

DUTY - FREE

WAREHOUSE

## SPIRITS News

*Sherried goodness, single barrels, exclusive blends and more—our spirits buyers have returned from deep in the heart of Scotland.*



## MAY 25, 2014 FEATURES

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## For the Love of Sherried Malt, It's Already Here

By David Driscoll

**Another spring has come and gone, and the K&L spirits team has made another trip over the Atlantic to Scotland in search of the world's finest (and sometimes forgotten) barrels of single malt whisky.**

This year was perhaps our most successful in terms of the quality-to-value ratio we always keep at the forefront of our minds. Our long-term relationships have slowly blossomed into friendships and we've become more comfortable working with some of our most-beloved suppliers. All in all, 2015 should be an exciting year for our loyal and dedicated whisky customers because we've been able to reload or find substitutes for just about all of 2014's most popular selections—except for one particular profile.

We all know that sherry-aged whisky has dominated the last year of single malt sales. Macallan's Oloroso sherry flavor has pushed it to the top of the food chain, with producers like Aberlour, Glendronach, and Balvenie bringing up the rear with their own line of decadent, fudge-filled expressions. That being the case, the one question I've been asked repeatedly over the last few months is: Does K&L have any more first-fill sherry cask whiskies on the way for 2015? The answer to that question remains to be seen. If our customers are asking if we have access to more first-fill sherry casks, the answer is yes. But whether or not we'll buy them is still up in the air because the pricing for sherry butts right now is outrageous. Those Spanish oak casks, soaked with the residue from the most famous of sweet wines, are at an all-time premium, which makes our quest that much more difficult. One thing I can tell you safely is this: In terms of sherry-matured whisky, there's nothing better in store for 2015 or 2016 than the two Glenfarclas whiskies we already have in stock. Period. Point blank. Nothing. If you want rich, textural,

mouth-coating sherry from Scotland's premier producer of sherry-matured whisky, then those whiskies are already here and they have been for months now—they've just been lost in the shuffle a bit.

What makes Glenfarclas whisky so special is actually a multitude of different phenomena, but what the family-owned Highlands producer is particularly renowned for is deep, dark, sherry maturation throughout the entire portfolio. Not only are the whiskies aged in sherry butts, but they often spend their entire lives within them—never being finished or transferred into other vessels. The concentration of sherry flavor, however, is 100% dependent upon the freshness of the casks themselves. Sherry butts are often used multiple times to age whisky: once one whisky comes to term the casks are emptied and then filled up again with a new malt. For that reason, producers differentiate between "first-fill" and "refill" casks to indicate the freshness of the sherry residue inside. When we visited Glenfarclas distillery last year, our goal was to load up on "first-fill" sherry-matured single malt while the availability and pricing were both still reasonable. We worked directly with distillery-owner George Grant to select a number of choice Oloroso butts and blend them into two unique and exclusive whiskies on behalf of K&L. The results speak for themselves. Without a doubt, the two Glenfarclas selections are the absolute best whiskies we carry, bringing the richness of

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that über-popular Macallan-esque flavor, with extra concentration and a higher proof, for a price that's more than reasonable.

So when I hear customers ask, "David, does K&L have more new sherry-matured whisky on the way for 2015?" I have to answer them honestly. If you're waiting for us to find new or better sherry-matured whisky than what we already have, you're going to be waiting for quite a while. This is simply as good as it gets. Not only is the quality of these Glenfarclas whiskies top-notch, the prices for these casks were based off the demands of 2013, so it's only going to be more expensive moving forward (if we even decide to move forward at the current prices). Part of the reason we loaded up when we did is because we saw these price increases coming. And we were right! Now there's less pressure to find more stuff in 2015 because we still have plenty of Glenfarclas left. Thank goodness.

**Glenfarclas "The Faultline Casks" K&L Exclusive First Fill Oloroso Sherry Casks Single Malt Whisky (\$109.99)** When George Grant offered us the opportunity to take multiple casks for a special exclusive bottling, we were over the moon. After tasting multiple vintages from

8 to 15 years of age, we settled on three of our favorite casks in the 9-10 year range, a mixture of young casks that surpasses even our own high expectations. This is full-fledged and powerful, yet tempered by the strong influence of that special wine of Andalucía. If you love sherry, if you love high-proof single malt, if you love powerful flavors and massively textural whisky, then this bottling is for you.

