

# Top whisky trends for 2022



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## EDINBURGH IS SHINING WITH A BOOM IN URBAN DISTILLERIES

**Dram drinkers might have always flocked to Edinburgh but now more than ever, the whisky scene in Scotland's capital is making an impression.**

Much anticipation awaits the Port of Leith opening, one of the first single malt distilleries in the city in nearly 100 years. Also, part of the Scotch vanguard are the folks behind John Crabbie & Co, which recently launched a distillery among neighbouring cobbled alleyways.

In addition, the bars are innovating like never before. Whisky ambassador, Colin Dunn sees whisky-focussed bar flies making a b-line for Devil's Advocate. Then there's the legendary Bramble. Clamber down the cavernous stairs to the bar doors. Inside, the wise are opting for the signature barrel and bottle-aged Affinity, balancing Scotch with fortified wine. Remember to mention its honeyed sweetness balanced with a nudge of bitter and spice. For the whisky curious, there's even a Water of Life Society at Edinburgh uni.



## HERE'S TO HIGHBALLS

**Where the Japanese go in whisky, we all follow. Long fashionable in Japan, the humble highball is now recherche in bars from London to Glasgow.**

While organising the legendary London Cocktail Week, co-founders Hannah Sharman-Cox and Siobhan Payne of HANDS London note: "Whisky highballs are fast becoming a go-to order over a G&T. Possibly seen as more discerning - definitely less sugar." Why the trend? The character of the whisky remains unsullied and it's easy to make. The art, however, is in the detail. You'll find bartenders toiling over the precise ratio of soda to whisky, the best ice and the perfect soda for carbonation.







**MIXING FLAVOURS WITH WHISKY WILL SHAKE THINGS UP**

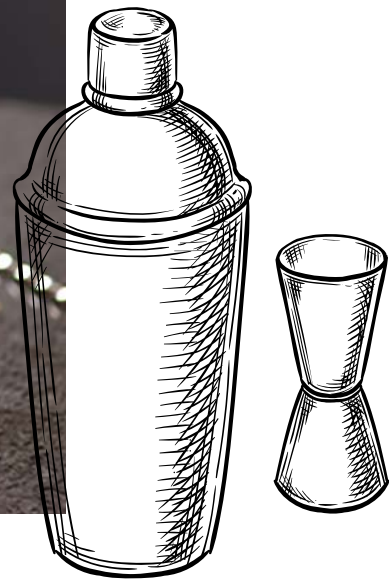
**Flavour trends have been prevalent in the spirits world for some time so it's no surprise it's whisky's turn "making a big impact and drawing new drinkers into the category.**

Few whisky companies want to be seen as the old man and pipe brands anymore – thank the Lord!" says drinks expert Sandrae Lawrence, Editor of *The Cocktail Lovers* magazine.

Not only are these drink attracting a new tribe to the whisky world, but women are calling the shots: 40 per cent of consumption is by the female market, compared to 20 per cent in conventional whisky trade (source: Kantar Alcovision Panel). Tipple du jour? Haig Club Mediterranean Orange Spirit Drink has boomed in sales since the pandemic. The preferred method of serving is mixing with lemonade over ice, with a slice of orange.



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**GIVE ME A WHISKY WITH YUZU, PLEASE**

**Check Shigefumi (Shige) Kabashima, whose New York bars have won accolades including "Best Bars in America.**

Kabashima, who was born and raised in Japan's Kyushu declares his favourite addition to Japanese whisky is yuzu, a Japanese citrus with lime and tangerine nuances with bourbon. Over the Atlantic, it is also prevailing. "When asking participating bars at London Cocktail week to choose their signature serves or the cocktails that best represented the bars, many chose Asian-inspired drinks with flavours such as yuzu," according to Hannah Sharman-Cox and Siobhan Payne. They cite shochu and sake alongside yuzu.



## CIN CIN TO EDIBLE DRINKING VESSELS AND WHISKY TOURISM

**Innovative ways to cut down on waste are already available, with Sharmian-Cox and Payne noting: "During London Cocktail Week we've seen a great focus on innovations like edible drinking vessels."**

Peer into a crystal ball and it's inevitable the doors of Johnnie Walker Princes Street in Edinburgh will also be notable. Sharman-Cox and Payne continue, "Johnnie Walker Princes Street is a glimpse into the future with regards to the emphasis that will be placed by brands on authentic, non-condescending, consumer education. The creativity that has gone into the creation of that space is something to behold while using forward-thinking technology throughout. Also worth noting are the sustainable practices within that space." The building opened with a Green Tourism Gold Standard certification, and employs a zero waste to landfill policy, with a custom-built dispensing system that removes the need for single-use glass bottles and an on-site glass buster (crusher).



