A Symphony *of* Smoke and Style

Pairing some of the most feted peated whiskies from India and around the world.

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Photographs: Rajwant Rawat; Location Courtesy: The Claridges, New Delhi

As temperatures calm down, and the sun goes balmy in the day and evenings turn crisp, the weather almost calls out to the company of convivial spirits. Winter is the perfect season to enjoy heavier whiskies, smoky and oily flavours, besides peaty and heavy bodied ones. To complement this winter cool, Spice explores an interesting pairing of traditional smoky Scotch whiskies, from the Islay region in Scotland, and also some notable Indian selections with some delectable accompaniments to ensure a flavoursome journey of tastes and textures. As the Scottish say "Slàinte mhath"

A Peppery Island Experience—TALISKER 10 YO & PEPPER MUSHROOMS ON TOAST

Talisker 10-Year-Old whisky, known for its maritime character, combines smoky peat with a peppery kick, a touch of sweetness, and briny undertones. Pairing it with pepper mushrooms on toast creates a delightful harmony of flavours.

The earthy richness of the mushrooms, sautéed with black pepper, creates a natural pairing with Talisker's smoky and spicy profile. The pepper in the dish mirrors the whisky's distinct peppery notes, intensifying the spice while allowing the whisky's subtle sweetness to balance the dish. The mushrooms, with their umami depth, resonate with Talisker's smoky and

slightly saline character, creating a savoury synergy. The toast adds a crunchy, contrasting texture to the soft, tender mushrooms, enhancing the overall mouthfeel of the pairing. As the mushrooms' richness coats the palate, the whisky's peat and brine cut through, offering a refreshing lift.
Price ₹4,000

The Classic Islay and Peat Monster—LAPHROAIG 10 YO & DUTCH SMOKED CHEESE, COLD CELERY STICKS & WHEAT CRACKERS
Laphroaig 10-Year-Old whisky is known for its bold, distinctive character with pronounced peat smoke, iodine, and seaweed, along with hints of sweetness and a touch of oak. This intense whisky pairs exceptionally well with a variety of flavours, and Dutch smoked cheese, cold celery sticks, and wheat crackers create an intriguing and balanced pairing.

The Dutch smoked cheese's creamy texture and rich, smoky flavour harmonise beautifully with Laphroaig's robust peatiness. The subtle saltiness of the cheese further complements the whisky's coastal characteristics, while its smoky profile reinforces the whisky's deep, earthy flavours. Together, they create a complex, full-bodied experience where both the whisky and the cheese enhance each other.

Cold celery sticks provide a refreshing contrast to the smoky, intense elements of the whisky and cheese. Their crisp, clean taste acts as a palate cleanser, helping to cut through the richness of both the cheese and whisky. The natural freshness of celery offers a light, herbal element that complements the whisky's subtle medicinal undertones.

Wheat crackers, with their neutral and slightly nutty flavour, serve as a solid base for this pairing. They add a pleasant crunch and balance, allowing the more pronounced flavours of the Laphroaig and smoked cheese to shine without overpowering the palate. The combination of smoky, fresh, and neutral flavours creates a well-rounded pairing with bold contrasts.
Price ₹4,500

Sublime & Elegant—LAGAVULIN 16 YO & CHICKEN STEAK ON MASHED POTATOES Lagavulin 16-Year-Old whisky is known for its rich, smoky character, with notes of peat, dried fruit, and a hint of maritime brininess. This bold whisky pairs beautifully with a hearty dish like chicken steak on mashed potatoes, where the contrasting textures and flavours create a harmonious dining experience.

The smokiness of Lagavulin 16 complements the grilled or pan-seared chicken steak, enhancing its savoury, charred flavours. As the whisky's peaty richness envelops the palate, it draws out the subtle grilled notes from the chicken, creating an intense, smoky layer that elevates the dish. The whisky's underlying sweetness, with notes of dried fruit and vanilla, adds a touch of balance to the meaty flavours of the chicken.