**Glenfarclas 24 Year Old K&L Exclusive Single Malt Whisky (\$169.99)** Current market conditions have made purchasing a single cask from the Grants rather cost-prohibitive. Negotiating the price down on those casks is also out of the question as wholesalers worldwide are privy to the price structure and the Grants are very loyal and fair. So we decided to get creative. Those single casks have a set price list, but picking multiple casks for one bottling afforded us some flexibility. So into the warehouse we went. George bragged about the quality of the 1990 vintage, but we had no idea how special they were until we were standing in front of the barrels. These casks are from a sequential lot of first-fill Oloroso sherry butts at 24 years old. Without a doubt, Farclas fans will be pleased, but this bottling is approachable enough for even the most novice whisky lover to appreciate.

## Cognac Without Caramel

By David Driscoll

It's a well-known fact that the darker a spirit is in color, the older it is. Except when it comes to spirits that have caramel coloring, of course. There's a time-tested tradition with blended Scotch, rum, and Cognac that involves adding a bit of caramel to the final liquid for the purposes of standardization and consistency. Most producers don't want a product that looks and tastes different each time around. However, in our experiences travelling in Cognac, we've found that the heralded brandy of the Charentes is one of the worst offenders when it comes to oversaturation. Some producers add an egregious amount of a substance called *boise* (a potent mixture of caramel, sugar, and oak chips) to their final spirit to make the brandy taste softer, sweeter, and appear older than it really is. Sometimes the only way to be 100% sure about the Cognac you're drinking is to ask the producer for an unadulterated version of the spirit, which is exactly what we did with Daniel Bouju on one of our recent visits to the region.

With the Daniel Bouju Fine Saveurs Cognac you're getting a brandy made from 100% Grand Champagne fruit of the highest quality, aged in oak, and bottled without one trace of additives for a cleaner, lighter, fruitier flavor that will force you to take another look at what you've been drinking previously. Without the caramel, the elegant nature of the fruit takes center stage and the aromas are full of ripe apple and pear, rather than soft vanilla or decadent caramel. The best part about the Daniel Bouju Fines Saveurs is the price. At \$39.99 you can sip it straight or pour it over the rocks without worrying about the expense. It also mixes beautifully



into cocktails like a Sidecar or French 75. With summer just around the corner, this is a Cognac you can actually enjoy the whole year round. Removing the caramel is almost like taking off that extra sweater you've been wearing during the cold weather months. Whether you enjoy the Bouju neat or as part of a larger recipe, we're positive that you'll enjoy the pure and potent flavors of unadulterated Cognac, and understand why we're eager to find other producers willing to take similar measures.

### Daniel Bouju K&L Exclusive Cognac Fines Saveurs (\$39.99)

Francois Bouju is the man running the show these days at Bouju Cognac. He's incredibly nice, knows a lot about distillation, taught us a great deal about the region and its wines, and impressed us beyond any expectations we had going in to our appointment. His vines are planted in the best soils (rich limestone that helps preserve acidity in the fruit) and he is a stickler for detail. The reason the Grand Champagne region makes what is considered the best Cognac is because the grapes mature to full ripeness with high acidity levels and low potential alcohol. This is important because distillation is about concentrating the flavor of a base substance. If you've got a wine sitting in a tank oxidizing, you're going to have an oxidized flavor in the Cognac. High acidity levels help prevent oxidation while distillation is taking place and prevents the need for stabilizing sulfur—none of us want to taste a distilled fart. At the same time, you need wine with a low alcohol level as to not overpower the flavor of the fruit. Full ripeness is also necessary to have any flavor at all. You can't simply pick early to preserve acidity because your wine will taste terrible. The resulting flavor of the Fines Saveurs is

# Light Lightening: Faultline Blended Scotch Whisky

By David Othenin-Girard

**Driscoll and I are constantly reminding ourselves how incredibly lucky we are.** Not only have we both found careers that we're passionate about, but that also happen to be all about *sharing* that passion. While we'd love to take credit for all that the spirits department has become, we're not dumb—we realize that the only reason we're able to do what we do is because we are lucky enough to be part of this unique organization.

