THE THELEN RESERVE

SCOTCH: GRAIN TO GLASS

PART 2 OF 2 · SPIRIT TO GLASS

Follow the spirit through the stillhouse, the cask and the finished dram.

07 · DISTILLATION



Pot stills and the grain column

WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT CHANGES
On the usual malt route, the wash still makes low wines. The spirit still distils them again. Grain whisky commonly uses continuous columns.	Copper contact and the shape of a still influence the spirit. Scotch is distilled below 94.8% ABV.	Wash becomes low wines, then concentrated spirit. Some malts are triple distilled.

08 · SPIRIT SELECTION & NEW MAKE



Inside the spirit safe

WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT CHANGES
The distiller selects the middle portion of a malt run, called the heart. Earlier and later portions commonly return for redistillation.	The selected fraction sets the character that will enter the cask.	The heart becomes clear new make. Its familiar amber colour develops in oak.

09 · CASK SELECTION & FILLING



Former bourbon, sherry-seasoned and refill casks

WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT CHANGES
New make fills an eligible oak cask of no more than 700 litres. Previous use and fill history vary.	Oak, previous contents and the number of fills affect what the cask can contribute.	New make enters the cask. A first-fill cask is on its first Scotch fill after another drink.

10 · MATURATION & FINISHING



In the dunnage warehouse

WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT CHANGES
Scotch matures in Scotland for at least three years. A producer may finish it in another permitted cask.	Wood extraction, chemical reactions and evaporation change the spirit over time.	Spirit becomes mature whisky. Colour alone cannot tell you its age.

11 · SELECTION, MARRYING & BLENDING



Comparing cask samples

WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT CHANGES
The blender samples mature casks and chooses a combination for the release. A single malt can draw on many casks from one distillery.	Malt or grain content and the distilleries involved determine the Scotch category.	Individual casks become a selected single malt or blend.

12 · BOTTLING & THE FINISHED DRAM



From bottling line to tasting glass

WHAT HAPPENS	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT CHANGES
The producer chooses strength and filtration, then fills and labels the bottles. Scotch is bottled at 40% ABV or higher.	Strength affects the tasting experience. Single malt Scotch must be bottled in Scotland.	The finished dram is ready to nose, sip and revisit through the finish.

READING THE AGE STATEMENT



THE YOUNGEST CASK SETS THE AGE

If an 8-year, 12-year and 15-year whisky are combined, an age statement can declare 8 years.



AFTER BOTTLING

Barrel maturation ends when the whisky leaves the cask. Time in a sealed bottle adds no years to that age.

THE TRANSFORMATION

WASH → NEW MAKE → OAK & TIME → SELECTED WHISKY → GLASS

Nose gently. Take a small sip. Follow the finish.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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

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Understand the craft. Explore the flavor.

Print at actual size (100%). Trim to 8 × 10 inches at the corner marks.