

Title:

Glenmorangie Scottish Whisky

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Summary:

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Single Highland Rare Malt Scotch Whisky

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Article Body:

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Few distilleries have been as transformed I the malt explosion as Glenmorangie. 'In til 1970s there were two stills and we were selling five cases of malt a year," says manager Graham Eunson. 'Now we've go(eight stills, we're the biggest selling malt in little chance that success will breed complacency here on the northeast coast; for this is a firm that is forever asking why trying out new ideas, trying to grasp the elusive secret of Scotch. You might expect space-age control panels, but you won't find any.

'I've yet to be convinced of the benefits) computerization in a distillery,' says Graha 'And I'm yet to be convinced that the capit expenditure needed to install computerization justifies laying a man off. you replace a mashman with computer equipment then you have to employ an evei more expensive engineer to solve any problems.' That was music to the ears of Brian Gilmour, who was mashing as we chatted. He was turning valves, nudging the temperature this way and that, and always listening; for, as he explained, part of his jol is knowing the significance of each sound -whether it's the change in pitch of the pump or the switchers girning away. 'The fact it's manual keeps you involved,' he says. 'It giv< it that personal touch - and there's always something to be done!'

It means that Glenmorangie's long-running 16 Men of Tain campaign is no PR

gloss. Neither are these old guys looking back with rose-tinted glasses. This is a young team well aware of the needs of today's J industry, but faithful to tradition. 'I'm a traditionalist, but a realist as well,' says Graham. 'I don't believe in change for change's sake and altering production to suit the workforce is beyond me. Can you imagine if Glenmorangie was the 16 megabytes of Tain?'

The workforce here understands their distillery's little quirks - from the use of hard water to the tall, slim stills that stand like elegant pillars in the cathedral-like stillhouse. Their height and narrowness means not only that there's considerable interplay between vapour and copper, but that only the lightest Vintages can force their way to the top. But running four wash and four spirit stills at the same time takes great skill, especially as some of them behave differently. The longest serving man here, Kenny McDonald, has had a long battle with Number Two wash still for years,' says Graham. 'You can come in and he's yelling at it. It just doesn't behave.'

The water and stills each play their part in creating Glenmorangie's spicy, pear-drop and apple character, but it is rounded out and given added complexity by a wood policy, masterminded by Bill Lumsden, that's among the tightest in the industry. Not only does the firm now insist on using only ex-Bourbon casks made from air-dried wood from certain slopes in the Ozarks, but it also controls what type of warehouses are used to age the Glenmorangie stocks.

The 10-year-old, for example, has a recipe for first and second fill wood, so certain types of casks are placed in certain types and areas of warehouses. They are pinning it down to the microclimate within each warehouse. With an ever-expanding range of finishes and plans to release a malt made from barley grown on its own farm, the range just keeps growing. Graham believes this is the difference between a malt-led company and a blend-led one.

I worked for a blend-led firm before this and you were a number. The people who took the decisions on whether you are open or shut didn't know who they were affecting or how their decisions impacted on people and communities. The guys here have strong feelings about Glenmorangie's success. They are the custodians of the distillery and the fact that they make something that's known worldwide gives them enormous pride.'

TASTING NOTES

Glenmorangie 10-year-old

The benchmark distillery style: pear drops, light orange and citrus fruit, light spice and a crisp note. Delicate but with a good, smooth and soft body.

Glenmorangie 15-year-old

finished in new wood 43%ABV Creme brulee, orange peel and vanilla. Light spice and a hint of sooty wood. A mix of bracing air and vanilla on the finish.

Glenmorangie Cellar 13

aged in first-fill casks A fragrant nose with apple blossom, fresh pear, ozone and lemon icing. Soft and long, with a great mix of blossom-like top notes, a creamy palate and a salty tang on the end. Brilliant. Finishes all 43 %ABV

Port Wood has touches of anise, red fruit, spices and a long rosehip syrup finish; Sherry Wood has full-on oloroso notes, tending to nut and spice with some cake mix and pear; and Madeira Wood is a fascinating mix of dried mushroom, spice and charred wood ending with a salty tang.