There are literally thousands of wine stores in California (OK, most of those shouldn't really be considered wine stores, but they do indeed sell wine—arguably). None of these countless shops, some of which are exceptional in their own right, emulate the model built at K&L over the past 30 years. K&L has allowed us to identify how we can best serve our customers. The tools are in the tool box, we've just got to design the plans and get our hands dirty. No other organization puts so much faith and control in their buyers' hands. While many others wish they could try, there's absolutely no one quite like K&L.

If you don't know how our system works, K&L has buyers for each category who constantly scour the globe for great deals. In addition to relying on the standard model, where importers and distributors present their offerings and we select our favorites and negotiate the best price, K&L has gone one step further. We have the opportunity to go directly to suppliers and bring in something totally unique that our other supply partners may have missed. That means we can also become an integral part in the development of the products we offer, creating specialty cuvées and selecting certain parcels or vineyard designates that we think showcase particular producers in the most favorable light.

When we took the model that had worked for our wine team and applied it to the spirits, we weren't sure that it would all work out. Risk is inherent in this merchant-supplier model, as we're relying entirely on our own good taste, rather than marketing, advertising, and sales teams that a standard alcohol brand uses to push their products. We must be absolutely confident in our selections because we are indeed creating a partnership with our clients in a much more personal and didactic way than other stores.

This is exactly why it took us three whole years to create a blended Scotch product that we felt not only lived up to our high quality standards, but would also be versatile and tasty enough for our clients

to come back for again and again. Our initial goal was to destroy the stigma behind inexpensive Scotch, which the large brands had built over the last 30 years by continually bottling increasingly revolting offerings for the lower end of the market. I'm convinced that there have been countless corporate marketing meetings that have ended with someone yelling, "*who cares if it tastes like crap*, just make sure it's dark and smooth and they'll keep buying it."

We knew that with a little bit of care and some seriously strong relationships, we could develop a product that showcased everything we love about Scotch at a fraction of the price. We established our quality goals: a higher than normal malt content, absolutely no coloring no matter how light the product turned out to be, and a higher ABV to retain texture and eliminate the need for filtration. After three years of development and hundreds of variations tasted, we finally landed on a recipe that we thought delivered in every respect and happened to be as affordable as any big brand blend.

**Faultline Blended Scotch Whisky (\$24.99)** turned out to be a blended Scotch like nothing else on the market. Utilizing young malts from Islay, Skye, and the Highlands, we created a smoky base, which is the core flavor components in the blend. We then added a small quantity of sweet, malty Speyside whisky and finished it off with some high-quality grain. The color is like a young Riesling, just a hint of gold shimmering in the glass. The proof is a cool 100. The glass is clear—we've got nothing to hide.

If the light color is a problem, I implore you to close your eyes, because once you've tasted the incredible depth of flavor and complexity we've achieved at this price you'll certainly forgive our desire to eschew the use of artificial caramel color. The nose is sweet malt and soft smoldering peat. Hints of vanilla and fresh fruits pop up as the billowing smoke fades in and out. Texturally rich on the palate, the malt is really in the driver's seat and the softer grain whisky fills out the explosion of flavor with a subtle oakiness. On the finish, the peat turns up thanks to the young malt whiskies from Islay and Skye. Let's not forget how massively delicious the young Caol Ila and Talisker single malts we've bottled in last couple of years are. This blend draws from those same stocks.

While securing ultra-rare single malts and century-old brandies are certainly highlights of our tenure, there is no other product we've bottled that we're more proud of. This is not only because we're selling something that we've had a significant role in creating, but because we've created a product of exceptional quality, distilled at the world's best distilleries, that almost *anyone* who loves Scotch can afford.



# The Rarest of the Rare

By David Othenin-Girard

Here at the K&L Spirits department, we're not only working to make sure that you have access to the best deals on your favorite brands, we also strive to offer you some of the world's most unusual and unobtainable products. We do this by scouring collections across the country, and that's why we're able to stock these rare offerings that very few, if any, other stores can offer.



