

Scotch, The Golden Charmer

Scotch! The very name rings bells in countless minds across seas. This passionately created alcoholic drink is continuously in its popularity since it was first brewed by Christian missionaries in Scotland. Scotch is 16th century contraction of the word Scottish by Modern English but since 19th century, the nouns Scottish and Scotts represent things belonging to Scotland.

What makes Scotch whisky retain its unbeatable and enviable position? The Scotch Whisky Order of 1990 (UK) which amended the Scotch Whisky Act of 1988 mandates certain stipulations which aim at retaining its uniqueness. For a whisky to be called as Scotch, it must be distilled in Scotland with only water and malted barley. Other permitted additions are whole grains of wheat and maize by yeast fermentation only. Occasionally used legal coloring agent is caramel color. The distilled alcoholic strength must not cross 94.8% by volume and must be matured in Scotland in oak casks for at least three years.

Scotch whisky has four distinct types based on how they are brewed and bottled.

1. Single Malt
2. Vatted Malt
3. Blended
4. Single grain

Although every customer has developed his own taste for different types, Single Malt is by far the most sought after whiskies for its unique distillation processes. Single Malt stands for malted barley whisky from a single distillation column. Single malt retains its characteristic uniqueness and commands the highest price.

Blended Scotch is made by blending whiskies from different, usually 15-50 distilleries, in a unique proportion which is a proprietary secret of that producer. Blenders choose whiskies to blend when they know they are ready for blending. Master blenders produce brands which their customers proudly recognize and pride themselves with, world wide.

Blends are usually made by a selection of various Single Malts and Grain Whiskies. Blended Scotch has a market share of 90% in UK and the percentage of Malt in it varies from 10-15% with higher quality brands having more malt content. Higher blended whiskies were being produced for upper class as pure malted whiskies were regarded as flavored little too harshly.

Scotch, gains its uniqueness from maturing it for long times in oak casks. (Sherry and bourbon are other woods used). Maturity is done by storing in open warehouses by the seaside when salty air passes on its characteristic flavor. You can tell the cask used for maturing by whisky's color. Sherry gives a darker color while bourbon leaves the honey-golden blend.

Single Cask Scotch, rarely bottled, commands a royal price. Single Cask whisky is from one cask which is numbered. The bottle carries a label with details of date of blending, bottling, number of bottles filled from that cask and the number of each bottle to prove uniqueness.

Scotch maintained the unique brand identity because of the passion with which it is produced. Well, to the longevity of golden charmer! Have a good time!

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