

Tasmania
Distillery

Barrel No.: TD 0386

Tare: 53.5 Kgs

Julian Date: 2327

Hobart

Tasmania
Distillery

No.: TD 0338

9.5 Kgs

Julian Date: 8332

2.5
part 5

EX HHD130

T-56.5

Tasmania
Distillery

Barrel No.: TD 0396

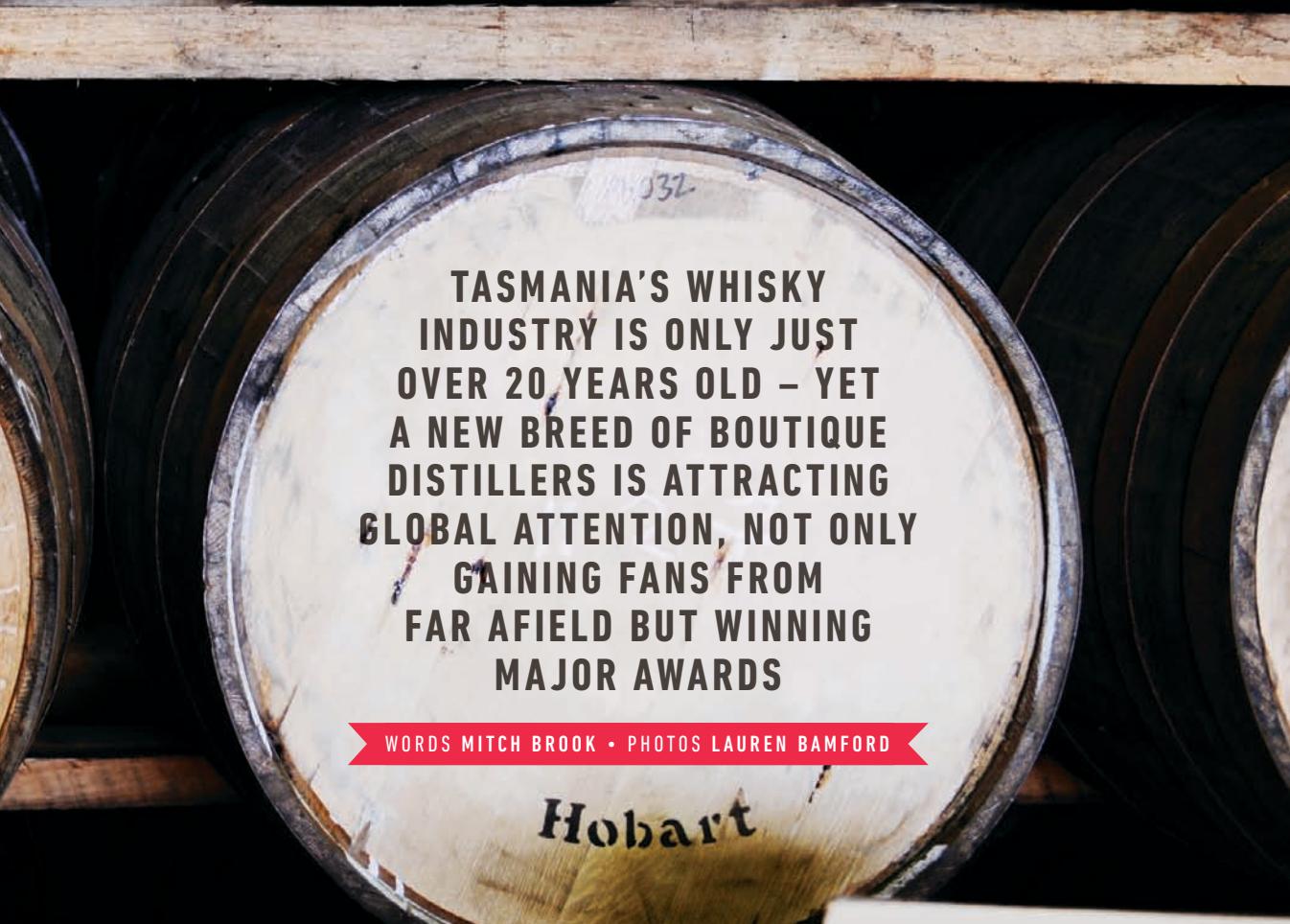
Tare 56.5 Kgs

Julian Date 2039

Hobart



TRIUMPH
OF THE H
SPIRIT



TASMANIA'S WHISKY
INDUSTRY IS ONLY JUST
OVER 20 YEARS OLD – YET
A NEW BREED OF BOUTIQUE
DISTILLERS IS ATTRACTING
GLOBAL ATTENTION, NOT ONLY
GAINING FANS FROM
FAR AFIELD BUT WINNING
MAJOR AWARDS

