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WINTER 2025

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CREEK**
CHRONOLOGY

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COPPER STILL

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200
YEAR
CELEBRATION

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SAN FRANCISCO WORLD SPIRITS
COMPETITION JUDGES

-

DOUBLE GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

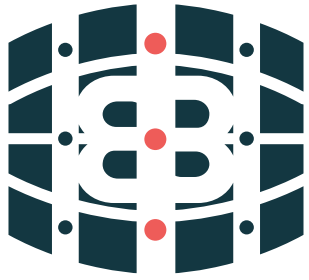


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MILLSTONE

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EDITOR'S THOUGHTS

The Holidays Are Here And The Spirit Of Sharing Is Upon Us



'Tis

The Season

For *Whisky*

Old And New Releases To

Share Under *The Mistletoe*



The Season Brings Out The

Younger

Version Of Some Of

SCROOGE

Us And Sometimes The



In Others The Cold Air Keeps us

Inside By The

Fire Sipping

Our *Glass Of Joy*

Outside We play A while

Until The Light Fades Away And Back Inside



To The Fire. Or maybe You Like The Cold



Just Be Sure To Wear Your Wee Woolies If You're Travelling



This

Winter

Be *Safe*

And Stay

Warm

Either

Way Enjoy Your Time We Have A lot To *Share* With You

So Sit Back And Relax Some Peruse Our Winter



Gift Guide

For Last Minute Ideas And Have Some Fun

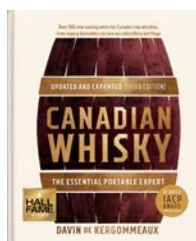
Happy Christmas

To All And To

All A Good Whisky

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How Reece Sims Is Changing
The Way We Taste





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BILL ASHBURN'S CHRONOLOGY

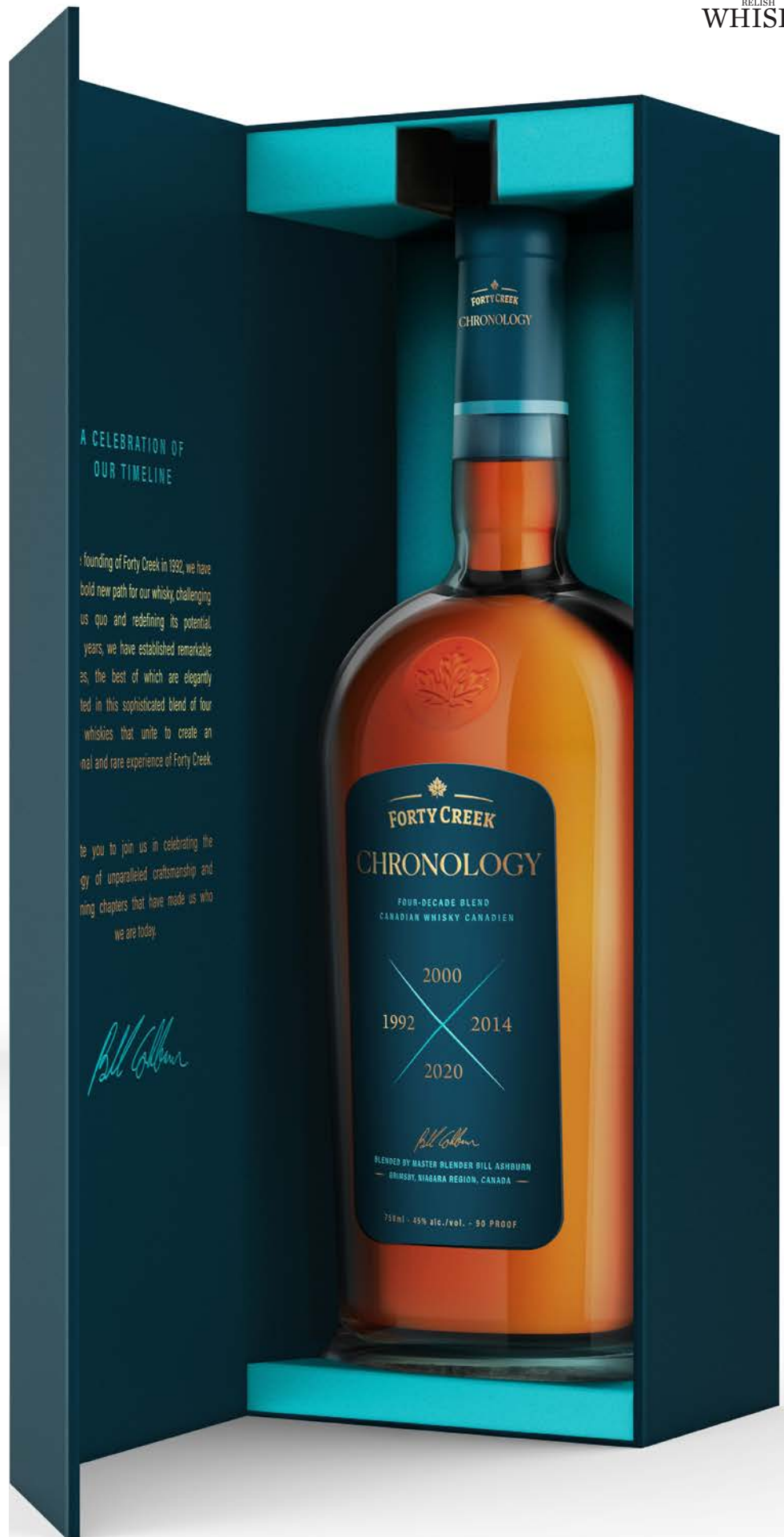
A Toast to a Legend

By Blair Phillips



Master Blender Bill Ashburn's announcement that he would soon retire brought a bittersweet overtone to the usual buzzing excitement of Forty Creek's Whisky Weekend this past September.

The cult of Forty Creek has become a sort of religion for whisky enthusiasts, who make a pilgrimage each September to snap up every drop of Ashburn's latest release.





Ashburn's following and portfolio of spirits are extensive. So extensive that Leonardo da Vinci may be the only person in history to conceptualize more creations than he has. Were da Vinci to attempt to record them in paint, he would require one massive canvas to have room for all of Ashburn's disciples and releases.

But Bill won't take his retirement until January, and after the dust had settled from celebrating the man of the hour, it didn't take him long to rise again. Within a week, Forty Creek announced a new limited-edition whisky called Chronology. "Chronology is very special to me as it contains whiskies from every decade of my time at Forty Creek. A little bit of me is in every drop," declares Ashburn.

Chronology honours Bill Ashburn's thirty-eight years at the distillery. It is his magnum opus, a blend of four whiskies, one each from 1992, 2000, 2014, and 2020, each decade of his personal journey at Forty Creek.

Together, they celebrate the milestones that shaped the Grimsby distillery. Each component whisky that Ashburn has hand-selected brings something special to the blend, telling its own story as well as that of the distillery's four visionaries, Otto Rieder, Gerhard Cohn, John K. Hall, and, himself, Bill Ashburn.

1992

Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was still blasting from every radio in April 1992. But at Rieder Distillery in





Grimsby, Ontario, venture capitalists no longer wanted to smell spirits of any kind. They had hired industry legend John Hall as a consultant to shut down the joint. When he arrived on site, Hall looked around and realized he had found his nirvana. Rather than close the facility, he bought it and renamed it Kittling Ridge. As Ashburn, who had been at the distillery since 1987, tells it, “I came with the furniture.”

Hall and Ashburn immediately began laying down whiskies that would usher in a new chapter and transform the history of Canadian whisky forever. Eight years later, Forty Creek took flight when these initial whiskies became part of the blends for Barrel Select, Three Grain, and later, a series of eagerly anticipated annual releases.

A single barrel of single malt from that first year was set aside and has remained untouched—until Chronology.

Chronology’s story begins with this rare thirty-one-year-old expression, the last barrel from that inaugural year and a powerful flavouring component in Chronology.

2000

Chronology also includes a notable 22-year-old corn whisky, the backbone of the blend, marking the year when Forty Creek’s most awarded whisky, Barrel Select, was launched. Recall December 31, 1999, when many rang in the New Year in their basements, surrounded by a Y2K stockpile of canned food and duct tape. Not at Forty Creek.

John Hall was packing his bags to set out in 2000 to promote Barrel Select. His goal was to sell people their first bottle; Ashburn’s was to ensure they came back for a second. That they did, and a rapidly growing fan base kept returning for their third, fourth, and fifth bottles.

By design, Barrel Select was more flavourful and robust than other Canadian whiskies available at the same price point at the time. It changed people’s perception of the category, giving whisky enthusiasts hope and bartenders something flavourful for whisky cocktails. Hall became familiar with their whisky stocks and embraced Ashburn’s photographic flavour memory for every barrel in the warehouse. Special releases that built on Barrel Select’s foundation soon followed, strengthening the Forty Creek lineup.





GOLDCOCK

— CZECH WHISKY —

Gold Cock Whisky, the oldest whisky brand in the Czech Republic, has a rich history dating back to 1969. The brand's journey began with the first distillation of malted barley, sourced from the maltings in Bruntál, at the Těšetice Distillery near Olomouc, and aged in Czech European oak casks, laying the foundation for its unique character. Gold Cock Whisky is distinguished by its use of Moravian barley, traditional floor malting, and aging in European oak barrels, resulting in a rich and complex flavor profile with notes of fruit, peat smoke, spices, and oak. The whisky's maturation in a non-temperature controlled warehouse, shared with brandies, imparts additional layers of flavor, contributing to its distinctive character.



Gold Cock 20YO

A Masterpiece of Czech Distillation

Gold Cock 20YO is a refined whisky aged in new, heavily charred barrels, resulting in a delicate aroma and complex flavor profile. Bottled at 49.2% alcohol, it offers notes of wood, fruit, and a warm, dry finish. This exceptional whisky earned a Gold Medal at the London Spirits Competition 2021.



Gold Cock 10YO

A Robust Czech Classic

Gold Cock 10YO, distilled on Arnold Holstein pot stills, combines tradition with innovation. Bottled at 49.2% alcohol, it features a fruity, strong, and woody aroma with a robust taste. The finish is warm and long-lasting, with hints of jam and plums.



Gold Cock Peated Whisky

A Smoky Czech Innovation

Gold Cock Peated Whisky, introduced in 2016, is the first heavily peated Czech whisky, boasting 45% alcohol and a 30 PPM peat level. Matured in refurbished Slivovitz barrels, it offers a smoky character with floral tones and a dry, smoked aftertaste, marking a bold departure from the brand's traditional profile.