## 1961 Bowmore 50 Year Old Single Malt Whisky (\$25,000.00)

Only one available worldwide. We may scoff when we see distillers try to pass off young or non-age-stated whisky at ridiculous prices, but sometimes our suppliers bottle products that do indeed deserve a price tag as legendary as the mystical island from which it came. The Bowmore Distillery is one of mankind's finest achievements. In the 1960s, the distillery is well known to have produced some of the finest spirit ever distilled—a veritable nectar of the gods. When those incredible single malts were bottled over the past 30 years, no one could have imagined just how superlative their quality ultimately turned out to be. Now, Morrison Bowmore has surprised the whisky world by bottling an original cask from this legendary decade. The odds that this whisky actually exists are infinitesimally small. We could call this the Higgs boson of single malt, only it won't cost you \$13.5 billion to find it. For a mere \$25,000, it will teach you a whole lot more about the universe than a 17-mile series of tubes.

## A.H. Hirsch 20 Year Old Bourbon (\$3,500—elsewhere \$7,000)

Only three bottles available. In 1974, when Adolf Hirsch commissioned 434 barrels from the exceptional Schaefferstown distillery in Pennsylvania, he probably didn't know that he'd be creating the most important modern collectable whiskey in history. This little distillery, originally built by Swiss Mennonite farmers to convert locally grown grain into whiskey for stable storage, was sold a few times and eventually closed during Prohibition. It became famous in the 1950s, when Lou Forman and Charles Everett Beam purchased the property and began distilling Michter's Sour Mash Whiskey there. Forman eventually sold the space to Pennco Distillers, but continued to produce the Michter's Whiskey at the site until the late '80s. During Pennco's tenure, contract distilling was the name of the game. That's how Hirsch acquired the 434 barrels of now-legendary juice. Juice so legendary that people have written books about how *you* won't ever get to taste it. These stocks were first bottled in 1989 as a 15-year-old by the Van Winkles and sold entirely to Japan. The following year the vast majority of the stock was dumped into tank at 16 years old and sold over the following decades at ever increasing prices. In fact, that original 16-year is still available—now featuring a crystal decanter and fancy humidor—through normal distribution channels (expect to pay around \$2,000 if you want one—we can get it) despite being distilled nearly 40 years ago. But, a few choice casks were held back and bottled over the following years. This bottle represents the oldest we've ever seen in the wild. This could be considered the most collectable modern American whiskey and deserves to be the crown jewel of any bourbon collection.





**Macallan Sir Peter Blake Set of Eight Small Bottles from 1930-2000s Artist Series (\$6,999—elsewhere \$10,000)** Only two available. To commemorate pop art legend Sir Peter Blake’s 80th birthday, Macallan has commissioned 250 unique pieces of art designed to evoke each period of the artist’s life. The pieces each contain eight small bottles of whisky containing single malt distilled in each of the artist’s eight decades. Mr. Blake designed the labels and a team of experts and artists collaborated on the design and detailed construction of a unique wooden presentation case. When the container is opened, a vibrant homage to the artist’s life is on display. Countless artifacts of incredible detail are uncovered, depicting each decade of his life. This unique handmade masterpiece, suitable for pop art collectors and single malt lovers alike, is being offered to you at a significant discount. The oldest whisky in this collection dates from the year 1937 and represents some of the distillery’s absolute oldest stocks, but ultimately you’re not only purchasing a collection of the world’s finest and rarest whisky, but an absolutely unique piece of art.



**Robison & Aronheim John Hancock Pure Whisky Circa 1900 (\$2,300—previously \$3,000)** This exquisite example of the era’s highest-quality offering represents some of the finest pre-Prohibition whiskies we’ve ever come across. The label is exceptional with very little sign of age and absolutely no sign of seepage or mildew. It reads, “John Hancock Whiskey, A Blend, Pure and Without Drugs or Poison.” The driven cork is in excellent shape and the upper shoulder fill is very inviting. This is almost certainly exceptional whiskey distilled most likely from rye and malt grains. Its color is a deep mahogany and the clarity (probably the most important indicator for judging old whiskey) is exceptional. Bottled by Robison & Aronheim, located in Detroit, Michigan.



