



101 Whiskies to Try Before You Die

Ian Buxton

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Fully updated and revised in 2013, 101 Whiskies to Try Before You Die is a whisky guide with a difference. It is not an awards list. It is not a list of the 101 'best' whiskies in the world in the opinion of a self-appointed whisky guru. It is simply a guide to the 101 whiskies that enthusiasts must seek out and try in order to complete their whisky education.

Avoiding the deliberately obscure, the ridiculously limited and the absurdly expensive, whisky expert Ian Buxton recommends an eclectic selection of old favourites, stellar newcomers and mystifyingly unknown drams that simply have to be drunk.

The book decodes the marketing hype and gets straight to the point; whether from India, America, Sweden, Ireland, Japan or the hills, glens and islands of Scotland, here are the 101 whiskies that you really want. This is a desert island list of whiskies - fully revised and updated in the light of the industry's constant need to keep changing things!

Try them before you die - Slainte!

101 Whiskies to Try Before You Die Details

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From Reader Review 101 Whiskies to Try Before You Die for online ebook

Matt says

Great style of book, would they be my 101 whiskies probably not, some are firm favourites others I've not tried or don't like. What I like is the fact it's not the "best" it's just 1 mans opinion with honest taste notes and a dedicated space on each page for personal notes. I've decided to try ad sample as many on here as possible before I die like the book suggests. I'm doing well as over the years I've tried just under half of them.

Joshua Feldman says

101 World Whiskies is, initially it seems, very like the extremely well regarded tome Ian Buxton wrote a few years prior, 101 Whiskies To Try Before You Die, which did so very much to fan the flames of Scotch appreciation in its current renaissance of popularity. Ian Buxton is a distinguished writer of many books, articles, and columns in top whisky magazines such as Whisky Advocate. He's the kind of guy who knows absolutely everybody and is one of the folks who gets invited to taste and describe those \$20,000 bottles that mortals like us never taste. As for the "101 Whiskies" books, these are both excellent works that, paradoxically, move me alternately to flights of delighted appreciation and spitting fits of wrath and rage as will become readily apparent. Both of these books are more collection of profiles and brief tasting notes than conventional 'whisky books'. By that, I mean that many common features of whisky books are absent. There are no ponderous chapters on whisky philosophy, production details and methodology, or history, and only a brief one paragraph on "how to drink" with no instructions on deciphering your own palate such as maps of the tongue. All this stuff is almost inexcusably omitted (or refreshingly so, depending on your perspective). Also missing are detailed history chapters that explain the roots of an industry, or even very detailed histories of various distilleries. You also will not find extensive and carefully written tasting notes. Buxton, indeed, sometimes omits tasting notes altogether; sometimes for the most important distilleries listed. An example is Highland Park, where Buxton not only fails to give us any tasting notes at all - he also cannot be pinned down to a recommended expression either - otherwise a firm rule throughout the book(s). I mean, if it's 101 whiskies you HAVE to taste before you shuffle off this mortal coil you should have 101 of them. Instead Buxton suggests, in the case of Highland Park, that we just have "all of them" - a suggestion he acknowledges as patently absurd even within that very chapter given the explosion of limited collector's releases and the fact that the 50 year old expression he depicts on that chapter's front retails for £10,000. This last part is particularly galling given that he assured us in the introduction that he would give us a tour of whiskies for drinking and that absurdly priced drams £1,000 and up flatly wouldn't be considered. Tasting notes, when actually provided, are often inexcusably brief - although I'll readily grant that what little is there is usually spot on. Furthermore, you don't get any scoring or rankings at all. Each chapter is illustrated with frontally nude bottle shots and nothing else - no illustrations of distilleries or images of the faces of the personalities mentioned. Images of lovely barley fields, castles, and malting floors are totally MIA.

But this isn't what really burns me up. What really gets me mad and confused and toss the book to the floor in a rage periodically are the facts that Buxton 1) doesn't like peat - but appears guilty enough of this that he includes a number of peat monsters ***in case YOU do***. 2) Sometimes includes whiskies he hasn't even tried or that don't even exist yet! 3) includes items that aren't even properly (ie legally) whisky. 4) Seems to evangelize major blends that I'm busy ignoring because I'm a whisky snob and look down my nose at major manufacturer blends in favor of rare single malts and interesting craft whiskies. To give you a taste of what