2014

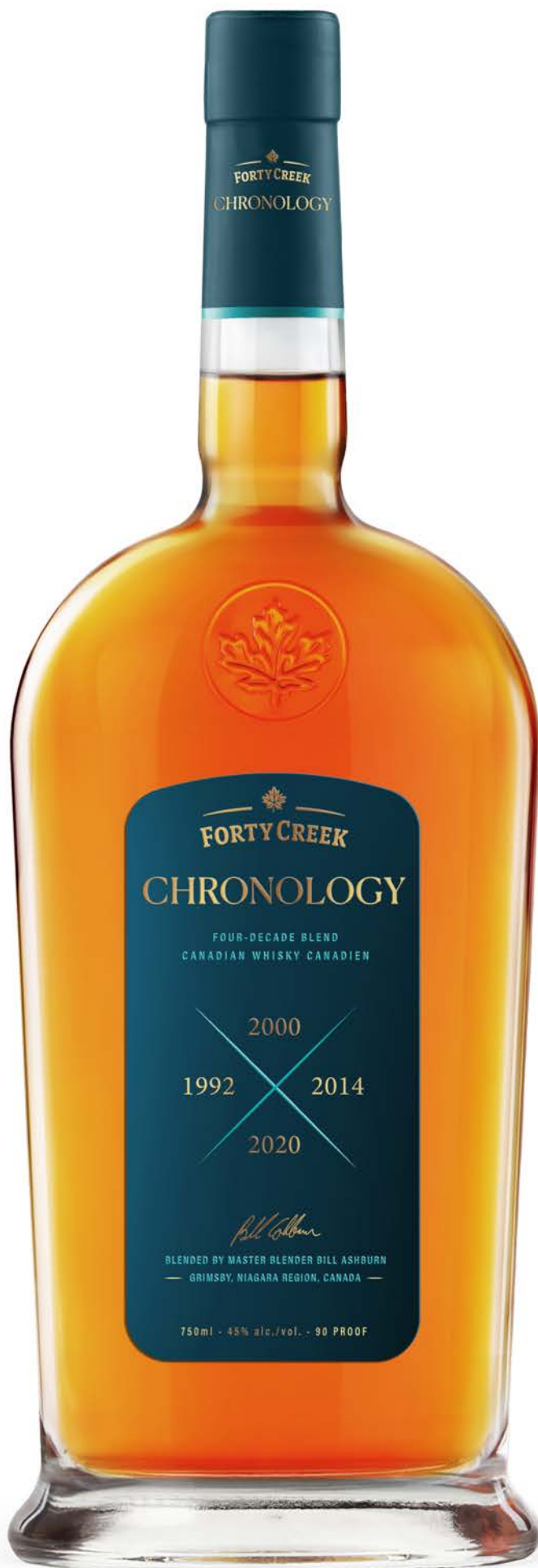
In 2014, NASA's Maven probe entered orbit around Mars, and the European Space Agency's Rosetta probe landed on a comet. As historic as these achievements were, they faded from the news when disappointed scientists confirmed that Forty Creek's limited-edition whiskies, such as 2014's Evolution, sold out everywhere, and there wasn't a secret stash in space. The whisky symbolized John Hall's evolution as a whisky maker. It was Forty Creek's eighth special release – a blend of three-year-old corn, barley, and rye whiskies that had been re-distilled then re-aged for an additional nine years in French oak cabernet sauvignon wine casks.

Driven by innovation, Forty Creek's international persona was growing, and the Campari Group took notice, acquiring the distillery that year for a handsome sum. Behind the scenes, it was also a milestone year in which Ashburn produced another whisky that would spend nine years in barrels, evolving into a delicious, rye whisky that would further develop Chronology's structure. This component marks a new chapter of innovation and growth for Forty Creek, following its acquisition by the Campari Group. A new historic chapter had begun.

2020

Forty Creek was named Whisky Maker of the Decade at the 2020 Canadian Whisky Awards, with their Confederation Oak taking home Whisky of the Decade. When Confederation Oak was first released in 2010, Forty Creek did something common in the early days of Canadian whisky. When settlers were clearing the land, distilleries used to cooper oak barrels from the trees that were harvested close to the distillery. This whisky was made with Canadian oak that came from a nearby





conservation area where trees were being thinned to allow light to reach growing saplings. 2020 was a hallmark year. To celebrate it, Bill Ashburn selected a 2020-distilled base whisky as Chronology's fourth and final component, a framework to integrate the flavours of 1992, 2000, and 2014.

2025

As Chronology unfolds on the palate, its broad palette deepens. Floral notes immediately come forward, framed by old oak. Then, an array of spices soars into layers of maple, mint, herbal licorice, orchard, tropical and some dark fruits. A flavour cornucopia spills from the glass, bound together by a sweetness that feels both new and, yes, familiar, with what has slowly emerged as Bill Ashburn's signature. "I look at this whisky in layers," says Ashburn. "When you nose this whisky, when you taste this whisky, it devolves down into different layers, and it takes you through a whole tasting experience. I've been trying to achieve that for years."

"If you were a fan of Forty Creek, or if you were a fan of Bill Ashburn and his beautiful whiskies over the years, if you were to summarize four decades of exceptional, award-winning, innovative, risk-making in one model, this is the one," says Chris Thompson, National Brand Ambassador. "This is the perfect swan song of an incredible 40-plus-year career in the beverage alcohol industry. It encapsulates the very best of what Bill's done in the whisky world."

Whether deliberate or not, many of Ashburn's whiskies come in trilogies with three different expressions completing a theme. In Chronology, his "final" mark on Forty Creek's history, he has crafted a message in a bottle that shares the distillery's story and sums up his remarkable career in one stunning whisky.

THE SPLENDOUR OF TORMORE

GAVIN D. SMITH

Scotch whisky distilleries come in all shapes and sizes, from bland industrial units to triumphs of aesthetic and architectural endeavour, but few can compare with the splendour of Tormore.





Located beside the A95 road that leads from Grantown-on-Spey into the heart of Speyside, Tormore's architecture owes a debt to art deco, with its arresting, white-painted mix of traditional and contemporary styling, including arched windows, stone balustrades and a copper roof, intended to turn green with time. Gardens are beautifully manicured, and topiary exists in the shape of stills, while a cupola is complete with a musical clock which plays four different Scottish tunes when it chimes. There is even a curling pond for when temperatures fall in winter

For most of its existence, Tormore's main purpose has been to provide malt spirit for blends, but in the hands of current owner Elixir Distillers, all that is changing, and the brand name should soon become much more familiar to malt whisky drinkers.

The distillery was built during the years following the end of the Second World War, when the Scotch whisky industry began to experience more positive fortunes after half a century in the economic doldrums. Exports to the USA led recovery, so it was appropriate that one of the very first new distilleries to be built in Scotland post-war was created by a UK subsidiary of the US company Schenley Industries.

That subsidiary was Long John Distilleries Ltd, and after exhaustive exploration and water analysis a site was selected near the River Spey, close to the hamlet of Advie. Water was sourced from the Achvochkie Burn, and the new distillery was christened Tormore – Gaelic for 'big hill.'

Keen to make a statement, Long John enlisted the services of celebrated architect Sir Albert Richardson for the project. Construction work on what was to be a showpiece distillery, dedicated to producing malt spirit for the Long John blend, began in 1958. No



expense was spared, with the final bill coming in at some CAN\$935,000. Due to its relative remoteness, Tormore was developed as a true distilling community, complete with a row of staff houses and a community hall.

The distillery, equipped with two pairs of stills, first produced spirit on 18th October 1959, and was officially opened on 7th October the following year. As the US-led Scotch whisky recovery strengthened, many existing distilleries across Scotland were ex

panded, and Tormore was no exception, being equipped with four more stills in 1972.

The 1970s were also a time when a number of major brewing companies diversified into Scotch, and in 1975 what was by then Long John International Ltd, complete with its distilleries, was acquired by Whitbread & Co Ltd. Via ownership by Allied Lyons, later Allied Domecq, Tormore ultimately came into the hands of Pernod Ricard's Scottish distilling subsidiary Chivas Brothers Ltd in 2005.



It remained in the hands of Chivas until 2023, when the site and maturing stock were sold to Elixir Distillers, headed by brothers Sukhinder and Rajbir Singh, who had just sold their leading online retail business The Whisky Exchange to Pernod Ricard.

Elixir produces the Elements of Islay trio of blended malts and Port Askaig Islay single malt, and construction is currently underway on the company's Portintruan distillery on the island of Islay. Elixir also owns Black Tot rum, and a rum solera, operating along the same lines as a sherry solera, has been established at Tormore,

which will ultimately become the headquarters for the rum brand.

In terms of whisky, under the Chivas Brothers regime, Tormore was a notably low-profile single malt, with 14 and 16-year-old expressions latterly available. Now, however, the emphasis is firmly on single malts, with a new core line-up due next year.

In the meantime, as a taster for what is to come, Elixir has released three 10-year-old expressions in its Blueprint series of limited-release bottlings. The Blueprint collection comprises whisky matured in cream sherry casks, toasted oak casks and first-fill bourbon barrels, with Blueprint 10 Years Old Bourbon Barrel being described as 'the core' of future Tormore releases, as the Elixir team considers first-fill bourbon barrels to be the optimum vessels for the spirit's maturation.

Along with 'Blueprint,' Elixir has launched three vintage single cask whiskies in the Legacy series, consisting of single malts distilled in 2003, 2009 and 2012, intended to showcase the 'DNA' of Tormore as produced under the previous Chivas Brothers regime, majoring in peaches, pears, and a rounded palate likened to peach pie with buttery pastry.

In terms of distilling equipment, Tormore boasts a 10.4 tonne full lauter mashtun, and 11 washbacks are spread across three locations, with four next to the mash house and stills, four above the boiler house, and three more in the clock tower. Fermentation lasts from 54 to 120 hours, and the distillery boasts four x 18,500 litres wash stills and four x 13,900 litres spirit stills.

An Elixir spokesperson declares that "Tormore's new-make spirit is characterised by pears, nectarines and walnuts. Though elegant, with a balance of autumnal and stoned fruits, it also has huge depth and weight of character. Much of this style is driven by the fruit-forward wash but also influenced by the large purifiers on each still that allow for maximum reflux and copper contact. This focuses the distillate toward the softer, fruitier flavours that have developed in fermentation."





The person occupying the manager's seat at Tormore and overseeing production of that distillate is Polly Logan, whose CV includes spells with Tomatin, Diageo and Edrington, latterly acting as The Macallan whisky maker.

According to Logan, "We have done some minor tweaks since taking over Tormore, mainly on fermentation times and yeast to emphasise the really lovely orchard fruits, with a buttery cereal note and a lovely mouthfeel." She adds that physical changes to the site have included reinstating the filling store which had not been in operation since 2006, noting that "We've put a new filling head and system in. The whole site – including the topiary – is category 'B' listed, so any changes have to go through a stringent planning process.

"We have repatriated many casks back to site, and many more have left the

site, too. However, there are many more casks still to come back from all over Scotland, but all planned in!" Re-racking of stock acquired with the distillery has also been undertaken, and Logan notes that "We released a wee sneak peak of what we have been doing at site since we took over in December 2022 in Blueprint.

