



HOW TO NOSE AND TASTE HIGHLAND PARK



HIGHLAND

ESTD **PARK** 1798

SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

HOW TO NOSE AND TASTE HIGHLAND PARK by Gerry Tosh, Global Brand Ambassador

Highland Park is enjoyed all over the world, in all sorts of different ways by all sorts of different people. There is no right way or wrong way to drink it. However, in order to get the most out of this peerless spirit, to appreciate the intricate generosity of this classic whisky, certain familiar steps will assist.

The perfect environment to taste is an odourless, well-lit one; then all you need is a suitable glass (with a decent bowl and a narrowing neck) and some fresh, still water.

Pour a healthy measure into a clean tasting glass.

Hold the whisky up to the light. Look at the colour. Colour only gives us a hint and shapes our expectations. It tells us nothing definitive (unless it is murky and should be poured away). Dark whisky does not tell us the age for the simple reason that some whisky producers add spirit caramel – a perfectly legal practice – to make their whiskies darker, suggesting greater age and flavour. Highland Park is of course, completely natural in colour.

Dark whisky is not necessarily better than light whisky; it may have spent longer in Spanish oak Sherry casks. These casks deliver a dark fruity flavour, for example dates and raisins. Conversely, a light whisky may have spent longer in Bourbon barrels. These barrels deliver a light floral, citrus flavour to the whisky.

Hold the glass at 45 degrees and rotate it one full turn. Then hold the glass vertically up to the light. A ring will appear where the whisky has touched the glass.

Over time little beads will appear. Then legs (or tears) will fall down the glass. The greater the time it takes the legs to descend the higher the quality of the spirit. The smaller the beads when they initially appear, the higher the alcohol content.

Add the same amount of water as there is whisky in the glass. Whisky makers tend to nose and taste at 20% alc/vol. This releases all the flavour without the alcohol sensation, allowing you to nose and taste whisky more readily.

Next, make sure the whisky is still. Don't swirl the whisky – swirling is for wine. Wine is between 11% and 15% alcohol; agitation is required to encourage alcohol to evaporate up the glass carrying the flavour with it up your nose. Whisky is at least 40% alcohol so doesn't need any help in evaporating. If you swirl the glass initially all the flavour will go up the glass at the same time and, unless you are a professional, this will confuse your nose. By keeping it still, the flavours travel up the glass at different times making it easier for your nose to understand.

Nose the whisky three times before gently swirling to try to find flavours that are hiding in the glass.

Then taste by chewing the whisky for 4-5 seconds. This gives every taste bud in your mouth the chance to experience the whisky. Pay close attention to the after taste (the sensation in your mouth after you have swallowed). This helps to determine to complexity of the spirit. The sign of a quality whisky is a long, clean finish.