

W.G. of Chicago

February 2012 Whiskey Gentlemen Newsletter

An Evening with Glenmorangie

The Gents meet at Binny's to sample seven Scotches



Sampled Spirits

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|  Original 10 Year |  Artein |
|  La Santa |  18 Year |
|  Quinta Ruban |  Signet |
|  Nectar d'Or | |

"I could take a bath in it if I wanted to," Dr. Bill Lumsden gleefully boasted to the audience. Who could blame him if he did? Lumsden is the head of distilling and whiskey creation for Glenmorangie and our speaker for the evening. A 17-year veteran at Glenmorangie, the scientist passionately shared the distillery's products and history, often with a sprinkling of irreverent humor. As a man who believes in banning caramel coloring as an additive, Lumsden is well-suited to represent the distillery, which purchased the lands surrounding their Tarlogie Spring water source to protect its purity. The dedication and craftsmanship is obvious in the variety and quality of Glenmorangie's whiskeys.

The Location – The Gents met at Binny's at 1720 N. Marcy in Chicago and (after some browsing in the appropriate store aisles) headed upstairs to the events and seminar room. The room was handsomely arranged with red curtain drawn for privacy from the retail area. Tables were situated in a V shape cradling the presentation area, and each place was set with glasses of Glenmorangie varieties in preparation for the tasting.

A small table with chocolates and bread was positioned the back of the room. The temptation to begin nosing the glasses was almost overwhelming, but the gentlemen decided to behave as such while waiting for the event to start.

Special pricing was available for the seven varieties, ranging from \$35 for the Original to \$180 for Signet. The event itself was well worth the price (just \$10), and we look forward to attending a similar event at Binny's.

The Lesson – The Glenmorangie distillery was established in 1843 as a brewery and lemonade factory, and later became a distillery. By law, Scotch must be made in Scotland and must contain only three ingredients: malt barley, yeast and water. The exception is caramel color, an additive used only in a couple of Glenmorangie's whiskeys – which is two too many in Lumsden opinion). The whiskey is

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twice distilled in the tallest copper stills in Scotland (16 feet, 10.25 inches), then aged three years.

Lumsden is an innovator in the art of distillation and selection of wood for aging. He selects Missouri's white oak trees for their barrels, which are used a maximum of twice at Glenmorangie before being disposed of or sold. (Some distillers use barrels seven or eight times on average, and others even more, thus the need for caramel coloring.) He prefers trees with 12 to 60 growth rings per inch, a slow-growth tight grain that is open and porous, yielding a lot of flavor. The barrels are then used for aging

“ This [low peat flavor] makes Glenmorangie's Scotch more approachable to those unaccustomed to the smokiness in other Scotches. ”

bourbon for four years in America before being shipped to the distillery. As for flavor, Lumsden attributes a fruity signature to the limestone, rare to the area, and other minerals in the water. Glenmorangie uses Scottish barley out of preference, but the real distinguishing characteristic of the whiskey is the very lightly peated nature, having only two to five parts per million (ppm) of peat flavor, versus 10 to 15 ppm typical in other Scotches. This quality makes Glenmorangie's Scotch more approachable to those unaccustomed to the smokiness in other Scotches.



The Libations – The variety of flavors in the seven samples we tasted was remarkable, from light, citrusy notes to the deep tones of chocolate and coffee. The Gents' notes follow:

Original 10 Year - creamy pear or melon, floral

Mike: Pleasing aroma before adding water. Really enjoyed the finish, even after second sampling. A bit of a harsh start, too bitter; unimpressed by peak.

Joe: An excellent introductory whiskey for those unfamiliar with Scotches for its subtle peat flavor and hints of fruit. Bought bottle as a gift.

Rick: Second choice. Being a fan of the lighter colored whiskeys, I liked this straw-colored Scotch. Very easy to drink. Light vanilla flavors that would go good after dinner or enjoyed combined with light cheeses, or a light cigar.

La Santa - Aged an extra 2 years beyond the Original in a sherry cask.

Mike: Very woody smell without water. Also smelled soapy, like a hair salon, which water intensified. The start (water added) was a bit spicier than the Original. Really good finish; faster than the Original: smoother. Pass.

Joe: Much more powerful aroma due to sherry cask aging. More intense flavor than Original. Did not notice any soapy aromas.

Quinta Ruban - Aged an extra 2 years beyond the Original in ruby port cask from Italy, giving it a red hue.

Mike: Best on the nose so far. Fruity, wine-smelling. Wow. I like this one and would buy it. With water, it really has a great finish.

Joe: Beautiful rosé color Intense pepper flavor

Rick: Third choice. Middle of the road, exactly between “The Original” and the “18 Year.” I enjoyed that this one was matured in wine casks. I can really pick up the wine flavor from the barrels. The dark fruits come to the surface very easily. Not smoky. I would enjoy this one much the same way I would enjoy a good bottle of wine, with grapes or other fruits or light cheeses.

Nectar d'Or - Vanilla crème, spicy citrus flavor

Mike: Great smell both with and without water. Nice beginning, and peak, but a bit of bitter finish. Nice, but not memorable. Easy drinking.

Artein - Gaelic for “stone”. Full body, slightly floral, mint taste. Smooth, peppery, cappuccino. Tannin gives leathery notes.

Mike: Light nose. Real mellow. Chocolate maybe. With water it loses the mellowness but not the chocolate. Wow - Super spicy. Fast peak, great finish. It's like eating a peppercorn steak. I could enjoy drinking this regularly.

18 Year – [The audience had loosened up by this point in the tasting]

Mike: Without water, nice mellow sweet smell. Very pleasant. Taste is oily, honey, lemon. Yeah, it's good. I like it :)

Joe: Floral taste, lemony. Sipping whiskey. Rich full flavor, smooth finish.

Rick: First choice of the seven. Simply very well-balanced, great body, easy drinking and very aromatic. This would be a pleasure to enjoy neat sitting in a porch next to a lone lake, or in a cellar, somewhere in the mountains. Mostly because of its strong aromas, I liked this one more than the “Signet.”

Signet:

Mike: High roast, chocolate, malt barley. This smells not at all like Scotch. Super sweet. This warmed me up. Baking spices. Dark chocolate bars.

WANT!!!

Joe: Roasted barley, coffee bean. Incredible, impressive aroma. Tiramisu.

Flavors reminiscent of liqueur, but maintains mouth-feel and flavor of Scotch