

# Glenrothes



Bottling according to vintage, like they do in the wine business, is a rare bird in the whisky world. The first distillery who introduced it, and one of just two that practice it, was Glenrothes and now they have decided to abandon the procedure.

Actually, Glenrothes single malt hasn't been available as an official bottling for that long. It was launched in 1987 as a 12 year old. Seven years later, the brand owners at the time, Berry Brothers, made the bold step to start releasing vintages. The only other distillery that followed suit a few years later was Balblair. Bottling by vintage definitely made Glenrothes stand out but in 2008, the owners decided to complement the range by releasing expressions without vintage. The first one was Robur Reserve and this was followed by other bottlings. In 2017, Edrington reclaimed ownership of the brand after seven years with Berry Brothers at the helm. One year later, the new owners declared that vintages are now a thing of the past and a new range with age statements was launched in September 2018.

Glenrothes distillery is equipped with a 5.5 ton stainless steel full lauter mash tun. Twelve washbacks made of Oregon pine are in one room, whilst an adjacent tun room houses eight stainless steel washbacks – all of them with a 58 hour fermentation time. The magnificent still house has five pairs of stills performing a very slow distillation. In 2018, the distillery will be doing 44 mashes per week, producing just over 4 million litres of alcohol.

All the old expressions in the core range have disappeared and the same goes for the vintages. They have been replaced by Soleo Collection which is based on whiskies that have matured 100% in sherry casks. The range consists of **10 year old**, **12 year old**, **Whisky Maker's Cut**, **18 year old** and **25 year old**. There is also a second range in the pipeline called **Aqua Collection** which will be sold on-line. The current duty free range will continue until September 2019; **Robur Reserve**, **Manse Reserve**, **Elder's Reserve**, **Minister's Reserve** and the **25 year old Ancestor's Reserve**.



12 years old



## [glen•roth•iss]

**Owner:** The Edrington Group  
(the brand is owned by Berry Bros)

**Region/district:** Speyside

**Founded:** 1878

**Status:** Active

**Capacity:** 5 600 000 litres

**Address:** Rothes, Morayshire AB38 7AA

**Website:** theglenrothes.com

**Tel:** 01340 872300

### History:

- 1878** James Stuart & Co. begins planning the new distillery with Robert Dick, William Grant and John Cruickshank as partners.
- 1879** Production starts in December.
- 1884** The distillery changes name to Glenrothes-Glenlivet.
- 1887** William Grant & Co. joins forces with Islay Distillery Co. and forms Highland Distillers Company.
- 1897** A fire ravages the distillery.
- 1903** An explosion causes substantial damage.
- 1963** Expansion from four to six stills.
- 1980** Expansion from six to eight stills.
- 1989** Expansion from eight to ten stills.
- 1999** Edrington and William Grant & Sons buy Highland Distillers.
- 2002** Four single casks from 1966/1967 are launched.
- 2005** A 30 year old is launched together with Select Reserve and Vintage 1985.
- 2008** 1978 Vintage and Robur Reserve are launched.
- 2009** The Glenrothes John Ramsay, Alba Reserve and Three Decades are released.
- 2010** Berry Brothers takes over the brand.
- 2011** Editor's Casks are released.
- 2013** 2001 Vintage and the Manse Brae range are released.
- 2014** Sherry Cask Reserve and 1969 Extraordinary Cask are released.
- 2015** Glenrothes Vintage Single Malt is released.
- 2016** Peated Cask Reserve and Ancestor's Reserve are released.
- 2017** The brand returns to Edrington and The Glenrothes Wine Merchant's Collection is introduced.
- 2018** The entire range is revamped and four new bottlings with age statements are introduced.

### Tasting notes Glenrothes Soleo 12 year old:

IR – Fresh and fruity on the nose with notes of strawberries/raspberries and a hint of cinnamon. The taste is fruity and spicy with notes of pear, cinnamon, nutmeg, lemon zest and, in the finish, brown sugar and a little ginger.

# Whisky

## the way I see it

**Your CV includes job titles such as bartender, writer, barista, whisky ambassador, spirits consultant etc. What is the common denominator here?**

I guess the link between everything I do is flavour. I'm fascinated by taste and flavour and every time my career has shifted in direction it has been thanks to my own curiosities that surround flavour — how we experience it, how we manipulate it, and how we communicate it.