## WE'RE BECOMING A NATION OF REFINED WHISKY DRINKERS

**Yes, the Great British drinker is seeking quality over quantity. Insiders call it "premiumisation," which basically means we're all upping our whisky game. Subsequently, the whisky world is offering premium products rather than cheap drinks to the mainstream.**

Evidence of this can be found at Milroy's Spitalfields, the latest outpost of the Milroy's of Soho, specialist group. Stretching across 4 floors, it offers tiers for tasting with the intro level being 5 luxury whiskies. CEO Simo Simpson has seen customers, not necessarily whisky experts, flocking to try a few top-quality drams. The Whisky Exchange is also responsible for the repositioning. Their third site at [London Bridge](#) offers barrel top tastings and an education space, all of which encourages drinkers to navigate interesting one-offs.



## GHOST DISTILLERIES IN SCOTLAND ARE BEING BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

**Using irreplaceable "ghost" whiskies from the Johnnie Walker reserves, now retired master blender Jim Beveridge has been whipping judicious drinkers into raptures with his blends from history.**

The Speyside distillery of Pittyvaich, which opened in 1974, closed its doors in 1993 after only 18 years in operation making its former whiskies a rarity. Developing the succession, Beveridge hand-selected another two "ghost" whiskies from the distilleries of Port Dundas and Carsebridge to help showcase the rare Pittyvaich expressions. The 43.8%-ABV Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ghost and Rare Pittyvaich is the fourth release in the series. Watch this space for further bewitching creations.







## WHO KNEW IT, THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH MICRODISTILLERY

**Whisky was produced in England across the 19th century until the last distillery shut its doors in Lea Valley and there was a century of nothing. Now, from 9-year-old Norfolk old rye, to Cotswolds to Cornwall, there are well over 30 spaces breathing new life into the scene.**

"If you look on Whisky Exchange, there are so many now," reports former Artesian mixologist and drinks legend, Anna Sebastian, of the zeitgeist. Far from trying to distill English versions of Scotch, these arrivistes are evolving flavour through novel experimentation, plucking techniques from Bourbon making in the US, to French cognac. Northwest London distillery Bimber, The Lakes Distillery in Cumbria and Oxford Artisan are just a few enterprises enlightened drinkers are keeping an eye on.



## 2022 - TIME TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION WITH INFLUENCERS INITIATING CHANGE

**Just two years ago, campaigners ourwhisky.com revealed only 18 per cent of posts on social, made by the world's 150 more influential whisky companies showed people of colour and only 36 per cent featured women.**

Be Inclusive Hospitality, [Mixing Class](#) and [Equal Measures UK](#) are initiating change to accelerate racial and gender equality. Equal Measures has announced a partnership with the Drinks Trust, where founder Deano Moncrieffe (co-owner of Hacha Bar) aims to help enrich possibilities for those from Black, Asian, and other minority ethnicities, as well as those from other marginalised groups.



## EQUALLY, 2022 IS THE TIME TO GET IN-THE-KNOW ON DR EMMA WALKER

**Meet Emma Walker, the first female master blender for Johnnie Walker Scotch whisky in over two centuries.**

The aptly named Walker is a legend in her field, already known for working on creations such as the Johnnie Walker Blue Label Ghost and Rare series. Now she's got the most coveted job in the industry, leading a 12-strong team of makers which will whip up new innovations, new flavours and textures globally, continuing the 200-year Johnnie Walker legacy. Her role started officially on New Year's Day this year. Stay tuned.





## MILLENNIAL DRINKERS WILL HAVE AN ECO WHISKY, THANKS

**Scotch whisky is an ambitious green pioneer, staggering halving its greenhouse gases in 15 years, according to the Scotch Whisky Association.<sup>1</sup> So, who's spearheading the charge?**

From developing regenerative agriculture pilot programmes in five key sourcing landscapes to a water sustainability commitment to cut the amount of water used to make Johnnie Walker whisky by 20%, share prices shot up after Diageo's recent Society 2030 announcement<sup>2</sup>, with a ten-year sustainability action plan and commitments to have net zero emissions across all ops by 2050. The recent "One for the Sea" initiative from the Talisker Single Malt Whisky x Parley three-year partnership is helping raise awareness of a global mission to help support the preservation and protections of sea forests. The aim is to protect 100 million square meters of marine ecosystems around the world by 2023. Another example of consumers buying into brands doing good is the world's first paper-based whisky bottles by Johnnie Walker, which they hope to introduce to consumers soon.



