

A modern, refined system for  
interpreting how whisk(e)y expresses  
itself through your palate.

TastelST  
Flavor  
Signature™  
Model  
(TiFS™)

Single Malt Scotch &  
Bourbon

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YOUR PALATE HAS A SHAPE, DISCOVER IT!

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# TastelST Flavor Signature™ Model (TiFS™)

A Sensory Framework for Whisk(e)y, Dual Edition – Single Malt Scotch & Bourbon

*YOUR PALATE HAS A SHAPE, DISCOVER IT!*

The TastelST Flavor Signature™ Model provides a unified sensory method for analyzing whisk(e)y —whether Bourbon or Single Malt Scotch— by transforming subjective sensations into a structured visual profile. Using the TastelST 5-Step Sensory Journey, participants translate aroma, palate, and finish impressions into a clear Personal Taste Identity. This identity reflects individual preferences, smell sensitivity, and palate characteristics— meaning every whisk(e)y experience remains uniquely personal.



# 1. Introduction

The TasteIST Flavor Signature™ Model helps you articulate your sensory impressions of whisk(e)y —whether Bourbon or Single Malt Scotch— into a clear and personal flavor identity. This approach allows every spirit to tell its unique story through your palate, transforming subjective sensations into a structured visual tasting profile using the *TasteIST 5-Step Sensory Journey*.

The model emphasizes that Personal Taste Identity is shaped by individual preferences, smell sensitivity, and palate characteristics — meaning every person’s whisk(e)y experience is distinctly their own. Participants document their impressions using the TasteIST Flavor Signature™ charts, creating a comprehensive and individualized Personal Taste Profile for each whisk(e)y sampled.

## 1.1 Why We Use “Whisky,” “Whiskey,” and “Whisk(e)y”

Throughout this document, you will see the terms **whisky**, **whiskey**, and **whisk(e)y** used intentionally. The spelling “*whisky*” traditionally refers to Scotch, Canadian, and Japanese production, while “*whiskey*” is used for American and Irish spirits. When discussing both styles together, the hybrid form “*whisk(e)y*” provides an inclusive, neutral spelling that respects global traditions without favoring one region. This approach maintains accuracy when referring to specific categories, while offering a unified term when the content applies to all styles collectively.

## 1.2 Reader Orientation

This document provides the universal tasting principles, charting instructions, and scoring system used in every TiFS™ evaluation.

For practical tasting, consult the appendix that matches your whisk(e)y, where you will find the correct color scales, radar axes, and Finish Identity tables.

- Scotch-specific tables (1A, 2A, 3A)
- Bourbon-specific tables (1B, 2B, 3B)

A glossary of key sensory and whisk(e)y terminology can be found in Appendix C for quick reference as you read.

## 2. TastelST 5-Step Sensory Journey

The TastelST 5-Step Sensory Journey offers a clear and intentional way to experience whisk(e)y by guiding you through each stage of sensory discovery.

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>1 Observe</b>              | View the whisk(e)y's color and viscosity against a white background.      |
| <b>2 Breathe</b>              | Gently nose the whisk(e)y without swirling, alternate nostrils.           |
| <b>3 Sip &amp; Settle</b>     | Take a small sip, then hold and roll it in your mouth for 3 to 5 seconds  |
| <b>4 Release &amp; Finish</b> | Swallow slowly, pause, and let the aftertaste emerge before describing it |
| <b>5 Record</b>               | Mark your impressions on the TastelST Flavor Signature charts             |

From the first visual impression to the final lingering note, the process helps you slow down, notice meaningful details, and understand how the spirit expresses itself across aroma, palate, and finish. By following these five steps, you create a consistent and personal foundation for every TastelST Flavor Signature™ evaluation.

### 2.1 TastelST Flavor Signature™ Charts (Overview)

The *TastelST Flavor Signature™ Chart* (Appendix A: Chart A for Single Malt Scotch version and Chart B for Bourbon version) consists of four marking stages used across all whisk(e)y styles:

#### 2.1.1 Mark the Color

Use the vertical color scale to record the whisk(e)y's hue. This provides a quick visual reference for cask influence, extraction, maturity, cask seasoning (sherry/port/wine), first-fill vs refill impact, and even warehouse aging conditions such as heat cycles or humidity.

#### 2.1.2 Mark the Radar Chart

Rate your impression on each of the six flavor axes from **0 (center)** to **5 (outer edge)**. Use the **Intensity Scale (0–5)** where **0 = none** and **5 = dominant**. Connect the points to create your personalized **Flavor Signature radar chart** for the whisk(e)y you are tasting.

#### 2.1.3 Capture Finish Identity

Capture how the aftertaste evolves across the **three finish stages**.

(Initial Echo → Mid-Finish → Final Fade), noting the dominant sensory elements in each phase. And separately the **length** of the finish.

#### 2.1.4 *Signature Sip Score*

Assign your personal rating (out of 10 total points):

- Flavor Resonance (0–4)
- Emotional Impact (0–3)
- Overall Harmony (0–3)

#### 2.1.5 *Additional Note*

Record the *tasting date* and, if helpful, include optional context such as mood, setting, or time of day. These details help you compare your impressions across future tastings and track how your palate evolves.

## 2.2 Color Scale

### *How to Mark the Color & Viscosity*

View the whisk(e)y's color and viscosity *against a white background*.

Color reflects cask influence, maturation depth, extraction intensity, and (where applicable) barrel char levels.

#### 2.2.1 *Observe the viscosity (legs/tears):*

Gently tilt the glass — slow, thick legs generally indicate a fuller-bodied whisk(e)y.

#### 2.2.2 *Match the color:*

Identify the closest shade —or choose a point between two shades— using the appropriate color table for the spirit style:

- Table 1A: *Single Malt Scotch Color Scale*
- Table 1B: *Bourbon Color Scale*

#### 2.2.3 *Record the viscosity:*

Mark the visual weight as “Light,” “Medium,” or “Full” next to your color selection.

These tables provide quick visual reference points to help you anchor your impressions consistently across tastings.