I'm talking about let's look at # 1: Bakery Hill Cask Strength Peated Malt from Australia. Fascinating stuff. However, as Buxton readily admits, he hasn't actually tasted it. He provides us some tasting notes from the cut sheet. **Bam** - sound of book (Kindle, actually) hitting floor in a rage. How about # 78: Buffalo Trace, White Dog - Mash #1. Wow, a fascinating unaged new make that doesn't qualify as a Bourbon because it's new. It's technically whiskey - in the old sense of our colonial forebears. Well, if Ian Buxton is putting this in the 101 Whiskies you MUST try before you DIE he probably thinks it's pretty damn well good, right? Not so fast. I'm going to actually quote Mr. Buxton on this one:

"Apart from the curiosities value, though, what do you actually use this stuff for? Well, enterprising cocktail experts have been mixing it into some innovative and truly unusual cocktails where the very high strength has some value and, er, that's about it."

"Rather than buy a whole bottle yourself (even allowing for the fact that it comes in a half-bottle size), you might want to consider buying this with friends and using it to kick off a tasting session. Nothing will more clearly demonstrate the role of barrel aging and the impact of good wood on whisky. After which you can quickly move on to the proper stuff!"

BAM (sound of kindle hitting the floor in a rage... again... poor little e-book reader). There are so many amazing whiskies, and Buxton is having me buy something that's maybe good for cocktails (like gin or vodka) but isn't so fine on its own (as new make) so I should plan on splitting it with friends rather than own a whole bottle. Is this just me or is this august gentleman looking for a kick in the shins?

Now, where was I? Oh yes, you absolutely must read 101 World Whiskies. Why? because it is a superb profile of where the world's malt whisky distilling scene is headed at the current moment. Interesting and worthy new malt whiskies are coming out of crazy places such as Holland, Germany, France, South Africa, the USA, Australia, England, Spain, Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Japan, Wales, and even (this may shock you) Scotland. Buxton describes scores of distilleries and expressions I've never even heard of - and I follow this stuff somewhat avidly. Buxton does more than list these revelations, he describes their context and why, exactly, you want to taste them. Why you need to, in fact. He does so with merciful brevity, an infectious good cheer, and a friendly aspect often missing from enthusiast's narratives. This is one part of the magic of "101 Whiskies To Try Before You Die". He makes you fall in love with a new whisky on virtually every page. He very quietly fills you with a passion for the malt and its people and its houses both great and small. He attacks your biases, (seemingly no matter what they are) yet he evangelizes the whisky topics I, personally find most vital: whisky tastes better bottled at higher strength, for example, and the less messed with the better.

But 101 World Whiskies isn't simply a catalog of obscure and weird drams. It's far too varied. Rather it's a catalog of what you should want to try - and why. And, yes, there are tons of weird obscure drams you've never heard of - but there are also tons of mainstream blends you may have been too snooty to desire lustfully (I certainly was). Buxton fixes that. There are some non-whisky items here too, a liqueur and a whisky fruit/spice infusion. Buxton leaves you lusting hard for those too. Indeed, it's this quality of inciting interest and lust, all without hyperbole or rants or volume of any kind that is on the whole, rather remarkable.

Did I mention that each short chapter is exactly the right length to enjoy while "using the facilities"? This "bite size" aspect makes reading Buxton feel a lot like feeding from your favorite bag of chips ("crisps" if you come from one of the countries where people drive on the wrong side of the road - like Ian Buxton). 'Once you pop', so to speak, 'you can't stop'. And you emerge revitalized and incredibly aware of a whole brave new world, with such wondrous drams in it. There is a special talent in being able to convey a great deal of information in a very small number of words. Buxton is a master at it. His brief profiles tell you a

tremendous amount, almost without you realizing it. He has an ability to pack a dense amount of information into few words but have it feel breezy, conversational, and, above all, friendly.

