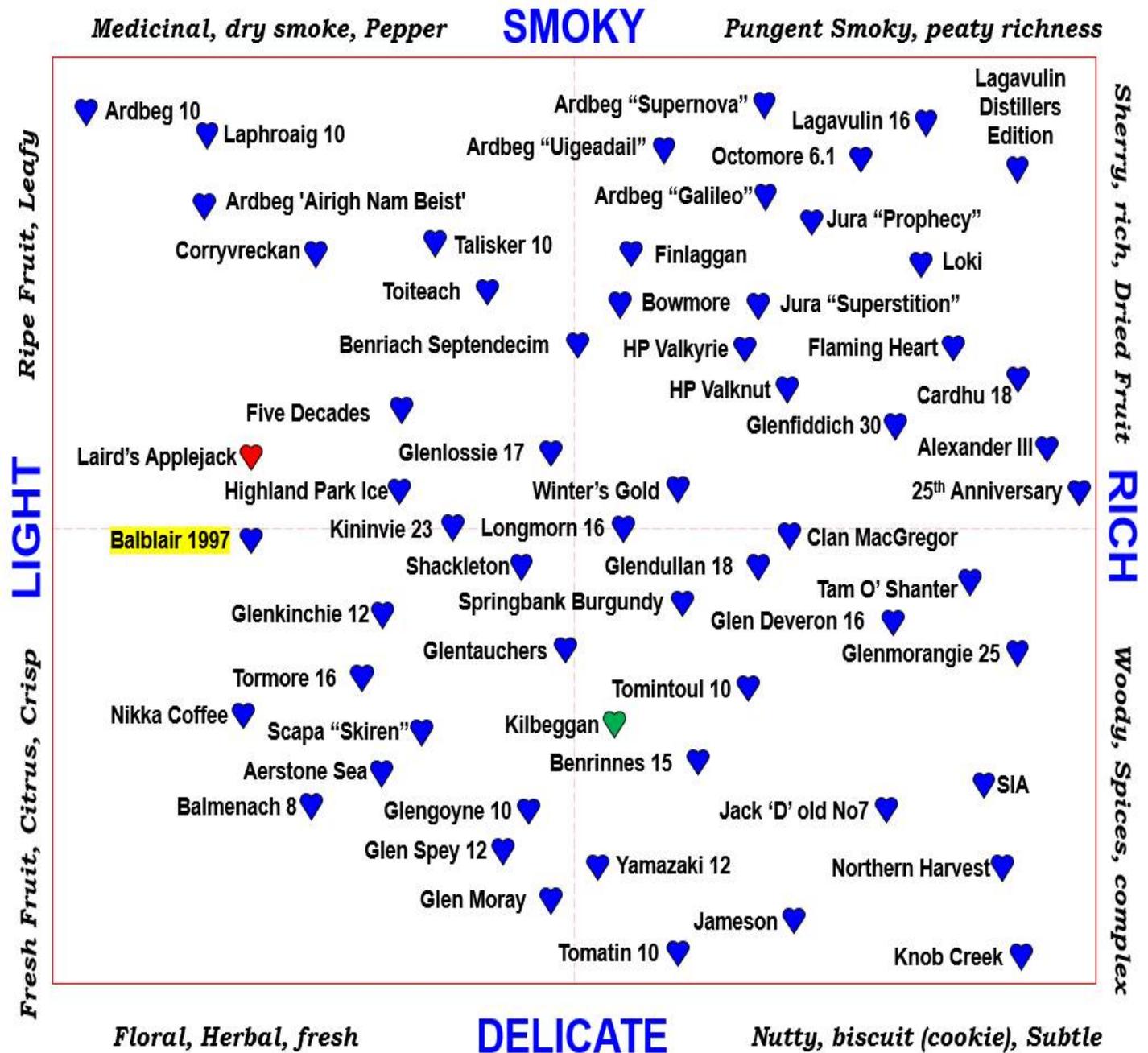
The Naked Grouse

Compass Box Glasgow Blend

Monkey Shoulder



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; [Balblair 1997](#). For more information on [Balblair whiskies](#) go to [www.balblair.com](#)





