The Thelen Reserve

WHISKY TASTING STEPS

A field guide to the art of whisky appreciation.

Starting your whisky journey

Pour a small measure into a clean glass. Let it rest for a minute or two, and notice the first aroma while the whisky is still.

Whisky tasting glasses

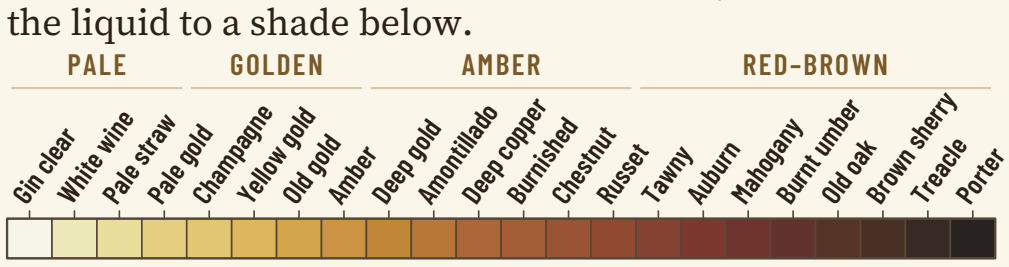


Tapered rim
The narrowing mouth gathers aromas.

Wide bowl
Leave room above the pour to swirl and see its colour.

Step 1 – Colour

Hold the glass against a pale surface in daylight. Match the liquid to a shade below.



Ex-bourbon and European oak casks overlap in colour.

Step 2 – Visual texture

Tilt the glass, coat its inner wall, then turn it upright. Watch how the trails, or legs, run down.



FINE, QUICK LEGS — THICK, SLOW LEGS

Light-bodied — Rich, oily and full-bodied

Confirm the body with a sip.

Step 3 – Nosing part 1



Bring the glass just below your nose. Breathe in gently with your lips slightly parted. What familiar scent comes to mind?



Nosing part 2

Briefly cover the rim, gently swirl, then uncover. Take another short sniff. Does apple, toasted grain or smoke stand out now?



BALANCE

Floral	Fruity	Cereal	Winey	Woody	Sulphury	Feinty	Peaty

Delicate — Smoky

Which family leads? Which note sits behind it?

Step 4 – Whisky tasting part 1

Take a small sip. Let it spread across your mouth. Notice the first taste, then the texture and warmth.







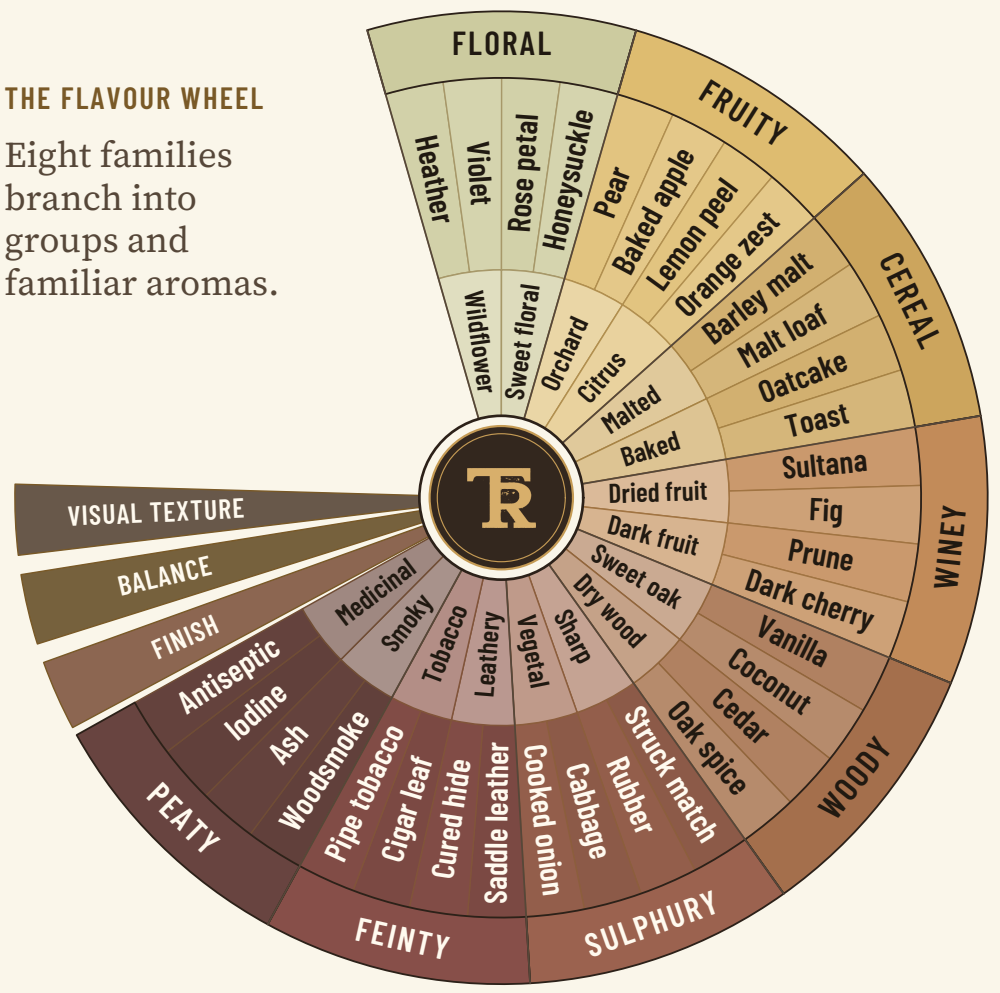
Receptors for the five basic tastes are spread across the tongue.

Whisky tasting part 2

Breathe out gently through your nose after the sip. Aromas travel up from the back of the mouth. Find a family on the rim and follow a spoke to a familiar note.

THE FLAVOUR WHEEL

Eight families branch into groups and familiar aromas.



Step 5 – Finish and aftertaste

After the sip, notice what stays. Describe its intensity, then how long it lasts.

Light — Rich

BRIEF EXAMPLE
Lemon peel fades quickly.

LINGERING EXAMPLE
Oak spice lingers.

Step 6 – Time, water and repeat

Smell the glass again after a pause. Add a few drops of still water, swirl gently and repeat steps 3 to 5. Which note grows clearer? Which fades?

