THE THELEN RESERVE

SCOTCH

WHISKY FROM GRAIN TO GLASS

Five categories. Barley, oak and the character of Scotland.





WHAT MAKES IT SCOTCH?



3+	700 L	40%
YEARS	MAX. CASK	MIN. ABV

- Made in Scotland from cereals, water and yeast.
- Distilled below 94.8% ABV to retain the character of the grain and process.
- Matured entirely in Scotland, in oak casks, for at least three years.
- Only water and plain caramel colouring may be added.

Single malt must also be bottled in Scotland.

THE FIVE SCOTCH CATEGORIES



SINGLE MALT
Water and malted barley at one distillery, batch-distilled in copper pot stills.



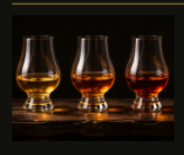
SINGLE GRAIN
One distillery. Other cereals may join malted barley. It falls outside the single malt definition.



BLENDED MALT
Single malts from at least two distilleries.



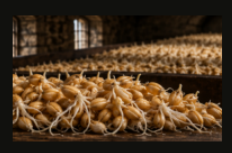
BLENDED GRAIN
Single grains from at least two distilleries.



BLENDED SCOTCH
One or more single malts combined with one or more single grains.

"Single" identifies one distillery. A single malt can combine many casks.

FROM BARLEY TO SINGLE MALT



MALTING
Barley germinates, then dries.



MASHING
Malt enzymes and hot water release sugars.



FERMENTATION
Yeast turns sweet wort into alcoholic wash.



DISTILLATION
Copper pot stills concentrate and shape the spirit.



MATURATION
Oak, time and reactions change the whisky.



SELECTION & BOTTLING
Casks are chosen. Water may set the strength.

WHERE PEAT SMOKE BEGINS



AT THE KILN
When peat is burned beneath drying malt, smoke compounds can give the whisky earthy, smoky or medicinal aromas.

Peat is optional. Malt phenol levels in parts per million do not directly measure smokiness in the glass.

THE CASK SHAPES THE STORY



EX-BOURBON	Often linked to vanilla, coconut and sweet oak.
SHERRY-SEASONED	Can bring dried fruit, nut and spice notes.
REFILL	Earlier fills reduce the wood extractives that remain.



Wood extraction, chemical reactions and evaporation change the whisky. A finish adds time in another permitted cask.

FIVE SCOTTISH REGIONS

HIGHLAND
Spans light malts and richer coastal styles.

SPEYSIDE
Often linked to orchard fruit, honey and spice.

LOWLAND
A varied southern region, often linked to lighter styles.

ISLAY
Known for peat smoke. Unpeated malts are made here too.

CAMPBELTOWN
Often associated with robust, fruity or coastal notes.

"Islands" is informal. Distillery choices and cask history can outweigh regional associations.

READ THE LABEL

SINGLE CASK
Bottled from one cask.

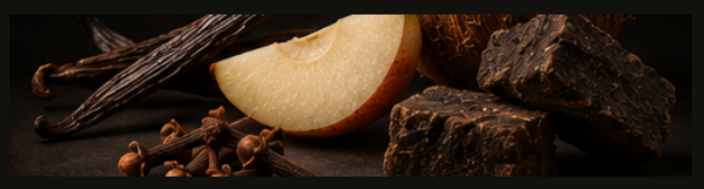
CASK STRENGTH
Bottled at cask or vatting strength, typically without dilution.

NON-CHILL FILTERED
Describes a filtration choice.

NATURAL COLOUR
No added caramel colouring.

AGE STATEMENT
The age of the youngest whisky in the bottle.

THE SCIENCE OF FLAVOUR



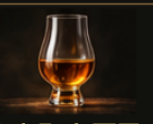
COMPOUND	ASSOCIATION
Esters	Fruit
Vanillin	Vanilla
Oak lactones	Coconut, wood
Eugenol	Clove, spice
Guaiacol / phenols	Smoke, medicinal notes

Concentration and interactions affect which aromas you perceive.

TASTE WITH INTENTION



NOSE
Smell gently. Look for fruit, grain, spice or oak.



PALATE
Take a small sip. Notice sweetness, texture and balance.



FINISH
Follow the flavours that linger after the sip.



FINAL TAKE
Write down what you enjoyed and what you would revisit.

A few drops of water can change what you smell and taste.

SELECTED REFERENCES

[1] Scotch Whisky Regulations 2009, regs. 3–12.
[2] Scotch Whisky Association, categories and regional guides.
[3] Scotch Whisky Association, Scotch Whisky Regions.
[4] Kelly et al., Beverages 9, 64 (2023).

THE THELEN RESERVE

Understand the craft. Explore the flavor.