WORDS MITCH BROOK • PHOTOS LAUREN BAMFORD

Hobart

EYES SWIVELLED WITH INCREDULITY TOWARDS TASMANIA IN MARCH WHEN TASMANIA DISTILLERY'S SULLIVANS COVE WHISKY WON BEST SINGLE MALT AT THE WORLD WHISKIES AWARDS.

The 13-year-old, French oak-matured spirit triumphed over entries from such traditional whisky nations as Ireland, Japan and America, and even Scotland. It's impeccable timing for an industry that's still very young; whisky's surging popularity means aficionados and amateurs alike are searching for new tastes.

"We were blown away with the win," says Patrick Maguire, director and head distiller at Tasmania Distillery. "We'd won other categories, like 'Best Australian' or 'Best Australasian', before, but never dreamed we'd take out the big one."

There are nine distilleries in Tasmania, with six located close to Hobart. The Tasmanian industry is said to produce less whisky than the Scottish industry spills in a year, but the distilleries here consistently deliver high-quality – and after the Sullivans Cove win, whisky lovers worldwide are scrambling for a dram.

The hilly country surrounding Hobart evokes rural Scotland, albeit with warmer weather, and it's here that Peter Bignell of Belgrove Distillery experiments in his back shed. Bignell has dabbled in many industries – among other things, he's a champion sand- and ice-sculptor – and is now distilling rye whisky on his rural estate 45 minutes' drive north of Hobart. All his equipment is handmade – including a copper still, a kiln adapted from a laundry dryer, and a mashtun, or insulated brewing vessel – and he powers his distillery with biodiesel converted from



MY FAVOURITE DRAM

"I really like an Ardbeg 10-year-old. It's easy, well-rounded and has some peatiness."

**PATRICK MAGUIRE,
TASMANIA DISTILLERY**

oil from the local fish and chip shop. His range of rye whisky is unique, with a spicy taste of pepper and dried fruit.

Before the early '90s, distilling was illegal in Australia except for companies with a 2,700-litre still – large equipment that was prohibitively expensive for a boutique enterprise. It was Bill Lark, the founder of Lark Distillery who's referred to locally as "the Godfather of Tasmanian Whisky", who set about changing the laws to allow licences for smaller stills. "Distilling was prohibited in 1839," says Lark. "In those days there was a concern that industry should be on a large scale, and the government tried to discourage small-scale distilleries."

There had been no distilleries in Tasmania since that date until Lark began working through his local Federal MP Duncan Kerr, and the then Minister for Customs, Science and Small Business Barry Jones, to amend the legislation. In 1992, he was finally ➤



STILL GOING STRONG

Lark and Overeem were two of the first whisky makers when distilling was made legal in 1992



MY
FAVOURITE
DRAM

"I've got a real affinity with the Islay whiskies like Talisker 10-year-old, as well as Lagavulin 16-year-old and Highland Park."

**CASEY OVEREEM,
OVEREEM WHISKY**

issued the first licence to distil whisky in Tasmania for a small operator, 153 years after the initial prohibition. Lark Distillery's cellar door in Hobart's waterfront district bears testament to this history, displaying letters about the change of laws, and one of the distillery's original stills.

With the change of laws, the industry was sparked, and the fire has been growing ever since. "People are talking about us now as the 'Whisky Island of Australia!'" says Lark. There are more distilleries in Tasmania now than in Ireland, and the "Whisky Trail" in Tasmania is becoming a popular tourist route as whisky fans rush to meet the distillers. Tours run out of Hobart, with distillers often on hand to explain production techniques and hold tastings.