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Taste 1: Tasting Notes:

Take a moment to nose this whisky before taking a sip and you'll find notes of toasted vanilla beans, citrus rinds, nutmeg, and butterscotch. Sipping this whisky reveals a surprising amount of character, with hints of clover honey, dried cherries, buttery caramel, and sweet malts. The finish is long, warming, and ends with a nice mixture of caramel and spicy cinnamon.

Taste 2: Tasting Notes:

Breathe in the scents of buttercream frosting, dried apricots, subtle cinnamon sugar, and sherry sweetness. On the palate, you'll find ripe berries, buttery caramel, vanilla beans, and dried cherries. It all ends with a nice mixture of toffee and sherry.

Taste 3: Tasting Notes:

On the nose, I knew that there's some juice from Islay in this blend, with a hint of peat smoke up front. Following close behind were sweet, dried fruits and caramel malts. The palate swirls with dried orange peels, prunes, caramelized sugar, and subtle spices.

The finish offered a great combination of peat smoke and tropical fruit flavors.

Taste 4: Tasting Notes:

On the nose, I got a whole lot of candied orange peels, sweet cream, cinnamon, and rich oak. The palate delivered hints of bitter chocolate, citrus zest, rich caramel candy, and subtle pepper. The finish was very warming and full of sweet caramel and subtle spice.



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Taste 5: Tasting Notes:

On the nose, I got aromas of dried fruits, vanilla beans, and subtle spice. The sip itself brought up creamy caramel candy, cinnamon, and a subtle hint of smoke. It all ended in a mellow haze of caramel and smoke.

Taste 6: Tasting Notes:

Even for a blended whisky, the nose was pretty lackluster here. The only aromas found were those of dried wood, honey, and vanilla. Sipping this whisky offered a little more... but not tons. Flavors of buttery caramel, milk chocolate, heather surfaced while the woody notes grew pronounced. The finish was medium, fairly warm, and ended with more honey.

Taste 7: Tasting Notes:

The scents of caramel apples, honey, and sweet malts started the dram. All in all, the aromas were pretty light, though. The palate was equally light, with hints of almonds, candied orange peels, cinnamon, and slight vanilla. As for the finish, I got a mouthful of honey and caramel and not a ton else.

Taste 8: Tasting Notes:

The nose gave me aromas of cooking spices, ripe cherries, orange zest, and vanilla beans. Sipping the whisky revealed hints of raisins, dark chocolate, butterscotch, and subtle sherry sweetness. The finish was long, filled with pleasing heat, and ended with a nice subtle ripe fruit sweetness.



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Part 2: The Ranking

A blind taste test can really prove eye-opening and this one definitely was. From the final rankings below, it's obvious that higher-proof whisky appeals to my palate.

8) Dewar's White Label (Taste 6)

ABV: 40% - **Average Price:** \$33 for a liter

The Whisky:

Dewar's White Label is one of the most well-known blended whiskies for a reason. It's always bargain-priced, it's been around for more than a century, and it's masterfully blended to feature an astonishing 40 or so whiskies by Dewar's Master Blender Stephanie Macleod.

Bottom Line:

Honestly, I expected more from one of the most well-known blended whiskies. It's not bad by any degree. But the flavors were a little more muted than I like when sipping whisky.

7) Copper Dog (Taste 7)

ABV: 40% - **Average Price:** \$34

The Whisky:

A copper dog is another name for the "whisky thief," the metal instrument used to sample still aging whisky through the bung hole. This blended malt whisky is an homage to the tool. It's a blend of single malt whiskies from eight Speyside distilleries. It was created to have enough flavor and balance to be both a valuable sipper and a great mixer.