These were 10-year-old Tormore which had been re-racked into Bourbon barrels, some virgin heavily toasted casks and some Cream Sherry casks, though that's not an exhaustive list of the cask types we've been using. We are really proud of the Blueprint series."

In terms of output, Logan says that "The distillery is set up to produce approximately 3.5mla annually on five-day production and that's what we've been doing since January 2023 and are doing this year and next. For the first three years of our owner

ship, part of the sale contract was to sell Chivas Brothers back an agreed amount to allow them time to source suitable replacements within their portfolio, but we are nearing the end of that period now."

Given the obvious visual charms of the Tormore site and the fact that very few members of the public have ever seen inside it, Logan is often asked about the creation of a visitor centre.

"That's definitely one of the most asked questions, possibly after 'when are the fountains starting back up?' she says. "Tormore is both incredibly distinctive and beautiful, and we are looking at various options on visitor centres and how they would work on site, because we want to do this the right way for the best experience. So, the plans are in action, but they are a wee while off yet, but rest assured you'll know when we are ready!"





**TORMORE 10 YEARS
OLD BLUEPRINT 03
BOURBON BARREL,
48%abv**

Nose:

Pleasingly fragrant, with white pepper, nectarines, caramel, walnuts, coconut and ginger

Palate:

Supple. Baked pear, peach, custard and sweet oak

Finish:

Medium in length. Lingering peach, dark chocolate and oak spice



RELISH
WHISKY





SPIRIT OF THE DEEP

A New Chapter in Fathom's Whisky Story

By Becca Penner

In Victoria's Inner Harbour, a new chapter in Fathom's whisky story is beginning. What began as a bold collaboration between Hotel Grand Pacific's signature restaurant and DEVINE Distillery has emerged in a bold new expression, marking both a continuation and a rebirth.

When DEVINE closed its doors last year,

it could have marked the end of Spirit of the Deep, a whisky originally crafted for Fathom's cocktail program. Instead, it became the beginning of a new chapter, written in partnership with the creative distillers at Driftwood Spirits, the acclaimed brewery-turned-distillery behind some of British Columbia's most inventive small-batch releases.

Spirit of the Deep's Origin Story

The original Spirit of the Deep was born out of a simple but ambitious idea: to craft a whisky bold enough to stand up in a cocktail, particularly Fathom's signature Old Fashioned, yet refined enough to enjoy neat. Created in collaboration with DEVINE Distillery, this spirit was crafted from a complex blend of ancient grains (barley, emmer, spelt, and Khorasan), aged in small barrels, and finished in spiced rum casks. Each batch carried a deep, warming flavour of honey, clove, and baking spice that paired perfectly with Fathom's "from light to dark" cocktail philosophy.

Only seven small casks were ever produced, making it one of the rarest whiskies to come out of Vancouver Island. Bottled at a precise 46.3% ABV — a quiet nod to Hotel Grand Pacific's address at 463 Belleville Street — the whisky became both a symbol of collaboration and a quiet local cult favourite.

When DEVINE's stills went silent, Fathom's whisky curator, Adam Bradshaw, and the Driftwood Spirits team saw an opportunity to evolve the story. The goal was never to replicate the past, but to honour its spirit and reimagine it through Driftwood's unique creative lens.

Crafted by Driftwood, Guided by Collaboration

The new Spirit of the Deep – Single Malt Whisky represents Driftwood's first-ever whisky release; a fittingly momentous partnership for two local favourites. Crafted with 100% BC malted barley and double-distilled in traditional copper pot stills, the whisky is matured for three years in American oak before being bottled at cask strength.

This new expression draws on the Canadian tradition of blending and layering flavour to create depth, using the one-eleventh rule — a practice that allows an aged spirit or fortified wine to be added to whisky in an amount less than one-eleventh of the total



volume. While this approach is typically based on corn whisky, Fathom's iteration begins with the bold and complex character of single malt, requiring an equally distinctive infusion to complement its intensity. For this, Driftwood's own barrel-aged Nocino, a green walnut liqueur of Italian origin, was selected, marking what is believed

to be the first use of its kind in this context. The whisky then underwent a secondary maturation in a cask that once held Driftwood's Singularity Imperial Stout, a beloved annual release celebrated for its rich, roasted depth. The result is a spirit that bridges the dark warmth of stout with the aromatic complexity of spice.





“The goal was to capture that same sense of depth and warmth that made the original special,” says Bradshaw. “Something built for an Old Fashioned — big, rich, complex — but also utterly unique and interesting to try neat.”

From Barrel to Bar

Though bottled at a full cask strength of 58.3%, the whisky’s balance allows bartenders to experiment freely. At Fathom, it’s already finding its place as the foundation of a new series of cocktails that explore its layers — smoky, spiced, and surprisingly elegant. Driftwood’s Spirit of the Deep represents not just a continuation of a beloved whisky, but the merging of two of Victoria’s most creative beverage programs. It’s a product of patience, collaboration, and a shared belief that the best spirits, like the ocean itself, are never static.

As Bradshaw puts it: “We couldn’t recreate the past, and we didn’t want to. What we’ve made instead is something that carries the legacy forward... still bold, still rich, but unmistakably its own.”

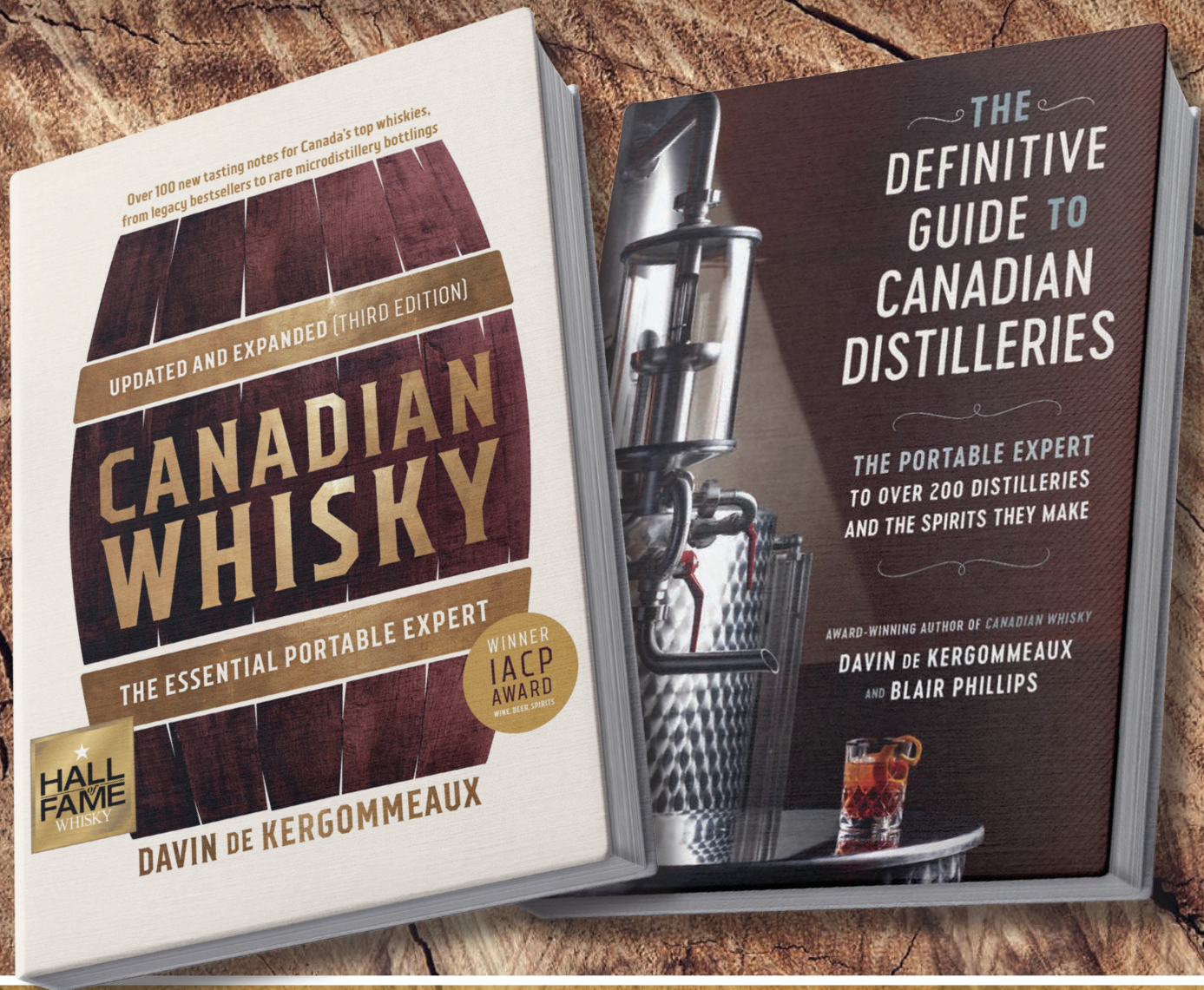
Tasting the Depths

On the nose, Driftwood’s Spirit of the Deep opens with clove-studded orange peel, bergamot, and hints of roasted coffee. A subtle oiliness gives way to fig, raisin, and dark chocolate. The palate begins with a flash of candied orange before deepening into burnt date caramel, vanilla, baking spice, and frozen baker’s chocolate.

The mouthfeel is viscous and lingering, designed to hold its own in bold cocktails but smooth enough for sipping neat. There’s even a faint thread of tart apple weaving through the darker notes, like a glimmer of light beneath the surface.



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GIFT IDEAS

*FOR EVERYONE
ON YOUR LIST
Even The Naughty List*





1

2



3



4

5



6



🍷 **The World of Whisky: New Traditions** Giving power tools isn't a thoughtful gift unless they plan to build a whisky cabinet. And that's likely to happen after reading Felipe Schrieberg's book. You'll need a place to display all these whisky discoveries. Schrieberg shares the story of a few dozen whisky distilleries, both big and small, in this gorgeous and thoughtful collection.

🍷 **Macaloney's Island Distillery An Loy** This Canadian single malt whisky is named after the river Loy in Lochbar, Scotland, where Dr. Graeme Macaloney's ancestors spent a thousand years cattle raiding. Aged in ex-bourbon, Spanish Oloroso, Portuguese Red Wine, and Pedro Ximenez casks, this malt raids the palate with a full spectrum of rich malty flavours.

🍷 **Forty Creek Cinnamon Bun Cream Liquor** Forty Creek corrals everything irresistible about freshly baked cinnamon buns and bottles it. This is indulgence and comfort in a glass. If you don't find a bottle of this cream liquor in your stocking, call 911. That sleigh-riding, red-suited guy called "Santa" who breaks into your home once a year probably kept it for himself.

🍷 **Canadian Whisky: The Essential Portable Expert** Hands down, this is the best book about Canadian whisky ever. Davin de Kergommeaux's pages are love letters to Canadian whisky's full story, one that hockey, maple syrup, and poutine combined, wish they could match. Here's a pro tip: if you receive a gift with a receipt, it's your ticket to return the item and exchange it for this exceptional, comprehensive book about Canada's national spirit.