## WHISKY CLUBS FOR TWENTY SOMETHINGS

**It might be a 100 years since we've witnessed whisky clubs but they're officially back, albeit in a new cloak.**

Whisky clubs are opening fresh dialogue, says expert Colin Dunn. He predicts the, "rise in bars starting Whisky Clubs for their clientele," and "bringing in guest presenters/ambassadors for mutual appreciation." He concludes, "Whisky is a conversation and this method of connecting brands with customers will continue to grow." Subscription clubs are integral to this. Don't miss [Pouaandsip.com](https://pouaandsip.com) with its live online tastings, Milroy's [dramstodoor.co.uk](https://dramstodoor.co.uk) and [thedramteam.co.uk](https://thedramteam.co.uk), three players disrupting the old school image of whisky.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scotch-whisky.org.uk/newsroom/sustainability-numbers-add-up-for-green-whisky-strategy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.diageo.com/en/society-2030>



## WE'LL BE ENJOYING CARBON-NEUTRAL BULLEIT BOURBON

**Bulleit Bourbon is soon to come from an operation using 100% renewable electricity, zero fossil fuels for production and virtual metering technology, reflecting Bulleit's ongoing commitment to becoming net-zero carbon across direct operations by 2030.**

The Kentucky site will support the local community with 30 full-time jobs while also sourcing 100% non-GMO corn locally. This aside, Bulleit recently partnered with American Forests to plant one million trees by 2025, providing a variety of environmental benefits including carbon sequestration, air purification, water conservation, and providing vital wildlife habitat. Bulleit will be bulleting among judicious drinkers in 2022.



## BARREL EXPERIMENTATION HAS NEVER BEEN SO POPULAR

**Look no further than Nc'nean's recently released whisky series, Quiet Rebels.**

The debut release is called Annabel, named after the distillery's founder Annabel Thomas. Only 4,504 bottles have been created. The whisky is aged in a mix of ex-Tokaji barrels, which are said to give a wonderful sweetness and velvety texture to the whisky, and the ex-Bourbon barrels impart flavours of coconut, toasted vanilla and tropical fruits.





## GLOBAL GARNISHES INFLUENCING THE SCENE?



### 1. PUT DOWN THE SCOTCH. PICK UP A SMOKY AMERICANA

**Once a staple of bars, whiskey from the US got relegated to the back bench. But with the EU dropping trade tariffs on US Bourbon, we're seeing a new high for the smoky potation over the pond.**

According to DISCUS, American whiskey exports to its largest trading bloc fell 37 per cent in the two years after the EU imposed retaliatory tariffs to Trump's tariffs on European steel and aluminum. Lifting the burden will see the amber nectar drip from high-end bars to subterranean cocktail speakeasies.

Over in the UK, Diageo research shows British drinkers are ready for American whisky. Bulleit bourbon, with its high rye recipe and distinctive bold flavour at the carbon-neutral distillery in the US's Kentucky, is de rigueur with Brits.




### 2. MEET THE SPANISH WHISKY SCENESTERS

**A new wave of small Spanish distilleries are mashing up tradition with a renegade approach to exciting effect.**

Rocking the boat are the *Basque Moonshiners*, swinging open their distillery doors to whisky. Focussing on using local ingredients for the whisky, their Agot Single Malt Basque Whisky is handcrafted in the distillery using pilsner and munich malt made from 100% Navarre barley. The Pioneer Edition is aged for three years in old Bourbon and Rioja Alavesa oak barrels after double distillation in a copper still. Rum distillery *Destilerías Aldea* has produced a debut blend named after the Canarian dragon tree, much to local interest.

All this is thanks to influencers such as Emma Briones, who runs the site *todowhisky.es*, educating an already prudent public on the joys of the drink, while Spanish drinking aficionados are found launching whisky groups on social media in the droves.





