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CURIOSITY...



FATHER'S DAY TASTING 2021

We'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone who joined us for our latest Adventure in Deliciousness on June 27th.

It was an absolute pleasure to be joined by Nick Blake of Big Smoke Brew Co., and to work with him on the culinary process of fine tuning three magnificent whisky and beer pairings. We have uncovered some incredible contrasts and unions of flavour that we will no doubt be coming back to.

To those of you that joined us and tasted along at home, we hope you managed to make some similarly delicious discoveries. And if your pairings didn't include beers from our friends at Big Smoke, we highly recommend you head to their [website](#) and give some a try.

During the tasting, we welcomed your questions on all things related to whisky and beer. Collectively, John Glaser, James Saxon and Nick Blake have answered them all. You will find the answers below.

Thanks for stopping by. We look forward to seeing you next time...

The Compass Box Team

begin in their mouths, they begin in their preconceptions. It doesn't matter if the emperor is naked as long as the brand sells. Preconceptions must first be changed. People need to be led by their mouths and by their noses – but in a good way. What strikes me is this: in Burgundy we have tiny stretches of vineyard with one grape, in Bordeaux all the greatest wines are a blend of many varieties – why not with whisky? American winemakers purchase grapes they like to make wines that in taste tests stand shoulder to shoulder with the greatest wines on earth. Why? Because some of

WHISKIES

What are the ages of the components of No Name, No. 2? Will there be a third iteration released?

No Name, No. 2 is made up mostly of 14yo malt whisky from the Caol Ila Distillery, with smaller proportions of 11yo malt whisky from the Talisker Distillery, 17yo malt whisky from the Clynelish Distillery and a little 10yo Highland Malt Blend.

There is indeed a third (and final) version on the way! It should be arriving in stores from November this year.

What was the inspiration behind the name of The Spice Tree and the tree on the label itself?

As John mentioned, he became aware of the possibility of using new French oak – *Quercus petraea* – for maturing Scotch whisky, a practice more common in wine.

French oak contributes spicier flavours than American oak, so that is why the name references the tree, and the spiciness of the resulting whisky. The tree design was created by the team at Stranger & Stranger after John told them about the origin story of the whisky, and gave them the brief of ‘psychedelic elegance’.

Why not make another Affinity?

Affinity was our blend of Scotch whisky and Calvados, and one we were very pleased about. We have no plans to return to this combination, as currently we are happy exploring other styles.

WHISKYMAKING

As part of the process of making a blended whisky, how do you decide on a starting point for the blends? And roughly how many iterations did you go through before you landed on each of the three Compass Box expressions we are drinking today?

The Spice Tree and The Peat Monster have guiding recipes that we aim to hit each time, having refined those whiskies over the years.

We have to ensure the makes and cask types we specify are up to standard and deliver the compelling flavour we need, so we sample widely for each vatting. Once we have tasted the samples and are happy with them, we make composites of each make and cask type, combine them in the proportions as laid out in the guide recipe, then taste the sample as a team against a target bottling. We will then tweak things to get the whisky closer to the target. For these first two whiskies in the Malt Whisky Collection gift pack, we will typically go through one to five iterations. The Story of the Spaniard however is more challenging to make. The fourth batch required 20 prototypes to get right!

Compass Box has certainly made a name for itself as a whisky blender. Are there any plans or thoughts around becoming a single malt bottler as well? Or even building your own distillery? Nothing like going big or going home.

We feel that there are plenty of single malt bottlers out there, all doing great jobs.

We are very happy to be plotting our own course and focusing on creating extraordinary whiskies via the blending process, which makes us unusual. We don't have plans to build our own distillery, that's for sure.

How much flavour is imparted by the distillation? I know you do not distil, but also surmise you know the answer to this. I have been to Scotland 3 times and visited many distilleries, but have not tasted the raw spirit and would like to know how much flavour is built in off the still.

While we don't distil, we do fill our own specification of casks with new make spirit, the name given to the spirit when it comes off the still.

It is tough to say how much flavour is provided by distillation; flavour is generated more by mashing and especially fermentation, while distillation is more about selecting certain flavours as the alcohol emerges from the still at different concentrations.

Lighter, more volatile aromas come off at higher strengths, so if you collect more of these in your spirit cut, you will produce a light, floral or estery spirit. Collecting heavier flavour compounds – which usually appear later in the run – makes for a richer and often meatier-tasting spirit. New make spirit can be very flavoursome indeed, but it is less a case of the stills creating flavour and more about capturing the flavours that the distiller wants.

Please can you delve into the creative process on how you come up with fantastic blends such as Magic Cask, Rogues' Banquet, Menagerie, to mention but a few. Where does the idea start?

We receive samples from warehouses across Scotland, we taste them, and some will capture our attention. We then work on finding the right accompanying parcels of whisky to allow these star casks to shine, while providing added depth and contrast.

The concept or 'idea' starts to emerge and that's where the name and design can develop. Magic Cask is a great example of one extraordinary cask of whisky making all the difference. Rogues' Banquet was about bringing opulently mature whiskies together for something truly celebratory, while Menagerie was a happy accident, as we discovered three malt whiskies which together had a touch of the wild side about them.

WHISKYMAKING

What's the difference between smoke and peat?

Peat is the soil-like substance which is dried and burned for the preparation of some malted barley. Peat, when burned, produces a smoky aroma and flavour which is absorbed by the malted barley. In tasting notes, 'peat' can indicate something earthier, heavier and more medicinal than 'smoke', which may be appreciated as a drier, more fragrant quality.

What is the most important ingredient that goes into whiskymaking?

This question was answered live. Watch the video to reveal the answer from James and John.

PAIRINGS

Favourite dessert/cookie pairing with these three whiskies?

We haven't done cookie-specific pairings with this trio, but The Spice Tree is fantastic with gingerbread (the cake rather than the biscuits), as you might expect.

The Story of the Spaniard is really good with quality dark chocolate and, as we recently discovered, alongside a sticky toffee pudding! The Peat Monster works wonderfully with white chocolate that has been studded with almonds, but makes an even better pairing with blue cheeses.

If there was going to be a fourth pairing today, what would it have been?

We didn't have one planned! We shall leave that to your creative imagination.

BEER

Nick, do you use the same yeast for each beer? Or how much experimentation do you do with yeast before you launch a beer?

This question was answered live. Watch the video to reveal the answer from Nick.

Big Smoke, are there still tickets for your Summer Beer Festival next month at the brewery?

Yes, check out the following [link](#) for tickets.

Are Compass Box whiskies available in the Big Smoke pubs?

Yes, we are pleased to say a selection of our whiskies are available in Big Smoke pubs.

What is the most important ingredient that goes into brewing?

This question was answered live. Watch the video to reveal the answer.

Can a highly hopped beer (like an IPA) upset the balance of flavours in a pairing?

This question was answered live. Watch the video to reveal the answer.

JOHN

Who would your dream collaboration be with?

Such a difficult question! Music is a big part of the Compass Box culture and so someone like Miles Davis – while no longer with us – would have been incredible to work with on a whisky project.

What is John's favourite Scotch whisky from Compass Box?

Picking a favourite is tough. It really does depend on the moment and company. However, over the past 12 months or so, I've gone through more bottles of Glasgow Blend at home than anything else. But this changes over time. In past years it's been Artist Blend. For many years it was Asyla (when we made it). I hope this gives some insight into what you're asking about.