Table 1A – Single Malt Scotch

The vertical scale ranges from Clear (pale, light spirits) at the bottom to Dark Oak (deep, aged expressions) at the top.

| Color Level       | Visual Appearance                | What It Usually Means  | Flavor & Aroma Expectations   | Common Cask Influence  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Dark Oak</b>   | Brown with ruby or mahogany hues | Intense cask influence + long aging                              | Raisin, fig, leather, tobacco, nutty bitterness, deep tannin complexity         | European oak sherry (oloroso/PX), port, wine finishes, 18+ yrs aging |
| <b>Copper</b>     | Deep polished bronze             | Long aging or strong wine/sherry cask use                        | Dark fruits, spices, chocolate bitterness, heavier mouthfeel, structured finish | Oloroso/PX sherry, toasted European oak, extended maturation         |
| <b>Amber</b>      | Rich golden-orange tone          | Deeper maturation; oak starting to shape flavor strongly         | Toffee, dried fruit, malty sweetness, rounded smoke, more viscosity             | First-fill bourbon + sherry blend, 12–18 yrs aging                   |
| <b>Honey</b>      | Warm light gold                  | Balanced aging with moderate wood impact                         | Vanilla cream, orchard fruits, gentle sweetness, light to medium body           | First-fill bourbon, mid-range aging (8–14 yrs)                       |
| <b>Pale Straw</b> | Very light yellow, sunlight tint | Minimal wood extraction; shorter aging or ex-bourbon refill cask | Light, grassy, citrus zest, cereal grain freshness; smoke is often clean + airy | Refill ex-bourbon barrels  |
| <b>Clear</b>      | Almost colorless, water-like     | Very young spirit or heavy refill cask                           | Neutral spirit character, raw barley, bright alcohol, no wood impact yet        | New-make, unfinished, or heavily used barrels                        |



*Table 1B – Bourbon*

The vertical scale ranges from Straw / Pale Gold at the bottom to Dark Mahogany at the top. Bourbon's color generally reflects char level, warehouse heat cycles, and maturation depth.

| Color Level              | Appearance                                  | Indicates  | Flavor & Aroma Expectations                                | Typical Influence                             |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Dark Mahogany</b>     | Deep brown with red-mahogany undertones     | Longer aging, significant barrel char extraction | Molasses, tobacco, dark chocolate, heavy spice, dense body | 12+ yrs, hot rickhouses, barrel char #4       |
| <b>Burnt Copper</b>      | Polished copper with warm red-bronze depth  | Deep oak + extended maturation                   | Roasted nuts, toffee, spice, dark vanilla                  | 8–14 yrs, barrel char #3–#4                   |
| <b>Deep Amber</b>        | Classic rich amber with orange-gold balance | Classic mature bourbon                           | Caramel, vanilla, baking spice, toasted oak                | 6–10 yrs, barrel char #3–#4                   |
| <b>Honey Gold</b>        | Medium honey tone, warm and bright          | Mid-stage aging                                  | Vanilla bean, fruit, light caramel, mild oak               | 4–6 yrs, balanced aging, barrel char #3–#4    |
| <b>Golden Wheat</b>      | Light golden grain color, pale and soft     | Young or mild extraction                         | Sweet corn, cereal, soft fruit, very gentle oak            | 2–4 yrs, cooler warehouses, barrel char #3–#4 |
| <b>Straw / Pale Gold</b> | Very light yellow-gold, almost transparent  | Very young bourbon                               | Raw grain, sugar, minimal oak                              | 1–2 yrs, minimal maturation                   |

## 2.3 TasteIST Flavor Signature Radar (*Aroma & Palate*)

### *How to Use the Flavor Axes Efficiently*

#### 2.3.1 *Smell — Slowly*

Hold the glass below your nose —not inside it— and breathe gently.

Alternate nostrils without swirling the whisk(e)y.

Ask yourself:

| <i>For Single Malt Scotch</i>                            | <i>For Bourbon</i>                                     |
|--|--|
| Is it bright, fruity, floral, grassy, or malty?          | Is the sweetness more corn-driven or dark-caramelized? |
| Is there smoke, coastal influence, or earthy minerality? | Is vanilla soft or bold?                               |
| Does the aroma feel clean, sweet, or complex?            | Are baking spices rising early or late?                |
|  | How strong are oak, char, or toasted notes?            |

These first impressions help you identify which axes (from Table 2A or 2B) are most expressive. Closing your eyes can help isolate aromas and sharpen your sensory focus.

Aroma signals travel through the olfactory bulb, which is why nosing sets the baseline for your perception.

### 2.3.2 *Sip and Hold*

Take a small sip and chew or roll it across your palate for 3–5 seconds to activate mid-palate expression.

Notice retro-nasal aromas —flavors rising back through your nose— as you evaluate sensory families.

As you sip, ask yourself:

- Which flavors rise first?
- Does the mid-palate build warmth, sweetness, spice, or smoke?
- Is the texture oily, creamy, dry, salty, or soft?

Focus on the aroma and palate sensations, letting the flavors reveal themselves naturally — *don't chase the flavor*. Reference Table 2A or 2B to orient your observations toward the correct flavor axes for the category.

### 2.3.3 *Rate Each Axis*

Rate each axis with a dot:

- 0** – Not noticeable
- 1** – Very faint
- 2** – Gentle presence
- 3** – Clear and intentional
- 4** – Strong feature
- 5** – Dominant, defining characteristic

### 2.3.4 *Connect the Dots*

Link your marks to form the whisk(e)y's Flavor Signature “fingerprint” — a visual map of its character based on your personal sensory perception and the relevant axis tables

- Table 2A: *The Six Axes of Single Malt Scotch*
- Table 2B: *The Six Axes of Bourbon*

