

Dornoch Whisky Festival Programme

We are delighted to be bringing back some old favourites and introducing some exciting new ones.

Read on to see what awaits you this year.

Friday 25th October, 2019

Port Askaig Masterclass

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

Julie Hamilton, Brand Ambassador for independent bottler Elixir Distillers will be showcasing a masterclass featuring their range from Port Askaig. Port Askaig is a range of Islay single malt whiskies that embodies the unique spirit of Islay and its people. Nestled into the north coast of the island, Port Askaig has been the gateway to Islay for hundreds of years.

While there is no distillery at Port Askaig, Elixir Distillers have taken the opportunity to specially select casks from the distilleries around Islay and create a variety of expressions.

Day: Friday Time: 1pm Ticket Price: £50

Morrison & Mackay Cheese & Whisky Tasting

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

Enjoy this afternoon tasting dedicated to whisky and cheese, two of life's great pleasures combined. Graeme from Morrison & Mackay will guide you through this superb tasting that involves single cask drams and how exceptionally well they pair with a choice of fine cheeses from across the country.

This is a great event for those who enjoy whisky and cheese alike, however it is pure perfection if you enjoy both.

Day: Friday Time: 5pm Ticket Price: £60

Blind Whisky & Gin Tasting for Beginners & Enthusiasts

Royal Dornoch Golf Club

Back again by popular demand, try your hand at sampling 3 gins and 3 whiskies and then identify which ones they are. We will give you a helping hand with a tasting sheet and all you have to do is pick the one you think matches. There will also be a selection of light nibbles and canapes to accompany the tasting.

Day: Friday Time: 5:30pm Ticket Price: £25

Japanese Vs Irish Tasting

The Vault @ The Castle

Held in The Vault @ Dornoch Castle - a new intimate whisky tasting & private dining room - the Thompson Brothers will take you on an exploration of both Irish and Japanese whiskies, including 7 bottles with rare single casks including: Hibiki 17 | Chichibu Single Rum Cask | Yoichi 2008 Single Cask Irish 1990 dark sherry | Bushmills 1975 | Irish 1989 TWE & Jamesons 1970s

Day: Friday Time: 6pm Ticket Price: £65

Scotch Malt Whisky Society Paired Dinner

The Dornoch Castle Hotel

Once again, we are offering you the chance to enjoy a 4-course whisky inspired menu paired with SMWS (Scotch Malt Whisky Society) whiskies at the Dornoch Castle Hotel. This is a wonderful opportunity to not only enjoy some delicious cuisine especially prepared for the whiskies by head chef Grant Macnicol but to also enjoy the SMWS whiskies - which are normally reserved for members of SMWS.

Day: Friday Time: 7:30pm Ticket Price: £60

VIP Dinner with The Macallan

Links House at Royal Dornoch

This year, the Dornoch Whisky Festival are delighted to be joined by the Whisky Makers from The Macallan. The event will be one to remember as we join the Whisky Makers with their glittering whisky knowledge and tutorage which will be accompanied by an specially created whisky paired 8 Course Tasting Menu from award winning Chef Javi.

Day: Friday Time: 7:30pm Ticket Price: £120

Gin Tasting

The Eagle Hotel

The Eagle Hotel is known for their selection of gins and has many, many gins to choose from, so this is a must for the gin lovers among you. With a great atmosphere, you'll be in a gin paradise with the chance to try four separate gins and mixers of your choice.

Day: Friday Time: 8pm Ticket Price: £15

Live Music at the Eagle

The Eagle Hotel

Once again, we warmly invite you to join us all for a night of live music at the Eagle! Get yourself a drink from the very well stocked bar and listen to some local musical talent. With a great atmosphere and a chance to get to know the locals and visitors alike, this is a brilliant night to just enjoy yourself.

Day: Friday Time: 9:30pm Ticket Price: Free



Saturday 26th October, 2019

Historylinks Tour of Dornoch

Dornoch Square

Fancy a stroll around 4000 years' worth of heritage and history? A lot of it quite turbulent (to say the least)? If so, then join us for a guided walking tour with the incredibly knowledgeable Historylinks Museum curator. From some nasty fires and burning of witches right back to pre-historic Dornoch and Norse invaders, you'll find there's much more to Dornoch than meets the eye. That's not even to mention our illicit stills that were once hidden in our town.

