



Malt-teaser loves to choc

Alwynne's a whisky ambassador

GET INTO SPIRIT

Charlie Gall

FIRST turned on to whisky in London's Soho, Alwynne Gwilt has become a malt-teaser.

As Miss Whisky, the Canadian expat is heading to Scotland to talk about her love for our national drink.

But she may surprise or even shock devotees of the dram with her passion for pairing the water of life with chocolate.

Some might pour scorn on such a cocktail but Alwynne, 28, would argue that it's a match made in heaven.

Whisky with chocolate on the side will be served up at next month's first International Women of Whisky Day, part of the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival

It takes place on Saturday, May 3 at The Aberlour Hotel in Aberlour and will be complemented by other events led by women during the five-day festival.

Alwynne said: "We are all taking a slightly different slant. I'm focussing on whisky and chocolate.

"I've come to absolutely love the pairing between whisky and chocolate. The two work so extremely well together and sometimes I think it surprises people a little bit how well they do. It's great fun, a bit of experimentation."

Miss Whisky was created by freelance journalist Alwynne out of a desire to widen her knowledge and boost the number of women writing about whisky.

She fell in love with whisky during

a tasting at Milroy's whisky shop in Soho in 2008.

She continued on her quest to discover and learn about the water of life, buying a bottle for herself every birthday and Christmas.

A change of job direction in 2011 saw her pondering her next career move and during a four-month bout of travelling she decided to delve into the world of whisky.

She launched her Miss Whisky website and hasn't looked back since. Alwynne is the current Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival International Ambassador of the Year for her efforts to educate people about whisky.

But how did the chocolate come about?

She said: "The moment actually clicked for me in January this year in Canada at a big international whisky festival.

"I hosted the opening event for 90 women which was great fun and I did it with chocolate and whisky.

"I worked with a Canadian chocolatier and a room full of people, including myself, got to understand chocolate better and the process.

"There are so many similarities in terms of the origins and how cocoa beans are processed and you can do lots of comparing and contrasting towards whisky.

"It's a really boutique product when you get past the common brand names and look at it from an individual basis.

"It's almost like little co-ops which produce chocolates similar to single malt distilleries."

Alwynne said: "If cocoa's sourced from a different region the flavours will be completely different -

similar to whisky really.

"Cocoa beans take on the flavours

of their environment." International Women of Whisky Day kicks off with Introduction to the Sensipedia of Whisky with Johanne McInnis, a Canadian whisky writer and judge known as Whisky Lassie.

She will be teaching people how to use all five senses to appreciate and enjoy Scotch.

Renowned whiskywriter Annabel Meikle will be shedding light on

tasting notes by exploring the language of whisky and explaining where the aromas come from. Participants will then be tasked with creating their own tasting note after a blind taste test.

In addition to writing about whisky, Edinburgh-based Annabel has her own consultancy, The Whisky Belle.

And master blender Angela

D'Orazio from Mackmyra Distillery in Sweden will introduce revellers to the unique whisky expression at her event.

She will share the story behind the distillery, and will be sharing some of the Mackmyra drams.

She will also talk about her experiences as a woman in the whisky industry and make comparisons between Speyside and Swedish whiskies.

Ann Miller, international brand ambassador for Chivas Brothers, will host a guided walk - the James Fleming Trail - about the man who founded Aberlour Distillery, and a tasting deconstructing Aberlour's double cask maturation.



Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival chairman James Campbell hopes that whisky drinkers will mark the day no matter where they are in the world.

He said: "The perception of whisky being a man's drink has been completely altered over the past decade.

"It's now estimated that nearly one-third of whisky drinkers in the UK alone are female."



I believe there are a lot of similarities between chocolate and whisky

Factfile

● A Twitter hashtag has been set up for International Women of Whisky Day - #IWOWD.

Events led by women take place through the festival, including tours and whisky tutoring.

● The 15th Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival takes place from Thursday, May 1 to Monday, May 5 at venues across the region with more than 30 events.

A key event for Homecoming 2014, it will start Whisky Month – a four-week celebration of Scots world class food and drink.

● A brand new event this year – The Spirit of Speyside Sessions – aims to put to spotlight on the area's traditional music heritage with concerts and ceilidhs being staged in venues closely linked to the whisky industry.

● Tickets for events in the 2014 Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival programme can be bought via – www.spiritofspeyside.com
It is also active on social media – facebook.com/WhiskyFestival and [@spirit_speyside](https://twitter.com/spirit_speyside) on Twitter.



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