

Mortlach 16 Flora and Fauna Review

T. S. Phillips

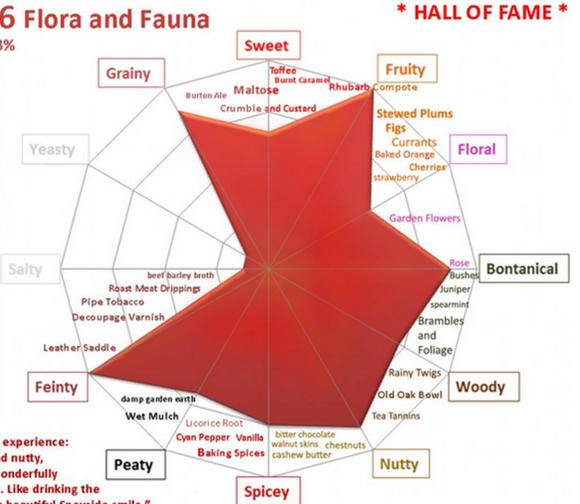


Mortlach 16 Flora and Fauna

Speyside - Duffton 43%

Malty, Rich and Meaty
A luscious nose of stewed plums, ripe red fruits, deep and dense with malty sweets, savory herbs, feinty layers of leather, roasting meats, and syrupy decoupage varnish hugs the horizon of the full bodied palate, massive yet juicy with stewed fruits, fresh figs, cherry, vanilla, rich with a brothy, nutty depth flecked with spice, and rooted in moist garden soil. Finishes up with rhubarb compote, spearmint, and caramel: Long and lovely.

"A delicious three-course experience: Fruity and spicy, malty and nutty, eccentrically herbal, all wonderfully integrated and expansive. Like drinking the warmth and pleasure of a beautiful Speyside smile."
-- Daniel of the Men of Malt



Mortlach 16 provides the best expression in Diageo's Flora and Fauna series, which allows obscure distilleries to offer some single malt to the public.

Region: Speyside - Duffton Style: Rich/Malty/Sherry Class: Standard Specialty Strength: 43%

***Malt for the Common Man Hall of Fame* - One of the Best at Any Price**

Tasting Notes

Overall - Wonderfully rich, smooth, and satisfying, with a unique herbal backbone surrounded by malty meat and lovely sherry

Color - Radiant reds and amber accents. Mortlach 16 Flora and Fauna practically glows with inner light.

Nose - A whiff of solvents give way to succulent berries and plums overhanging a wonderfully herbal and feinty nose of rich leather, toffee, varnish, faint citrus, dense foliage, and meaty broth.

Splash - Plum and butterscotch and a sprinkling of ground cyan pepper.

Palate - Richer by the sip, with a malty, meaty, nutty body balanced by stewed sherry fruits, roasting herbs, soft caramel, and restrained woody spices. Deep and luscious.

Finish - Rhubarb compote in an oak bowl with a copper spoon, and small piece of licorice on the side.

Most of the F and F series are quirky malts, since they are designed to fit into specific facets of blended scotch. But they can be a lot of fun to explore. The Mortlach 16-year-old Flora and Fauna is a different story, as its eccentricities result in one of the great whiskies that is so coveted by blenders because of its rich, deep, space-filling character, and a well-integrated complexity that also appeals to serious drinkers of single malt whisky.

Full Review

I no longer remember the older, generally available Mortlach, only that it was a favorite since my earliest drinking days. But I doubt it was AS good as THIS version. Civilized yet beefy, it offers richness and subtly, with a considerable Wow Factor.

Nose: A glowing glass of dark rosé and amber highlights gives up tendrils of sweaty solvents and lovely red berries, which swirl up from a dense mass of malty-sweet leather and tobacco, toffee, roasting herbs, coriander, tarragon, catnip, sweet decoupage varnish, leafy rose bushes, juniper and ferns, beef barley broth, real Burton ale, orange bits and currants baked into rye loaf, walnuts and baked plums sliding down the savory crust of a roast mutton joint, custard and crumble for desert, and the nostril-tinging astringent of grappa Affinata. Over time the nose winds and wreathes its way ever deeper.

Splash: Full and firm, the soft center of malty plumb-tinged butterscotch slides silky across the tongue, with woody spices thrown like wedding rice afterwards, littering the floor, walls and rafters of the mouth. It dries oaky with traces of cyan pepper.

Palate: Massive and deep, the malty emulsion is firm enough to chew, yet juicy with stewed fruits gently sweetened by fresh cherries and sticky figs, vanilla beans, and rich with a meaty, nutty presence filling up every void between the herbs, grasses, rain-soaked twigs, and damp garden topsoil.

Finish: Even the long, balanced finish is full-bodied. The essence of rhubarb compote hovers over a tongue tingling from licorice root, copper kettle, and the drying sinus of an oaky lumber room.

While this is a deep, warming comfy chair to sink yourself into and savor, it is almost worth finishing just to reach that indulgently rich caramel with a sprig of spearmint that fills the empty glass.

Water: A small amount of water opens up the nose and brings out a thin bitterness that is inherent to all Mortlach, which here seems more vegetative, like collard greens, than minerals. But it also breaks down some of the fruity sugars and makes them creamier, so the toffee and caramel come forward.

Conclusion

Delicious. How much the green vegetable quality and earth is due to peat and how much comes from other elements remains a mystery. But the unusual meaty quality comes from the special distillation, which employs some five or six stills, two normal sets that work in tandem, and reportedly some oddball ones, including a smaller still, referred to as the Wee Witchy that contributes a triple-distilled component, but which helps build up the savory essence rather than simply lightening things up.

This is one of the true five star whiskies, in its style, in its price tier, and across the whole world of distilled spirits.

Highly recommended, but unavailable for sale in North America. However, it can be imported by certain on-line sellers in the UK* and is totally worth it.