

Whisky and Tobacco (by Paul) – Part 1.

<https://dutchpipesmoker.com/tag/whisky-and-pipe-tobacco/>



Once in a while, mostly late in the evening when Ellen is already asleep, I like to indulge myself with a glass of good whisky. Often in combination with a pipe. Unfortunately I know very little of this distilled alcoholic beverage that is made from fermented grain mash, only that I like it. What I do know is that I enjoy a glass of peaty 16 year old Lagavulin paired with a pipe filled with leathery, smoky Penzance. Hmm.. I wondered.. Would there be more combinations possible between whisky and tobacco?

The man to ask this question to is Paul, who some of you may know from the “Who’s afraid of chemistry part 1 and 2” posts. Besides pipe smoking he also enjoys a good whisky. Well, several good whiskies. Ok, a lot of good whiskies. The man is a walking whisky encyclopaedia and has bottles and bottles of the finest “water of life” at home. Paul also does so called “nosings and tastings” in which, together with a selected group of people, he discusses how to distinguishing smells and tastes with whiskey. He also provides background information about the production process, the components of the distilleries, specificities of whisky, whisky regions and distilleries, wood and barrels, water and peat, boilers, other technical aspects etc. So I asked him to write a post about which whisky goes best with which tobacco. Before I let you read the piece Paul wrote I have to mention that throughout his story I linked to whisky reviews. Now not every reviewer thinks the same about a whisky (the same goes for tobacco) so all opinions and recommendations are Paul’s and are based on his knowledge and vast experience.





For this article I want to write a bit about one of my other passions besides pipe-smoking: whisk(e)y. Arno has asked me: which whisky goes best with which tobacco? Hmmm, tough question to answer, because one person likes to adjust the tobacco aromas with the whisky aromas and another likes some contrast in tobacco and whisky

while enjoying them together.

My specific love goes out to the Scotch single malt whiskies, so you will find them in my examples. But in this article I will occasionally mention the Irish and the American whiskeys too; sometimes with a specific brand-name and expression, sometimes as a group. In



Scotch single malt whiskies 400 (four hundred) aromas have been found, so you will understand I can only give “some” guidance on brands and expressions. There are about 10.000 – 12.000 Scottish single malt expressions on the market, including the many independent bottlings. A list way too big to insert them all in this article. So please look upon the following tips and names as a first direction you can follow. For specific questions I will gladly be of service to answer anything on the subject of whisk(e)y. You can use the e-mail on my website www.whiskyinfoplus.nl (in Dutch, but you will find the e-mail button).



For the purists on this heavenly brew, who might have noticed the “e” in the name of the drink: Irish and American whiskey is written with the “e” in the name, all the other whisky producing countries spell it without the “e”. If generally mentioned I will write whisky in this article as the Scots do. If I mean specific Irish or American whiskey, you

will notice the extra “e”. A final remark upfront: “yo” is not only a rap-word from guys like 50-Cents and others, but stands for “years old”, which is the age statement of the whiskies ageing in the casks.

AROMATIC BLENDS:

– vanilla and caramel:

Most American Bourbon and Tennessee whiskeys have quite some vanilla/caramel aromas, which go perfectly with a vanilla flavoured tobacco.

As do a lot of Irish whiskeys, such as Bushmills 16 yo, Magilligan 5 yo, Greenore 8 yo and Redbreast 12 yo.

Most Scotch single malts have aged in ex-Bourbon or ex-Tennessee casks and they almost always have aromas like vanilla, caramel and/or butterscotch. Like Glengoyne 12 yo, lots of The Macallan expressions, Deanston 12 yo, The Glenlivet and Glenfiddich single malts up to 15 yo. This also goes for most of the brands from the Speyside region, as long as they have matured on casks formerly used by American whiskey makers.



– honey:

A lot of whiskies can have some honey aromas, i.e. Drumguish (from the Speyside distillery, no age statement on the label), Speyburn Solera (which combines the honey with oranges) or The Macallan Fine Oak 10 yo.