There are such strong links between the industries I have been involved in from both a flavour and science perspective. The way a steak cooks on a barbecue has links to how a coffee bean roasts, how peat reek is produced and why direct-fired stills produce a different style of new make spirit. I've found that a broader understanding of mechanisms such as these has given me a finer appreciation of their effects on a finished product.

**You were the co-founder of Fluid Movement, an attempt to challenge the stuffiness of the on-trade business. One of the ways was the opening of Black Rock bar in London. What distinguishes that bar from others?**

The aim of Black Rock was to do away with the dogma that many people see when they think about whisky. We wanted to democratise whisky and create a space that was accepting of new initiates and aficionados alike. At virtually every turn during the design stages we challenged ourselves to think of the first principles of enjoying a glass of whisky, and then attempted to weave that in to the fabric of the bar.

We have filtered running water taps on every table; the mood and lighting of the bar are more akin to a hip-hop club than a 'traditional' whisky bar; and the whole room is dominated by a 5 ton English oak tree trunk that seats up to 20 people and houses two cocktail maturation channels that sit within the table itself.

But perhaps the most important thing about Black Rock is our commitment to demystifying whisky flavour. We believe that flamboyant language has its place in the category, but for many people, simplicity is the key to appreciation. All of our whiskies in Black Rock are organised by flavour, each sitting in one of six cabinets: smoke, fruit, fragrance, balance, sweet and spicy. Whiskies that sit higher in the cabinet are lighter in style and whiskies that sit lower in the cabinet are heavier. This allows guests to select a product based entirely on its flavour profile rather than by its country of origin or region, which in these days of increased variety and innovation, often means very little in the context of flavour.

**After that you launched Whisky Me. What is that and what made you do it?**

Whisky Me was less an idea than it was the next obvious step down this pathway of malt whisky demystification (I might yet claim the word 'dewhyskification/dewhiskyfication'!) by getting good quality product in to the hands of those who want to learn more but feel the category is too elitist (and too expensive) to gain a foot holding.

Convenience culture will become a growing trend in alcohol over the next few years. We are seeing it already in deliveries-to-your-



Tristan Stephenson  
Whisky entrepreneur and author

door and a growing range of RTD products, and I think there's opportunities for spirits too. Whisky Me delivers a PET pouch of single malt whisky through your letterbox every month for £7. We fill the pouches with whisky that we genuinely enjoy and the expressions tend to be 15yo and over and typically retail for £60 a bottle. The service is backed up by a 1-minute video of the distillery that we shoot on location with our drone. The branding is disruptive in so far as it doesn't conform to what you might consider 'traditional' malt whisky packaging and it is designed to be that way. We prefer to let the liquid do the talking, which is as it should be.

**The whisky industry is often talking about how to reach the Millennials or Generation Y or whatever you want to call them. In your opinion, what's the best way of getting the young generation interested in whisky?**

I think the best way to engage with any demographic is to speak their language without patronising. Millennials and Gen Y seek value and provenance in the products they buy. Provenance isn't a problem where whisky is concerned, but value is trickier. That's because value is contingent on balancing price with appreciation. If you don't appreciate a product you will never find value in it. That's why the education piece is so important to whisky.

**Your work is very much centred around finding new ways of enjoying spirits yet at the same time you devote a lot of space in your book An Odyssey of Malt, Bourbon and Rye Whiskies to history. How important is the history and tradition to Scotch whisky?**

I think that history is simply another way that we can appreciate the value of whisky. Understanding where a product has come from, how geography has conspired with economic and socio-political events to have shaped its flavour, who the people were that made it, and how a distillery has evolved over the years. These things add value to a product and hopefully give us a reason to pause and reflect when we're enjoying a glass.

**What does Scotch whisky mean to you?**

I consider myself an amateur historian and scientist. Whisky combines both of those passions perfectly and not only that, it tastes delicious too!

**The history of Scotch whisky has had its ups and downs over the years. How do you see the future for Scotch in the next 10-15 years?**

Besides that which I have already mentioned, I see Scotch continuing its return back in to mixed drinks. When I first began bartending, I rarely made scotch cocktails and by request of the guest I would typically only mix it with soda or ginger. We are now seeing a much welcomed return of the whisky highball, which has inspired bartenders to riff new and ingenious variants. Single malt whisky is no longer so sacrosanct that we can't mix it and as result there are some incredible malt whisky cocktails being turned out of the top bars. I think that scotch, with its Scottish provenance, depth and breadth of flavours, and rich history, has the potential rise up as the next big mixing spirit...in the UK at least.