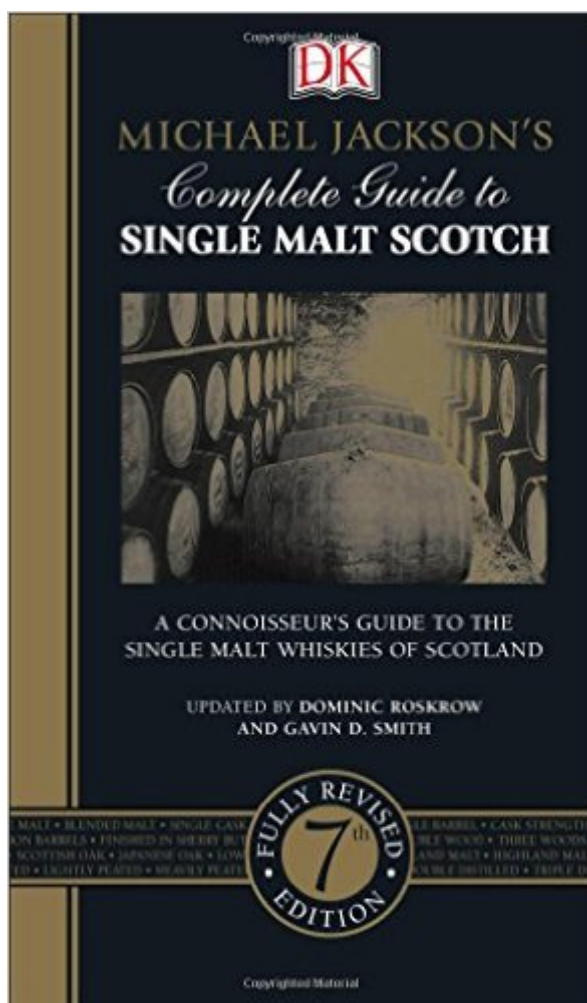


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Michael Jackson's Complete Guide To Single Malt Scotch, 7th Edition



Synopsis

The world's best-selling book on malt whisky, now updated to include all the latest significant bottlings. This seventh edition of Michael Jackson's Complete Guide to Single Malt Scotch continues to provide whisky enthusiasts with all the information, advice, and guidance they need to improve their knowledge and appreciation of single malt whisky. Fully updated with all the latest significant bottlings, Michael Jackson's Complete Guide to Single Malt Scotch includes an unrivaled A-Z of single malts with background information on the distilleries and tasting notes for more than 1,000 bottlings. It even provides each whisky with an overall score. Michael Jackson, regarded as the world's foremost authority on whisky until his death in 2007, originally authored this title. His legacy lives on in the 2015 edition edited by world-leading whisky consultants Dominic Roskrow and Gavin D. Smith. By giving practical advice on buying and collecting malts and interpreting whisky labels, and providing hundreds of color images, Michael Jackson's Complete Guide to Single Malt Scotch can turn any whisky novice into an informed veteran.

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Customer Reviews

(This is a review of the latest 6th Edition, published in 2010) Michael Jackson died in 2007 and his book had not been updated since 2004. The malt whisky industry has changed greatly since then. The goal of these three editors was to update Michael's classic book while trying to do it as he would have himself. The layout of the book is in alphabetical order by distillery. There is a short half-page introduction to each distillery, a sentence on the distillery's house style, followed by very short reviews and ratings of several whiskies from the distillery. Many reviews also include a picture

of the bottle label. The beginning of the book starts with a general introduction to whisky, left mostly untouched from how Michael wrote it. The editors say that their goal was to keep as many of Michael's original reviews as possible, while updating them with reviews of new whiskies and removing outdated whiskies. The introduction says that two-thirds of the reviews are new, but I also found many of Michael's iconic tasting notes still in the book. The authors have intentionally changed very little in The Macallan section due to Michael's special affection for The Macallan, although they have added reviews of the Fine Oak series. When it came to reviewing the whiskies, the editors say that they tried to stay true to Michael's style. This means that the reviews are terse, ratings are rarely above 85, and also that the editors tried to put aside their own opinions of the whiskies and tried to rate them as Michael would have (based on their reading of his past reviews). They spent 18 months updating the book, each working on reviewing separate distilleries without consulting each other on the reviews.

The discovery by Americans of single-malt whisky back in the 80's and 90's was one of the most interesting stories in the food and beverage market ever. This event by itself probably prevented a number of distilleries from closing, and several, such as the great Ardbeg, which had been moth-balled, were perhaps reopened as a result. Some great but lesser known malts, like Edradour, found new appreciation for their tiny output abroad. Edradour, for example, produces less in a year than some distilleries do in a week, like Tomatin (the Edradour distillery only has 3 employees and only makes 2 barrels a week). Others, such as the Islays like Lagavulin, Laphroaig, and Bowmore, and even the oddly dual-natured Caol Isla, with its both sweetish and phenolic character, were already known in Scotland but garnered new fans here in America. As in Scotland, the Islays are not to everybody's taste, but I know people here who will hardly touch a drop of anything else--an amazing testament to the enthusiasm that has developed in America even for the stronger and more exotic malts. And probably no book did more to make that happen than Jackson's great little books on single-malt scotch. On a personal note, sometimes even the Scots themselves failed to appreciate how far American sensibilities had come with respect to single malts. I had the experience 20 years ago, when still a young man, of sitting in a bar at the south end of Loch Lommond, and having a well-meaning bartender refuse to serve me some Laphroaig. He insisted on giving me Royal Brackla from an old bottle, itself a great malt.

As a novice Scotch drinker, I often found myself in the local liquor store standing in front of the whisky displays feeling a little like Sir Edmund Hillary before Everest- wondering just where to start.

Scotch, like wine or music, is an incredibly personal thing, and there are numerous brands to appeal to a wide array of palates. By my ignorance hasn't cost me, because I tend to buy what I already know I like rather than risk forty or fifty dollars on a malt that I won't like. So, rather than risk money on a malt that will just sit on the shelf, I tend to only buy various Glenmorragie, Glenfiddich, etc. In restaurants I always seem to be stuck with the 12 year old Glenlivet, since liquor barons Seagrams seems to have control of every restaurant's alcohol supply. And while on a day trip to Stillwater, Minnesota we ate a restaurant that had an impressive list of Scotches, (I consider any more than 3 or 4 types impressive), and I tried a 15 year old Glenkeith that amazed me. It finally dawned on me that after nearly a year of conservative tasting, i.e. not going beyond what I have listed above, that perhaps I need an expert opinion. Michael Jackson's "Complete Guide to Single Malt Scotches" seems to fit the bill nicely. Inside are personal reviews of over 800 Scotches from Scotland and Ireland, plus a brief history of Scotch is discussed. To my chagrin, Jackson seems to have taste for peatier Islay malts like Laphroaig and Talisker, malts that I have yet to mature enough to enjoy. He does give high marks to what I already drink, with the Glenmorangies scoring in the 80's on a scale of 100. The Scotches he seems to most enjoy are those bottled by the MacCallan in the Speyside region. And again the MacCallan's seem to have an abundance of peat. Overall, though, the book is marvelous.

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