– orange/grape/citrus:

An aroma which also can be found in Scotch single malts, like Oban 14 yo, Speyburn Solera, Old Pulteney 12 yo (grape/orange like aroma) and Fettercairn Fior.





– red fruits like berries, raspberry, blackberry, etc.:

Tomatin 25 yo has a few expressions with berry-aromas. Further you have Springbank 13 yo Port Cask, Lochside 10 yo and Glencadam 15 yo.

– floral aromas:

Glenturret 10 yo brings out some floral notes, as well as a lot of whiskies which have matured on ex-sherry casks, like Glengoyne, Genfarclas 15 yo, Mannochmore 12 yo, Glenmorangie Lasanta 12 yo, Benriach 12 yo, Aberlour 12 yo and most whiskies which boast “matured in Oloroso/sherry/Pedro Ximenez casks” on the label.



VIRGINIA BLENDS:



Almost all of the time an Irish whiskey matches perfectly with Virginia tobacco. There are far over 100 Irish whiskeys, blends, single malts, single grains, pot stillled or continuously distilled whiskeys. All with their own specific character but mostly a bit more “friendly & easy-going” in taste and aroma than the average Scotch single malt. You almost can’t go wrong combining a Virginia tobacco filled pipe with an Irish whiskey.

Scotch whiskies from the Lowlands also combine fine with the light sweet aroma of a lot of Virginia tobaccos. Think of Lowland whiskies like Auchentoshan 12 yo, Littlemill (if you still can find it, the Littlemill 8 yo has a typical aroma of a freshly mowed lawn), Bladnoch and Glenkinchie. But a Speyside region whisky like Knockdhu 12 yo or a young (under 15 yo) Knockando will do just fine as well. Ever tried Highland whiskies like Deanston 12 yo or Dalwhinnie 15 yo to go with your Virginia tobacco? Both, with their heathery and sweet notes, will bring out the sweetness of your Virginia pipe tobacco.

– Virginia / Perique blends:



Tobacco blends with Perique have that typical sour aroma and taste. There are not many “sour” whiskies/whiskeys. But you could try an American Sour Mash whiskey, like some well known brands produce, like Pappy Van Winkle, Jim Bean, Woodfort Reserve, Maker’s Mark, Wild Turkey and some Jack Daniels expressions. Note that the Sour Mash process is used in almost all Bourbon and Tennessee whiskeys. If you are looking for that typical aroma, check the indication “sour mash” on the label. The process doesn’t make a whiskey with a sour aroma-

note as per definition, they can turn out very sweet and with vanilla/caramel aromas. As for Scotch single malts I can’t easily come up with whiskies which have a sourly aroma or taste. It’s a taste most whiskymakers do not want in their whisky. The only one I ever encountered that would fit in here is an independent bottling of Edradour 10 yo from The Un-Chill-Filtered Collection, distilled 12-08-1998 and bottled 20-11-2008, 46% alcohol and from cask No. 286.

Besides looking for a sour taste in the whisky (and because Perique brings out more complexity out of the Virginia tobaccos) you could try such a tobacco-blend with a more complex whisky, like mentioned next, under Virginia/Oriental blends.

– Virginia / Oriental blends:

Typically a single malt like Royal Lochnagar 12 yo brings out a leathery note, which I think would combine easily with an Oriental tobacco blend. It also brings out a little peaty flavour and aroma. Other light to medium peated whiskies would do nice in my opinion, like Springbank 10 yo, Scapa 16 yo and Isle of Jura Superstition.

I think a Virginia/Oriental tobacco blend can be perfectly combined with more complex whiskies, such as Highland Park 18 yo, Loch Lomond Old Rhodhu 10 yo, Glen Garioch 12 yo or a Glen Spey 12 yo.





