

THE OWL DISTILLERY

Grâce-Hollogne
Belgium



The Belgian Owl Single Malt Whiskey is the first Belgian whiskey ever made with barley grown in Belgium. It is the outcome of the determined efforts of Etienne Bouillon, a master distiller from Liege.

“The distillation I practice gives a very flexible, smooth product. To obtain a top quality taste, I keep only the heart of the distillate obtained after a second distillation.”

The barley malt is distilled in century-old stills, then aged in oak casks for three years. During the maturation process, it gradually takes on its lovely amber color and develops magnificent aromas of pear, cherry, and lily. The finish hints at apples.

“European Single Cask Whisky of the Year”— Jim Murray’s Whisky Bible 2011, on the 44-month edition of the Belgian Owl.



For Etienne Bouillon, spirits are a family tradition. He started the only distillery in the Leige area in 1997, in Grâce-Hollogne, after acquiring two handmade stills from the 1880s. Each of these stills has a capacity of 500 liters. Etienne traveled to Scotland and joined the Whisky Academy at the Bruichladdich distillery on Islay to learn all aspects of the whisky-making trade. Studying under master distiller Jim MacEwan there, Etienne later returned home to produce a most unique Belgian whiskey using only local ingredients. The barley fields are in Hesbaye; the water from 40 meters below, clear and protected. Malting, mashing, and fermentation processes take place in an old converted farm on the city’s outskirts. American Oak (ex-bourbon) barrels are used for maturation.

The symbol of the Owl was chosen to represent the whiskey as it recalls nature, authenticity wisdom, and Wallonia in particular. Of course, the owl as a “night” bird is perfect since whiskey is often consumed at night with friends!



The Progression of the Belgian Owl

The spirit, when *first distilled*, presents a pleasant floral nose. Jasmine is first, followed by fruity notes of pear & plum. The palate confirms these fresh aromas with a beautiful persistence of yellow citrus fruits and Reine Claude plums.

After *12 months*, the liquid is becoming softer with a more aromatic richness. Scents have evolved into vanilla-cream and cinnamon, fresh sweet butter, orange marmalade, and pear syrup. When first tasted, the complexity combines with an unexpected flexibility. A chocolate note opens, and an almost creamy feeling in the mid-palate follows. Cooked pear flavors and delicate spice notes of pepper and cinnamon round out the experience. The finish is set up with great softness, guarded by a pleasant vanilla & honey persistence.

Around *24 months*, the intimate play between the oak of the barrel and the spirit arrives! You will catch flavors of vanilla, bourbon, and milk chocolate to accompany the aromas of sweet apples, cinnamon, and sweet honey. At 24 months the beverage promises sweetness & freshness, taking you on an elegant and long journey ending in the spicy/woody finish along with touches of dried pear and toasted bread.

After *36 months* the Belgian Owl has matured. The nose, at the same time both rich and delicate, opens with a pleasant fruity softness. Mirabelle, ripe pear, butterscotch – then a floral touch that confers a small touch of Spring. As it opens a bit more, it reveals an almost exotic dimension of coconut cream, vanilla, banana ice cream, and fig. The mouth is full and fresh at the same time, confirming the promise of the aromas. The flavor is delicate and spreads in an astonishing crescendo of vanilla-cream with lemon, frozen apples, and ginger jam. The finish is wonderfully long, developing the vanilla of the American Oak while preserving the delicacy of the distillate. Ripe fruit flavors of pear, apple, banana, and plums grow together as a haunting echo. The whiskey presents an astonishing balance of fruity freshness and delicacy. “Magnifique!!” says Jim Murray in his Whisky Bible 2009.



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