Day: Saturday Time: 10am Ticket Price: £5

Whisky Makers VIP Masterclass

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

Join Polly, Russell and Steven - a trio of The Macallan Whisky Makers - as they put on not one, but two amazing VIP tasting for this year's Dornoch Whisky Festival!

You will then get the chance to use that knowledge to put together a 100ml dram of your own miniature of the Macallan to take away with you, based on your own personal preferences!

If you're a fan of The Macallan, or just a fan of whisky and how it's chosen, this event is for you. This trio really loves what they do and bring so much energy and passion to their tastings that this one will be really fun!

Day: Saturday Time: 12pm & 4pm Ticket Price: £100

Dornoch Whisky Festival: Grand Tasting

The Dornoch Castle Hotel Marquee

This year we're adding even more exhibitors to fill our marquee with some of our returning favourites and a few new faces with a range of distilleries, independent bottlers and gins. The full line up of exhibitors is on our website.

The Grand Tasting works on a voucher system whereby you purchase a ticket for £25 and receive a voucher card of 20 vouchers on the door. These vouchers are then exchanged for 10 ml pours of your choice on the day.

Included in your ticket price is your own Glencairn tasting glass and some goodies from us too

Day: Saturday Time: 1pm Ticket Price: £25

Thompson Bros: Old & Rare Tasting

The Vault @ The Castle

A Dornoch Whisky Festival staple! Join the Thompson Bros, Phil & Simon Thompson, whilst they guide you in a tasting of old, rare and vintage whiskies held in The Vault @ Dornoch Castle - a new intimate whisky tasting & private dining room. The drams of the afternoon will be:

Chichibu Bar Kitchen Cask | Springbank 1974 | Milntonduff 40 year old | Speyside Region 1973 | Laphroaig 1989 | Glen Moray 1971

Day: Saturday Time: 12pm Ticket Price: £70

Thompson Bros Single Cask Tasting

The Vault @ The Castle

Join the Thompson Bros for an exclusive tasting of their personally selected single casks, held in The Vault @ Dornoch Castle - a new intimate whisky tasting & private dining room with the following drams being poured:

1980 Blend, 38 years old | Imperial 1995, 23 years old | Caol Ila 2008, 10 years old | Monymusk 2007, 12 years old | Ben Nevis 1996, 22 years old | Linkwood 2007, 12-year-old
Day: Saturday Time: 5pm Ticket Price: £30

Rare Gordon and MacPhail Tasting & Dinner

The Vault @ The Castle

Do not miss the chance to take part in this extraordinary dinner and tasting. Not only will there be an exquisite 7-Course dinner prepared by head chef Grant Macnicol but this will be followed by an incredibly rare G&M tasting hosted by Stephen Rankin. This is a very limited availability event with 7 hand-picked bottles by the Thompson Bros & Stephen Rankin. Spirits poured will include:

Glen Grant 42 Year (1970s) | Benriach 1966 | Caol Ila 1966 | Longmorn 1971

Day: Saturday Time: 7pm Ticket Price: £200

Links House X Clynelish - Sensory Evening

Links House at Royal Dornoch

Pairing up with local distillery Clynelish, Links House at Royal Dornoch have put together a sensational 5 Course Sensory Menu with liquid to match!

This is a great opportunity to have award winning Chef, Javi show you some things a little outside the box.

Day: Saturday Time: 7:30pm Ticket Price: £100

RDGC Quiz Night

Royal Dornoch Golf Club

Join in the fun at the Royal Dornoch Golf Club for a quiz night! No tickets required just come along, it is £1 per person to enter the quiz and teams can be any number of people.

Day: Saturday Time: 7:30pm Ticket Price: £1

Ceilidh in the Castle

The Dornoch Castle Hotel Marquee

This year we are excited to have BlackRock Ceilidh with us to round off a wonderful day after the Grand Tasting! Over the last ten plus years, they have performed everything from pubs & hotels around the country to festivals including Belladrum, Islay, Barrafest and many others and now we get to welcome them to the Dornoch Whisky Festival!

Don't worry if you're not a whisky lover because this is all about the music and the dancing but if you do fancy a whisky or other refreshment, the bar will be open all night.

Our annual raffle draw will also be drawn here too.