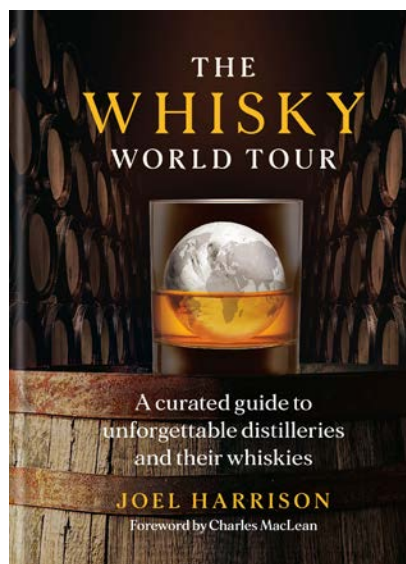
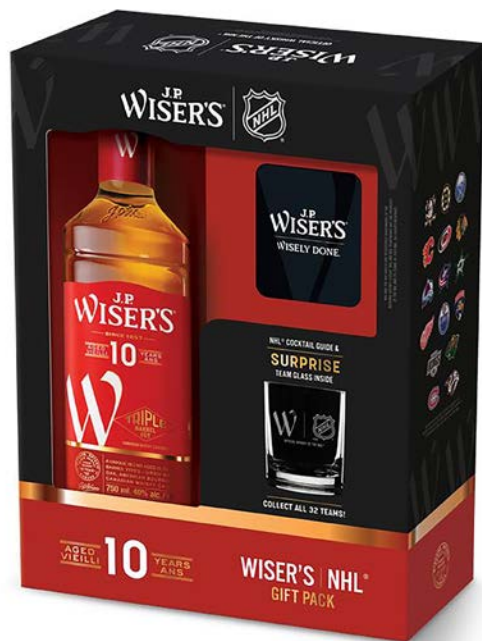
🍷 **Two Stacks Fruit Drops Irish Whiskey** Yukon Cornelius spent all of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer searching for silver and gold, but he could have struck it rich with these cans. Two Stacks Irish Whiskey offers a trio of canned drams—perfectly portioned apple, apricot, and blackberry brandy cask-finished Irish whiskey.

🍷 **Rampur Barrel Blush** This Indian single malt was matured in ex-bourbon barrels, then in Australian Shiraz casks. Rich and sweet, it features dark berry, currant, vanilla, toffee, and spicy pepper notes. A stunning pick for adventurous palates.



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🍇 **Dillon's** reinvents the twelve days of giving with a box of cocktails—no turtle doves, French hens, or calling birds needed. This selection brings a parade of cocktails a-shaking and a-stirring, including Martinis, Negronis, Manhattans, and other treats for the spirited season.

🍇 **Spirit of the Deep Single Malt Canadian Whisky**
This cocktail whisky brings together Victoria's Driftwood Spirits Distillery and the Hotel Grand Pacific's Fathom Lounge. Three-year-old single malt spent time in ex-bourbon, Nocino, and Imperial Stout casks. A bold creation—better than grandma's holiday baking.

🍇 **Glenmorangie Nectar D'Or 16-Year-Old**
Inspired by the memory of a French pastry shop, Bill Lumsden has created a whisky as memorable as the shop itself. This Glenmorangie was aged for 14 years in ex-bourbon barrels, then for 2 more years in sweet wine casks like Spanish Moscatel, Hungarian Tokaji, French Sauternes, and Monbazillac.

🍇 **J.P. Wiser's 10-Year-Old NHL Gift Pack**
J.P. Wiser's has teamed up with the NHL to craft a gift set that scores on flavour. This exclusive collection features a bottle of J.P. Wiser's 10 Year Old Canadian whisky, an NHL team cocktail book, team-branded glassware, and a hockey-themed stir stick. Ice not included.

🍇 **Two Stacks Double Irish Cream Liqueur**
This four-pack offers an indulgent blend of Irish Double Cream with a variety of Irish whiskies, including pot still, light grain, dark grain, double malt, and peated malt for a decadent dram in a can. A stocking isn't stuffed unless it holds these silky, creamy tins of joy.

🍇 **The Whisky World Tour** Author Joel Harrison has thoughtfully curated a Whisky World Tour featuring distilleries worldwide that tell a story, welcome visitors, and are worth a visit. Ask for a copy for your home and one for your suitcase. Fun fact: Santa's globe-trotting to deliver presents to children is a cover-up. It's really an excuse to take Harrison's book on the road.

A stag with large antlers stands on a rocky outcrop, looking out over a valley at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and blue. The stag is facing away from the camera, looking towards the horizon.

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PUTTING FLAVOUR FIRST

How Reece Sims Is Changing The Way We Taste

By Andrea Fujarczuk

Reece Sims wears black like a uniform, but her work in the spirits world is anything but monochrome. Named the IWSC's 2025 Emerging Talent in Spirits Communication, she has built an entire ecosystem around helping people understand why things taste the way they do and why that matters.

A former award-winning bartender and on-premise territory manager, Reece's path to spirits began in marketing and communications, first in fashion and then in architecture. That creative foundation now fuels her trio of ventures: Flavor Camp®, SIP Spirits Consulting Inc., and the Flavour Report.

Through Flavor Camp®, she teaches people to taste with confidence and curiosity. Through SIP Spirits Consulting, she transforms that engagement into market intelligence, giving brands data they can actually use.

And through The Flavour Report, she collaborates with experts to explore the intersection of flavour, culture, and connection proving that a good drink is as much about people as it is about process.

Her mission is simple: to make the spirits world more inclusive, more connected, and more flavour-driven through a universal tasting language that everyone can speak.

Andrea Fujarczuk : What was the "Aha!" moment that made you realize spirit education needed to be less technical and more playful, inclusive, and multi-sensory?

Reece Sims: My “aha” moment probably came after doing my WSET Level 3 in Wine and Spirits. I found the standardized approach to tasting really helpful as it gave me structure and language, but I also felt like something was missing. It was analytical, but not very alive.

When I was younger, I was a big colour-coder and doodler with my notes. I guess I've carried that same approach into spirits education. Layering multiple cues (visual, emotional, and sensory) helps people not only learn but retain the technical information in a more natural, human way. I don't necessarily think spirits education needs to be less technical, I actually love the technical side.







The challenge is presenting that in ways that meet people wherever they are in their tasting journey, from beginner to expert.

Right now, a lot of tastings and educational content are designed for one type of learner. By expanding the cues we use (visual, verbal, sensory, and of course, taste) we make learning feel more inclusive and less intimidating. That's really what inspired the Flavor Camp® Tasting System. It's rooted in research and surveying spirits enthusiasts, and it uses the most associated colour cues for each flavour 'camp', association icons, and a shared descriptive language that builds across three tiers: the main Flavor Camps, which group spirits by overarching taste profile, sub-sections that dive into specific flavor families within each camp, and then detailed descriptors that help people build a shared vocabulary for what they're experiencing.

AF: *How is your approach actively breaking down the traditional, intimidating barriers that often surround spirits and wine culture?*

RS: A lot of the intimidation in spirits and wine culture comes from how information is presented. It can feel like there's a "right" way to taste, talk, or even enjoy a drink. My approach breaks that down by making learning participatory, sensory, and fun. When something feels playful, it's easier to learn and remember.

Some people can get really pretentious with specificity—you'll hear two people debating whether a whisky tastes like "the backseat of my father's 1980s station wagon with wet dogs" or "wool mittens after a snowball fight in February." Personally, I love that level of specificity; it shows real sensory awareness. But I also recognize that for many people, it can feel intimidating or exclusionary. At Flavor Camp®, we try to bridge that gap.

For us, that same note might simply start with "funky." It's about giving people a shared language that feels approachable while still leaving room for individuality and creativity.

I've designed it so that each spirit category has 8 to 15 top-level cues that give people a simple structure to start with. It's like a dartboard, the goal isn't to hit the bullseye right away, it's just to hit the board. Over time, your palate sharpens naturally, and your aim becomes more precise.

AF: *How do you measure success in "changing the way people talk about taste"? What shift in language or behavior do you most often observe in your participants?*

RS: Anecdotally, some of our participants have been attending Flavor Camp® Taste Challenges for several years now, and it's been amazing to watch their confidence and vocabulary evolve. Part of the fun is that each tasting is blind, and people can guess which spirit they think is which. There are no stakes (no scorekeeping or passing workbooks around) but the friendly competition adds focus and intention. It makes learning feel playful and low-pressure, yet deeply engaging.

This past year was the first time I've seen participants get all eight spirits correct in a session. The joy on their faces, realizing they can now identify flavour profiles and articulate what they're tasting, is incredibly rewarding. Success, for me, looks like that progression from uncertainty to curiosity to confident expression. When someone starts using the shared, non-branded flavour language we've developed, describing spirits in terms of their sensory "camps" instead

of marketing jargon, that's when I know the system is working. It's changing not just how people taste, but how they talk about taste, with more clarity and confidence.

AF: *Can you share an example of a common marketing bias or prestige cue that the blind-tasting format successfully eliminates, and what did participants learn from it?*

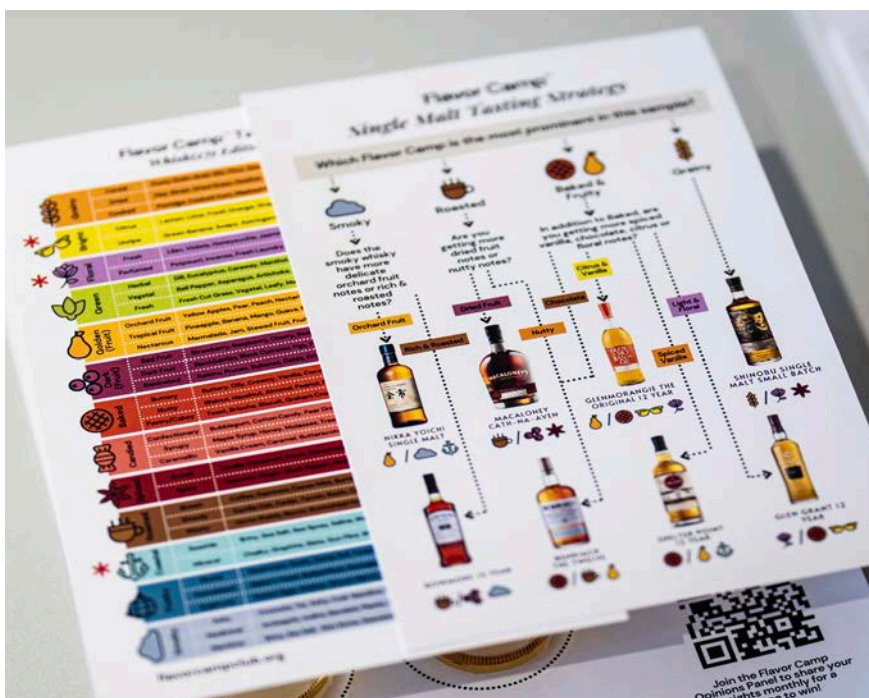
RS: One of the biggest biases we see in spirits marketing revolves around brand prestige, age, and price point. People often assume that an older whisky or a more expensive bottle must taste better, or that certain well-known brands are automatically "premium." The blind-tasting format removes all of that.

