

Speech, members meeting #102

It's been commented that Hosts should endeavour to live up to §5.4 of the Norwegian Scotch Malt Whisky Society Articles, where it's stated that (and I quote) "The Organising member has to hold a speech not longer than 10 minutes regarding Scotch Whisky or related subject" (Unquote) rather than just reading whatever's printed on the box the Whisky of the Night came in. This, of course, can be rather challenging as most relevant topics have already been covered, some more than once.

A few speeches have been given on the different types of barrels used to mature whisky in and of the chemical interaction between "the alcohol" and the barrels, but have you ever wondered what happened to a whisky barrel when it's pensioned off? Does it go to the great cooperage in the sky, or does it pass on to another level of existence?

Having checked most if not all available sources on the Internet, it seems that when whisky barrels are rolled out of the distillery for the very last time, they do in fact still have a lot to offer the human race and there are many companies that specialise in manufacturing products, both small and large, from used whisky barrels.

- With two barrels and a plank you could have a sturdy rustic bar
- A slightly more sophisticated bar consists of two barrels cut down the middle and together with a plank of wood it makes quite a stunning bar. The open sides of the barrels face inwards and offer ample storage space for bar supplies.
- If a door is cut in a barrel, it can be turned into a classic storage place for bar supplies!
- Or how about a wine rack made from a whisky barrel? First the barrel is cut in two, hinged together and mounted on a support so it can be swung open. This way up to 38 wine bottles can be stored in a standard barrel.
- Another wonderful use for a barrel is to convert it into a wash basin or sink. One end of the barrel is removed and the sink fitted. Together with some plumbing, this gives you a wash basin that would be the envy of all your visitors!
- There are a lot of different tables, chairs, sofas and benches to choose between, all made from old whisky barrels. Some use staves as legs and the end of the barrel is used either as a table top or as a bar stool. You could of course make a bucket seat out a barrel, add some cushions and you have the best seat in the house! Chairs and sofas come in umpteen different variations, so you shouldn't have any problems finding one that even the most discerning house wife would both appreciate and love!
- Some barrels have even been turned into toys for the wee bairns. How about a toy train where the engine is made from a barrel and the coaches are made from barrels cut in half! Surely a winner!
- And you will of course need some good speakers when you play rousing Scottish music. *Have no fear, Pioneer is here.* You can choose between Vintage Darkwood or Original Lightwood Whisky Speakers where the cabinets are made from barrels used by Suntory to store and mature Japan's signature spirit.
- It would take to long to mention all the ornaments and artefacts made from whisky barrels, but there are artist out there who specialise in works of art made from whisky barrels which would add an air of sophistication to every home.
- Now, having furnished your house, how about the garden? Whisky barrels cut in two have long been popular fixtures in many gardens, either as water fountains or pots for plants.
- You could also make a wheel barrow for your garden. Cut a barrel in half, add a wheel and some handles and you have the most sophisticated wheel barrow you could ever wish for!

- Anything else? Well, when you arrive at a biker's convention on your 2.3 litre Triumph Rocket III with a motorcycle cart made from a whisky barrel in tow, your success with the lassies is guaranteed!
- However, the ultimate must be a whole house made from whisky barrels! There is a company that can supply you with what they term as a Whisky Barrel House. Imagine the patina in a house made from whisky barrels and furnished with fittings also made from whisky barrels! According to the description of such houses (and I quote) "Recycled, discarded wooden whisky barrels are used to construct the exterior of the house. The barrels are purchased from local Scotch whisky distilleries. The houses are entirely circular and smell slightly of whisky for many years after." (Unquote).
- And of course, to round it all off, you would attach the key to you Whisky Barrel House (and motorcycle) to a whisky wood key ring!

If all this sounds too good to be true, then take heart in the fact that all the products I've mentioned (plus many, many more) are all available on the Internet for the discerning whisky connoisseur.

If you are a gambling man (or woman) then perhaps the "Spot the barrel" competition is worth considering. A whisky barrel attached to a parachute is dropped from a plane just south of Port Ellen once a year and you are invited to guess where the barrel will land! What about the prizes? In 2007 they included a dream house on Islay, accommodation in a new Islay Hotel and several Islay and Jura single malt whiskies.

So, honourable members top up your tumblers and enjoy your whisky secure in the knowledge that every time you empty a bottle of whisky you are contributing to the survival of not only the whisky industry, but also of a booming second-hand whisky barrel industry!

"Slaandjivaa"!