THE GENTLEMAN'S RETREAT



How to taste whisky

A short guide from the house.



THE GLASS AND THE LOOK

The glass and the look.

Use a tulip-shaped nosing glass, which gathers the aroma at the rim. A heavy tumbler is for drinking, not tasting. Pour about 25 ml. Hold it to the light: colour tells you something of the cask, though some whisky is coloured with caramel. Tilt and swirl, then watch the legs run down the side.



NOSE AND PALATE

Nose and palate.

Keep your mouth slightly open and bring the glass to your nose slowly. Do not bury your nose in it; the alcohol will numb you. Note what you find: fruit, honey, smoke, spice, wood. Take a small sip and hold it on your tongue for a few seconds, moving it around the mouth before you swallow. The second sip always tells you more than the first.



WATER AND THE FINISH

Water and the finish.

Add water a few drops at a time with a pipette. It often opens up the aroma, especially in whiskies bottled at cask strength. The finish is what stays after you swallow: is it short or long, dry or sweet, smoky or clean?

If you are tasting several, go from light to heavy and keep the peated ones until last.

Keep a small notebook. In a year you will be glad you did.