Once labels and price tags are out of sight, people start evaluating what's actually in the glass. It's fascinating to watch perceptions shift. Participants will describe a younger or more affordable whisky as elegant or complex, then be shocked when they find out it wasn't the top-tier bottle.

What they learn is that experience and enjoyment aren't dictated by status. It reframes tasting as something personal rather than performative. By stripping away marketing cues, people connect more honestly with flavour and often rediscover brands or styles they'd previously overlooked.

AF: *How do the Taste Challenge classes specifically empower participants to trust their own palate and form their own opinions?*

RS: The Taste Challenges are intentionally designed to help people learn to trust their own palate, no



matter their level of experience. We run the classes as half-blind tastings, which means participants know what products they're tasting, but not the order or the price. This setup removes bias and forces the focus onto flavour first.

Each attendee gets an intro card with the products and their corresponding Flavor Camp® Taste Profiles, which outline the primary and secondary flavor camps each spirit falls into. The sensory exercise is to taste through the lineup and identify which sample fits which profile. For beginners, that might mean simply recognizing one of the 8-13 main flavor camps (for example bright, spice, dark fruit, smoky, etc).

For more advanced drinkers, each camp and sub-section has been intentionally designed to connect back to potential production methods, allowing them to reverse-engineer how those flavours were created. For example, if a Scotch has a 'golden fruit' primary and 'baked' secondary Flavor Camp® Taste Profile, one could

anticipate it's a single malt with a longer fermentation period, double distillation, and a heavy proportion of ex-bourbon cask maturation. Add 'spiced' into the mix, and that might point toward some use of virgin oak, higher ABV, or perhaps a shorter maturation period.

AF: *Why do you feel spirits' knowledge has historically been so exclusive, and what are the most crucial steps Flavor Camp® takes to make it participatory?*

RS: Historically, spirits knowledge (especially whisk(e)y) has been treated like insider information, something reserved for those already in the industry or with the right connections. A lot of education was built around hierarchy and expertise rather than inclusion and curiosity. The language was technical, the environments formal, and the assumption was that you had to earn your way into understanding. That created invisible barriers that left many people feeling like outsiders.



Even today, whisk(e)y culture can still feel very male-dominated. I was at a whisky show recently where some booths would only speak to the men who approached, not even making eye contact with me. There's definitely a shift happening, with more women pouring at whisky shows and working behind the scenes, but we still need more women at the front of the room leading tastings, hosting masterclasses, and being seen as authorities. Subconsciously, that imbalance reinforces who people expect to see in positions of expertise and who they assume the audience is.

At Flavor Camp®, I'm proud that our in-person Taste Challenges have organically become much more balanced. Our participant data shows an even 50/50 split between women and men, sometimes 40/60 at most. Representation isn't just symbolic, it actively reshapes who feels invited

to the table and who feels confident pulling up a chair.

AF: *What is the biggest challenge in translating a hands-on, flavor-driven experience like a tasting class into compelling digital content?*

RS: You can't smell, sip, or swirl through a post, so the storytelling has to do all the sensory heavy lifting. The goal is to make people feel like they're tasting, even when they're not.

We do that by layering visual and verbal cues: using colour, iconography, and short, punchy language to guide people through the same flavour logic they'd experience in a live class. It's less about describing a spirit and more about sparking curiosity, helping people imagine how it might taste.

Another challenge is maintaining authenticity when the internet rewards speed over depth. I try to balance

education with entertainment, using digital touchpoints to inspire people to slow down, think about flavour, and eventually take that next step into a real tasting experience. The engagement speaks for itself! Our content is now reaching over 5 million viewers a month (and growing).

AF: *With such a massive digital reach, how do you ensure the online community maintains the core values of inclusivity and interactive education that define Flavor Camp®?*

RS: Our digital community has grown, but the focus has never been on numbers; it's about connection. Every post, quiz, and challenge is designed to invite participation rather than broadcast expertise.

We use polls, blind-tasting games, cocktail competitions, and flavour challenges that encourage people to share their impressions, not just consume information. It's about creating space for dialogue. That mindset builds confidence and community at the same time.

Inclusivity also means representation. We feature voices from across the



industry including bartenders, distillers, enthusiasts, and creators from different backgrounds so people see themselves reflected in the culture of spirits. That approach has resonated. Even as we've grown to nearly 75,000 followers and millions of monthly average views, the conversations still feel personal and collaborative.

AF: *What was the driving vision for the new Flavour Report and why did you decide to create it in a printed collectible reference guide style rather than a traditional magazine?*

RS: Flavor Camp®'s digital programs run on a monthly cycle, where we deep-dive into one spirit category at a time. That format is great for focused learning, but it doesn't always leave room for other brands or categories to join the conversation. The Flavour Report was created to fill that gap.

Each edition is built around a central theme tied to flavour, not category, which allows different spirits to be featured together through shared ideas like Flavour is Place or Flavour is Connection. I don't see it as a magazine so much as a collectible series of mini-books or reference guides infused with expert industry perspectives. It's something I want bartenders to keep on their back bars and home drinkers to leave on their coffee tables.

While I create all the Flavor Camp® content myself, The Flavour Report brings in incredible writers and voices from around the world (like you, Andrea!) who share my mission to celebrate and educate through great spirits, storytelling, and opinions.

AF: *As the sister company, how does SIP Spirits Consulting transform the consumer engagement from the Flavor Camp® classes into actionable data and insights for spirit brands?*

RS: SIP Spirits Consulting Inc. (I'll note that SIP is actually an acronym for "sensory insights, intelligence, and perceptions") functions as the insights and strategy counterpart to Flavor Camp®, leveraging sensory data, consumer research, and market intelligence to inform brand decision-making. It's achieved through collecting data during our Flavor Camp® sessions, analyzing trends

from our digital content and user interactions, conducting national market surveys, and drawing on firsthand experience from working with hundreds of products each year (as well as judging hundreds of products across varying spirits awards annually).

Working with SIP Spirits, brands can see how their products perform in the glass, how they're perceived compared to competitors, and what flavour trends are emerging in different regions or demographics. It translates education into strategy, helping brands make smarter, more human-centered business decisions.





AF: Can you share an example of a time SIP Spirits helped a brand gain a critical understanding of "what drinkers really want" by using Flavor Camp® data?

RS: I was recently speaking with a client who represents a super-premium gin brand in BC and Alberta. We featured their gin in six Flavor Camp® Taste Challenge sessions with bartenders, consumers, and media in BC and Alberta in 2025. Each session, as I formerly mentioned, collects structured feedback on blind tasting impressions, brand perception, willingness to purchase, and perceived value.

When we analyzed the data, the results were clear: participants rated the gin highly for quality, aesthetics, and flavour, but many hesitated at the retail price once it passed the \$90 mark. Based on these findings, the distillery has agreed to a strategic price adjustment for BC to stay below that psychological threshold, bringing down the retail price by about \$5.

It's a great example of how combining sensory education with real consumer feedback can guide tangible business decisions for international brands (or local brands) in Canada. Rather than guessing what drinkers want, brands can gain clear, actionable insights that directly influence pricing, positioning, growth strategies and even future product formulation.

AF: In balancing the two companies, how does Flavor Camp® maintain its independent, bias-free mission while its sister company, SIP Spirits, works directly with spirits brands?

RS: I'll be honest, Flavor Camp® isn't entirely bias-free, because we do collaborate directly with brands. But what keeps it credible is how those partnerships are structured. Every tasting is designed to prioritize education and experience first, not promotion. Participants taste blind, compare notes, and only later discover the brands behind what they enjoyed most. That keeps the focus on flavour, not labels.

For our digital education, we intentionally partner with brands that integrate seamlessly into the learning process. They often serve as examples that help illustrate the concepts we're teaching within a spirit category. We also post real reviews on our website and only work with brands we genuinely believe in. I've definitely turned away paid opportunities to feature certain brands because their ethos didn't align with ours, and maintaining that integrity matters more than short-term revenue.

The ultimate goal of both Flavor Camp® and SIP Spirits is to make the industry smarter, more inclusive, and more connected through honest feedback. At its core, it's really as simple as figuring out what people want and if they don't know yet, helping them learn how to articulate it. From there, it's about connecting them with products they'll genuinely love. In a way, we're like matchmakers, creating win-win moments where consumers feel seen and understood, and brands gain the insight to craft beverages that truly resonate.

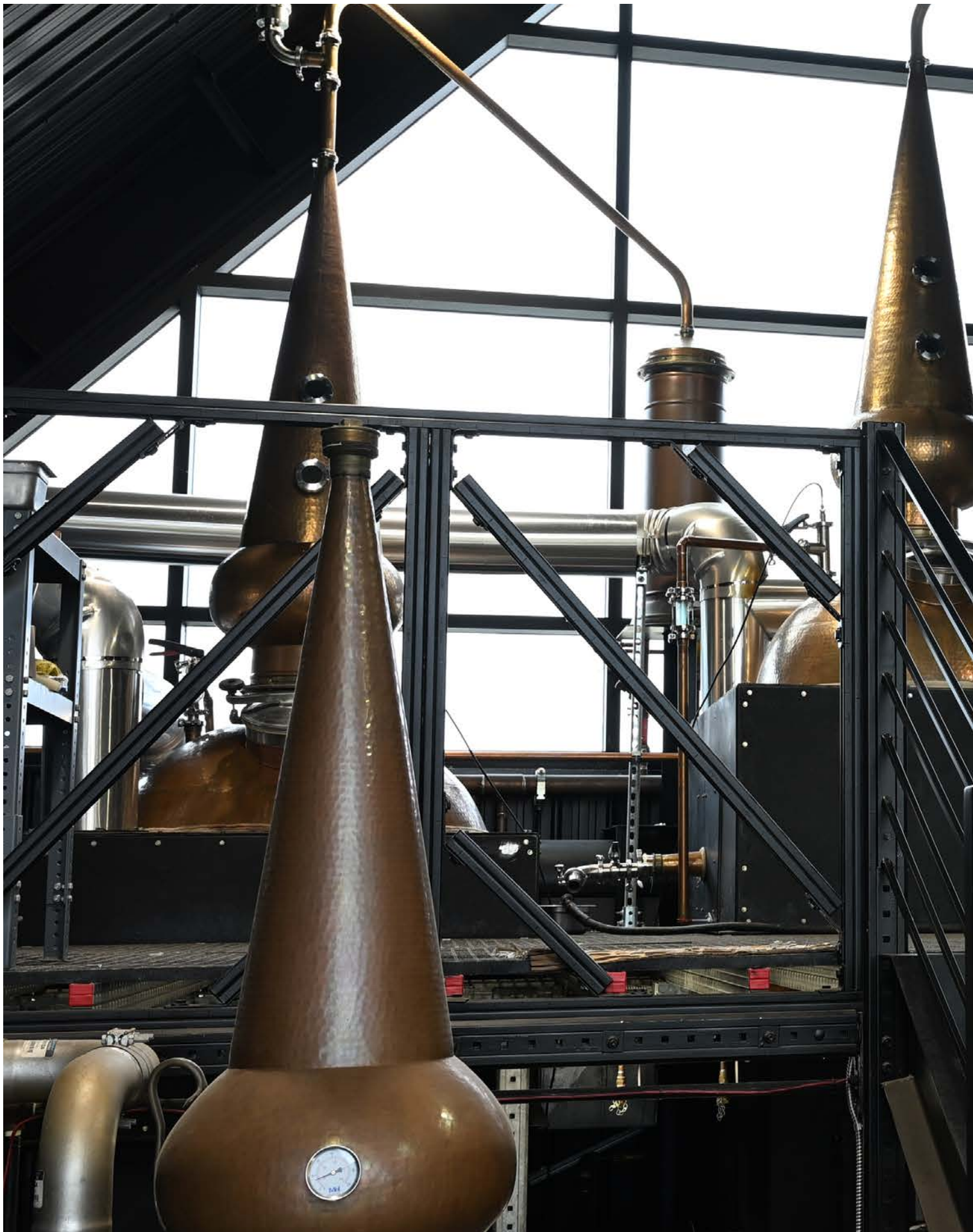
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A man in a dark suit and white shirt is standing on a metal staircase inside a distillery. He is holding an open book and looking down at it. The background features large, industrial copper distillation columns and a dark, slanted wooden ceiling. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