Recently Steve Urey (Sku) wrote about the end of whisky's 'Golden Age' on top American whisky blog "Sku's Recent Eats". His point was that the explosion of popularity of whisky has resulted in prices shooting through the roof, and hard to find expressions becoming unobtainable. There's also the question about the loss of complexity in the flavor profiles of whiskies over the past few decades because of mechanization (or perhaps deliberate choice) - such as the one I frequently wrestle with on my blog cooperedtot.com as described in the Dramming.com article "Has Whisky Become Better, Worse, Or Just Different?" These discussions can lead to a sense of loss. The implications of these narratives is that the epicurean opportunities of the Whisky world are becoming diminished. 101 World Whiskies is an antidote to these feelings. Reading Buxton fills me with a contrary "sense of gain". There is a huge world of new whiskies, and new expressions, and even new flavor profiles and some of them are really good. And there is more of this new good stuff going on than you knew about, or even had hopes of in your secret heart. And, furthermore, this new good stuff is coming from all over, including established brands and even stuffy mainstream blends that you wouldn't think of at all in searching for what's new. Reading Buxton makes me feel that the golden age is yet to come. This optimism creeps in many parts of the lovingly detailed descriptions in many areas of the book, such as Whisky Castle from Switzerland, where Ian's prose waxes into the beauty of true affection. In this radiant light the true impact of 101 Whiskies becomes apparent: an almost seditious expansion of whisky's world view. This isn't Ian Buxton's invention, but with this book he has taken up the mantle of an evangelist for a kind of positivism about the future of whisky.

But, wait, there's more. In a subtle and almost sneaky way, the biggest and most disruptive aspect of Buxton's 101 Whiskies books isn't the text narrative, factual content, or editorial perspective. It's the selections themselves. In choosing a set, Buxton is making an argument. As it is, the argument is as personal and subjective as an argument can possibly be. Buxton bends over backwards to say so in the introduction and at various points. However, Buxton isn't making his decisions lightly and it shows. He is carving a set and they stand like the stones of Stonehenge - individual and hewn - but in a common configuration and forming a common whole. This common whole, that you don't immediately see until you've read and understood and thought about the set of selections, is a powerful statement about how to appreciate whisky. In this aspect 101 World Whiskies stands head and shoulders above its brother and emerges, in my opinion, as an important book. Buxton wants you to be rounded. He wants you to be worldly. He wants you to transcend your own limitations and the blinders of preconception that hinder virtually every community of drinkers I've ever come across. That is the special genius of this book. This is why I picked up my kindle off the floor and resolved to grab a bottle of Buffalo Trace White Dog Mash #1 - tail firmly planted between my legs - and take my medicine. I know that if I follow Buxton down all these paths I will grow as a whisky drinker. It's a little bit like the part in Karate Kid where the master has the kid picking up the coat over and over. The logic isn't immediately apparent - but one day it's going to be the margin of glory and honor.

So buy 101 World Whiskies. Buy it as a bathroom read. Buy it as an excellent shopping list. But most of all buy it to have Ian Buxton lead you to become bigger inside. Buy it to have Ian Buxton fill your heart and your sails with the joy of discovery and the delicious anticipation for what is yet to come.

Marco Ceccarelli says

An essential tool to discover the incredible world of whisky. Recommended to beginners and enthusiasts alike.

Tomasz Stachewicz says

Really good choice of 101 whiskies, of all types and price ranges. While I might have a personal preference to substitute author's choice for a different whisky here and there, it's still a very solid list well worth going through.

Laurel Bradshaw says

A nice, concise guide to whisky without a lot of gibberish about the history and making of whisky. Just a page (and a picture) for each of Ian Buxton's choices, with some basic facts (often humorous and occasionally snarky). I liked the variety. It includes not just single malt Scotch, but blends, American ryes and bourbons, Japanese and other world whiskies. I doubt I will ever try all 101, but I found a few recommendations that I want to try. Clearly written for a UK market, so I don't know what the general US availability is on these.

4 stars for the book, but only 2 for the Kindle version that I read. The font was muddy, with some very faint letters making it difficult to read, and I could not enlarge the font. What you see is what you get. Buy the book.

Book Description: Avoiding the deliberately obscure, the ridiculously limited, and the absurdly expensive, whiskey expert Ian Buxton has scoured the shelves of the world's whiskey warehouses to recommend an eclectic selection of old favorites, stellar newcomers, and mystifyingly unknown drams that simply have to be drunk. This witty, focused, and practical guide is not an awards list or a list of the 101 "Best" whiskies in the world in the opinion of some self-appointed whiskey guru. It's simply a guide to 101 whiskies that enthusiasts really must seek out and try—love them or hate them—to complete their whiskey education. What's more, it's both practical and realistic as it cuts through the clutter, decodes the marketing hype, and gets straight to the point; whether from India or America, Sweden or Ireland, Japan or the hills, glens, and islands of Scotland—here are the 101 whiskies that every whiskey enthusiast needs to try. Sláinte!

Vijaya Kumar says

More affordable

Honestly I believe that the book is written to keep the available whiskies...I some how didn't like it

Alex Bleach says

Easy read, non-patronising and unpretentious. Covers a lot of obvious choices and a few obscure ones.