Day: Saturday Time: 9pm Ticket Price: £10

Sunday 27th October, 2019

David Urquhart Memorial Golf Trophy

Royal Dornoch Golf Club

This event is open to both men and women who have an official CoNGU handicap. Men will play from the yellow tees and women from the red tees. Included in the entry fee is coffee and bacon roll before the round with a one-course meal after the golf.

Day: Sunday Time: 10am Ticket Price: Varies

Whisky Cocktail Tasting

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

Join Lorna from the Carnegie Whisky Cellars for another rendition of her popular whisky cocktail tasting. You've probably heard of a 'Manhattan' or an 'Old Fashioned' but you've never had a Lorna style cocktail. Combining her impeccable whisky knowledge with a creative flair she takes classic cocktails and gives them an innovative and perfectly matched twist. This event is perfect for both the seasoned whisky lover and the beginner as it gives you a chance to really explore just how versatile whisky is.

Day: Sunday Time: 11am Ticket Price: £30

Community Market

The Dornoch Castle Hotel

Held in the marquee in the Dornoch Castle Hotel grounds, the community market will give you a great chance to pick up some Highland goodies! With a range of products from homemade bakery items, to photography and crafts, there's something for everyone here.

Day: Sunday Time: 11am Ticket Price: Free

Links House X Mac & Wild X Rock Rose Gin BBQ Brunch

Links House at Royal Dornoch

Teaming up with local BBQ wiz kids and Dunnet Bay Distillers to brighten up Sunday Brunch! Enjoy an elegant Sunday Brunch with attitude and Red Snappers! (Gin Based Bloody Mary's - first one on us!)

Chef Javi's Food, Mac & Wild Fire and Rock Rose Spice! The perfect Sunday Brunch!

Day: Sunday Time: 12pm Ticket Price: £40

A Tasting of Local Malts

The Eagle Hotel

Including a secret selection of local malts sourced across the Highlands with a focus on the Highland Whisky Trail, this event is a fantastic opportunity to sample some of the best of our local malts right on our doorstep in the comfort of one place.

Day: Sunday Time: 1:30pm Ticket Price: £25

Benromach Sensory Tasting Event

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

Immerse yourself in exactly what defines Benromach with this intimate sensory experience. A short blind nosing competition with some prizes are also up for grabs!

The following will be poured:

10YO | 2008 Cask Strength | 15YO | Organic | Peat Smoke | 35YO

Day: Sunday

Time: 3pm

Ticket Price: £50

Independent Bottling Masterclass

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

A main stay at the Dornoch Whisky Festival, this Independent Bottling Master Class hosted by Michael Hanratty, General Manager at the Carnegie Whisky Cellars. Michael puts single cask bottlings from a range of independent bottlers head to head in this blind tasting. Each of the Carnegie Whisky Cellars independent bottlers are invited to put a bottle forward that showcases their companies core values and cask selection. A description for each whisky and company is given by Michael as he looks to highlight each company unique features. All whiskies are scored during the tasting with feedback being provided back to each of the companies involved, this has been popular with our Independent bottlers as the look to showcase a specific item against their competition. This tasting has sold out each year with last year's customers tasting 141 years' worth of whisky in one sitting.

Day: Sunday

Time: 6pm

Ticket Price: £60

Monday 28th October, 2019

Dornoch Distillery Old & New Site Tour

Dornoch Distillery

Get a chance to join the Thompson Bros for a tour of Dornoch Distillery - both the old and the new site. The 'Old Distillery' is normally too busy and a little too small for visitors and the 'New Distillery', well, it's still new, so you'll be one of the few that have had a peak into this normally off-limits distillery.

After you've had the tour, Phil & Simon will be hosting a new make & maturing cask tasting to showcase Dornoch Distillery.

Day: Monday

Time: 10am

Ticket Price: £50

Islay Comparison Tasting

The Carnegie Whisky Cellars

After the success of last year's Speyside comparison tasting, David from the Carnegie Whisky Cellars has put some of his favourite Islay whiskies head to head in this comparison tasting. Do all Islay whiskies taste the same? No, but there are a few similarities that may surprise you. David is an Islay whisky lover, so you know you're in good hands as his passion for the region, combined with his comprehensive knowledge that gives fantastic insights into each of the drams poured. Each of these whiskies will be tasted blind with clues given about each, do you fancy testing your Islay knowledge??

Day: Sunday

Time: 3pm

Ticket Price: £40