*Table 2A – The Six Axes of Single Malt Scotch (with sensory prompts)*

| Axis                      | What It Represents  | Typical Sensory Clues   | How to Recognize It   |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>1. Cereal</b>          | The core <b>malted barley character</b> of the whisky             | Bread dough, biscuit, oatmeal, grain husk, barley field, porridge       | Notice this mainly when the whisky feels <i>clean, light, or “farm-like”</i> — often most obvious in younger or minimally oaked whiskies. |
| <b>2. Fruity / Floral</b> | Light <b>aromatic top notes</b> from fermentation & distillation  | Apple, pear, lemon zest, peach, melon, honey blossom, chamomile         | These notes sit <i>above</i> everything else — if the whisky smells “bright,” this is where to look.                                      |
| <b>3. Peaty</b>           | The style and intensity of <b>smoke</b>                           | Campfire smoke, beach bonfire, charred oak, seaweed, iodine, ash        | Peat is not just “smoke” — it has tone: sweet, earthy, medicinal, coastal, or mineral.  |
| <b>4. Feinty</b>          | The <b>wild, funky, or raw</b> elements from distillation         | Leather, raw wool, cured meat, brewery floor, oil, game, earthy funk    | This is what gives some whiskies <i>soul and personality</i> — subtle, but deeply distinctive.  |
| <b>5. Oak / Woody</b>     | The <b>impact of the barrel</b> over time                         | Vanilla cream, toasted oak, sandalwood, nutmeg, tannin, cigar box       | If a whisky feels <i>warm, rounded, structured, or drying</i> , oak is speaking.  |
| <b>6. Winey</b>           | Influence from <b>sherry, port, wine, or fortified wine casks</b> | Raisins, dried figs, plum sauce, berry jam, chocolate, walnut, espresso | These are deeper, darker, sweeter flavors — often emotional, cozy, and dramatic.  |

*Table 2B – The Six Axes for Bourbon (with sensory prompts)*

| Axis                                    | What It Represents   | Typical Sensory Clues   | How to Recognize It  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>1. Corn Sweetness</b>                | The natural sweetness and grain character derived from bourbon's high corn content (≥51%).             | Sweet corn, caramel corn, cornbread, kettle corn, maple, buttery sweetness.           | Notice this on the nose or at the tip of the tongue. Sweetness should feel "round," warm, and grain-derived rather than confectionary sweetness. |
| <b>2. Vanilla / Cream</b>               | Vanilla tones and creamy textures extracted from new charred American oak.                             | Vanilla bean, custard, crème brûlée, marshmallow, sweet cream, white chocolate.       | If the whiskey feels soft, dessert-like, or "creamy," this axis is active. Vanilla often rises after swirling or warming the glass slightly.     |
| <b>3. Baking Spice</b>                  | Spice-driven notes naturally produced by new char + aging + bourbon's mash bill.                       | Cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, allspice, gingerbread, spiced caramel, warm spice character. | These notes feel warm or tingling on the mid-palate. Spices rise after the first sip and often grow during the "Settle → Release" stages.        |
| <b>4. Oak / Toasted Wood</b>            | The structural contribution from the barrel: tannin, dryness, toasted wood, oak warmth.                | Toasted oak, pencil shavings, cedar, sandalwood, dry wood spice, tannin, barrel heat. | Recognize this as dryness on the tongue, warmth at the back, or a sense of structure. If the finish feels "wood-driven," this axis is strong.    |
| <b>5. Dark Sugar/ Caramelized Notes</b> | Deeper, darker sweetness created by barrel char and caramelization during maturation.                  | Brown sugar, molasses, toffee, burnt sugar, maple glaze, dark caramel, cola syrup.    | These notes sit lower and deeper than corn sweetness. Look for heaviness on the mid-palate and rich aromas rising after a swirl.                 |
| <b>6. Char / Smoke</b>                  | Smoke-like character from barrel charring (not peat smoke). Adds depth, warmth, and slight bitterness. | Barrel char, fireplace embers, smoky edges, charcoal, toasted marshmallow, light ash. | This lingers on the finish. Look for warmth, slight bitterness, or a smoky "halo" around the flavors — especially in the Release → Trace stages. |

## 2.4 The Finish

Now comes a key part of the exercise: *take your time as you explore the finish – (also called the aftertaste).*

The instant you swallow, the whisk(e)y refuses to leave quietly. Flavors and sensations continue to evolve and reveal themselves long after the liquid has gone — often showing depth and character that were only hinted at on the nose or palate. This lingering phase is where many great whiskies truly shine and leave their lasting signature.

The TasteIST model captures the finish through two complementary aspects:

- **Finish Identity** – how the character changes over time (the three-phase finish)
- **Finish Length** – how long the experience persists overall (recorded separately)

*These two dimensions are independent, a whisk(e)y can have a short but stunningly complex finish, or a very long one that feels simple and one-note. When both character and duration are rich and layered, it is often seen as a hallmark of exceptional depth and craftsmanship.*

To make the finish easy to describe and compare, we don't try to capture everything in a single impression. Instead, the TasteIST method breaks the evolving character into three clear stages while noting the overall length separately. This gives you a precise, personal map of how the whisk(e)y says goodbye.

### 2.4.1 The Finish Identity (the three-phase finish)

| Stage                                   | Timing                             | What to Pay Attention To  | Questions to Ask Yourself  |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>1. Initial Echo</b>                  | First few seconds after swallowing | Temperature, first impression of sweetness or dryness, any immediate smoke or spice                               | <i>What is the very first thing that reveals itself?</i>                                       |
| <b>2. Mid-Finish Development</b>        | Next 10-15 seconds                 | Flavor shift, growth, deepening, brightening, softening, or transformation; spice, wood, or fruit building        | <i>Does the flavor brighten, deepen, fade, or change shape? What is becoming more obvious?</i> |
| <b>3. Final Fade (Lingering Memory)</b> | beyond 20 seconds                  | Texture, dryness, saltiness, bitterness, smoke tail, oak imprint, emotional tone — the “goodbye” of the whisk(e)y | <i>What is the last note that stays behind?</i>  |

Take a breath and brief pause between stages to reset your palate and avoid rushing the experience. This approach allows you to experience the finish as a progression, not a single flavor — and to recognize the whisk(e)y's personality in its most subtle and memorable form.

*Finish Identity Layers – Style-Specific References:* While the structure of the finish (three stages) is shared, the Finish Identity Layers are tailored to each whisk(e)y style. These layers help you

give each stage a simple “headline” based on what dominates. Use the appropriate reference table depending on what you’re tasting.

- Table 3A: *Single Malt Scotch Finish Identity Layers*
- Table 3B: *Bourbon Finish Identity Layers*

### 2.4.2 *Finish Length*

Separate from the evolving character of the finish (the three stages), tasters often describe the overall duration of the aftertaste as its length. This measures how long the whisk(e)y continues to be felt and enjoyed after swallowing.