– **Virginia / Burley blends:**

Burley can give a tobacco some hint of chocolate. And in some whiskies you can find that aroma too. Bladnoch 15 yo would do fine (chocolate, orange and even a tobacco aroma can be found) or the Glencadam 15 yo. These whiskies are not too strong in taste and aroma, which combines nicely with the Virginia-based tobacco.

– **Burley / Kentucky blends:**

Here too the chocolate can be found, but I think a Burley/Kentucky tobacco is often somewhat stronger in aroma and taste than a Burley/Virginia. Therefore I would recommend a whisky that is a bit more “present” in the nose and on the tongue, like Glenrothes from about 14 yo or older or a Speyside 12 yo. The latter shows even more chocolate with a few drops of water (and don’t exaggerate on the water!).



– **Latakia blends:**



Well, this is the territory of the man who get hair on their chests while smoking these kind of tobacco-blends. And mind you, there are whiskies which grow hair on your chest too: the peaty ones. A few examples of medium to strong peated whiskies are Lagavulin, Caol

Ila, Bowmore, Ardbeg, Laphroaig, Kilchoman (all from the Isle of Islay) and Longrow (the peaty one from Springbank) or Ledaig (the peaty one from Tobermory).

But also some brands, less known to produce peaty whiskies, have managed to bring some nice peaty expressions. Like the Isle of Arran Devil’s Punch Bowl, Croftengea 5 yo or Inchmoan 4 yo (both from the Loch Lomond distillery) and Ardmore Fully Peated Quarter Cask finish. The

famous Talisker from the Isle of Skye matches evenly well with a Latakia tobacco. And distilleries from the Isle of Islay that have a non-peaty house-style sometimes produce a peaty whisky. Like the Port Charlotte expression from Bruichladdich and the Moine-series from Bunnahabhain. The last one only bottled by independent bottler The Ultimate from Amersfoort, The Netherlands.

– Cigar leaf blends:

With tobacco blends which include Cigar leaf I think a lot of peaty whiskies can be combined perfectly. Also whiskies with some leather-aromas would do fine (like the mentioned Royal Lochnagar 12 yo). But one specific single malt comes to mind to accompany a cigar leaf pipe tobacco and of course a cigar as well: the Dalmore Cigar Malt. If you like these kind of tobaccos or you are a cigar aficionado as well as a pipesmoker and you are looking for a balanced whisky to go with the smoke, this is the best I can recommend. It balances perfectly with the smoke and even let's behind an oily film in your mouth. Which makes the smoke, either pipe or cigar, very pleasant.



So, in general:



Keep in mind that maturing on ex-American whiskey casks creates whiskies with vanilla and caramel. They vary from dry to pretty sweet. Maturing on ex-sherry casks mostly give more complex whiskies. With aromas varying from fruits, chocolate and flowers to nutty aromas and even aromas of other distillates like brandy and armagnac.

Pipe-smoking and whisky-drinking:

In closure I would like to make a kind of statement. People often ask me if smoking is allowed while drinking whisky. My opinion on is this: When you are drinking socially or just to relax and take some time for yourself to enjoy the good things in life, please smoke, drink and eat what you like and how you like it.

However, when you are seriously “nosing and tasting” your whisky, it’s better not to smoke. The same goes for exploring a tobacco trying to define the aroma’s which are in it: better not drink or eat while searching for the fine nuances in your mixture. The one interferes your perception and findings of the other. Whether you are exploring whisky while smoking or exploring your tobacco while drinking a fairly strong drink like the “water of life”. For instance, the Scotch single malt whisky Highland Park 18yo is a very complex whisky with 24 detectable aroma’s. If you are really exploring this whisky, a smoke will have effect on your nose. Thus making it very hard searching for such fragile distinctions in whisky aroma’s. Having said this, I can assure you that I like to smoke my pipe or a good long-filler cigar while enjoying my whisky. Even my complex Highland Park 18yo, when I’m just relaxing and enjoying my passions: pipe-smoking and Scotch single malt whisky.



Enjoy your smoke and your drink,

Paul