

For Reference Only
Not for
Reproduction,
Distribution,
or Posting
Thank you!



STRAIGHT TALK

Superlative new whiskeys for sipping and savoring

Whiskey popularity is on the rise, with 59.4 million cases sold in the U.S. last year, according to the Distilled Spirits Council. But more recently, the spirits world has seen a resurgence of traditional whiskey consumption: the straight pour. With that in mind, we highlight four outstanding new releases from around the world — one sure to satisfy you, whatever your taste preference for whiskey serves up. As the Scots jovially declare, *Slàinte!*

BY **SHAUN TOLSON**

For Reference Only
 Not for
 Reproduction,
 Distribution,
 or Posting
 Thank you!

A Smoky
 Option
 From
 Scotland

BRUICHLADDICH OCTOMORE 74

Ahh, the island of Islay. It's the most polarizing region for single-malt Scotch whiskys because many of the whiskys produced there are peated – the process of drying malted barley with the intense heat from a peat-fueled fire. The process results in an unmistakable smokiness that whisky drinkers either love or hate. Through its Octomore and Port Charlotte labels, the Bruichladdich distillery is at the forefront of this heavy-smoke movement through a cold-smoking process, and its latest release, Octomore 74, continues to reinvent the category.

One way to qualify the smokiness of a peated whisky is by measuring its phenol parts per million (PPM), the amount of phenols from the smoke absorbed into the malted barley as it dries. Each new Octomore expression consistently ranks among the highest, if not the highest, Islay Scotch in PPM. For example, Ardbeg is considered one of the most peated Islay Scotches, with its whiskys typically falling in the 55 PPM range. Octomore 74 measures 167 PPM. This new release is the company's first peated Islay whisky aged in virgin French oak casks, which deliver sweet notes of vanilla and honey up front that transition to intense smoke on the finish. It's a remarkable juxtaposition that's intensified by the whisky's overall potency; it's bottled at cask strength (61.2 percent ABV). \$235/750 mL; bruichladdich.com

