

Title:

Glenfiddich Scotch Whisky

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Summary:

Glenfiddich

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Article Body:

Glenfiddich

Nothing is straightforward in whisky. Here is a distillery which makes the biggest selling malt in the world, but still uses coal-fired stills, a technique most distillers have abandoned for being too expensive and liable to give variable results.

It's a light dram produced from tiny stills, when industry wisdom maintains that small equals big.

Only Glenfiddich and Springbank make, mature and bottle on the same site. To be the manager of all of that must be daunting, but Ian Millar is up for it. With 25 years' experience in 10 UK distilleries, Ian knows how to get the most out of a plant.

As a modern distillery manager he has to balance the need for a plant to be cost-effective, while preserving the tradition which uniquely impacts on the distillery's character. 'The lower the cost per litre, the greater the margin,' he says.

'So whisky production is all to do with lowering the cost of the make.' Unromantic? A distillery manager's job has always been about getting the best possible yield from the malt, without impacting on quality or character. Bring three managers together in the same room and you can bet that within minutes they'll be bragging about how high their yield is. He will be boys. Ian is obviously enjoying the challenge! managing such a high-profile place. 'This is

such a diverse site.

We have floor malting Balvenie, we have three distilleries Kininv is also on site, one of which is coal-fired, we've a cooperage, we're maturing all the stocks on the one site and bottling it here« well. Working for a smaller company has enabled me to get involved in areas such as wood purchase, which I've been unable to access in the past, so personally there's a new depth to the job.' As a new boy, it also means that he relied on the experience of his staff. 'Work with people is the joy of this job,' he says

A lot of people here have been brought up in the whisky industry. Their fathers, inii It's and grandfathers have worked here lirlil inl them. They've great pride in what they tin .ind are steeped in tradition.

Developing his skills is, he feels, fundamental to developing the Glenfiddich tick. 'Traditionally, the distillers and brewers haven't been given enough credit for what they have done. The way things are developing it's the integrators who are taking more responsibility, whereas in the past they would look up and ask, what to do.

'We didn't give them an understanding of the process,' he adds. 'If people are more involved and have more responsibility you are more likely to monitor the quality of the spirit. If they're not involved, it's down to you. Glenfiddich is up there to be shot at, but no matter what the rest of the trade or the critics say, it keeps on selling. Its site may be a tourist trap (but then it does give free tours), and it may be seen as a sign of weakness or innocence to say you like a dram of 'Fiddich, but can millions of consumers be that wrong?

OK, it's not the greatest malt in Scotland, but it has never claimed to be. In its standard issue it's a perfectly decent (and mixable) drink - a Strauss waltz rather than a Mahler symphony. The newest expressions, the likes of Solera, Millennium and 25-year-old, point to a degree of substance behind the froth.

#### TASTING NOTES

##### Glenfiddich Special Reserve

Hay-like and grassy, with some pear. A sweet start, with a touch of peanut brittle on the finish. \* Glenfiddich 12-year-old A malty/oatcake nose with some grassiness. Sweet in the mouth with a mix of white chocolate and gorse. A spicy, creamy little number ivith a tingling finish

##### Glenfiddich 15-year-old Solera Reserve

A mix of dried fruits and milk chocolate on the nose. Touch of fruit and some walnut/orange sherry notes. Crisp, with a finish of fresh raspberries, chocolate and cream.

Glenfiddich Ancient Reserve 18-year-old

A waft of cereal/bran notes and some sherry wood. A little peat smoke and mocha. The finish has a hint of caramel.

Glenfiddich Millennium Reserve 21-year-old

Lovely nose of fresh flowers, nuts and ripe red plums. Soft and quite chocolatey to start; velvety, with a mix of vanilla pod and coffee bean on the very long finish. Subtly charming.