There's been great interest in the Tasmanian industry from Japan and Scotland. Glenfiddich, one of Scotland's biggest distilleries, has proposed a swap of distillers to see what they and Lark



"GLENFIDDICH WERE SO IMPRESSED THAT WE'RE SUCH A TRADITIONAL, HANDS-ON DISTILLERY"

could learn from one another. "They were so impressed that we're such a traditional, hands-on distillery," says Lark. "There's this sense that we're part of a worldwide family, with a desire to share knowledge to make wonderful whisky."

Another early player on the scene was Overeem Whisky, whose founder Casey Overeem struck up a working relationship with Bill Lark when he was working on having the laws changed. "At the time, I said to my wife, 'One day I'll make a whisky that's fit for the shelves of the world,'" says Casey. With his port cask-aged whisky, rich with spices and the taste of fruitcake and sultanas, he's more than achieved that goal. The spirit is still made from a shed on his home property, the two copper stills arching over a small desk, which sits under a row of single malts from around the world.

Running a small-scale operation allows these distillers to be nimble and hands-on, a key factor in creating high-quality spirits. Their involvement includes choosing ingredients, selecting casks for bottling, and determining the whisky's strength – it's usually diluted from cask strength with water before bottling.

Most of the producers choose to bottle their whisky on a cask-by-cask basis, rather than at a certain age, which means only the best is sent to market. Most age their whisky in small casks of 50 or 100 litres, increasing the spirit-wood contact and allowing for a shorter maturing time of five to seven years. "When figuring out what to bottle, we bring out a sample of four to

eight whiskies and form a panel," says Lark. "We make notes independently about these samples at different strengths and reveal our results. If we all like it, we look at what strength it would be best at." 



MY
FAVOURITE
DRAM

"I'd never be caught at home without three Scottish malts – Highland Park, Talisker and Laphroaig."

BILL LARK,
LARK DISTILLERY

“At the moment the only scientific thing we do is stick our nose in the bung and have a sniff,” says Maguire, who ages his whisky in both small and large barrels. “Does everything feel and taste good about it? That’s what I’m looking for. The barrel to me is an ingredient – it’s not just storage, it drives 50–70% of the flavour of the whisky, and all of the colour. It’s just as important as the barley, the water, the yeast and the still.”

The producers share a camaraderie that would appear as non-competitive to other industries, sharing information, techniques and working together through the Tasmanian Whisky Producers Association, and even taking to international marketing events as a united front.

With whisky’s surging popularity around the world, the hype couldn’t have come at a better time for Tasmania’s fledgling industry. “There’s a different way of eating and drinking today compared with 10 or 20 years ago,” says Maguire. “We’re maturing as a nation of eaters and drinkers. There’s a lot of exploring going on out there, and people seem to be liking the whisky.” *



COUP DE GLASS
Bottling is the last stage in the whisky-making process, which can take decades

TRY IT
HERE

BELGROVE DISTILLERY

makes rye whisky with stills powered by home-made biodiesel.

Visit by appointment only.

3121 Midland Highway, Kempton.

Tel: +61 409 144 560; belgrovedistillery.com.au

LARK DISTILLERY

has a cellar door at

14 Davey St, Hobart. Tel: +61 (3) 6231 9088; larkdistillery.com.au

MCHENRY AND SONS

is the world's southernmost distillery.

229 Radnor Rd, Port Arthur. Tel: +61 (3) 6250 2533; mchenrydistillery.com.au

NANT DISTILLING COMPANY

aims to open 70 whisky bars around the world over the next 5–10 years.

Meanwhile, take a historic guided tour at 254 Nant Ln, Bothwell. Tel: +61 (3) 6259 5790; nant.com.au

OLD HOBART DISTILLERY

Overeem Whisky has just released a bourbon-cask-aged whisky. Note: no whisky tours or cellar door here.

For stockists, go to oldhobartdistillery.com

REDLANDS ESTATE

is a paddock-to-bottle producer, with all ingredients created on site. This historic estate offers whisky tours.

