



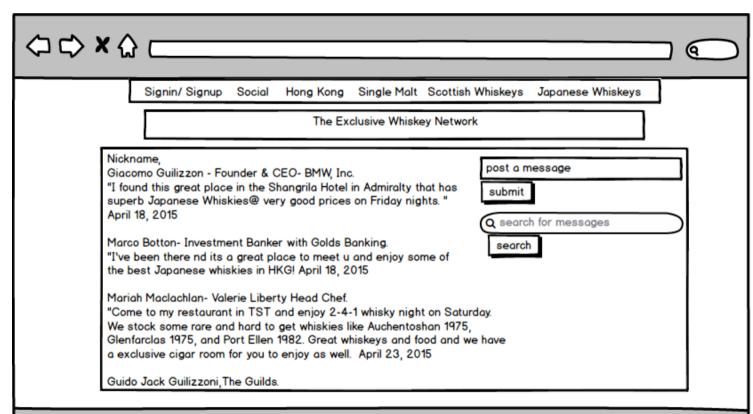
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What Is the Difference Between Single Malt and Blended Whisky?

Consumers and even some bartenders have a misconception that single-malt Scotch is not a blended whisky, but this is a myth. Single-malt scotch is a blend, but it's a very specific type of blend. In fact, nearly all whiskies on the market today are blends—bourbons, ryes. Tennessees, scotches, etc.—although in this article I'll focus on Scotch.

The confusion arises from the misunderstanding of two words—blend and single—words whose seeming simplicity mask a more complicated reality.

What Is a Blend?

What we need to do here is to establish that there are two different ways to use the word blend—an informal way and a formal, or legal, way. Informally, a blend is a mixture—in this case, a mixture of two or more whiskies that are bottled and sold as one whisky. Formally, however, a blended whisky is a product that contains a mix of barrel-aged malt and grain whiskies.

There's a common misconception that because a certain whisky is labeled "single malt," it must be the product of just a single batch or barrel of whisky. This is incorrect. Most single malts, as you'll see, are a blend, in the sense that they're a mixture of whiskies.









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What Does Single Mean, Anyway?

Not the product of a single batch or a single barrel, but a single distillery.



The root of all confusion lies in the simple word single. A single-malt scotch whisky is nothing more or less than the product of a single distillery. Not the product of a single barrel, but a single distillery. A single-malt Lagavulin may contain whiskies from many barrels produced at the Lagavulin distillery, but it will contain only whiskies produced at Lagavulin.

A single-grain scotch whisky varies only in that it contains barley and one or more other cereal grains, usually wheat or corn. Again, single is misleading here: it refers not to a product made from a single grain, but a product made at a single distillery.

Variables, Consistency, and House Style

When whisky is aged in oak barrels, a number of variables influence the final character of the spirit. A full discussion of these variables is beyond the scope of this article, but they include







Scottish Whiskey



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