**Monogram “1860” Pure Old Rye Whiskey Circa 1890s (\$2,299.99—previously \$3,000)** A well-known New York merchant named M.E. Bellows bottled this ultra rare pre-Prohibition rye whiskey before the turn of the 19th century. It was most likely Pennsylvania or Maryland rye purchased and aged in a traditional manner (meaning consolidating as bottling and evaporation depleted volumes) and may have actually been from stocks originating in the 1860s. While the label is worn, it is still legible after more than 100 years. The square bottle is deceptive in the quality of the fill, which is slightly below the hard square shoulder, but because of the short neck it’s actually a rather nice fill. This is perhaps the oldest rye whiskey available in retail anywhere in the country.

# The Old Particular Brand

By David Othenin-Girard

**Our relationship with the Douglas Laing Company is one of our most important.** This historically significant bottler is responsible for some of the most sought-after bottlings in modern history. The Laings were the beneficiaries of the large distilling downturn in the '80s and are one of the few blenders to retain filling contracts with the big distillers. They've also supplied us with some of our most legendary casks, including the 1983 Port Ellen, which, despite its equally legendary price tag, remains one of our most successful undertakings to date. They are also the supplier responsible for bottling our Faultline Blended Scotch, which is a huge reason why the quality there is so high.

We've always loved and supported the Laings, but their main brand Old Malt Cask has been consistently overpriced due to importation issues. That dissonance was the main reason Douglas Laing was one of our first stops when we started visiting Scotland. Last year, the

two brothers who had run the company together for decades decided to part ways. The brothers split the stocks and the brands and the Douglas Laing Company was left without a major flagship brand. To replace the legendary OMC brand, Fred Laing and his cohorts developed an equally special offering designed to house their finest stocks. Thanks to our close relationship with Fred, we were offered the U.S. exclusive for the launch of the brand.

The Old Particular Brand exists to highlight Scotland's top distilleries, as well as the Scotch regions from which they came. With the help of Fred Laing and his team of tasters, we've scoured their stocks for the finest examples from each region and worked hard to get them here at the absolute best price. Only limited quantities of each offering are available, so please don't wait—grab one of these exceptional whiskies before it's too late.

**1998 Tamdhu 16 Year Old K&L Exclusive Old Particular Single Malt (\$99.99)** Tamdhu is a lovely distillery located in Knockando in the heart of the Speyside region. The distillery has had a tumultuous decade, being mothballed and nearly demolished in 2009, and ultimately sold to the Ian MacLeod Whisky Company in 2011. The relaunch of the distillery brand is considered a triumph for both the producers and connoisseurs alike. This solid little refill hogshead exemplifies the distillery's spirit perfectly. The nose is wild citrus, vanilla, Bartlett pear with hints of exotic wood spice.

On the palate it remains on the ultra-soft and fruity side, with floral honey and candied citrus popping up around tropical fruit. A strong white pepper note kicks up to balance it all out. This all turns a bit nutty on the finish, with a slight *amer* quality that reminds me of Maraska Maraschino. Altogether, it's an inviting and easy-to-love version of this wonderful Speyside distillery.



**1996 Tobermory 18 Year Old K&L Exclusive Old Particular Single Malt (\$109.99)** This magnificent Tobermory not only represents the Islands sub-region perfectly, it also happens to be an absolutely stupid value. The distillery bottlings from this beautiful distillery on the Isle of Mull (a beautiful far-flung place that is totally worth the two-hour ferry ride from Oban) are very well regarded. So much so that their own 15-year goes for upwards of \$120 in California. This single cask, nearly three years the official bottling's senior, also trounces it in terms of character. The nose captures the distillery's ocean locale perfectly: salted stone fruits, light wafts of clean peat smoke, old leather and fresh rubber.

On the palate, it starts a bit cleaner, with the oceanic side coming out first. As it builds on the palate, the peatiness gains a foothold again with a soft herbal finish that moves away from the initial saltiness. For me, this is a benchmark not only for trying to understand the Islands as a region, but this wacky, wonderful distillery as well.