Finish length is independent of complexity or intensity - a whisk(e)y can have a short but beautiful finish, or a long but simple one - but a prolonged, evolving finish is frequently praised as a hallmark of depth and craftsmanship.

**Short** : Under ~15 seconds – the flavors fade quickly.

**Medium** : 15-45 seconds – a satisfying, noticeable persistence.

**Long** : 45 seconds or more – the whisk(e)y keeps revealing itself, sometimes for a minute or longer, often with new layers emerging as it fades.

These timings are longer than they first sound — most everyday whiskies fall in the Short to Medium range.

*Sensory Insight:* Time the finish with a watch or phone the first few times; most people are surprised at how long (or short) many finishes actually are. With practice, you'll develop an intuitive feel for length and be able to mark it consistently on your chart.

*Table 3A – Finish Identity Layers for Single Malt Scotch*

| Axis / Layer                      | What It Represents   | Typical Sensory Clues                                    | Dominant Impression  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>1 – Clean</b>                  | Soft, neutral, almost silent – the whisky just vanishes politely | Very light barley, faint warmth, water-like, no residue  | The aftertaste disappears almost immediately and leaves nothing noticeable behind                        |
| <b>2 – Citrus / Fresh Sweet</b>   | Bright, lively, uplifting – like spring air or a cool breeze     | Lemon zest, green apple, pear, light honey, floral lift  | The first echo feels bright, juicy, or refreshing (citrus, apple, light honey) and not creamy or smoky   |
| <b>3 – Creamy / Vanilla Sweet</b> | Smooth, rounded, comforting – the classic warm whisky hug        | Vanilla custard, shortbread, buttery toffee, warm pastry | The finish turns soft, rounded, and comforting with clear vanilla or custard-like sweetness              |
| <b>4 – Salty / Maritime</b>       | Coastal, mineral, oceanic – instantly takes you to the sea       | Sea spray, brine, wet rocks, oyster shell, salty air     | You get a clear salty, briny, or coastal tingle that reminds you of the sea more than smoke or sweetness |
| <b>5 – Smoky / Resinous</b>       | Warm, glowing, campfire-like – wraps the throat in smoke         | Peat reek, bonfire embers, iodine, tar rope, medicinal   | Smoke (peat or wood) is the strongest and keeps glowing long after the sweetness and spice have faded    |
| <b>6 – Bitter / Ashy</b>          | Dry, grippy, slightly bitter – the finish tightens and darkens   | Cigar ash, dark chocolate 90 %, black tea, dry oak bark  | The final fade is dry, tannic, slightly bitter, or ashy (dark chocolate, black tea, oak bark)            |

*Table 3B – Finish Identity Layers for Bourbon*

| Axis / Layer                   | What It Represents   | Typical Sensory Clues   | Dominant Impression   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>1 – Fresh Sweet / Clean</b> | Bright, light, and quick – lifts away almost immediately               | Sweet corn, light honey, faint vanilla, soft grain warmth               | The aftertaste is short and clean with almost no residue – common in younger or wheated bourbons    |
| <b>2 – Caramel / Vanilla</b>   | Thick, rounded, comforting – the classic bourbon sweetness settles in  | Toffee, butterscotch, crème brûlée, caramel drizzle, warm vanilla bean  | Caramel or vanilla is the strongest note right after swallowing and lingers sweetly                 |
| <b>3 – Baking Spice Warmth</b> | Warm, spicy glow that rises and energizes the finish                   | Cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, rye bread, ginger, black pepper                | Spice heat becomes the dominant sensation after the caramel sweetness starts to fade                |
| <b>4 – Toasted Oak</b>         | Dry, structured, woody – sweetness steps back and oak takes over       | Dry cedar, toasted coconut, old wood, light tannin, baking chocolate    | A clear dry, woody note appears, and the finish starts to feel more structured than sweet           |
| <b>5 – Char / Sweet Smoke</b>  | Warm, glowing, slightly smoky – like toasted marshmallow or dark cocoa | Charred oak, sweet smoke, ember warmth, burnt sugar crust, dark caramel | A gentle, sweet char or smoke is the last pleasant thing you notice before the fade                 |
| <b>6 – Bitter Tannic</b>       | Dry, grippy, slightly bitter – the finish tightens and darkens         | Black tea, walnut skin, 90 % dark chocolate, oak bark, dry cocoa        | The very end is drying, tannic, or mildly bitter – typical of heavily aged or high-rye/oak bourbons |

#### 2.4.3 Why Single Malt & Bourbon Have Different Finish Structures

Single Malt Scotch and Bourbon express their finishes differently due to distinct production factors:

- **Grain Base:** Malted barley vs. high-corn mash bills produce different sweetness, texture, and grain signatures.
- **Barrel Policy:** Scotch uses refill + mixed casks; bourbon uses new charred American oak.
- **Climate:** Scotland's cool, damp climate slows extraction; Kentucky's hot rickhouses accelerate it.
- **Smoke Influence:** Scotch may include peat smoke; bourbon smoke comes from barrel char only.
- **Cask Interaction:** Wine/sherry casks shape Scotch mid-finish; caramelized sugars + char shape bourbon mid-finish.



Because of this, Scotch finish layers include **maritime, citrus, creamy, smoky, ashy**, while bourbon includes **fresh sweet, caramel/vanilla, spice warmth, oak/toasted wood, char/smoky edge, bitter/tannic**.

Both systems follow the **same** 3-stage progression — but their sensory vocabulary diverges due to different production traditions and chemical pathways.

#### 2.4.4 How to Mark the Finish Identity

You have two simple options when recording your finish:

A. Numeric Layers (1–6)

- For each of the three stages (Initial Echo, Mid-Finish, Final Fade), select the **Finish Identity level** (1–6) that best matches your impression, using the appropriate style-specific table:
  - **Table 3A** for Single Malt Scotch
  - **Table 3B** for Bourbon
- Enter the level number in the designated box for each stage.

B. Short Descriptors (1–3 words)

- Alternatively, write a brief note for each stage, such as: “bright citrus,” “creamy vanilla,” “salty smoke,” “charred oak,” “dry tannin,” etc.
- You can later match these notes back to the levels in Table 3A or 3B.