Tomasz Stachewicz says

While I might not agree with all of the choices, it's still a great guide to whiskies worth trying at least once. I have deep respect for sticking to "no limited releases" rule and focusing on widely available bottles of whisky.

j_ay says

I haven't tried many of these...so far just 6 of 101. So far.

- 1- Aberfeldy, 21 Years Old
- 2 - Aberlour, a'bunadh
- 3 - Amrut, Fusion
- 4 - AnCnoc, 16 Years Old
- 5 - Ardbeg, 10 Years Old
- 6 - Ardbeg, Uigeadail
- 7 - Asyla
- 8 - Auchentoshan, Classic
- 9 - Balblair, Vintage 1989
- 10 - Ballantine's, 17 Years Old
- 11 - Basil Hayden's
- 12 - BenRiach, Curiositas Peated
- 13 - Benromach, Organic
- 14 - Bernheim, Original Wheat Whiskey
- 15 - Black Bottle
- 16 - Black Grouse
- 17 - Bladnoch, 8 Years Old
- 18 - Blue Hanger
- 19 - BNJ, Bailie Nicol Jarvie
- 20 - Bowmore, Tempest
- 21 - Bruichladdich, 12 Years Old Second Edition
- 22 - Buffalo Trace
- 23 - Bunnahabhain, 18 Years Old
- 24 - Bushmills, 16 Years Old**
- 25 - Cameron Brig
- 26 - Caol Ila, 12 Years Old
- 27 - Chivas Regal, 25 years old
- 28 - Clynelish, 14 Years Old
- 29 - Crown Royal**
- 30 - Cutty Sark, Original
- 31 - Cutty Sark, 25 Years Old
- 32 - Dalwhinnie, 15 Years Old
- 33 - Deanston, 12 Years Old
- 34 - Dewar's, 12 Years Old
- 35 - Dewar's, Signature
- 36 - Eagle Rare, 17 Years Old

37 - Elijah Craig, 12 years old
38 - Glen Breton, Rare
39 - Glenfarclas, 21 Years Old
40 - Glenfarclas, 105
41 - Glenfiddich, 18 Years Old
42 - Glenfiddich, 30 Years Old
43 - Glenglassaugh, The Spirit Drink That Dare Not Speak Its Name
44 - Glenglassaugh, 26 Years Old
45 - Glengoyne, 21 Years Old
46 - Glenmorangie, Quinta Ruban
47 - Gordon & MacPhail, Glen Grant 25 Years Old
48 - Green Spot
49 - Hakushu, 18 Years Old
50 - Thomas h Handy, Sazerac Rye
51 - Hedonism
52 - Hibiki, 17 Years Old
53 - Hibiki, 30 Years Old
54 - Highland Park, 18 Years Old
55 - Highland Park, 21 Years Old
56 - Highland Park, 30 years old
57 - Highland Park, 40 Years Old
58 - Isle of Jura, Superstition
59 - Jameson, 18 Years Old Limited Reserve
60 - Johnie Walker, Black Label
61 - Johnie Walker, Blue Label King George V Edition
62 - Kilchoman
63 - Knob Creek
64 - Lagavulin, 16 Years Old
65 - Laphroaig, Quarter Cask
66 - Longrow, CV
67 - Mackmyra
68 - Maker's Mark
69 - Mellow Corn
70 - Monkey Shoulder
71 - Mortlach, 16 Years Old
72 - Nikka, All Malt
73 - Oban, 14 Years Old
74 - Old Pulteney, 17 Years Old
75 - Redbreast
76 - Scapa, 14/16 Years Old
77 - Sheep Dip
78 - Smokehead, Extra Black
79 - Speyburn, Solera 25 Years Old
80 - Springbank, 10 Years Old
81 - St George's
82 - Talisker, 10 Years Old
83 - Talisker, 18 Years Old
84 - The Balvenie, PortWood 21 Years Old
85 - The Balvenie, 30 Years Old

