

# WhiskyFest

The Leading Whisky Festival in North America

## WASHINGTON, DC

By Teddy Durgin

**W**hisky lovers are set to gather on April 17 in Washington, D.C., to sample some of the world's best whiskies. The event is WhiskyFest. Presented by *Whisky Advocate* magazine, the festival is returning to the nation's capital for the third consecutive year, offering the chance for attendees to sample almost 300 whiskies from around the globe and attend seminars hosted by industry experts.

Among those attendees will be numerous bar, restaurant, and packaged-goods store operators. Whisky Advocate Executive Editor **Jeffery Lindenmuth** comments, "WhiskyFest is certainly a place for local whisky sellers to sample whiskies they are considering [serving/stocking] and to discover new ones. Attendees who taste a whisky and meet the distiller leave motivated to buy that bottle. In that way, whisky experience and whisky education boost whisky sales."

He continued, "Whisky lovers are a passionate bunch and respect first-hand advice. It's a powerful sales tool when you can say to customers with authority,

'I tasted this at WhiskyFest, and I highly recommend it.' The more you know, the more vital you become to your whisky customers."

This year, Lindenmuth expects between 20 percent and 25 percent of attendees will



be members of the beverage alcohol trade in some way. And he definitely recommends to each going in with a plan. "The WhiskyFest app is very useful for evaluating the whiskies being poured and locating them on the floor plan," he stated. "If you spend the first hour checking off your top ten whiskies, you'll have a real sense of accomplishment. Then, go enjoy yourself."

The 300 whiskies from around the world will include single malt and blended Irish, Scotch, bourbon, rye, Tennessee, Canadian, Japanese, and craft-distilled whiskies. Also available for tasting will be high-end cognac, rum, and other spirits. The highlight for many will be the various speakers and seminars.

One of the sessions Lindenmuth is most excited about is the bourbon blending seminar that will be conducted by Heaven Hill Master Distiller Denny Potter, where attendees can try their hand at blending their own Elijah Craig using samples from eight to 12 years of age. He said, "It's a rare opportunity to get hands on and really gain an appreciation for the skill required to make such superb whisky."

Lindenmuth added, "Really all the seminars are tremendous. There will be



exciting opportunities everywhere. For instance, Wild Turkey master distiller Jimmy Russell has attended every single WhiskyFest for 25 years. He is such a talented, warm, and generous person. To share a few moments

with a living legend like Jimmy is among the greatest experiences a whisky lover will have in a lifetime."

WhiskyFest will be held at the Washington, D.C. Marriott Marquis. It will start with a VIP Entrance at 5:30 p.m.; feature tastings from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.; with seminar times at 7 p.m., 7:45 p.m., and 8:30 p.m.

Lindenmuth stated, "The whiskies are always dynamic and delicious. But the evolution that excites me the most is the audience

itself. Last year in D.C., I was delighted to see the diversity, the enthusiasm of young consumers, and all of the couples who share a passion for whisky. It's very different from 25 years ago when WhiskyFest started, and this is all very promising for the future growth of the category."

Of course, putting together such an event is a massive undertaking for Lindenmuth and his staff. To this end, he credits WhiskyFest Events Director Joan McGinley for being a master of detail. "She coordinates with distillers from around the world, previews the food with the chef, and keeps the app up to date to ensure guests have a flawless experience," he raved.

Regular admission tickets were still available online as of press time at Early Bird prices for \$275. The tickets include: a commemorative crystal glass; entrance to all seminars on a first-come, first-served basis; a gourmet buffet throughout the evening; a one-year subscription to Whisky Advocate; a gift bag; an event program and pen; and, of course, the 300 whiskies to sample.

For Lindenmuth, WhiskyFest is one of those yearly events that stokes his ongoing passion for the product. He concluded, "I had an editor at Maxim magazine who told me I needed to expand, to write other stuff. 'Why don't you write about music or men's fashion. All you do is wine, beer, and whisky.' Like most people in this business, I just thought, 'Why would I possibly want to do anything else?'" The beverage business is full of great people!" ■



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