Take your time — pause and breathe as you go through each step. Let the aftertaste evolve naturally rather than trying to chase a particular note.

*Sensory Insight:* Note the Final Fade — After the glass is empty, smell it again.

Ask yourself: **What remains in the glass?** This often reveals a pure echo of the Finish Identity.

By marking the three stages and connecting them to the Finish Identity Layers, you create your own aftertaste journey — a clear, personal expression of how the whisk(e)y revealed itself to you from first echo to final fade.

## 2.5 Signature Sip Score

Your Signature Sip Score (0–10) captures the completeness of the whisk(e)y’s expression across your tasting journey.

It transforms the final assessment into a structured, multi-layered view of the dram—uniting its clarity, emotional tone, and structural cohesion. By blending technical markers (Flavor Resonance and Overall Harmony) with the personal dimension of tasting (Emotional Impact), the score offers a holistic and insightful conclusion to each sip.

|                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Flavor Resonance    | (0–4 points)   |
| Emotional Impact    | (0–3 points)   |
| Overall Harmony     | (0–3 points) + |
| <hr/>               |                |
| Signature Sip Score | (0–10 points)  |

*Sensory Insight:* If you are new to whisk(e)y:

- *For Single Malt Scotch*, compare a light Speyside with a smoky Islay. The contrast will quickly train your perception of the 0–5 intensity scale for brightness, fruit, smoke, and malt structure.
- *For Bourbon*, compare a softer, low-char bourbon with a deeply charred, older barrel-proof expression. This side-by-side approach helps you understand how sweetness, caramel depth, spice warmth, and char influence the radar axes and finish.

### 2.5.1 Flavor Resonance (0 – 4 points)

*Why it Matters:* This score emphasizes technical performance and craftsmanship.

Flavor Resonance reflects the clarity and strength of the whisk(e)y's core expressions — how confidently its key traits present themselves from first aroma through the final sip. It highlights technical execution: definition, presence, and the consistency of flavor across the experience.

*Ask yourself:*

- Are the whisk(e)y's signature traits clear and well-defined? (e.g., smoky, creamy, fruity, nutty, herbal)
- Do these flavors maintain their presence through the sip and finish or fade quickly?
- Do the aroma and taste connect naturally (the smell and taste “agree” with each other)?

| Score   | Description  |
|---|--|
| <b>0 – Absent</b>                             | The flavor expression is indistinct or hollow, offering little structural clarity or direction.  |
| <b>1 – Subtle / Understated</b>               | Aromas and flavors are present but faint, with limited definition. Craft elements are detectable but not fully articulated.  |
| <b>2 – Moderate / Emerging</b>                | The whisk(e)y shows a coherent flavor structure with recognizable layers. Expression is sound, though not yet fully developed or integrated.   |
| <b>3 – Defined &amp; Well Crafted</b>         | A clear, intentional flavor profile emerges. Layers interact with purpose and balance, demonstrating solid craftsmanship and a thoughtfully shaped character.                                |
| <b>4 – Articulate / Masterfully Expressed</b> | A highly refined flavor architecture with excellent clarity, depth, and structural harmony. Each component is precise, integrated, and confidently executed—reflecting expert craftsmanship. |

### 2.5.2 Emotional Impact (0 – 3 points)

*What it measures:* The impression or mood the whisk(e)y creates — the atmosphere it evokes beyond flavor alone.

Emotional Impact reflects the feeling the dram leaves behind: a sense of warmth, intrigue, comfort, curiosity, or quiet excitement. It captures the emotional tone that emerges as you engage with the glass — not just what the whisk(e)y tastes like, but how it feels in the moment.

This score acknowledges the human dimension of tasting. Beyond structure and craftsmanship, great whiskies often leave a meaningful imprint — a clear emotional contour (e.g. warmth, calm, curiosity, or a subtle lift in mood). Emotional Impact recognizes that whisk(e)y appreciation is both sensory and psychological, shaped by the connection you form with each sip.

*Ask yourself:*

- Did this whisk(e)y evoke a mood or memory (coastal walk, winter fireside, honeyed orchard)?
- Did it surprise or challenge your expectations in a rewarding way?
- Did it create a memorable moment or distinct emotional impression you could clearly describe?

| Score                               | Description  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>0 – Neutral</b>                  | The whisk(e)y leaves little or no sensory impression beyond its basic structure. No emotional or atmospheric qualities emerge.   |
| <b>1 – Subtle Impression</b>        | The whisk(e)y begins to suggest a mood or sensory atmosphere — gentle warmth, comfort, curiosity — but in a restrained or understated way.   |
| <b>2 – Distinct Presence</b>        | The whisk(e)y clearly shapes the tasting moment. It conveys a recognizable emotional tone — such as elegance, richness, energy, calm, or warmth — that complements its flavor structure and heightens the experience.          |
| <b>3 – Resonant &amp; Memorable</b> | The whisk(e)y delivers a powerful, cohesive emotional signature that elevates the entire experience. It leaves a lasting impression — a sense of place, mood, or character — that remains vivid even after the sip has passed. |

### 2.5.3 Overall Harmony (0 – 3 points)

*What it measures:* How the whisk(e)y’s structure feels as *you* move through it—how the nose leads into the palate, how the palate transitions into the finish, and how the entire sip aligns with *your* sensory rhythm. It blends the whisk(e)y’s technical harmony with your personal tasting path.

“Overall Harmony” assesses the coherence of the entire experience — how aroma, taste, texture, and finish connect into a unified expression. It distinguishes a whisk(e)y that is well-made but fragmented from one that feels complete and intentionally crafted.

It captures the aesthetic flow of the sip: whether each transition feels composed and purposeful, or jarring and uneven. Harmony is the artistic dimension of the TiFS™ model — the measure of how gracefully a whisk(e)y tells its story to you from beginning to end, with each layer supporting the next, from first aroma to final fade.