- 86 - The Dalmore, 12 Years Old
- 87 - The Glenlivet, 21 Years Old Archive
- 88 - The Glenrothes, Select Reserve
- 89 - The Macallan, Sherry Oak 10 Years Old
- 90 - The Macallan, Sherry Oak 18 Years Old
- 91 - The Macallan, Fine Oak 30 Years Old
- 92 - The Wine Society, Special Highland Blend
- 93 - The Spice Tree
- 94 - The Tyrconnell
- 95 - Tobermory, 15 Years Old**
- 96 - Van Winkle, Family Reserve Rye
- 97 - Wild Turkey, Rare Breed
- 98 - Woodford Reserve
- 99 - Yamazaki, 12 Years Old
- 100 - Yamazaki, 18 Years Old
- 101 - Yoichi, 10 Years Old

notes

- 1 - Have it, not yet opened it
- 8 - Their "Three Wood" is pretty nice
- 20 - I've had the Bowmore Islay 12 year, too much peat for me
- 24 - a bit too much peat for my taste
- 29 - a bit too sweet
- 46 - I much prefer their "Lasanta" or even "Nectar D'Or"
- 59 - Have only tried the age unspecific version
- 60 - reminds me too much of their "Red Label"
- 64 - Ugh. Not for me at all, I loathe anything that is "smoky", and too much peat
- 74 - Have only tried the 12 year old. Didn't like it.
- 95 - Not bad

Scott says

Good reading...

If you live in the U.K.

The US needs a version of this. He does a great job of introducing all of the different types of whisk(e)y but the selection is U.K. based.

Robert Williams says

The premise of this book is good. Not a list of the 101 best whiskies but a guide to 101?that you should seek

out and try. The problem is that he goes and spoils that by focusing heavily on scotch and recommending various expressions of the same whisky e.g. 3 versions of The Macallan.

It's interesting but it could have been so much better if he done what he said he was going to do.

Katherine Simmons says

It is a good list of buyable whiskies that will cover the bases written in a friendly manner

Mike Sumner says

I thought it might be prudent to stop, having tried 100, not wanting to shuffle off this mortal coil just yet! Anyway, this is a terrific book for anyone who enjoys whisky, or indeed, whiskey. A guide to 101 whiskies that enthusiasts should seek out and try, according to the author Ian Buxton, an eclectic selection of some of his favourites, some stellar newcomers and some mystifyingly unknown drams. Some of my own preferences are here: Aberlour Highland single malt, Ballantine's 17 YO blend, Bowmore single malt from Islay, Bushmills Irish single malt, Dalwhinnie 15 YO Highland single malt, Glenfarclas 105 cask strength, Hibiki 17 YO blend from Suntory, Japan, Wild Turkey Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey..... Still leaves many to chose from in years to come (I hope!)

I will certainly carry this pocket size book with me on any future travels. Never know what I might find...

Keith says

The opening lines of the introduction say it all:

[This] is not an awards list.

It is not a list of the 101 'best' whiskies in the world.

It is simply, as it says in the title, a guide to 101 whiskies that enthusiasts really should seek out and try—love them or hate them—to complete their whisky education.

The author has selected 101 whiskies from around the world representing a range of tastes and styles. There are single malts and blended whiskies, bourbons and ryes, whiskies from major producers (Scotland, Ireland, the US), and from places you wouldn't expect (India, Sweden).

Buxton comes across as straight-foward and honest. He tells you what he likes about the whiskies, and also what he doesn't like. Not all of these drinks are his personal favorites. He also includes a bit of history and local color about many of the items, as well as the to-be-expected descriptions of their taste.

Buxton also wants you to actually have a chance of trying these whiskies, so he avoids limited bottlings and other hard-to-find items. And most of the items are affordable, too (although he does include a small number of whiskies that will set you back \$500 - \$1000 per bottle---such as a 40 year old Highland Park).

By my count I've had 14 of the whiskies described here. This book has given me a number of ideas for new things to try. Only 87 more to go!

Cristhian says

Este libro de Ian Buxton (@101whiskies) fue uno de los regalos de mi esposa y, se ha vuelto -de manera peligrosa-, un To Do List. Actualmente (julio 2017) puedo decir que he probado 23/101 con dos más en camino (Clynelish de 14 años y The Singleton of Glen Ord de 12 años).

Me sorprende la cantidad tan variada de drams (49) que podemos conseguir con relativa facilidad en México, (estos dos últimos que vienen en camino son algo complicados de conseguir en UK) por lo que el challenge de los 101 parece algo que podré conseguir en algunos años.

El libro me acompañará sin duda en todos mis viajes ya que no puedo evitar viajar sin tomar.

Ah sí, el libro: muy bien documentado, divertido y procurando ser tan amplio como incitante al descubrimiento. No tengo nada malo que decir de este.

5/5
