

A SCOTCH ABOVE

THE TASTING PANEL AND GLENFIDDICH'S SECOND KINDRED SPIRIT COMPETITION BRING THE HEAT



The contestants with their Glenfiddich host, Jennifer Wren (front, center), Brand Ambassador, Glenfiddich West. Back row (left to right): Nathaniel Steinberg, Director of Operations, Tavern Law, Seattle; Jose Cabrera, Head Bartender, The Bowery Collective, NYC; Kenneth McCoy, Creative Director, Public House Collective, NYC; Richard Knight, Executive Chef, Hunky Dory, Houston; Emily Young, Executive Chef, Tavern Law, Seattle; and Julie Calabrese, Sales and Events Manager, Morton's The Steakhouse, Denver. Front row (left to right): Brian Goodwin, Beverage Director, The Gladly, Phoenix; Brad Moore, General Manager, Landry's Seafood, Denver; Walter Easterbrok, Beverage Program Manager, The Bowery Collective, NYC; Chas Williams, Head Bartender, The Oakland Art Novelty Company, Ferndale, MI; Andrew Fritz, owner, The Gladly, Phoenix; Leslie Ross, Bar Director of Treadsack and Creative Director of Canard, Houston; Sarah Akromas, Head Bartender, Ward III, NYC; and Kyle Thousand, General Manager, The Oakland Art Novelty Company, Ferndale, MI.

COMPETITIONS



The judging panel (left to right): Mathieu Gordon, a Grant family member; Michael Giardina Senior Brand Manager, Glenfiddich; Jonathan Grant, a Grant family member; Josh Weltmer, winner of the 2015 Glenfiddich Kindred Spirit competition; and Emily Coleman, Managing Editor of The Tasting Panel.

by Emily Coleman / photos by John Paul

When William Grant decided to transform his life savings into a distillery, he sought to produce the “best dram in the valley.” And for the past 129 years, Glenfiddich has embodied this vision. Showing off the diversity and versatility of its portfolio, *The Tasting Panel’s* Glenfiddich Kindred Spirit competition brought 14 bartenders from across the country to present how they serve Glenfiddich at their accounts. After several days of exploring Scotland and the Glenfiddich and Balvenie distilleries with Jennifer Wren, Brand Ambassador, Glenfiddich West, the contestants made their way to the Malt Barn Bar, located in the original building of William Grant’s distillery, to recreate their serve for a panel of judges.

In its second year, which we unofficially dubbed The Year of Smoke—since nearly half of the entries utilized a burning element in their serve and a couple of contestants’ wood was provided from American oak barrel shavings from Glenfiddich’s on-site cooperage—the five judges faced a very difficult decision of choosing between eight unique and perfectly-executed serves. Mathieu Gordon, a Grant family member, summed up the most important factors guiding the choice: “We are craftsman, looking for people who are showing off our craft, along with their own.” In the end, they concluded that Kyle Thousand, General Manager, and Chas Williams, Head Bartender, from The Oakland Art Novelty Company in Ferndale, MI, best expressed William Grant’s original dream and captured the spirit of Glenfiddich.

The Oakland Art Novelty Company, Ferndale, MI

What Detroit lacks in size, it makes up for in a creative and growing restaurant and bar scene, which has the city finally living up to its nickname, Renaissance City. One such establishment, The Oakland Art Novelty Company, takes the form of an early 20th century speakeasy and features craft cocktails. Representing this venue, Kyle Thousand, General Manager, and Chas Williams, Head Bartender, highlighted the Glenfiddich 15 with their serve.

The twosome delivers the whisky in a small bottle on a plank of white American oak. On this board, they place a small pile of wood chips soaked in fig balsamic vinegar, which is then lit on fire and the smoke is trapped with a Glencairn glass. The guest enjoys a piece of raw honeycomb covered in chocolate, before turning over the Glencairn, pouring the Glenfiddich 15 into the glass and sipping the whisky. All of these components play off of and complement the dark, fruity flavors in the Glenfiddich 15.

Much like Detroit itself, this seemingly simple serve packed a lot of complexity and integrated each component beautifully, which the guests at The Oakland seemed to appreciate: “If someone orders it,” Thousand notes, “another customer sees it and orders it, setting off a chain reaction down the bar.”



Ward III, NYC

Bringing Scotch into a Scottish tea room, the Spiked Tea Service serve from Sarah Akromas, Head Bartender of Ward III, and Kenneth McCoy, Creative Director for Public House Collective—which owns Ward III—pairs family-owned McNulty’s Teas from NYC, oaties (savory Scottish cookies), a selection of sweeteners (maple syrup, honey, orange marmalade, Demerara sugar cubes and slices of lemon and orange) with expressions of Glenfiddich. Akromas complements the Glenfiddich 12, 18 and 21 with apple and peach herbal tea and a honey and oat oatie; fruit and spice herbal tea and a banoffee oatie; and caramel tea and a maple pecan oatie, respectively. While she made these recommendations, she also explained that it was designed to be interactive, allowing the guest to choose their own whisky adventure.