ANOHKA DISTILLERY

By Davin de Kergommeaux

" Heading west out of Edmonton along the Yellowhead Highway, it's maybe twenty minutes to Manly Corners, five if Dolph Shaw, President of the Alberta Scotch Society, is driving his low-slung, anti-gravity Taurus Landspeeder and knows his passenger is enjoying the ride."



An abrupt, maximum-performance left turn brings giggles of joy that, without warning, turn into whoops, as a black structure – more arresting than the monolith in Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey – erupts from undulating fields to the right. “We’re here,” Dolph announces laconically, then, assuming a bus driver’s tone, “Anohka distillery.” It’s a dramatic arrival at Alberta’s most dramatic distillery, which, though its new-make malt spirit, some peated, some not, has been judged best in the world, is just releasing its first mature whisky this fall.

“We wanted to have a striking structure in the middle of a farm, like some vineyards,” says distiller Gurpreet Ranu, explaining the agricultural-architectural incongruity. “In my mind, the rolling hills of central Alberta are just as beautiful as the vineyards of British Columbia or California.”

WHISKY AND THE LAW

But how did a successful corporate lawyer end up making whisky? It’s a long story that officially begins on the first day of law school. However, long before that, a younger Gurpreet Ranu was unknowingly absorbing whisky culture from his community.

When you grow up in Wolf Willow and your friends’ parents are judges, prosecutors, civil litigators, and such, there’s a good chance you’re going to learn a lot about good whisky. And when you finish law school, and take a job in their tenth, fourteenth, or twentieth-floor suites, you inevitably learn to drink it – the Glenfiddichs, Glenlivet, and Macallans displayed on side tables and shelves, not hidden in desk drawers.

Sign a contract? Have a drink. Sue some twit out of business? Finish a bottle. And not the cheap stuff, either. If you’re going to win big, you have to live big, and that means single malt. “My very first week of law

school involved so much drinking, it’s shocking how much, and I was impressed how much whisky and Scotch was involved,” says Gurpreet.

“Single malts aren’t that welcoming because they can be quite intense, but once you get over that and take stock of how much flavour’s there, it’s easy to fall in love,” he reflects. “I fell in love with single malts because of their complexity, and it should be no surprise that I love 100% rye; I love that too because of its complexity. You know, the last big firm that I worked for, we had 40 lawyers in the office and 2 bars. It was never more than a few steps away. Law is one of the only remaining professional environments in which it is OK to consume alcohol during work hours.” But for a young lawyer whose parents ran the neighbourhood corner store and earned their living a dollar at a time, it seemed somehow hollow.

“Alberta grows three times as much barley as Scotland. We use it as feed or export it. I was looking out my window and seeing all this grain. We sell the stuff and make nothing on it. Someone else processes it and sells it back to us. That was upsetting enough that I quit a well-paying career to become a glorified volunteer at my own distillery.”

Leaving a well-paying job to run a distillery is something of a gamble, and it involved considerable family angst. “We started a distillery in my dad’s backyard with a 300l and a 200l still in a shed, and we built a brewery in my dad’s basement with a hose to take the fermented mash out to the stills.” At first, Gurpreet worked on refining ideas and processes while he kept his job. Then, when the time came to go full-time, he and his wife had some serious discussions that often came back to “You’re good at your current job, what if you suck?”



Eventually, the family agreed to support him, on the condition that, if after two years, he didn't have a solid plan and a finished distillery, he would have to go back to suing people for a living. At first, he tried learning from YouTube and visiting distilleries, but he soon figured out the guys on YouTube didn't know what they were talking about, so he enrolled in the brewing and distilling program at Heriot-Watt.

"About 18 months in, I made a batch of whisky and had my Eureka moment." He shared the spirit with his wife, and she commented, "That's not terrible." So, he tossed a Kubrickesque bone into the air and submitted it to the International Wine and Spirits Competition, where it landed at 95 points, the highest score that year. "It lessened my motivation to finish Heriot-Watt, but I finished all the courses relevant to distilling."

FROM BACKYARD DISTILLER TO PRO

Gurpreet relocated from his dad's backyard in Wolf Willow to build Anohka distillery on a 110-acre farm in nearby Parkland. As eye-catching as the distillery building is, so too are three, hand-hammered, direct-fire, Portuguese stills – the three direct-fire cosmic marvels – framed by picture windows at each end of the stillhouse.

"I drew those stills on Adobe Illustrator and came up with a rendering for handmade stills. I wanted

direct fire, but no one in Canada would make it." Never defeated without exploring every option, Gurpreet approached several coppersmiths in Portugal. One of them impressed him. They used thick copper, and the fit and finish were excellent, but the largest still they could make was 1,000 litres, so all of Anohka's stills are 1,000 litres. The biggest pipe the coppersmiths could bend was 5 cm, so the still's bell had to come to a 5 cm point.

"I want the environment to contribute to the whisky, so we do most of the distilling in winter," says Gurpreet. "I want you to taste Alberta in every step of the process. So, we set up our cold air intake upstairs, right next to the still. It really increases the amount of reflux." Each still has a 2 metre helmet and an adjustable lyne arm, which can go up or down, creating another 3 metres of run for the spirit to go up. "It allows us to really dial in the reflux," he explains. The lyne arm is ascending for the two 1,000l wash stills and descending for the 1000l spirit still.



"I always had a soft spot for Springbank direct fire," continues Gurpreet. "Nobody would make this for us, so I lined up a burner maker in Tennessee, but nothing he makes will pass CFA inspection." An engineering firm in Vancouver wanted \$1 million to create a prototype, so Gurpreet approached an oil and gas firm in Sundrie, Alberta. "If anyone knows how to burn gas safely, it's oil and gas. As soon as we said whisky, they were in. Those black boxes you see under the stills are oil-field engineering." It took four redesigns to get everything to work properly, but once it did, Anohka went on to win World's Best yet again.

Always thinking local, he noted a damp spot in the otherwise semi-arid fields and decided it would be a perfect place to build a dunnage warehouse. In the middle of a semi-desert, Anohka's warehouse sprinkles the barrels with a gentle indoor rain. He also noticed something unusual when the province was doing road-work by the distillery – a patch of black soil that, on closer examination, turned out to be peat. The province was digging, and Gurpreet offered them a place to dump the peat – 8 tonnes of it for future use, in making peated malt.



AT LAST, ANOHKA WHISKY

"Working as a lawyer did prepare me well for what we do now, which is consume alcohol first thing in the morning," Gurpreet says, smiling. "Today, I spent the entire morning tasting whiskies. I find my palate is freshest in the morning, so when my wife and I taste whisky, we do it first thing in the morning. Very small amounts, more nosing and reflection, but nonetheless, consumption of alcohol before noon is quite common now."

Three years into production, Gurpreet's past legal career is beginning to pay new dividends as he prepares the release of his first whisky, a 10-year-old blend. Ingeniously,



he has turned Canada's much-debated 9.09 rule on its head. "Why," he wondered, "if I can add 9.09% of somebody else's strongly flavoured whisky to make my own whisky more interesting, then why couldn't I add 9.09% of my own 2 ½ year old strongly peated malt spirit to a solid mature base whisky from one of Alberta's long-established major distilleries?"

Morning after morning, trying blend after blend, he finally found a winner. "With strongly-peated whisky, a little goes a long way; I'm learning that as I blend," he comments. By the time this is published, Gurpreet's first whisky, Moose Hunter, a ten-year-old flavoured with young Anohka malt, should be available. And who was that moose hunter? One Alice Campbell, of Thompson, Manitoba, a Scot and the great-great-grandmother of Michelle Ranu, Gurpreet's wife and Anohka distillery's nose. Anohka malt to honour a Scottish ancestor? Seems fitting.

"I think that blend has so much potential. You know, if I take that same blend and sub in some peated whisky and finish it in Sherry, all of a sudden I've got something that the Japanese market absolutely loves," says Gurpreet. "I think we have the opportunity to work with the same bones, that same skeleton there, and adjust it in various small ways to create a myriad of different whiskies, and we can be market specific. Yeah, that blend makes me really excited because the base whisky we purchased is just so versatile and really well-made. That to me is really exciting."

While other provincial governments seem wired into Kubrick's HAL 9000's, "I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that," the Province of Alberta is well on its way to becoming a Canadian whisky region. Alberta has its own climate and its own vibe, and thanks to the provincial government's having removed regulatory barriers to production and sales, it also has about four dozen distilleries, three of them majors. At least half a dozen of them call Edmonton home, and the Anohka distillery is a Star Child, poised to blow whisky lovers' minds.



CELEBRATING WISER'S LEGACY

A **200**th Birthday Bash in Windsor ON

By Blair Phillips





A plume of smoke billowing into the Windsor sky above the Hiram Walker & Sons distillery was no cause for alarm. Its source? Candles were lit to celebrate the 200th anniversary of J.P. Wiser's birth on October 4th, 1825. Let's be clear: Wiser hasn't been living secretly in a hyperbaric chamber, surviving on a diet of kale chips and organic broccoli to reach this milestone. The staff of the distillery, built by Hiram Walker—Wiser's one-time political rival—now produce Wiser's brands and had gathered with local officials, including Mayor Drew Dilkins, to celebrate Wiser's legacy. It's the story of a single life whose legacy remains strong, touching the lives of an entire city.