## MOVE OVER WINE, WHISKY IS A RIVAL INVESTMENT



**One of the rarest whisky casks to come to market recently was sold at auction in October for a spectacular and record-breaking \$2.33 million by London-based whisky merchants, VCL Vintners.**

The cask was sold at a digital auction via an NFT, which was based on an original artwork by celebrated NFT artist Trevor Jones. The piece, titled *The Angel's Share*, references the natural evaporation of the whisky through the porous wood of its barrel, which simultaneously helps mature and smoothen the taste of the liquid and also depletes its volume by up to 2% each year. For investors, this means their asset is likely to appreciate over time, with most estimates for ROI sitting comfortably between 5-8% per annum. The previous world record was a whisky cask, which went for \$572,978 in August 2021 at Bonhams Hong Kong.

## SOME OF THE RAREST BOTTLES RELEASED TO THE WORLD

**Providing serious whisky enthusiasts the chance to enjoy the legacy of single malt Scotch that dates more than half a century, a 54-year-old Singleton of Dufftown is Diageo's oldest single malt release to date, bottling for more than £28,000.**

Part of the acclaimed Paragon of Time Collection, malt master Maureen Robinson held court over 54 journalists from across the world reporting on the coveted dram. In November, a 39-year-old specimen was launched. Such long-matured whiskies only attain character and richness through painstaking skill. These historic relics are rightly on the up in the whisky world.



## RISING STARS OF THE PEAT ELITE



### 1. LORA HEMY

**The Irish Whiskey category is growing again, no prohibition or temperance movement this time, says Dunn.**

At Roe & Co, head distiller Lora Hemy is, "pushing the boundaries, playing with different yeast strains, different woods, and generally looking at distillation in a modern way," says Dunn.

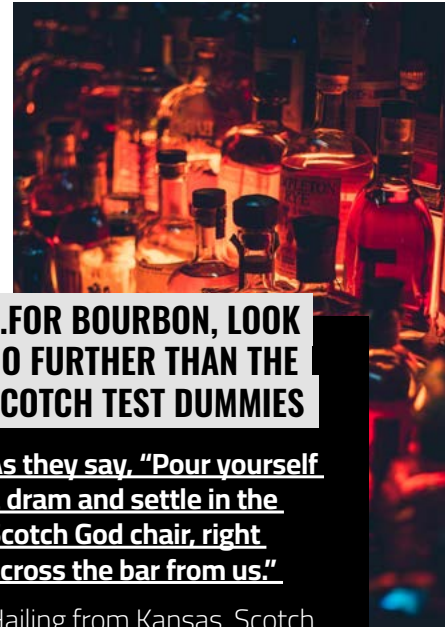


### MEET THE YOUTUBING MEGASTAR, RALFY

**He might be a hirsute 50-something dressed in tweeds but malty Ralfy, a whisky reviewer who publishes twice a week is an underground legend, gaining anything from a whopping 9K to 16K views.**

The Scotsman is a hit globally for his robust opinions and reviews. The vibe of his YouTube videos? Think educational, quirky and no nonsense.

\*<https://www.youtube.com/user/ralfystuff/videos>



### 3. FOR BOURBON, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE SCOTCH TEST DUMMIES

**As they say, "Pour yourself a dram and settle in the Scotch God chair, right across the bar from us."**

Hailing from Kansas, Scotch Test Dummies have brought whisky to the masses through the digital world. With a slug of comedy, they sell merchandise whisky glasses, break news stories and show their viewers what's hot and what's not.

<https://www.scotchtestdummies.com>

## INNOVATION



### 1. THE FLOATING CELLAR, BARGE 166

**The world's first ever floating ageing cellar opened in winter 2021.**

Knowing the rolling motion would aid the spirits flavour in the barrels, Maison Ferrand, the brainchild of the invention, applied for a cellar permit on the River Seine. The result is a stash of 1500 barrels buoyant on the river cellar. The cellar continues to challenge the team with the idiosyncrasies you'd expect with such an invention but this year, the drinks cognoscenti are watching with anticipation to see the results.

### 2. WHISKY GOES MULTISENSORY THANKS TO QR TECH

**Diageo is responsible for this popular shift in tech, thanks to the launch of "Legend's Untold," a single malt whisky collection.**

Impeccably crafted, the collection features eight treasured whiskies and the first-ever augmented reality experience, revealing untold stories of the distilleries in a unique and enchanting way.

The stories, inspired by the mythology surrounding the Scottish distilleries and their landscapes, are activated via an on-pack QR code. Enthusiasts are then guided through a mixed reality tasting experience. As if this wasn't enough to inspire progressive whisky drinkers, Johnnie Walker Princes Street is currently implementing flavour tech in the QR section to offer consumers a range of experiences.

<https://www.johnniewalker.com/en-gb/visit-us-princes-street/book-whisky-tasting/>