



Benromach: A SPEYSIDE CORNERSTONE

The Urquhart family has been synonymous with whisky from the Speyside region of Scotland since 1895—the year John Urquhart took a job at Gordon & MacPhail, a newly established grocery in Elgin. Thanks to his skill at blending and aging the local whiskies the company stocked, he soon assumed a leading role at the company.

Fast-forward a century: Gordon & MacPhail was now internationally renowned as a Scotch bottler and wholesaler. But while the third generation of Urquharts upheld their reputation by working with 100 different distilleries to secure the finest spirits for maturation, they also dreamed of opening their own distillery. As Richard Urquhart, Gordon & MacPhail's fourth-generation Head of Sales (Americas), explains, "By actually making whisky ourselves, we could safeguard the future of our business." That dream came true in 1993, when they purchased the then-defunct Benromach distillery; five years later, they reopened it on its centennial.

Today, Benromach is the repository of the Urquharts' 125-year his-

tory in the whisky business, with a three-part portfolio that reflects their expertise. One is the experimental Contrasts range: "Because we are small and family-owned," says Urquhart, they have the freedom to "do these small batches and try anything." Another is the Heritage range, built on the stocks that remain from the original distillery. That includes the much-buzzed-about **50 Years Old**, showcasing "our last ever Benromach cask from the 1960s," according to Urquhart, for a "dark-red, treacly whisky with an oiliness . . . yet elegance; everything is in perfect balance." Clocking in at \$12,000 per, a full 50 of just 125 bottles released were exported to the U.S.—a stat that, he adds, "shows the importance of the market."

Which brings us to the core range: Classic. "That's going to be the real focus for us in terms of brand building in the U.S., which is hopefully going to be our biggest market," Urquhart says. "It is really the DNA of the distillery, handcrafting whisky the way it would have tasted in Speyside 50, 60, 70 years ago—elegant and fruity with a touch of smoke." And its crown

jewel is the multi-award-winning **15 Years Old**: As "one of the few distilleries that always uses first-fill casks to get the right balance of whiskies," Benromach matures the Scotch in Sherry barrels, which "give it a really rich, intense flavor" marked by "cinnamon spice, dried fruit, a subtle smokiness. . . . It's a full-bodied and really well-rounded whisky." Adds Urquhart, "We're very proud of it."



Benromach 15 Years Old Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky

Offering up a bouquet of peat and brown rice, peppermint, and candied almonds, this spirit is indisputably supple and seductive, with notes of caramel-covered pears, cigar leaf, charred coconut, and chocolate egg cream. The vivacious aftertaste offers an echo of delicate

peatiness and a bundle of heather. **96** —M.M.