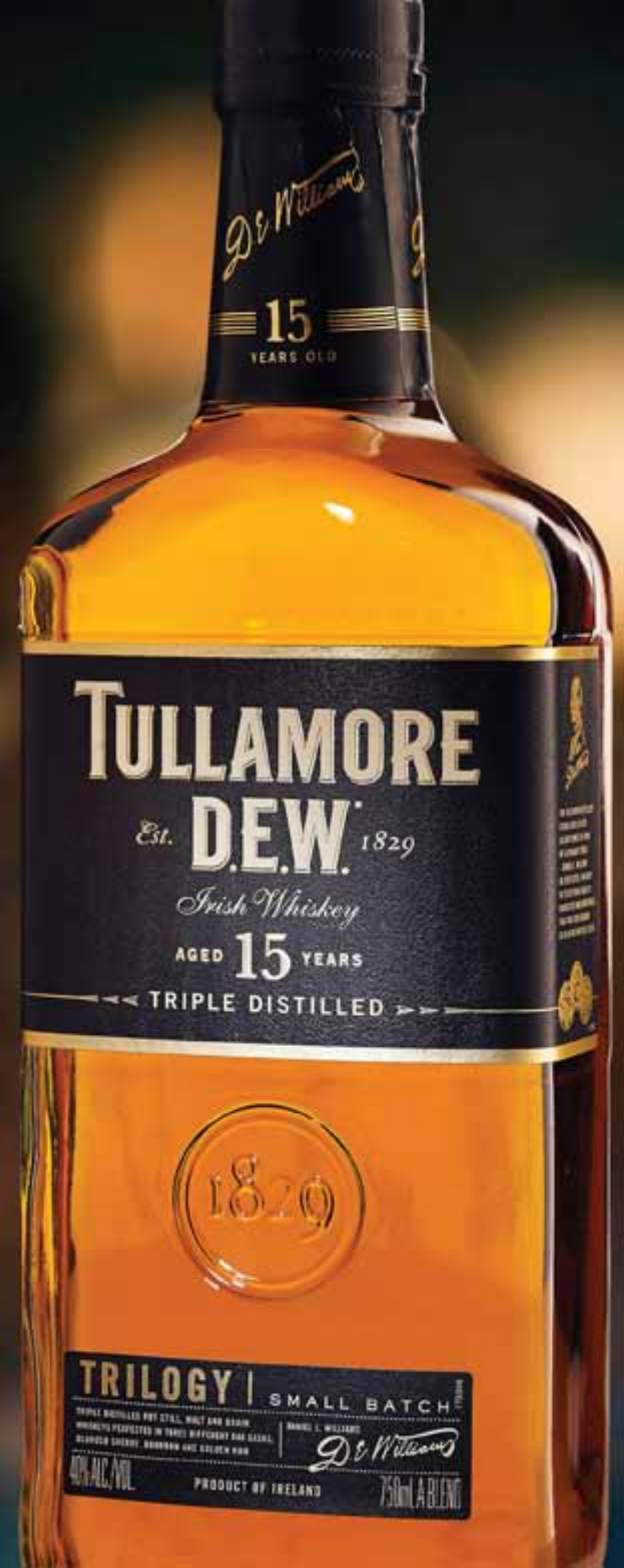


From
 Ireland,
 Something
 Sweet

Tullamore D.E.W. Trilogy, Aged 15 Years

This long-standing Irish whiskey brand plans to unveil several old age-statement whiskeys this year, leading off with Trilogy, a spirit aged first in bourbon barrels, then in sherry casks, and finished for three months in Trinidad-sourced rum casks. "Irish whiskey tends to be fresh and fruity, and in the case of Tullamore D.E.W. with added spice," says John Quinn, the company's global brand ambassador. "All these characteristics lend themselves to rum influences. Finishing the liquids in casks that previously held rum helps awaken the liquid, adding rich, exotic notes, and it was unbelievable how quickly the rum influence became apparent."

Because of this process, Trilogy offers slightly deeper aromas and flavors than Tullamore D.E.W.'s other expressions. Dark sugar and molasses notes are prevalent – no doubt a product of the rum-cask finish – with hints of hearty dried fruits, primarily dates and raisins. \$80/750 mL; tullamoredew.com



P.J. HINKLE/TULLAMORE; DRISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES; (BACKGROUND)

From the U.S., a Spicy Pour

WhistlePig 15 Year Straight Rye Whiskey

WhistlePig converted many bourbon drinkers in 2010 with its first expression, a 10-year rye aged in new American oak casks. Since then, the distillery has released a cask-strength expression (The Boss Hog) and a blend of rye whiskeys finished in a combination of port, sauternes, and Madeira casks (12 Year Old World). But this latest release, finished in casks made from oak trees grown on the company's Vermont estate, may be its finest and most complex expression to date.

While the distillery's 10-year rye offers sweet vanilla, butterscotch, and caramel flavors with a spicy, black-pepper finish, this 15-year release delivers more exotic and herbaceous notes. You'll detect hints of ginger, garlic, and rosemary, though they're balanced with some caramel notes. As with many rye whiskeys, it boasts a spicy finish. As for that complexity of flavor, company founder and chief steward Raj Peter Bhakta credits the wood and compares the robust flavors it imparts to the bold flavors in wine produced from grapes grown in adverse conditions.

"Vermont oaks grow a lot slower than the trees in the Ozarks, where oak grows most bountifully," Bhakta says. "Consequently, they're denser and much more flavorful. It's all about the richness of the flavor that the Vermont oak imparts; it's a pretty extraordinary difference." \$200/750 mL; whistlepigwhiskey.com



For Reference Only
Not for
Reproduction,
Distribution,
or Posting
Thank you!

A Smooth
Taste
From Japan

YAMAZAKI SHERRY CASK 2016 EDITION

Some Japanese single malt whiskeys are revered as much as their Scottish counterparts. Yamazaki, one of the most heralded Japanese distilleries, is also the country's first. It was started in 1923 by Suntory's founder, Shinjiro Torii, though it was another 60 years before the distillery released its first single malt. It now produces 12-, 18-, and 25-Year expressions annually. The 25-Year whiskey, produced in limited quantities and priced at \$1,600 a bottle, is matured exclusively in Spanish sherry casks, requiring deftness and precision since the flavors of the fortified wine can easily overpower the nuances of the malt-based spirit.

Occasionally, Yamazaki produces a special sherry cask edition, made from a blend of whiskeys of various ages all matured in sherry casks — this new release being one, and it's the first one available in the United States. "It's more delicate and nuanced," says Mike Miyamoto, Suntory's global ambassador, comparing the special release to the Yamazaki 25 Year. "The older a sherry-cask whiskey gets, the more acidity comes out, and that means the complexity builds up. There's an acidity [to the Sherry Cask 2016], but it's a delicate acidity."

Sherry's underlying sweetness also comes through, and given this release blends various aged whiskeys, the end result is a complex and intriguing spirit that's undeniably smooth. \$300/750 mL; whisky.suntory.com