*Ask yourself:*

- Does the whisk(e)y transition smoothly from nose → palate → finish?
- Do sweetness, spice, smoke, and wood complement each other?
- Does it feel coherent, or do certain elements dominate unnecessarily or clash?

| Score                              | Description   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>0 – Disjointed</b>              | Components feel separated or inconsistent. Aroma, palate, and finish lack alignment, creating a fragmented or uneven structure.   |
| <b>1 – Partially Integrated</b>    | Some elements work well together, while others remain disconnected. Harmony is present in moments, but transitions may feel abrupt, loose, or incomplete.   |
| <b>2 – Balanced &amp; Cohesive</b> | The whisk(e)y presents a unified structure. Aroma, palate, and finish are well coordinated, with smooth transitions and thoughtful integration across layers.   |
| <b>3 – Seamless &amp; Refined</b>  | All elements work together with exceptional fluidity. The whisk(e)y displays structural precision, effortless transitions, and a polished sense of completeness — the hallmark of expert blending, distillation, or maturation craftsmanship. |

#### 2.5.4 Signature Sip Score (Final Score)

This score summarizes the whisk(e)y's complete sensory expression as you experience it — no "right" score, just honest resonance. Just sum up the 3 scores given for "flavor resonance", "emotional impact" and the "overall harmony" and mark it boldly on the chart.

| Total Score | Total Interpretation  |
|-------------|---|
| 9 – 10      | <b>Exceptional Expression</b> — A whisk(e)y of remarkable clarity, balance, and structural precision. Flavor, emotion, and harmony align seamlessly, showing a level of craftsmanship that elevates the entire sensory journey.               |
| 7 – 8       | <b>Highly Articulated</b> — A confident, well-crafted whisk(e)y with strong definition and cohesion. Its character is clear and engaging, demonstrating technical skill and thoughtful construction across all stages.                        |
| 5 – 6       | <b>Competently Crafted</b> — Solid structure with recognizable strengths. While not uniformly expressive, it presents a coherent profile with moments of clarity and balance. A dependable and well-made whisk(e)y.                           |
| 3 – 4       | <b>Evolving Structure</b> — The whisk(e)y shows potential but presents uneven integration or limited depth. Certain elements feel underdeveloped or disconnected, resulting in a structure that is serviceable but not fully resolved.        |
| 0 – 2       | <b>Technically Inconsistent</b> — A whisk(e)y lacking cohesion, clarity, or expressive definition. Elements compete or fade prematurely, resulting in a fragmented sensory experience that does not fully communicate its intended character. |

### 3. Final Thoughts

Embrace the TiFS™ model as a mirror to your evolving palate — each chart is a snapshot of you in that moment. Your profile may change over time — revisit past charts to see how your palate evolves. Repeat tastings reveal growth; share profiles to connect with fellow enthusiasts. For digital tools or workshops, visit [TasteIST.com](https://TasteIST.com). Over time, your Flavor Signature collection becomes a living map of your evolving palate — a story only you can write, one sip at a time.

Whether exploring Single Malt Scotch or Bourbon, the TasteIST™ model offers a unified language for your evolving palate

*TasteIST™ – Where Every Sip Shapes Your Story.*

*Disclaimer:*

The TasteIST Flavor Signature™ (TiFS™) Model is a sensory exploration framework designed for educational and personal enrichment purposes. It does not represent an official scoring standard, certification, or commercial evaluation system. All tasting impressions are subjective and reflect individual sensory perception and context.

# Appendix A – Sample TiFS™ at a Glance Sheets

Chart A – Single Malt Scotch one-page TiFS™ sheet

## TiFS™ at a Glance

A sensory Framework for Single Malt Scotch

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### Color Scale

|                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Dark Oak<br>   | Brown with ruby or mahogany hues |
| Copper<br>     | Deep polished bronze             |
| Amber<br>      | Rich golden-orange tone          |
| Honey<br>      | Warm light gold                  |
| Pale Straw<br> | Very light yellow, sunlight tint |
| Clear<br>      | Almost colorless, water-like     |

### TastelST Flavor Signature Radar Chart

Intensity Scale  
0 (center) to 5 (outer ring)

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### Finish Identity Layers

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Clean                  | Very light barley, faint warmth            |
| 2. Citrus / Fresh Sweet   | Lemon zest, light honey, floral lift       |
| 3. Creamy / Vanilla Sweet | Short bread, warm pastry, custard          |
| 4. Salty / Maritime       | Sea spray, wet rocks, oyster shell         |
| 5. Smoky / Resinous       | Peat reek, bonfire, iodine, medicinal      |
| 6. Bitter / Ashy          | Cigar ash, black tea, dark chocolate (90%) |

### Viscosity

Light / Medium / Full

### Finish Identity

|   |  |   |                                     |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Initial Echo<br><small>first few sec.</small> | Mid Finish<br><small>next 10-15 sec.</small> | Final Fade<br><small>beyond 20 sec.</small> | Finish Length                       |
|   |  |   | <small>Short/<br/>Med./Long</small> |

### Signature Sip Score

|                  |                  |                 |  |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|
| Flavor Resonance | Emotional Impact | Overall Harmony | Total Score  |
| 0-4              | 0-3              | 0-3             | <span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 40px; height: 20px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> |

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Date :    /    /                      Name :

YOUR PALATE HAS A SHAPE, DISCOVER IT!


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Chart B – Bourbon one-page TiFS™ sheet

## TiFS™ at a Glance


A sensory Framework for Bourbon



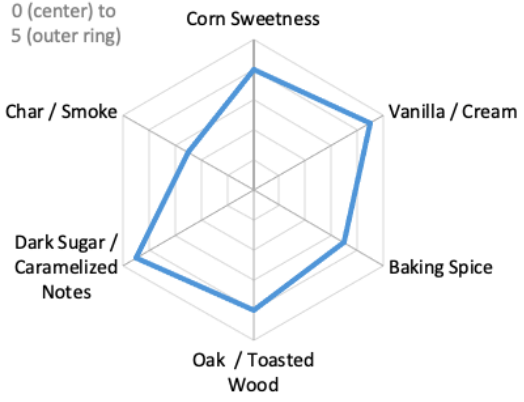
### Color Scale

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Dark Mahogany   | Deep brown with red-mahogany undertones     |
| Burnt Copper    | Polished copper with warm red-bronze depth  |
| Deep Amber      | Classic rich amber with orange-gold balance |
| Honey Gold      | Medium honey tone, warm and bright          |
| Golden Wheat    | Light golden grain color, pale and soft     |
| Straw/Pale Gold | Very light yellow-gold, almost transparent  |