Old whisky makers of Wiser's era are often said to have tucked a few gems away for their successors to discover.

So, until he passed away on April 30, 1911, instead of joining other pensioners at the early bird special, the

85-year-old Canadian whisky legend would more likely have been found at his Prescott, Ontario, distillery putting quill to paper to record a whisky recipe to be his legacy.

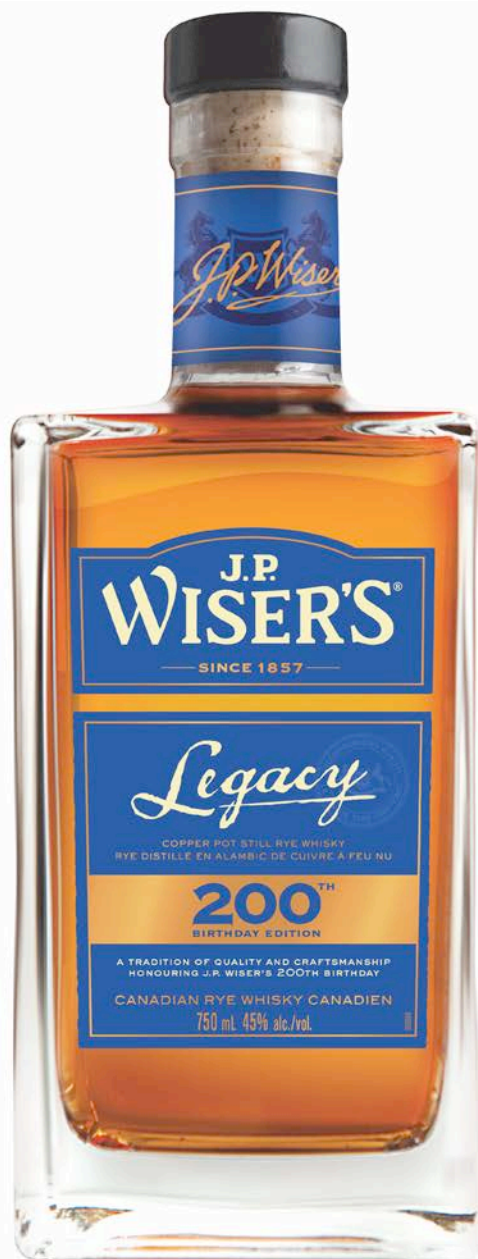
But, throughout his life, Wiser forged a different kind of legacy. The mut-ton-chopped J.P. wore many hats during his distinguished 85 years. He had relocated across the St. Lawrence River from Ogdensburg, New York, to Prescott, Ontario, in 1853 after teaming up with Charles Egert, Amos Egert, and James Averell to buy the Charles Payne distillery. The distillery did not bear Wiser's name until about a decade later, when he bought out his business partners.

Soon after moving to Prescott, he purchased 25 acres of land nearby for a livestock farm. This likely established his true legacy—cattle. His business, J.P. Wiser and Sons, also included a prospering brickyard. But Wiser also built his career as a champion standard

-bred horse breeder and as president of the Dominion Cattle Company in Texas. He was also president of the Prescott Elevator Company and a director of several companies, including the Montreal Stockyards Company, the Montreal Lighterage Company, and the Imperial Starch Company. He dabbled in politics, winning a single-term seat as a Liberal in the House of Commons in 1878, but he did not seek re-election.

While society pages in newspapers had him traveling everywhere (the benefit of owning racehorses), advertisements promoted his whiskies. In 1895, a bottle of Wiser's Canada Whiskey was promoted as palate-pleasing and health-boosting. "Attain Happy Old Age," it said. "Good digestion, sound sleep, and good care induce good health. If you have the greatest tonic on earth, get Wiser's Canada Whiskey."

"Be Wise and Drink Wiser's" was another. "The symbol of purity."



A year after his death, Wiser's distillery burned to the ground and was not rebuilt until after his sons sold it to Corby Distillery in 1920. No records of his whisky recipes are known to exist. But that doesn't mean J.P. Wiser left the world without a whisky legacy. Some might argue that it was Red Letter, although that came late in his career.

When Wiser began advertising Canadian Red Letter Rye in 1906, the ads boldly stated: "Everybody says I'm the best ever." We can only speculate why he called it Red Letter. At the turn of the twentieth century, advertisers commonly used regular prices versus red-letter prices to highlight specials and quality. Red lettering was

traditionally used to mark holidays and special occasions on calendars. The colour was also considered auspicious and linked with good luck in Asia, where he exported his whisky at that time. Red Letter Bibles first appeared, with the words of Jesus printed in red ink.

Illustrations of the Red Letter bottle concealed a Christian cross in its clever shading. Other Red Letter ads from that era claimed that the whisky blended the souls of corn and rye. Since former master blender, David Doyle, revived Red Letter in 2007 to mark the 150th anniversary of John Phillips Wiser's distillery, each new release — including Dr. Don Livermore's latest twenty-year-old Red Letter expression

— continues to evoke the soul of this beautiful whisky with divine flavours. Yet Red Letter represents just one part of Wiser's new-era whisky legacy.

Boxer and mixed martial arts specialist Vitor Belfort reflected, "Legacy is not what I did for myself. It's what I'm doing for the next generation." Wiser words could not be spoken by someone who made a living being punched in the head. And it holds especially true for whisky makers who make their living tucking away whisky for their successors.

In the fall of 2010, a hundred years after Wiser's death, a new whisky hit shelves. Bottled in what has become Wiser's trademark—a heavy, square, premium bottle—it bore a bright blue label with the name Wiser's Legacy. As this new release snaked along the bottling line, Hiram Walker's star master blender, David Doyle, passed the blending torch to a young Don Livermore.

The 2010 Legacy was a rich whisky with clear rye-bread notes, punctuated by cloves, cinnamon, and other baking spices. Dark sweet fruits sliced through the spice with razor-sharp citrus zest. Fresh lumber balanced the blend, while herbal dill accented complex hot spices in the finish. It was a masterpiece, and once it was gone, it was sorely missed. The idea of another Legacy was just a dream. Or was it? Was there no way to make a new Legacy that could hold a candle to the 2010 release? Livermore found a way that holds 200 candles to it.

Accompanying Wiser's 200th birthday, J.P. Wiser's Legacy returns as a gift for whisky lovers — a new 200th birthday edition. It's a whisky that embodies the Wiser spirit while paying homage to everyone who has worked at the distillery. The original Legacy's flavours landed with perfection, a direct flight from the nose to the palate and through the finish. This new edition demonstrates greater maturity and nuance in blending.

The whisky's rye component, aged in tawny and ruby port barrels, enhances the blend's complexity while softening the landing. "I just wanted to add an extra layer to the original good recipe," says Livermore. A smart choice. "This is a flavour-based decision. I have PX, and I have Madeira inventory that I could have easily chosen, but I thought the port worked quite well." It's a whisky that rivals the classic Wiser's 35-Year-Old, released in 2017 and 2018, as one of the best whiskies made in Windsor.

Wiser's Legacy goes beyond John Philip's story. It honours a long tradition of whisky makers who followed. At Hiram Walker, people like Murray Sobolov, Mike Booth, and David Doyle each have a legacy. For Livermore, it's too soon to define his legacy, but premiumization and innovation stand out. "I look at the Wiser's platform and we've innovated a number of different whiskies," he says. These include J.P. Wiser's Dissertation, Wheatfield Gold, Seven Rebels, and the Decades Series. "We've made some fine whiskies. The future is bright." Premiumization includes J.P. Wiser's 27-Year-Old Mizunara Oak, a limited-edition whisky finished in Japanese Mizunara oak casks. It's one of the most expensive Canadian whiskies ever released.

Legacies run deep at Hiram Walker, with hundreds of names, each part of the story. As the smoke from the birthday cake gradually cleared, it revealed the faces of the many proud employees who had joined the celebration. You could feel the energy and pride that goes into the spirits they make. For these people, it's not just a job; it's a legacy.





WINE, WHISKEY & WIENERS

Warm It Up For Chilled Celebrations

By Patrick McMurray

Once the Thanksgiving leftovers are gone, the Halloween candy has been shipped off to your work family, it's time to prep for the inevitable - Christmas celebrations!

Beyond the ugly Xmas sweaters (this is the only time to use them), tinsel, string lights, and frosted trees... there's the hearty winter fare for the plate, and the Winter Warmers for the glass.

A time to reflect on the year, and think of the snowy months ahead. Wandering the Bavarian Christmas Markets, you learn quickly that the cooler weather has its own celebratory, seasonal food & drink. Warmed Wine Whiskey & Wieners...





Gluhwein is a staple of any Christmas market - Red or White mulled with assorted spices - cinnamon, cloves, star anise, vanilla, orange - the recipes are well guarded - and cherished by the seasonal participants.

Served hot in a myriad of custom collectable mugs (don't go there...we have 26 from just one visit...)



FEUERZANGENBOWLE

Flamed, high proof rum drizzled over sugar into a waiting bowl of mulled wine - two please...

And of course the food....anything over fire works well.

All of the Sausages - Frankfurters to bratwurst, grilled to order, Gluhwein while you are waiting...



PLANKED SALMON

One fabulous treat I did not expect to see Salmon pinned to a cedar plank, and roasted next to an open fire...

Yes, even the Oyster comes out to play in the winter - chilled on the 1/2 shell, and grilled with butter, garlic, herbs and grated cheese...

These travels to Christmas markets were always inspiring me for events and menus. The Ceili Cottage had a nice, large 100 person patio. Which is great for about 4 months with good weather - but

what do you do for the other 8 months?

You make Lemonade...in this case we created a Winter Patio Program with Mulled Wine & Cider, Hot Poker Whiskey and an Outdoor fireplace to warm your bones...and to heat the poker for this spectacular Hot Whiskey. Keep warm... Winter's Coming! Sláinte



WINTER WARMER RECIPES

Gluhwein

- 1 bottle Red Wine (happy, inexpensive table wine will suffice), 1/2 water, 1/2 cup Demerara sugar, 2 Cinnamon sticks, Cloves, 1 whole Orange - juiced, star anise, nutmeg to finish
- Start with heating the water in a pot, add in the spices, orange juiced and shell pierced with the cloves.

- Once heated through - do not boil, add in the red wine and allow the flavours to marry. Ladle the warmed gluhwein into mugs and add a little fresh nutmeg over top!
And of course - adding a drop of rum or whiskey adds another dimension...

CANADIAN Hot Toddy

- 2oz CDN Whiskey
Lot 40

- 1/4 lemon spiked with cloves

- 1/4 oz Maple Syrup
(Smokier the better)

- Hot water (boiled, not tap)
to top off your mug

Slow cooker Mulled Cider for everyone

& Just Add Whiskey with I.D....