**1997 Laphroaig 16 Year Old K&L Exclusive Old Particular Single Malt (\$139.99)**

Laphroaig is quickly becoming one of the most difficult-to-find distilleries on the secondary market. The owners have stopped all contracts and are not filling barrels for anyone but themselves. We're incredibly lucky to get this well-aged Laphroaig at such an amazing price. For me, this age range is perfect for capturing the intensity that makes Laphroaig special while slightly taming the inarguably wild character of this whisky. Here we start with big wafting peat marked slightly by aromas of bitter chocolates and candied red fruits. On the palate we're slightly off the overt peatiness, but the smoke is really there. We're moving toward the campfire/fireplace type of smoke, with sweet mesquite BBQ and roasted fruit. The finish trails off nicely and remains big and broad with plenty of peat driving the final moments. A fabulous example of the world's most flavorful malt. All peat lovers should take note.



# New Selections from Hepburn's Choice

By David Driscoll

**Our customers know that we work directly with suppliers in Scotland to secure interesting and high-quality casks of single malt whisky on behalf of our store.** But what does “going to Scotland” actually mean, as it pertains to the K&L spirits department? Where do we go? What do we talk about? Who do we meet with? How does business get done? I'm here to tell you—but not in too much detail, otherwise every retailer from here to New York will start mimicking our efforts. Part of our routine involves visiting distilleries and choosing casks directly out of their local warehouses for private purchasing. The other main focus of our journey involves working with blending houses, or basically the people who continue to make the Scotch world go round. Since the original days of Johnnie Walker himself, the Scotch whisky trade has been more about the people who buy and blend the world-famous whiskies rather than the people who actually make it.

Knowing what we know about production today, and the leaps and bounds in consumer education that the internet has helped bring about, most people associate their favorite whiskies with the distillery that produces it. The idea of a single malt whisky being branded with the name of the actual producer, however, is a relatively new concept. Hundreds of years ago, the distilleries themselves were merely contractors and the blending houses the purchasers. One side handled production, while the other side handled the ultimate flavor profile and the actual marketing. Much like Dom Pérignon is a blend of many different Champagnes and Hennessy a blend of hundreds of different Cognacs, Scotch whisky was often (and still often is) a blend of many different whiskies.

Today, the boutique market has changed a bit. More than ever before, whisky customers want to know where their whisky is coming from and who actually made it. That's forced blending houses to rethink their strategies a bit. In today's market, where knowledge and information are valued, would it perhaps be more beneficial to bottle these numerous casks from numerous different distilleries as individual whiskies rather than nondescript blends? That was a question that various blending houses began to ask about 15 years ago, and the answer to that question was a resounding *yes* from

the whisky consumer base. One of these storied whisky houses was Hunter Laing, a Glasgow-based bottler with deep stocks of casks from all over Scotland. We befriended Stewart Laing and his son Andrew a number of years back and struck up a working relationship. Today, we're moving into a solid and lasting friendship based on mutual respect and a love of working together. Our recent arrival of Hepburn's Choice-labeled single malt expressions are single cask selections chosen by our spirits team in conjunction with the Laings. Check out some of the most dynamic and value-oriented Scotch selections we've just brought in from our most recent shipment.



## Caol Ila 5 Year Old Hepburn's Choice K&L

### Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$49.99)

Don't let the young age fool you: this five-year-old, single barrel, cask strength version of the legendary Islay distillery is bringing more than its share of bang for the buck. Lots of smoke and immature phenolic action quickly turns rich and round and finishes with a mouthful of stone fruit and citrus. A whopping 61.1% ABV brings intensity.

## Bowmore 12 Year Old Hepburn's Choice K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$79.99)

The nose shows subtle ashy smoke revolving around gorgeous and exotic ripe fruit; mango skin, apricot pit, creamy fondant and the swelling ocean behind it all. Sweet candied citrus envelope the palate and only hint at the peaty finish. This is *absolutely* the perfect whisky to give someone who says they don't like peat.

