

London Whisky Show 2017



Shameek Popat visits London's biggest annual whiskey festival

I decided to pop along to the UK's finest and largest whiskey festival, bringing distillers and whiskey lovers from all over the world together at Old Billingsgate, in the heart of London, for a truly spectacular food and whiskey experience. This year's theme was the Art of Whisky.

I also signed up to a couple of the masterclasses that were on that day, "A Beginners Guide to Whisky" led by Becky Paskins, who is the editor of scotchwhisky.com and a whiskey expert, who guided us through eight whiskeys, which allowed us to focus on the flavours than what's on the label. The whiskeys I tasted are pictured at right.

We used a flavour map put together by whiskey expert David Broom that allowed us to build a personal flavour map to find whiskeys that suited our palate and guide us through the rest of the show. It was a great way to start the show (and get a taste of the drams on offer).

I learned that everyone interprets the aromas and flavours differently, so whatever you pick out, you will always be "correct." The flavour map did help to split the whiskeys into four main groups:

Light: leafy, fruity (citrus or stewed, for example)



Delicate: floral, grassy, herbal, nutty, biscuits or oats

Rich: spicy, woody, dried fruits, roasted

Smoky: medicinal, peaty, iodine, tobacco

I found out that I do like my whiskeys rich (spicy, woody, complex), so no wonder the Macallan and Dalmore are my favourites.





Then it was time to wander around the show tasting quite a few great drams on offer; the trick was not to try everything, and pick and choose your drams because it was too easy to get carried away!

The late lunch to help soak up the whiskeys was a delicious two-course whiskey-infused menu:

- Pressed shoulder of lamb with a red currant and rosemary sauce, infused with Tamdu 10-Year-Old
- Apple and pear crumble with Talisker Port Ruighe custard

After lunch, it was time for the second master class, which was the tradition of cigar and whiskey pairing. I chose the Dalmore Cigar Malt with Partagas Serie D No.4.

I also got to meet one of my heroes, Charles Maclean, who is a living legend in the whiskey world and a great character. He has written a number of books on whiskey, which are well worth a read.

That then left me to use my dream dram token to try some of the special whiskeys there—but here I made a rookie mistake of leaving it to the end, and all the ones that I wanted to taste were already finished. Luckily, I still managed to taste the Springbank 25-year-old and Macallan 25-year-old. I have read that “patience isn’t just a virtue, it’s an ingredient, time honoured.”

And it is sometimes said time is the fifth ingredient in malt whiskey—malted barley, water, yeast, oakwood and ... time—and the 25-year old Macallan for me was perfection itself!

I will review some of the whiskeys in a future article. This was an amazing day and one I would highly recommend for all who enjoy a dram. But the main message I took home was that you should buy whiskey for flavour and not anything else. So, all that is left to say is *Slàinte!* ■