### TasteIST Flavor Signature Radar Chart



Intensity Scale  
0 (center) to 5 (outer ring)



### Finish Identity Layers

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. Fresh Sweet / Clean | Sweet corn, faint vanilla, light honey                  |
| 2. Caramel / Vanilla   | Warm vanilla, caramel, toffee                           |
| 3. Baking Spice Warmth | Cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, ginger                         |
| 4. Toasted Oak         | Dry old wood, toasted coconut                           |
| 5. Char / Sweet Smoke  | Charred oak, sweet smoke, burnt sugar                   |
| 6. Bitter Tannic       | Black tea, dry cocoa, walnut skin, dark chocolate (90%) |

### Viscosity

Light / Medium / Full

### Finish Identity

|   |  |   |                     |
|---|--|---|---------------------|
| Initial Echo<br><small>first few sec.</small> | Mid Finish<br><small>next 10-15 sec.</small> | Final Fade<br><small>beyond 20 sec.</small> | Finish Length       |
|   |  |   | Short/<br>Med./Long |

### Signature Sip Score

|                  |                  |                 |  |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|
| Flavor Resonance | Emotional Impact | Overall Harmony | Total Score  |
| 0-4              | 0-3              | 0-3             | <span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 50px; height: 20px; vertical-align: middle;"></span> |

Date :    /    /      Name :

**YOUR PALATE HAS A SHAPE, DISCOVER IT!**

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# Appendix B – Why the TiFS™ Model Works

## A brief look at the neuroscience and sensory science behind flavor perception.

Whisk(e)y tasting is not just an art — it is a sensory process grounded in how the human brain interprets aroma, taste, and texture. The TasteIST Flavor Signature™ Model works because it follows the same pathways your brain uses to translate molecules into meaning.

### 1. *The Olfactory Bulb — Your First Interpreter of Flavor*

Most of what we call “flavor” is actually smell.

When you nose the whisk(e)y, aroma molecules travel through the nose to the *olfactory bulb*, the brain’s primary aroma-processing center. Here, signals are sorted into categories your brain recognizes — fruity, smoky, grainy, floral, woody, spicy, etc.

This is why the first nose impressions (Step 1–2 of TiFS™) strongly influence how you interpret the entire sip.

### 2. *Retro-Nasal Perception — Where Flavor Comes Alive*

When you take a sip and hold it on your palate, volatile compounds rise through the back of your throat into your nasal cavity. This process is called *retro-nasal olfaction*, and it is responsible for the majority of what you perceive as “taste”.

This explains why:

- rolling the sip across the tongue
- “chewing” for 3–5 seconds
- and exhaling gently through the nose

unlock deeper layers of fruit, spice, smoke, oak, and sweetness. Retro-nasal perception is the scientific reason Step 3 (Settle) and Step 4 (Release) reveal different flavors than the nose alone.

### 3. *Palate Mapping — How Your Mouth Interprets Structure*

While the idea of a “tongue map” is outdated, the mouth does have regions more sensitive to certain sensations:

- **Tip** : sweetness and bright notes
- **Mid-palate** : body, warmth, cereal, and fruit
- **Edges** : acidity and salinity
- **Back** : bitterness, smoke, tannins, and oak

This is why a whisk(e)y can begin sweet, build spice and warmth, and finish dry or smoky — the palate perceives *flavor progression* over time.

The TastelST model embraces this by dividing the holistic experience into:

- **Aroma (before sip)**
- **Palate (mid-sip)**
- **Finish/Aftertaste (after swallowing)**

Each stage uses a different part of the sensory system.

### 4. *Temporal Processing — Why the 3 Finish Stages Matter*

Your brain does not perceive the finish instantly — it processes it as a timeline.

This is why the TastelST Finish Identity uses:

- **Initial Echo** (First few seconds) : fast signals such as warmth, sweetness, smoke
- **Mid-Finish** (Next 10-15 seconds) : developing spice, wood, malt, fruit, char
- **Final Fade** (Beyond 20 seconds) : tannins, salt, bitterness, residual smoke

You are literally tracking how your brain decodes the lingering molecules. This is not just a tasting technique — it is sensory neuroscience in action

### 5. *Visual Mapping — The Radar Chart Mirrors Brain Patterning*

Your brain recognizes patterns better than isolated data.

By marking each axis from 0–5 and connecting the dots, the radar chart forms a *visual “fingerprint”* of the whisk(e)y.

This mirrors how the brain:

- categorizes aroma clusters
- organizes flavor families
- detects intensity differences

The visual map makes the tasting more intuitive and more memorable.

In Short, the TasteIST Flavor Signature™ Model works because it aligns directly with how your brain naturally experiences whisk(e)y:

- Smell → Olfactory bulb
- Sip → Retro-nasal flavor integration
- Mid-palate → Sensory mapping
- Finish → Temporal processing
- Charting → Visual pattern recognition

It transforms a complex sensory process into a clear, structured, and repeatable tasting method.

# Appendix C – Glossary of Sensory Terms

## A practical reference for new and experienced whisk(e)y tasters.

The following sensory terms appear throughout the TasteIST Flavor Signature™ Model. They help you translate aroma, palate, and finish impressions into clear, structured language.

### Aroma & Nose Terms

**Aroma** — The smell of the whisk(e)y before tasting; perceived via the olfactory bulb.

**Nose** — The act of smelling gently, without swirling; the first stage of flavor recognition.

**First Impressions** — The earliest aromas detected; they form the baseline for sensory mapping.

**Retro-Nasal Aromas** — Flavors that rise into the nose after sipping; the bridge between taste and smell.

**Bright** — High-toned, lively aromas (citrus, orchard fruit, florals).

**Floral** — Light, fragrant notes (chamomile, blossom, heather).

**Fruity** — Notes from fermentation (apple, pear, lemon, dark fruits in sherry Scotch, apple/corn sweetness in bourbon).

