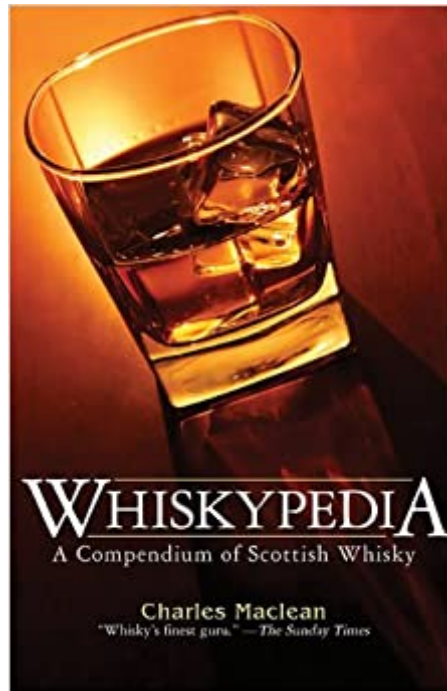




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Whiskypedia: A Compendium Of Scottish Whisky



Synopsis

Individual distilleries give their whiskies unique characteristics. These characteristics do not arise magically (as was once thought), nor are they the result solely of the region (as is still thought, by some). They have their roots in the craft and custom of the distillery and of the district in which it is located, but the key influences upon flavor are the distilling equipment itself, how it is operated, and how the spirit is matured. For the first time, Whiskypedia explores the flavor and character of every malt whisky distilled in Scotland with reference to how it is made. Introductory sections explain the contribution made by each stage of production and maturation, to elucidate the detailed notes about how malt whisky is made at each distillery. The distillery entries also provide historical notes and quirky facts. Malt whisky is the quintessential “spirit of place” and this element of the story has been captured by John MacPherson’s camera in specially commissioned images which compliment the text.

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Customer Reviews

MacLean, who won a James Beard Award for *Scotch Whisky: A Liquid History* (2003), here provides an A-Z guide to Scotland’s most famous export, after golf. Noting in his introduction that differences in flavor are less the result of distilleries’ locations, as is usually thought, than of tradition, technique, and market concerns, he provides information about materials, equipment, and procedures for aficionados curious to make such comparisons. But the heart of these entries lies in the “historical notes” and “curiosities”

where the author's research and enthusiasm are clearly evident. Buyers and collectors will find the list of "expressions" (commonly available bottlings) useful, while many users will jump straight to the informed, richly descriptive tasting notes (Dalmore smells "rich and sherried, with sweet malt, fruit cake, orange peel and marzipan." As Scotch's popularity grows, its world changes surprisingly fast, and updated information is crucial. The untimely death of beer and spirits writer Michael Jackson in 2007 makes the eminent MacLean's work more important than ever. Serious drinkers "this is not a book for beginners" can ask for no better guide. --Keir Graff

"The untimely death of beer and spirits writer Michael Jackson in 2007 makes the eminent MacLean's work more important than ever. Serious drinkers "this is not a book for beginners" can ask for no better guide." (Booklist)

This is a lovely book about Scottish whisky. MacLean starts by giving a quick history of Scottish distilling; this is helpful in understanding and appreciating the industry of today and it's also very interesting. Then he moves on to "Understanding the Label" with a color photo of a Scotch whisky label and a numbered explanation detailing what each part means. Next is the "Taxonomy" of Scotch and "Regional Differences". He also discusses where flavor comes from, the raw materials in making scotch, malt & the "Plant"/physical parts of a distillery: Mash tun, Washbacks, Stills, Condensers, Casks & Warehouse styles. This is the first 37 pages of the book. Then on to the part of the book you will use most often: The alphabetical listing of each Scottish distillery, including the new ones who have not yet released a bottling & the silent. There is a color photo of at least 1 bottle from each distillery which I find very useful when going shopping. I also really enjoy seeing the various labels & bottle styles. MacLean gives a history of each distillery going back to the earliest days, even the illicit days of the distilleries, describing various owners/investors. Each entry (distillery) has: -Expressions - The current bottling of the distillery owner (proprietary) not the independent bottler releases. -Raw Materials - Source of the distillery water, peat & malt. For all you "peat heads" (I like peaty whisky), he gives the maltings' phenolic content ppm. For example: Ardbeg - Port Ellen maltings at 55 ppm; Laphroaig- Port Ellen & mainland maltings at 35-40 ppm, peat from Machrie Moss. -Plant: Description of the mash tun, washbacks, stills & condensers. -Maturation: Type of barrel used & warehousing description. -Style: Describes the style or character of the new-make spirit, not the mature whisky. These descriptions are mainly provided by the distillery owner. -Mature Character: MacLean's opinion and description of samples usually in

