



CHEERS

A HY-VEE NEWSLETTER



DID YOU KNOW?

Peat contains organic matters such as decomposed trees, grass and fungi, etc. Peat develops in wetlands and swamps. When dried, it is highly flammable. Scotch distilleries use peat to dry malted barley to give their whisky a smoky (peaty) flavor.



FEATURE: SCOTCH WHISKEY



Scotch whisky—the smooth wonder drink consumed by kings, presidents, lords and commoners everywhere.

Believe it or not, whisky tasting is done principally through the nose. Since flavor is affected by odors and smells, the highly sensitive olfactory nerve plays a huge part in enjoying a glass of Scotch. A Scotch snifter or tulip-shaped glass can enhance the taste by allowing the aromas to gather at the bottom and drift to the top. Adding a little water will open up the flavor by releasing the whisky's aromas.

All spirits labeled Scotch whisky must conform to the standards of the Scotch Whisky Order of 1990. There are four categories of Scotch: single malt, vatted malt (also called “pure malt”), blended and single grain. Of these, single malt and blended are the most popular. Single means that a Scotch is from a single distillery, while blended means that the product is composed of whiskies from two or more distilleries.

The flavor of every Scotch is affected by a variety of factors: the type of wood barrel it is stored in; the water and type of stone it flows over; and the aging process. Some Scotches even get aged in two different types of wood barrels.

There are four major distilling regions: Highland, Islay pronounced (eye-la), Campbeltown and Lowland. Some of my favorite single malts from the **Highland** region are Glenlivet, Glenfiddich, Balvenie, and McCallan.

The single malts from the **Islay** region tend to be peatier, be full of iodine and have a pronounced flavor. Some of my favorites from this region are Lagavulin, Isle of Jura and Cal Lila.

The **Campbeltown** region was once home to more than 30 distilleries. Today there are three: Springbank, Glengyle and Glen Scotia. Whiskies from this region tend to have a little peat and salt to them and are generally medium to full body in flavor.

The **Lowland** region also has only three active distilleries; their whiskies are often more discrete and less spectacular. This keeps them smooth on my list. Some of my favorites from the Lowland region are Bladnoch, Glenkinchie, and Auchentoshan.

Generally speaking, a smooth-flavored Scotch means that the high alcohol content is not obvious at first taste, and the initial harsh bite is missing. Traditionally, Scotch is drunk at room temperature with a touch of water, no ice. This lets the Scotch whisky release its flavor to a maximum. But once again, Americans have customized these traditions by adding ice, soda, colas and assortments of bar formulas to their Scotch. As always, the golden rule of Scotch drinking is that since you pay for it, you should enjoy it any way you want.

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A GREAT FIND

I prefer Riedel glassware when I drink fine wine and spirits. I wasn't a Riedel fan until five years ago. I hang out with a group of wine-drinking snobs—and I use that term affectionately—and we were clowning around one night. We pulled out Dixie cups, high balls, champagne flutes and Riedel stemware to taste a bottle of wine.

To our surprise, the same wine tasted different in each of those four glasses—and it was decidedly best in the Riedel glass. The lesson, of course, is not to buy a bunch of different Dixie cups so you can have a ball with a bottle of wine. To maximize the characteristics of the crafted products, we must have the right glassware to deliver them.

How did Riedel become the stemware company to be envied? For one thing, it invites the world's most renowned spirits experts to participate in their extensive tasting workshops. The tasters analyze the effect of shapes, size and rim diameters on each beverage to create instruments that express the individual character and originality of the beverage.

The Riedel Scotch glass shown here is one of my favorites. If you enjoy Lagavulin, you must—I repeat, you must—get a Riedel Scotch glass. It turns the austere iodine-ish potion into an alluring charmer, and renders it seductive in the nose and in the mouth.

I love this Riedel Scotch glass so much that I buy it for friends who are Scotch fanatics. Keep it in mind for the Scotch drinkers on your list this holiday season.

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