COMPETITIONS

Tavern Law, Seattle

An often overlooked aspect of the dining experience, dessert can add something to any meal, and when the dessert is served in a mysterious smoke-filled glass dome, it adds a sense of mystery throughout the restaurant, sparking the curiosity of the surrounding guests. At least that's what Tavern Law's Emily Young, Executive Chef, and Nathaniel Steinberg, Director of Operations, experienced with their serve: a brioche bread pudding, topped with vanilla Chantilly, cider- and cinnamon-brazed apples, Scotch caramel and a pinch of sea salt. Dubbed the American in Speyside, this offering—which Grant family member Mathieu Gordon called the best bread pudding he has ever had—paired beautifully with the toffee and oak layers of the Glenfiddich 14 Year Old Bourbon Barrel Reserve.



The Bowery Collective, NYC

As a nod to his upbringing in upstate New York and to the meaning behind Glenfiddich—Scots Gaelic for “valley of the deer”—Walter Easterbrook, Beverage Program Manager of The Bowery Collective named their serve Dear Miss Valley. Easterbrook and Jose Cabrera, Head Bartender of The Bowery Collective, build the drink in an Old Fashioned glass over a large ice cube, and then combine Glenfiddich 21 Year Old, Campari, Antica Formula Sweet Vermouth, Ancho Reyes and a couple of dashes of chocolate bitters and garnish with a flamed orange. To accompany the drink, the duo places dark chocolate truffles with layers of Scotch caramel and chocolate ganache infused with orange zest, Antica Formula and a hint of cayenne, which play off of the toffee, fig and other exotic notes of the Glenfiddich 21.

Hunky Dory, Houston

Chef and bartending pair of Richard Knight, Executive Chef of Hunky Dory, and Leslie Ross, Bar Director of Treadsack and Creative Director of Canard, developed a beautiful menu of three courses and three corresponding cocktails for their serve. The first course was comprised of fish and chips tartare alongside a mizuwari-style highball drink without ice, featuring Glenfiddich 21 Year Old and sodium alginate-fortified Scottish Highland sparkling water; the second included black pudding in a crispy pastry over glazed onions, with Glenfiddich 15 Year Old neat and French Alpine still water; and the third consisted of a lardy cake with candied peel and fruit, next to a Scaffa variation of an Old Fashioned with Glenfiddich 18 Year Old, orange and Dr. Adam's Orinoco Bitters, whisky barrel stave Lyle's Golden Syrup and an orange peel garnish.



Morton's The Steakhouse, Denver

As an “amateur historian,” Julie Calabrese, Sales and Events Manager for Morton's The Steakhouse, Denver, looked to the past for her serve's inspiration. She begins her serve with a stone slab, representing the masonry involved in the building of the distillery in 1887, and a wooden board, a nod to the barrels that house the Scotch and the on-premise cooperage, on which she places a glass with a cooper rim, paying homage to the stills of Glenfiddich. The Glenfiddich 15 Year Old Solera Whisky accompanies chamomile cracked vanilla ice and homemade orange toasted barley bitters in the glass, revealing the earthy notes of the Scotch. This drink sits beside an elevated version of bar nuts that remind the guest of a Christmas morning, the first day that whisky ran from the Glenfiddich stills.



The Gladly, Phoenix

“We wanted to create a theater for all your senses,” mused Brian Goodwin, Beverage Director for The Gladly, located in Phoenix. Goodwin and Andrew Fritz, owner of The Gladly, did just that with their three-part serve, which drew on Goodwin's experience in the back of the house as a chef. The serve starts with Glenfiddich 14 Year Old Bourbon Cask paired with Houston Baby Bourbon chocolate s'mores; it then moves into a dram of Glenfiddich The Original with yuzu and green tea sorbet—a refreshing palate cleanser, which takes the guest to Glenfiddich 21 Year Old Grand Reserve with apple and pear compote on a Sailor Jerry caramel sauce. Finished with toasted pipe tobacco, this serve is truly a delight for all of your senses.

Landry's Seafood, Denver

Brad Moore, General Manager of Landry's Seafood, Denver, learned his love of cooking from his grandmother. He pulled from this skillset to build a serve that turned the traditional Scotch and cigar pairing on its head, by making the cigar an edible one. Moore pipes cold mascarpone mixture into cookie shells, overfilling one end by half an inch, and then rolling the end in an “ash” mixture, consisting of fennel stalks, toffee cinnamon almonds, powdered sugar and tapioca maltodextrin. He then burns oak in a glass and traps the smoke with another glass containing Glenfiddich 18 Year Old, a few drops of Aqua Panna and a zested orange peel. When the guest picks up the whisky, the smoke is released, further adding to the illusion of a cigar. ■■