the 12 year old range. He does not use a point system or ranking; just his overall tasting description.***This is NOT the book to buy if you are primarily looking for specific bottling tasting notes. Each distillery listed has its address, phone number, website, owner, visitor information & capacity listed on the left side of the page. The end of the book contains "Facts & Figures" which include a breakdown of who owns whom, the top ten single malts with liters sold in 2007 (I assume although it doesn't state liters on the page) & a pie chart visual of their market share. Next is a breakdown of the major consumer countries of malt whisky. Also a listing & description of the 18 leading independent bottlers. This book has a very nice layout & is printed on heavy paper. It's not a pocket book but it's also not huge and heavy. I've carried it in to the liquor store and I find it very helpful in learning about Scotch whisky. Do yourself a favor and buy a whisky glass; it really does enhance the flavor and enjoyment! [Stolzle Glencairn Whiskey Glass Boxed](#)

It is perhaps too exhaustive for my purpose. I would classify it as an academic treatise on scotch whisky. I was hoping for a book that would compare scotches using a common set of metrics. I am not interested in all the historical dribble that accompanies some of the descriptions. That's not to say there isn't value in much of the information that is provided (e.g. label definition, the taxonomy, regional differences, history of a particular brand, etc.). However, I was looking for a summary of the "style" and "mature character" (his categories) for each bottle, perhaps grouped by expected price range, somewhere in the book. I did enjoy reading parts of the book that wouldn't lend information for me to purchase or not purchase a given product. The section on who owns whom was of no value to me.

Overall I really loved this book I take it with me to the liquor store to help me pick out good whiskys on occasion. However the 1 huge flaw in this books is that they do not accurately describe the taste of the different variations of the same whisky makers. For example Spring bank 10 14 and 17 are all different but this books only has 1 description.

Charles MacLean's Whiskypedia is a well written, comprehensive look at the Scotch Whisky industry. The book begins with a short but insightful history of Scotch, followed by a detailed explanation of how to understand a label on a bottle of Scotch. Then he gives you an explanation of the recognized regional differences that make Scotch Whisky so unique. The meat of the book is the "Gazetter of Distilleries", which takes up the largest portion of the book. Here MacLean shows off his vast knowledge of all things Scotch. Each entry is listed by the name of a Distillery, with a brief

history of the brand, a listing of their range of products, information on the plant (stills, washbacks, etc.) how the spirit is matured (bourbon or sherry casks, etc.), and the style of whisky made there. MacLean finishes each listing with his personal tasting notes. The entries are very inclusive, listing all known distilleries that are currently in operation, those that are now closed, and a handful that are back in operation but haven't released anything yet. The historical notes and "curiosities" make each entry an enjoyable read that gives special insight on each distillery, their founders, and their current owners. This is a very well researched and enjoyable resource book that I know I will return to often. I doubt this book will have time to collect dust on my bookshelf!

While it's fun and fascinating to read the history and technique of the various famous distillers, don't expect much detail between bottlings. For example: you'll read a few pages about the Glenlivet distillery, but not a lot about the (rather significant) differences between a 25 and 12-year-old bottling. It's a good read if you want to get the general sense of a particular malt, but don't expect a comprehensive breakdown between the variants from the same distillery.

It is an encyclopedia, but still an interesting read.

Overall a very nice introduction to whisky (especially malt whisky) Charles MacLean is widely regarded the foremost expert in all matters whisky and rightfully so. Mr Maclean separates myth from fact, explains the differences in production equipment and methods and their impact on the final product and gives a lovely overview of nearly all distilleries and their readily available spirits along with history and lore/trivia. Overall a very nice book. Had it been more thorough and illustrative on the making process, it would have easily received 5 stars.

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