**Malty / Cereal** — Barley-driven grain notes (biscuit, fresh bread, cereal, barley field).

**Creamy** — Soft, rounded, vanilla-like aroma; often oak-driven.

**Winey** — Sherry/port/wine cask influence (raisin, fig, plum, nutty richness).

**Feinty** — “Wild” or funky distillation notes (wool, meat, earth).

**Corn Sweetness** — Bourbon-specific sweet-grain aroma (cornbread, kettle corn).

**Toasted** — Warm, lightly smoky aroma from toasted oak.

### Palate Terms

**Palate** — What you taste and feel once the whisk(e)y touches your tongue.

**Mid-Palate** — The middle of the tasting experience; where sweetness, spice, smoke, and structure show themselves.

**Texture (Mouthfeel)** — The physical feel of the whisk(e)y in your mouth

**Viscosity** — The thickness and weight of the liquid; observed as “legs” or “tears” when the glass is tilted. Recorded on the chart as Light / Medium / Full. Higher viscosity usually indicates higher ABV, older age, or cask strength bottlings.

**Oily** — Coating, thick

**Dry** — Tannin- or oak-driven

**Silky** — Smooth, clean, lightly viscous

**Warmth** — Gentle heat from the spirit (not “burn”).

**Spice Warmth / Baking Spice** — Cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, pepper, ginger, allspice; typically bourbon-driven.

**Oak / Woody / Toasted Wood** — Structure, dryness, tannins, cedar, toasted coconut.

**Sweetness** — Grain, caramel, dark sugar, honey, or fruit-driven.

**Dark Sugar / Caramelized Notes** — Barrel-induced molasses, toffee, burnt sugar, dark caramel.

**Saltiness** — Mineral or coastal note (primarily in Scotch).

**Peaty / Smoke** — Resinous, earthy, medicinal, maritime, or char-driven smoke.

**Char / Smoke** — Bourbon barrel-derived sweet smoke from charred oak (toasted marshmallow, dark cocoa).

### Finish Terms

**Initial Echo** — The first few seconds after swallowing: fast signals such as warmth, sweetness, bright notes, or smoke.

**Mid-Finish** — Flavor development 10–30 seconds after the Initial Echo: spice, wood, fruit, malt, char.

**Final Fade** — Last sensory memory beyond 30 seconds: tannins, dryness, salt, residual smoke, or bitterness.

**Finish** — The aftertaste once the whisk(e)y is swallowed; how long flavors linger and evolve.

**Finish Length** — Duration of the aftertaste: Short / Medium / Long.

**Ashy** — Peaty embers or charred residue notes.

**Caramel / Vanilla** — Bourbon-driven sweet notes on mid- and late finish.

**Citrus / Fresh Sweet** — Bright, refreshing finish layer (Scotch).

**Drying / Tannic** — Oak or tannin-driven mouthfeel that tightens slightly; dry, woody, slightly bitter.

**Resinous** — Thick, sticky smoke quality (often peated Scotch).

**Tannin** — Naturally occurring compounds extracted from oak during maturation.

### Intensity & Expression Terms

**Dominant** — Main characteristic (5 on the axis).

**Expression Strength** — How vividly the whisk(e)y presents itself, not whether you “like” it.

**Flavor Axis** — One of the six core sensory categories for radar chart mapping.

**Flavor Signature** — The connected shape created on the radar chart, forming the whisk(e)y’s “sensory fingerprint.”

**Gentle Presence** — Detectable but not leading (2).

**Intensity** — Strength of a flavor on the 0–5 radar chart scale.

**None** — Absent (0).

**Strong Feature** — Structurally important (4 on the axis).

**Very Faint** — Barely noticeable (1).

### Scoring Terms

**Flavor Resonance (0–4)** — How deeply and completely the whisk(e)y expresses its full character across all stages.

**Emotional Impact (0–3)** — The mood or feeling the whisk(e)y evokes in you.

**Overall Harmony (0–3)** — How coherently nose, palate, and finish work together.

### Structure & Maturation Terms

**Cask Influence** — What the barrel contributes: vanilla, spice, tannins, color, sweetness.

**Extraction** — How much flavor is pulled from the barrel.

**Barrel Char Level** — Char #1–5 for bourbon; affects caramelization, smoke, and color.

**Refill Cask** — Used barrels with lower extraction potential (Scotch).

**First-Fill** — Barrels filled for the first time after another spirit (sherry/bourbon).

**Sherry Cask / Wine Cask** — Adds dark fruit, richness, chocolate (Scotch).  
**Rickhouse Heat Cycles** — Seasonal temperature shifts influencing bourbon aging.  
**Maturity** — Combined effect of age, climate, warehouse, and cask type.

#### Scotch-Specific Vocabulary

**Maritime** — Sea spray, brine, coastal smoke, wet stone.  
**Peaty / Peat Smoke** — Earthy, medicinal, tarry, coastal, or sweet smoke.  
**Iodine** — Medical, seaweed-like aroma common in Islay malts.  
**Feints** — Distillation byproducts adding complexity or funk.

#### Bourbon-Specific Vocabulary

**Corn Sweetness** — Sweet grain-driven aroma and flavor.  
**Baking Spice** — Cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, ginger, allspice.  
**Toasted Wood** — Soft wood note (lighter than char).  
**Char** — Barrel char smoke; sweet and warm rather than peaty.  
**Dark Caramel / Molasses** — Barrel caramelization from heavy char.  
**Rickhouse** — Multi-level bourbon warehouse affecting heat maturation.  
**Barrel Proof** — Undiluted strength bourbon; higher intensity.

#### Emotional & Narrative Terms

**Resonance** — How deeply the whisk(e)y expresses itself across sensory stages.  
**Emotional Impact** — The mood or feeling the whisk(e)y evokes.  
**Harmony** — Coherence among nose, palate, and finish.  
**Flow** — The progression from aroma → palate → finish.  
**Memory Note** — The final impression (last flavor or emotion that remains).

#### Others

**Congeners** — Flavor compounds from fermentation/distillation.  
**Esters** — Fruity aromas.  
**Phenols** — Smoke, medicinal character in peated whisk(e)y.  
**Maillard Reaction** — Roasted sugar chemistry in bourbon barrels.  
**Oxidation** — How open-air exposure changes aroma.

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