## Smoky & Peaty Tobermory (Ledaig) 8 Year Old Hepburn's Choice K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$59.99)

The rugged peaty malt that comes out of this distillery is unlike anything from Islay. The smoke is more earthy than oceanic; herbaceous and intense, the dark, earthy peat is balanced by a wonderful sweet malt. Amazing what only eight years in a refill hogshead can do when the spirit is on point.

## Mortlach 7 Year Old Hepburn's Choice K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$49.99)

So much complexity at such a young age, this whisky shows tons of pear and that subtle savory side.

## Craigellachie 18 Year Old Hepburn's Choice K&L Exclusive Single Sherry Butt Cask Strength Single Malt Whisky (\$99.99)

This has everything you want in a sherried malt and nothing that you don't. It starts with a slight flintiness that quickly blows off to reveal a bouquet of dried cherries, fudgy cacao nibs, roasted coffee beans, and freshly polished sandalwood.



Tasting at Hepburn's Choice.

# A Heaping Helping of Four Roses

By David Driscoll

While we continue to head across the Atlantic in search of more Scotch whisky, going to Kentucky in search of American bourbon has been much less fruitful. That's not because we don't have great relationships or because the whiskey isn't as good as it used to be—it's just that there's simply less of it to go around. While Scotland has more than 70 distilleries nationwide, most of Kentucky's highly-allocated bourbon we sell at K&L is the product of less than 10 main producers; the same handful of producers who must supply the global demand as well as the domestic. Getting our hands on enough fine bourbon just to satiate the legions of K&L whiskey drinkers is in itself a gargantuan task, so we have to take what we can get when the gettin's good. Our recent meeting with Four Roses yielded a larger crop of contenders than usual, and we weren't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. Ranging from nine to almost 12 years in maturity, these barrels are exclusively for K&L and have been bottled at cask strength with no water added.



*Tasting barrels with famed master distiller Jim Rutledge in his office.*

**Four Roses K&L Exclusive OBSF (11 Year & 6 Month) Single Barrel Cask Strength Bourbon (\$66.99)** Another four stupendous casks of Four Roses have just arrived on the tail of the three fabulous casks that were recently released. Thank God, 'cause you guys ate those up and we're almost completely out. These four new casks for the most part are a total contrast from the last three, with the exception of one offering

which is identical to the last batch in every way except the barrel number—it's *very* educational to taste these side by side. This lovely OBSF is getting close to the 12-year mark and comes in at a healthy 119 proof. It was aged in the HW warehouse. Powerful, yet balanced, it's going to be well-appreciated by the growing hordes of Four Roses lovers, but is open enough for anyone to get into.

**Four Roses K&L Exclusive OBSK (9 Year & 8 Month) Single Barrel Cask Strength Bourbon (\$66.99)**

This wild spicy OBSK came out of the ME warehouse. It is the youngest of the bunch, but a total no-brainer in my opinion. This is classic Four Roses in every way and reminds me of some of the stupendous LE releases of years passed. Definite must-have for lovers of spicy high-rye bourbon.

**Four Roses K&L Exclusive OBSO (11 Year & 2 Month) Single Barrel Cask Strength Bourbon (\$66.99)** The OBSO whiskey is an important component in the standard Small Batch offering designed to balance out the strong spicy from the K yeast strain. This is a nose of pure rock candy. Soft candied flower, sweet orange peel, on the nose turn to cotton candy and coconut oil on the palate. Different, but delicious!

**Four Roses K&L Exclusive OESF (10 Year 9 Month Barrel #48-2Q) Single Barrel Cask Strength Bourbon (\$66.99)** OESF brings a bold mouthful of rich vanilla balanced by potent oak spices and a healthy amount of herbaceous peppery notes from the rye. It's a classic, no-frills whiskey with plenty of gusto and lots of depth.



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**HOURS** Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

## K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to [KLWines.com/Local-Events](http://KLWines.com/Local-Events).

## K&L SAN FRANCISCO

638 Fourth Street, San Francisco, CA 94107  
**P** (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739  
**HOURS** Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6

**We accept American Express, Discover, Visa and Mastercard.**

**For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit [KLWines.com](http://KLWines.com)**

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