Bottom Line:

This was my first introduction to Copper Dog, and it tasted exactly as I expected it to — standard. All of these whiskies proved serviceable, but Copper Dog was a little lower in the flavor department than I hoped.



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6) Johnnie Walker Black (Taste 5)

ABV: 40% - **Average Price:** \$40

The Whisky:

The name Johnnie Walker means quality. Even if you're grabbing a bottle of the cheapest expression from the brand, you can be pretty sure you're getting a good product. Johnnie Walker Black Label is a blended malt and grain whisky that is made up of around 40 different whiskies with a minimum age of 12 years.

Bottom Line:

This expression was smoky, sweet, and mellow. It's a tremendous sipper, but the price also makes it okay to try as a mixing whisky. It fell lower on this list than expected, but it's still a solid dram.

5) Chivas Regal Extra (Taste 8)

ABV: 40% - **Average Price:** \$40

The Whisky:

Like Johnnie Walker, Dewar's, and Famous Grouse, Chivas is known for its blended whiskies. You can spend the rest of your life sampling the various blends in its full-line, or you can crack open a bottle of Chivas Regal Extra and saves some cash in the process.

This blended Scotch gets an added kick from the addition of whiskies that were aged in Oloroso sherry casks.

Bottom Line:

If you're a fan of sherried whiskies like Aberlour A'Bunadh or GlenDronach 12, this is the budget blended whisky for you. It deserves a permanent spot on your home bar cart.



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4) Compass Box Glasgow Blend (Taste 3)

ABV: 43% - **Average Price:** \$40

The Whisky:

Founded in 2000, Compass Box is a well-known producer and bottler of blended whiskies. It's very well-known for its unique blends. Glasgow was first introduced in 2014. It's a blend of 33 percent Lowland grain whiskies and 67 percent single malt whiskies from the Highlands, Speyside, and even Islay.

Bottom Line:

As blended whiskies go, this is a true sipper. And for around \$40, you'll want to grab a few bottles. It also makes a mean, spicy penicillin.

3) Monkey Shoulder (Taste 1)

ABV: 40% - **Average Price:** \$35

The Whisky:

This malt whisky blend was created for bartenders and people who enjoy mixed drinks. Made by William Grant & Sons, it's a blend of single malt whiskies from three well-known (unnamed) Speyside distilleries. The result is a sweet, vanilla-filled, buttery whisky that stays true to the Speyside style on a budget.

Bottom Line:

Before this taste test, I always believed that Monkey Shoulder was nothing but a mixing whisky. But while it works perfectly well as a base for a cocktail, it actually stands up surprisingly well on its own as a bargain sipping dram.



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2) The Naked Grouse (Taste 2)

ABV: 43% - **Average Price:** \$35

The Whisky:

If you're looking for a well-made, perfect-for-mixing blended Scotch, look no further than the flagship expression from The Famous Grouse. But if you're looking to ramp up The Famous Grouse's flavors, go for The Naked Grouse. Made from a blend of various single malt whiskies including those from The Macallan and Highland Park, this expression is aged in sherry casks for added flavor.

Bottom Line:

Sherry is the name of the game with this expression. It's way cheaper than it ought to be. Just don't tell the folks at The Famous Grouse that.

1) Cutty Sark Prohibition (Taste 4)

ABV: 50% - **Average Price:** \$40 for a liter

The Whisky:

One of the cheapest whiskies on this list, Cutty Sark Prohibition is the second most popular expression from the brand. Named to pay tribute to Bill McCoy, a famous Cutty Sark smuggler during Prohibition, it's a 100 proof, bold blend of single malt and grain whiskies.

Bottom Line:

This is a bold, brash, in-your-face whisky designed to pay tribute to the potent whiskies of the Prohibition era. If you like your whisky surprisingly cheap and highly potent, this is the perfect dram for you. It was certainly my favorite this go around.