

Title:

Chavis Scotch Whisky

Word Count:

556

Summary:

Trying to get a blender to explain what his or her job involves is never easy. Not because they are secretive, far from it. They're almost relieved to have a chance to tell their story.

Keywords:

food, drink, alcohol, recipe, whisky

Article Body:

Trying to get a blender to explain what his or her job involves is never easy. Not because they are secretive, far from it. They're almost relieved to have a chance to tell their story.

It's just that the intricacies of blending are complex that strange analogies have to be employed: orchestras, football teams, actors cars, cakes, houses - all appear in the blender's lexicon. Colin Scott, master blender at Chivas Brothers, is a master of the art. Created by firm of high-class Aberdonian grocers who began blending whiskies in the 1840s, Chh Regal has been Seagram's flagship Scotch since 1949. It is Colin, however, who has overseen the recent explosion of Chivas brands, including the superb 18-year-old a^ the awesome Oldest.

Colin feels it's important not to get hung i over numbers. 'How many malts and grains I go into the blend isn't important,' he says. 'What is important is always having Chivas the glass.' The one constant is Strathisla. 'Making a Chivas blend is like building a house; with malts as the bricks, grains as th«j mortar and Strathisla as the foundation. Chivas Regal is one shape of house, 18-year old is grander and Oldest is a castle!'

They may be individual brands, but then is a distinct family resemblance. 'The brand have a thread running through them ... richness, smoothness and roundness of flavours. You use different bricks to chang the flavour profile, while retaining the character,' says Colin. 'That means manipulating the range of available flavou (different malts, grains, wood types, ages) and creating different but similar teams. Chivas 18- isn't 12-year-old aged for a further 6

years, it's a different team.'

To make matters more interesting, each team is in a constant state of flux. 'Consumers don't want to see character or quality alter, but to preserve them you must make changes,' urges Colin. 'If you have one pot of whiskies to use in a blend, you must always also have another pot which contains different whiskies will have the same flavour as the first. Because you know what is in each of the pots, you know where any differences are and can therefore find ways to narrow any gap between them.'

That second pot is like footballers sitting on the bench. We know how they perform, so our job is to make sure whatever ones we use they'll make Chivas. CHIVAS The Chivas brothers owned a high-class grocery business in Aberdeen and started blending whiskies (for, among others, the Royal household) in the 1880s.

Regal appeared at the turn of the 20th century and was another light Speyside-dominant blend to make it big in the United States during Prohibition. It was bought by the Canadian distiller (and one-time bootlegger) Sam Bronfman in 1949 and is still a major player in the US and Far East markets.

TASTING NOTES

Chivas Regal 12-year-old

Deceptive weight behind the apparently light mix of grass, apples and cereal on the nose. A grassy, almost mossy start to the palate, it crisps up deliciously mid-palate. * * * (»)

18-year-old

A magnificent melange of currant leaf, orange pulp/peach cobbler, barley malt and turfy smoke. The palate explodes with flavour, but always in that elegant, restrained family style. * * * * * Oldest

The finest in the range. Peatier still, with a rich, complex mix of citrus notes (tangerine, lemon) heather, fruit and spicy grain. Stunning. *****