

Malt Maniacs E-pistle #2013-01 ***By Jacob Krodel***

This article is brought to you by 'Malt Maniacs'; an international collective of more than two dozen fiercely independent malt whisky aficionados. Since 1997 we have been enjoying and discussing the pleasures of single malt whisky with like-minded whisky lovers from all over the world. In 2010 our community had members from 15 countries; The United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, The U.S.A., Canada, India, Taiwan, Australia and South Africa. You can find more details on: www.maltmaniacs.org.



Whisky Clubs: Join One or Start One!

Why A Whisky Club

There are few things in life that compare to late night conversation over a good dram. The problem is that, unless you live in Scotland, or a large city, you probably do not happen to know enough like-minded people for that to happen often. The solution for many of us is joining a whisky club. A good whisky appreciation club allows its members to try a wider variety of spirits of a higher price than they could have possibly afforded on their own. It also facilitates the opportunity to meet others with a passion for Aqua Vitae and share our ideas and impressions. In addition, clubs can host fun events like blind tastings, charity auctions, public speakers and even day trips. For a real malt-head, there is nothing quite like a whisky club, as long as there happens to be one in your neck of the woods.



My first Experience



I first had the privilege of joining such a club at my last duty station in Ansbach, Germany. A small specialty whisky shop called, "Celtic Whisky Dreams" hosted a group named, the "Celtic Whisky Circle." The group met in the back hall of a great little Italian Restaurant in the city. The presenter, a man named Peter, would give a short talk on the distillery history and bottle particulars of each expression we tasted. We would participate in the guided nosing and tasting of 4-5 drams in this way while enjoying our dinner, and the evening would culminate with an exciting auction of what remained in the bottles we

had tried that evening. The evenings were admirably planned and enjoyably executed, with a relaxed atmosphere that allowed for plenty of conversation. On top of all that, the cost was relatively low when you consider the quality of bottlings that were presented. In a word: fantastic!

No Oasis in the Desert

When I was relocated to Korea, I immediately went about searching for a whisky society in my local area. It was difficult for me to explore Korean opportunities, due to the language barrier, but there was a scotch and cigar club that met once a month at a nearby Air Force base. Unfortunately, further checking revealed that this was little more than a place to socialize with a tumbler of Famous Grouse and a cigar. Nothing wrong with that mind you, but it wasn't what I was looking for. Peter's club in Germany had spoiled me for that kind of whisky tasting. There was only one choice left for a guy who wanted to be a part of a whisky tasting club in Korea, he would have to start his own. So, that is precisely what I did.

My Solution

I decided right away that I would pattern the club after the format I had experienced, and so enjoyed, in Germany. If it isn't broken, don't fix it. I also used some great advice in one of Ralfy Mitchell's videos on starting a whisky club. Next, I needed to see if there would be anyone willing to join me in forming the club. I began by establishing a facebook group and naming it after the military installation I worked at: the Humphreys Whisky Club. Then I



went about posting messages in the local facebook groups, military spouses support groups etc. asking if anyone would be interested in helping start such a club. To my absolute delight, I got plenty of responses, not only from service members, but also from spouses and family members. My confidence thus raised, I donated a small seed-fund, ordered some bottles and set a date for our first meeting, and the rest is history.

The Ripple Effect

Not only was the club successful beyond my wildest imaginings (a result I attribute far more to the inherent quality of our favorite liquid than I do my own efforts) but it inspired others to try to start clubs of their own. One of our former members, who was relocated to Hawaii has formed the MCBH (Marine Corps Base Hawaii) Whisky club for folks who live and work in and around the Base in Hawaii. Another online contact used our model to establish the Dead Malt Society in the UK. These took bits of what we do here in the HWC and used them to create their own clubs, just like I did using what I saw in Germany.



Your Turn

So here's the moral of the story: you can do it too! I'm not saying it won't take a little work, but it is the most fun sort of work you can imagine, if you love sharing your passion for whisky as I do. And, what's more, you will find people willing to pitch in and lend a hand in the running of the club, as I did. Sure, there will be disagreements to resolve, schedules to plan, venues to find, glassware to buy and a whole myriad of other little problems to solve, but the end result will be rewarding in ways you can't begin to imagine. So, if there is a whisky club in your area, get out there and join in, and consider volunteering to help out. Maybe present a dram or two, or research and give a talk on a related subject. And, if there isn't a whisky club nearby, start one. You will be happy you did.

And now for a couple of bottlings I've had the pleasure of sampling through our club:

Johnny Walker Platinum (40%, OB, 750 ml, 2012)

Nose: subtle and green with notes of moss, must and something mineral.

Palate: understated dance of apples, pears, vanilla and a dusting of cinnamon. There is the suggestion of peat in the development.

Finish: medium, similar to the Gold Label, with light oak and pear.

Conclusion: nearly indistinguishable from the Gold Label

Dimple Pinch 12 yo (40%, OB, 750 ml, 2012, bottled for Korean market)

Nose: An unimposing resinous nose. Some descent sherry cask influence. dried fruit and oak.

Palate: Substantial splash of dark fruits, sawdust, leather and cola. Builds with wood and spices. Really descent.

Finish: Nice. dry and leathery.

Conclusion: a great go-to blend to keep in stock.



Jacob Krodel is the event coordinator for the Humphreys Whisky Club. He lives in Korea with his wife and daughter where he serves as a MEDEVAC helicopter pilot with the US Army. Jacob enjoys skiing, grilling out and making a spectacle of himself obsessing over Scotch Malt Whisky.