The creamy mashed potatoes are a perfect counterpoint to the chicken and the whisky. The soft, buttery potatoes help mellow out the intensity of Lagavulin's smoke and peat, creating a smooth, comforting contrast. This pairing is ideal for those who appreciate robust flavours and are looking for a refined yet hearty dining experience.
Price ₹9,500

India`S Global Whisky—AMRUT & LAMB CHOPS WITH PEPPER JUS
Amrut whisky, a celebrated Indian single malt, offers a rich profile with flavours of tropical fruit, spice, and a gentle smokiness, making it an ideal companion for lamb chops with pepper jus. This pairing creates a complex balance of robust and complementary flavours. The lamb chops, with their tender and juicy texture, match beautifully with Amrut's malty sweetness and subtle smokiness. The whisky's spiced character enhances the natural flavours of the lamb, particularly when paired with the pepper jus. The peppery kick in the sauce echoes the warm, spicy notes in Amrut, creating a seamless flavour connection. The whisky's fruity undertones, often featuring notes of citrus, mango, and apricot, contrast the savoury depth of the lamb, adding a layer of complexity to the dish. As you sip the whisky, the fruitiness cuts through the richness of the lamb, providing a refreshing balance to the dish's bold flavours. The finish, which lingers with spices and soft wood smoke, pairs well with the pepper jus, leaving a warm, lasting impression on the palate. Ideal for a special meal, this combination is perfect for those who appreciate bold, well-rounded flavours.
Price on request (Limited Edition)

The New Face of Indian Whisky—CRAZY COCK DHUA & TANDOORI BARRA
Crazy Cock Dhua, a smoky Indian whisky, offers bold flavours of oak, spice, and a pronounced smokiness, making it an exciting pairing for Tandoori Barra, a traditional Indian lamb dish marinated in aromatic spices and cooked in a tandoor.
The smoky, peaty notes of Crazy Cock Dhua harmonise with the charred, smoky exterior of the tandoori-cooked lamb. The whisky's oak and spice profile intensify the earthy flavours of the marinade, which typically include ingredients like yogurt, garlic, ginger, and a blend of warm spices. The smoky depth of the whisky

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also enhances the tandoor's high-heat cooking, adding an extra layer of complexity to the tender, juicy lamb.

Crazy Cock Dhua's subtle sweetness balances the rich and slightly tangy flavour of the Tandoori Barra, particularly from the yogurt marinade, creating a perfect contrast. The peppery and spiced finish of the whisky mirrors the warm spices in the lamb, like cumin, coriander, and red chili, creating a seamless flow of flavours from bite to sip.

Price ₹8,500

The Peat Story— BOWMORE 15 YO - CREME BRULÉE

Bowmore 15-Year-Old whisky is celebrated for its rich complexity, featuring a harmonious blend of smoky peat, dark chocolate, and dried fruit notes, making it an exquisite pairing for crème brûlée. This classic dessert, with its creamy custard base and caramelised sugar topping, offers a delightful contrast to the whisky's bold flavours, creating a sophisticated tasting experience.

The smooth, velvety texture of crème brûlée complements the silky mouthfeel of Bowmore 15. The rich vanilla and eggy flavours of the dessert harmonise beautifully with the whisky's caramel and toffee notes, enhancing the overall sweetness. The custard's creamy richness is perfectly balanced by the subtle smokiness of the Bowmore, which adds depth to each bite. As you indulge in the crème brûlée, the whisky's dark chocolate undertones come forward, echoing the dessert's caramelised sugar layer. This interplay of flavours creates a luxurious symphony that lingers on the palate. Further, Bowmore's maritime influence, with hints of sea salt, provides a refreshing contrast to the sweetness of the dessert, adding an intriguing layer of complexity.

This pairing is perfect for those who appreciate the balance of rich and smoky flavours, offering a decadent yet refined combination.

Price ₹5,400

In wine, there may be truth, but whisky breeds pure desire!

** Prices mentioned are approximate since they vary according to state taxes*

Location Courtesy: The Claridges, New Delhi