759 Glenora Rd, Plenty. Tel: +61 (3) 6261 5728; redlandsestate.com.au

TASMANIA DISTILLERY

creates Sullivans Cove whisky, the world's best single malt. Buy online at tasmaniadistillery.com.au

HOBART WHISKY TOURS

taswhiskytrail.com or tasmanianwhiskytours.com.au

HOW
TO MAKE
WHISKY

Dean Jackson of Redlands Estate Distillery shares the steps to making a great drop

① MALT THE BARLEY Steep barley in water to germinate, creating starch. Dean says: "Barley is spread out on a malting floor, and grows over the next 5-7 days. We turn the barley three times a day. We then dry the barley in a kiln, stopping the growth process and retaining the starch in the dried barley."

② ADD SMOKE/PEAT (OPTIONAL)

During the kilning process, you can influence the barley with peat smoke. Dean says: "We feed the smoke of burning peat into the kiln and the barley absorbs some of that peatiness."

③ GRIND THE BARLEY Feed 300kg of dried barley into a grist mill, which will grind and crush it to make grist.

④ MASH IT Feed the grist into a mash-tun, and add hot water to create the mash. Dean says: "In the mashtun we activate the enzymes in the barley to convert the starch to sugar. The resulting liquid is called wort, and is sieved away from the grain and cooled."

⑤ DISTILL IT Add wort to the still. Dean says: "This is heated, making it evaporate and separating the spirit. This happens twice, and the spirit is collected after the second run."

⑥ CUT IT Separate the three stages of spirit. Dean says: "First come the foreshots, a poisonous methanol. Then we collect the next stage separately. The heart spirit is next, which is what we



want. It's clear and has lovely flavours and tones on the nose. The final stage is the feints, which are drinkable, but not as desirable – they're soapy and sour."

⑦ BARREL IT Dilute and age it. Dean says: "Diluting reduces the alcohol content to around 60%, then it's barrelled. The barrels are usually previously used for port, wine or sherry, and are stored for several years. It can legally be called whisky after two years of storage in wooden barrels."

⑧ BOTTLE IT When it's aged, decant into bottles. Dean says: "This can be done at cask strength [50–60%], or diluted to around 43% with water."

Travel info ↓

Jetstar has great low fares to Hobart.

Visit jetstar.com to book

タスマニアウイスキー

小さな醸造所が作る高品質のウイスキー

ホバートからそれほど遠くないところに6つの蒸留所がある。ベルグローブ蒸留所のピーター・ビッグネル氏は家の裏小屋で試行錯誤を続け、ホバートから車で45分の美しい農場でライウイスキーを蒸留している。彼が作るのは、胡椒とドライフルーツの香料が入った独特の味のウイスキー。

90年代初めまで、オーストラリア国内での蒸留は禁じられていた。が、1992年にその法律を変えようと動いたのがビル・ラーク氏だ。これによってウイスキー産業が活気づいた。彼が作るシングルカスク・シングルモルトにはピートの香りと、絶妙なキャラメルの風味がある。また、オーフレイムウイスキーの創設者であり親善大使でもあるケイシー・オヴァリーム氏も早期から活躍しているひとりで、「いつか世界中に知られるウイスキーを作るよ」と言っていた通り、スパイス、フルーツケーキ、サルタナといった香りでいっぱいのポートカスク熟成のウイスキーを作り、夢を実現させている。

こういった蒸留所は小規模であることで、融通が利くというメリットがある。

「今は樽の栓の匂いを嗅ぐことが仕事」と話すのは、自分のウイスキーを熟成させているマグワイア氏。「私にとっての樽とは異なる入れ物ではなく、原材料のひとつ。ウイスキーの5~7割が樽で左右されるんだ。」

今、このタスマニアにスコットランドと日本から大きな関心が寄せられている。スコットランド最大の蒸留所のひとつであるグレンフィディックは、蒸留所を交換して共に学べないかとラーク氏に提案しているとか。そして、タスマニアを訪れる旅行者のために出来た“ウイスキー・トレイン（蒸留所を巡るツアー）”もまた、ウイスキー人気にお車をかけた原因の一つだろう。

「我々は、食べたり飲んだりする人々の国として、まだ成熟途中。まだまだ模索することがたくさんあるし、もっとウイスキーを好きになっていきそうだね。」とマグワイア氏が最後に語ってくれた。