

W.G. of Chicago

April 2012 Whiskey Gentlemen Newsletter



Discovering the “Duke of Perth” Scottish pub

The Gents drop in and check out the Duke’s pub for its well-regarded selection of single malt Scotches and a worldly selection of whiskeys and beers

The Duke of Perth – walk into the pub, the atmosphere welcomes. Sit at the bar, the selection beckons. Order a Scotch, the bartender delivers. “Dukeophiles” familiar with the Duke’s website will know that the Duke of Perth was chosen by [whiskymag.com](#) as a “Great Whisky Bar of the World” a few years back.

Motivated by the accolade and the very respectable complement of whisky choices, the Gents had ample reason to investigate personally at 2913 N. Clark in Chicago.

Selected Spirits

-  Oban 14 (Highland)
-  Glenkinchie 12 (Lowland)
-  Clynelish 10 (Highland)
-  Caol Ila 12 (Islay)
-  Talisker 10 (Skye)
-  Laphroig 10 (Islay)

The Gents filed into the pub and, in lieu of a table toward the back, each grabbed a barstool at the Duke’s bar. The ambient lighting was dim and the tones warm and rustic – the perfect kind of place to settle in for a drink and some comfort food. The general manager was working the bar and would be handling the drink orders.

After a careful survey of the menu, Rick and I determined that a whisky flight was the perfect order.

Mike took a different tack and opted for a pour of Oban, and between every few swirls of the glass, sniffs or sips, he remarked approvingly and with fascination at the drink in his hand. Witnessing this, Rick and I spent mere moments deciding whether to follow our flights with a snifter of our own.

There would be little debate about it: Mike and I agreed that the Oban was the favorite of the outing, but more notably, Rick concluded the same!

Rick had ordered the “For Peat’s Sake” flight, a trio of single malts chosen for their smokiness. Oban, however is not peaty and to our surprise it impressed Rick, a big fan of smoky Scotches.

So what is it about Oban? This single malt (pronounced like “open” with a “b”) first presents an intriguing aroma. Rick likened it to a bourbon-meets-Scotch sort of scent. The sweetness is offset by a subdued smokiness, ranging from only a hint to a max of 5 out of 10

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to Mike's nose. Then, Oban proceeds past the nose to the palate to deliver a sweet caramel flavor, suggestive of bourbon or cognac, tempered by the peatiness of a high quality single malt scotch. Each swallow is a pleasure to drink for its smoothness and presentation. Oban is definitely worth adding to a personal collection for its approachability, unique aromatic bouquet, and complex flavors.

The flights offered at this establishment were listed on the menu as six triads of single malts, each group bestowed with witty names like "The Kilt Warmer" and "Duke's Malt Goggles." Certain names hinted at the Scotches' attributes, as in "My Sherry Amour."

Ordering a whisky flight capitalizes on a convenient opportunity to sample and compare several whiskies. As such, flights are a menu-offering that the Gents tend to take advantage of wherever available (and sometimes by request when they are not). I chose "The Roving Drover," which comprised Glenkinchie, Clynelish, and Caol Ila. The Glenkinchie presented a citrusy aroma and a light mouthfeel, while the Clynelish was smoky and spicy all around. The

Caol Ila was heavily peated and was also part of Rick's "For Peat's Sake" flight. Caol Ila had an oily character that went down smooth with a long, warm finish.

The second glass in Rick's flight contained Talisker. He observed a robust peatiness and an oily trait that he said leaned toward being syrupy. Talisker had a peppery, spicy finish.

The last glass, Laphroaig, was every bit as smoky as Rick remembered from our first event back in [October 2011](#) at Fountainhead. "It's [still] like sucking on a piece of charcoal."

The opening and closing selections that Mike ordered were, respectively, the Balvenie 14 Year Caribbean Cask Single Malt Balvenie and, in keeping with the Scottish trend, the Belhaven Scottish Ale on draught.

The Balvenie had a sweet smell that, interestingly, did not reflect in the tasting. A quick spiciness on the front end revealed notes reminiscent of aging in a rum cask.

The Belhaven ale was an easy-drinking IPA with a boldness that gave the ale rich character, but Mike felt it was not overpowering or detract from its drinkability.

Rick was unable to detect the medicinal scent claimed by the flight description sheet, but I could. To me, only the slightest trace of a sterile dentist office came across, and I was amused such a tang would ever appear in Scotch. The sheet also listed seaweed as a scent, but Rick and I felt no loss for being unable to pick up any hint of it in the glass.

As a final indulgence, we took the bartender's recommendation to try the basket of hot wings, a decision that marked another win for the very friendly staff at the Duke of Perth!



The Roving Drover