- Fresh Pressed Apple Cider, 2 Cinnamon sticks, 1 tbsp fresh ginger sliced, 1 whole Orange spiked with cloves & juiced, 1 star anise, nutmeg to finish

- In a Slow Cooker - add 2 L of Cider, spices and orange - warm on medium as per instructions with the slow cooker, and once hot, place on low

- You can hold this as a non-alcoholic Mulled Cider for Festive events

- AND you can add 1oz of a favourite whiskey to your mug of hot cider



THE GREAT AMERICAN IRONY

Politics, Morality, and the Spirit of Prohibition

By Anthony DeYoung

A Nation Votes Against Its Own Freedom

Few events in U.S. history capture the contradictions of the American constitutional experiment like the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. In 1919, the same republic founded liberty and self-determination willingly voted to outlaw one of its oldest social rituals: drinking.

How could a people so devoted to freedom and personal liberty embrace prohibition? The answer lies in a shifting definition of liberty itself. Reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries reframed liberty not as freedom to act, but as freedom from sin, vice, and temptation. As Ken Burns observed in his PBS documentary *Prohibition*, “The entire story is about how we define ourselves as Americans — where the line between personal liberty and public responsibility lies.” By the early 1900s, that line had blurred beyond recognition.

The temperance idea began as a moral whisper long before it became a political roar. In 1826, the American Temperance Society formed in Boston and quickly spread through churches and civic halls. Within a decade, it claimed over a million members — men who pledged to abstain, first from spirits and later from all alcohol. The earliest abstainers were preachers and reformers such as Lyman Beecher, whose

fiery 1825 sermons on intemperance warned that alcohol was “the national sin.” Signing the pledge became a public badge of moral discipline — a declaration that self-control was patriotic duty.

By the 1840s, “teetotalism” — total abstinence — had become a mass social movement. The drinker was cast not as a free man enjoying liberty, but as a captive of addiction. Temperance transformed private virtue into public policy. Even before national prohibition, states began experimenting with legislative sobriety. In 1851, Maine passed the “Maine Law,” the first statewide ban on the manufacture and sale of alcohol (except for medicinal or mechanical use). Its success inspired a wave of imitators: by 1855, a dozen states had enacted similar bans. The patchwork of “dry” laws expanded steadily. By 1916 — three years before national prohibition — twenty-three of the forty-eight states had gone completely dry. Counties and towns that didn’t outlaw alcohol outright often used “local option” statutes to close saloons within their borders.

These early experiments revealed a moral geography of America: rural and Protestant regions embraced the cause, while urban and immigrant centers resisted. The battleground lines of the coming culture war were already drawn.





If Lyman Beecher converted adults, Francis Elizabeth Willard converted children. As president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), she understood that real change required shaping young minds. Willard championed "Scientific Temperance Instruction," mandating

anti-alcohol lessons in public-school textbooks. "Educate the child to hate alcohol," she said, "and the man will never drink it." Those schoolchildren of the 1880s and 1890s became the voters and legislators who would one day ratify Prohibition.

Under Willard's leadership, the WCTU expanded its mission beyond temperance — into women's suffrage, labor reform, and family protection — all framed as extensions of Christian virtue. For her followers, sobriety wasn't just moral; it was patriotic.

If Willard was the strategist, Carrie Nation was the spectacle. Nearly six feet tall and armed with a Bible in one hand and a hatchet in the other, she stormed Kansas and Oklahoma saloons at the turn of the century, smashing bottles and mirrors in what she called "hatchetations." "You destroy my home," she warned saloonkeepers, "and I will destroy yours." Reporters alternated between ridicule and fascination, yet her raids symbolized the

righteous fury of the movement's grassroots. Nation's crusade also marked a turning point — women taking direct action in public spaces long before they held the vote. Her destruction of saloons was less vandalism than performance art: a sermon in shattered glass.

The temperance movement was one of America's first great moral crusades — a fusion of evangelical revivalism, women's activism, and political pragmatism. Churches became campaign offices; hymns became slogans; pulpits became polling places.

As Ken Burns put it, "It was the first time in our history that a single-issue movement so completely dominated the national political conversation." Their tactics — petitions, fundraising, public-relations campaigns — foreshadowed every moral movement since, from civil rights to modern cultural debates. To its advocates, alcohol was not merely a vice; it was an enemy of democracy. To drink was to surrender reason; to abstain was to preserve the republic.

In 1830, the average American adult consumed a staggering 7.1 gallons of pure alcohol per year — more than triple today's level. By 1900, consumption had fallen to about 2 gallons, and by the eve of Prohibition (1915) it hovered around 2.5 gallons — roughly thirteen drinks per week.

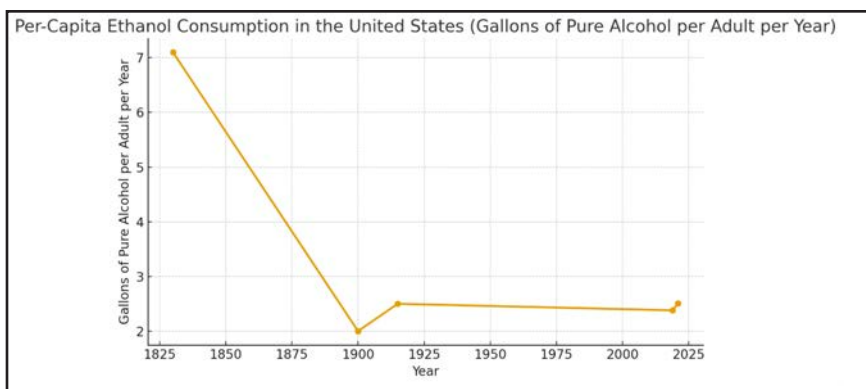
Modern figures from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism show that per-capita U.S. consumption remains around 2.4–2.5 gallons per adult per year — nearly identical to the late-19th-century level. The difference wasn't the volume of drinking, but the moral panic surrounding it.

That decline before 1920 highlights a central irony: Americans voted to outlaw alcohol just as they were drinking less than ever before. The "national crisis" was as much cultural perception as statistical reality.



UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL FOTO

Wet Congressmen witness signing of the "Beer Bill"—first step in the Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. President Franklin D. Roosevelt is shown at his desk in the Cabinet Room of the White House on March 22, 1933 with Congressmen who sponsored the 3.2 beer bill. Left to right, Claude V. Parsons, Illinois; John W. McCormack, Massachusetts; H. V. Hesselman, Clerk of the Committee of Enrolled Bills of the House; John J. O'Connor, New York; Thomas H. Cullen and Adolph J. Sabath, both of Illinois.



U.S. per-capita consumption of pure alcohol (gallons per adult per year), 1830–2021.

One of the darker legacies of the temperance crusade was the rise of “rotgut” — a term that originally described the harsh, impure, and sometimes deadly liquors sold on the American frontier in the 18th and 19th centuries. Cheap tavern whiskey was often distilled multiple times from spoiled mash, then “rectified” with tobacco juice, sulfuric acid, or burnt sugar to mimic age and color. Sheep’s cud would be added to thicken the spirit, unknown to the consumer that had a wool allergy! Ugh. The name itself implied what it did to the drinker’s insides — it could literally rot your gut.

During Prohibition, the term made a bitter comeback. Bootleggers, unable to access proper distillation equipment or quality grain, produced industrial alcohol from wood or denatured spirits and attempted to “purify” it with primitive chemistry. As a result, thousands were poisoned or blinded by methanol-laced liquor. Ironically, the law meant to protect Americans from alcohol’s dangers created a far more lethal underground market. As one newspaper quipped in 1926, “Prohibition made every man his own poisoner.”

When the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act took effect in 1919, they promised a sober nation. Instead, America

entered its most lawless decade. A new word entered the lexicon — bootlegger — derived from the frontier practice of hiding flasks in tall boots.

From moonshiners in Appalachia to gangsters like Al Capone, bootleggers turned abstinence into enterprise. “The cure,” Ken Burns later noted, “was worse than the disease.” The speakeasy replaced the saloon, and corruption replaced moral reform.

Politically, prohibition fractured the country. Rural Protestants saw divine victory; urban immigrants saw cultural persecution. Democrats split between “wets” and “drys,” and Republicans wrestled with enforcing a law that many citizens mocked. By 1933, the Twenty-First Amendment repealed Prohibition — a rare act of national mea culpa. Prohibition was never just about alcohol. It was about the American impulse to perfect itself through law — to legislate virtue, to impose order on desire. In the end, it taught the opposite lesson.

As Ken Burns concluded, “Prohibition was a noble experiment, but it revealed the limits of our ability to legislate human desire.” It remains a mirror of the American psyche — moral yet indulgent, idealistic yet rebellious. The same contradictions that made Prohibition possible still define the national character: the eternal struggle to balance liberty and restraint, faith and freedom, morality and democracy.



UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL FOTO

This cage for drunks might have been invented during Prohibition. But it was March, 1935 when it was christened with water by Ella M. Knowton, president of the Woburn (Mass.) Unitarian Church. This prison on wheels was built at the behest of Woburn’s mayor, William E. Kane, at right in photo.

DELICIOUS COCKTAILS

For Those *Dark, WINTER* NIGHTS

The winter time is for relaxing by the fire with a wonderful, much deserved drink in hand while reading Relish Whisky Magazine

Un-Edited Boulevardier

UNCUT,
UNFILTERED
(118 PROOF) A Big,
Balanced Boulevardier
Showcases The Power
Without Losing Poise.

Build: Stir 1½ oz
Un-Edited (118 proof), ¾
oz Campari,
¾ oz sweet vermouth
(optional: 1 barspoon
water) with ice; coupe
or big rock; orange peel.



The Valour

Inspired by the Decadence of the Aston Martin, the Winter season and people we love. Rich, Layers of depth and Luxurious textures.

1.25oz Bowmore 12
1/2oz Shanky's Whip
1/2oz Sherry
1/2oz Apple Brandy
Barspoon Cinnamon Syrup
Pinch of Salt
Stirred
Cocktail Cherry Garnish



(Recipe Alex Drum)

Oranje Old Fashioned

Orange is the national colour of the Netherlands, and this Oranje Old Fashioned features the excellent Millstone whisky and orange liqueur from Dutch distillery, Zuidam.

1.5oz Millstone 9yo single grain
3/4oz Zuidam orange liqueur
Dash Fee Brothers Whiskey Barrel-Aged
bitters
Pinch of salt
Stir over ice
Garnish with orange peel, cherry,
and a cinnamon stick



Chocolat Chaud

With your favourite whisky and chocolate, that is. This is a recipe that's fun to make and easy to take on a walk, in a to-go cup or thermos.

1.5 oz. Lot40 Dark Oak (45ml)
4 oz. French hot chocolate (120ml)
Garnish: whipped cream
and chocolate shavings

Method:

Combine whisky and hot chocolate in mug, give it a stir to combine, and add a dollop of whip cream on top with chocolate shavings.



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THERE IS ALWAYS MORE.

DRINK  SMART™

Bowmore® Scotch Whisky, 40% alc/vol. ©2025 Beam Suntory, Inc. Chicago, IL.