

# It's a New Era for Irish Whiskey

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By Kara Newman



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Until very recently, Irish whiskey was the most traditional of the whiskey categories. It wasn't known for flashy celebrity promos, and special cask finishes were only rarely seen. Irish whiskey was gentle and staid, known for its approachable flavor profile and affordable pricing.

However, times have changed. Although it still speaks of the pastoral countryside, with layers of fresh orchard fruit, grass and floral notes, the new Irish whiskey has attitude and edge.

Following in the footsteps of Scotch and American whiskey, a growing number of new bottlings have been finished in barrels that previously held other liquids, feeding a consumer market hungry for new flavors. Examples include fortified wines like Port

(Ballyhoo) and oloroso Sherry (Powers Three Swallow, The Sexton); beer (Glendalough's stout-finished single malt and Jameson's IPA-finished Caskmates bottling); and spirits like Cognac (Lambay).

Producers are also experimenting with casks made from various woods—yielding some particularly interesting effects. For example, Glendalough gave its 13-year-old single malt a spin in mizunara oak puncheons from Japan, lending a markedly silky texture to the finished Irish whiskey, along with intriguing hints of plum skin and bitter chocolate. Meanwhile, Bushmills rolled out a limited edition Distillery Exclusive bottling finished in acacia—a wood typically used as cooperage for white wines.

While production techniques and marketing patter likely will continue to evolve, at least one thing hasn't changed: Irish whiskey still offers plenty of great bottlings worth seeking out.

How Wine Affects Your Whiskey

**Bushmills Distillery Exclusive Single Malt Irish Whiskey**

**(Ireland; Proximo Spirits, Jersey City, NJ); \$85, 96 points.** This

big, bold whiskey will appeal to those who usually gravitate toward Scotch. It layers tones of wood, smoke and cinnamon spice. A cube of ice tames the alcohol heat and unfurls hints of orange and lemon peel. Matured in charred Bourbon barrels and toasted Sherry casks, then finished in acacia wood. *abv: 47%*



**Glendalough Double Barrel Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Mark Anthony Crafted Spirits,**

**Chicago, IL); \$33, 95 points.** This honey-hued whiskey is aged in Bourbon barrels, then finished in oloroso Sherry casks. The overall effect is bold and mouthwatering, and yields flavors of almond, vanilla and pecan accented by clove and black pepper. ***Best Buy.*** *abv: 42%*

**The Quiet Man Traditional Irish Whiskey Blend (Ireland; Luxco, St Louis, MO); \$33,**

**95 points.** Look for a burnished gold hue and mild scent that hints at vanilla. The silky palate opens with fresh fruit sprinkled with cinnamon, fading into an exceedingly long, rich vanilla finish. Finished in ex-Bourbon casks. ***Best Buy.*** *abv: 40%*

**Powers Three Swallow Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Pernod Ricard, New**

**York, NY); \$50, 94 points.** This robust, tawny whiskey offers almond and fresh pear aromas. The rich, buttery palate opens with baked pear, vanilla, raisin and toasty brioche, sliding into a clove-accented finish with just hint of smoke on the exhale. Matured in ex-Bourbon casks, married with a smaller amount of whiskey matured in oloroso Sherry casks. *abv: 43.2%*

**Tipperary Watershed Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Impex, San Francisco, CA);**

**\$65, 94 points.** Bright and bracing, this straw-tinted whiskey is light on its feet. Green apple slices and honeysuckle perfume the nose, while the palate reflects green apple

tartness, brisk lemony acidity, white flowers and ginger. A wisp of smoke marks the elegant fade. *abv: 47%*

**Lambay Whiskey Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; CIL US Wines & Spirits, Ft. Lauderdale, FL); \$70, 93 points.** This Irish whiskey is finished in Cognac casks, which are placed on Lambay Island off the coast of Dublin. While the result doesn't exactly sing of the salty sea, it's a pleasing sipper nonetheless, with a dark honey hue, bold, fruity aroma and drying palate mixing cedar with big, red apple bite and a long, robust vanilla-and-clove exit. *abv: 40%*

**Glendalough 13 Year Old Single Malt Mizunara Finish Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Mark Anthony Crafted Spirits, Chicago, IL); \$115, 93 points.** Soulful and silky, this is aged for 13 years in ex-Bourbon barrels, then a shorter turn in mizunara oak puncheons. It's markedly soft on the palate, with most of the flavor on the drying finish: an intriguing mix of plum skin, unsweetened chocolate, honey and a touch of clove. *abv: 46%*

**Ballyhoo Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Millstone Spirits Group, Philadelphia, PA); \$30, 92 points.** This easy-drinking whiskey has a straw hue, mild vanilla aroma and feather-light feel on the palate. Smooth layers of vanilla and lemon cream are braced by black pepper and the faintest whiff of smoke. Finished in Port casks. *abv: 43%*

**Jameson Black Barrel Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Pernod Ricard, New York, NY); \$37. 92 points.** The former Bourbon barrels used to mature this whiskey were "charred and double charred," the producer says, to coax more from the barrel wood. Look for an almost piña colada-like effect: coconut and tropical fruit aromas, and a rich, honey-soaked palate that shows caramelized pineapple and dried apricot. **Best Buy.** *abv: 40%*

**The Sexton Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Proximo Spirits, Jersey City, NJ); \$28, 90 points.** Within the squat, hexagonal-shaped bottle, this tawny whiskey is scented boldly with baked pear, vanilla and honey. The smooth, oak-forward palate suggests a Bourbon-like profile, finishing long with lots of honey, plus echoes of nutmeg, clove and lemon peel. Finished in oloroso Sherry casks. **Best Buy.** *abv: 40%*

**Spade & Bushel 10 Year Old Cask Strength Single Malt Irish Whiskey (Ireland; Millstone Spirits, Philadelphia, PA); \$43, 90 points.** This whiskey offers a mild, fresh apple scent. Initial sweetness leads the palate into citrusy tartness and a wallop of heat on the exit. Dosing this dram with water takes the edge off the alcohol heat and brings out hints of smoke and lemon zest. *abv: 57.5%*

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## About the Author

Kara Newman

[@karanewman](#)

Spirits Editor

