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Wine & Spirit News

£25M NEW SPEYSIDE MALT WHISKY DISTILLERY OPENED BY FIRST MINISTER

Chivas Brothers, the Scotch whisky and premium gin business of Pernod Ricard, has moved to secure future malt supplies with the launch of the Dalmunach Distillery. The £25m state-of-the-art operation has been opened on the site of a former silent distillery on the banks of the River Spey.

Dalmunach Distillery, named after the nearby pool in the River Spey on whose banks the new facility sits, was officially opened today by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. The completion of the distillery in Carron sees the culmination of an investment package which has increased Chivas Brothers' malt whisky distillation capacity by 17% as it looks to support long-term global demand for its brands.

Situated on the site of the former Imperial Distillery which was mothballed in 1998, Dalmunach has been built using the latest innovations and environmental expertise such as heat recovery technology. It is the most energy efficient distillery within Chivas Brothers' portfolio, with a 20% efficiency improvement over traditional distilleries. Chivas Brothers recently won The Sustainability Award at The Drinks Business Green Awards with Dalmunach praised for its design efficiency.

Dalmunach is capable of producing up to 10 million litres per year, with the high quality Speyside style spirit used in bestselling blended whisky brands within Chivas Brothers' portfolio, which includes Chivas Regal, Ballantine's and Royal Salute.

Every element of the distillery design, including the unique still shapes, has been geared to producing the very highest quality Speyside malt whisky with a rich, fruity character, a vital ingredient to the highest quality blended Scotch whiskies.

Local Speyside companies were heavily involved in the Distillery's construction and five permanent employees have been recruited.

Laurent Lacassagne, Chairman and CEO of Chivas Brothers, comments: "Today is the latest culmination of our ongoing investment to satisfy the growing demand for our brands.

"Dalmunach Distillery is an excellent example of securing the future of the industry by respecting its heritage and it's fitting that the remnants from the old Imperial Distillery have been built into an extremely efficient distillery with an architecturally stunning design. It is a real pleasure to see this piece of land in Carron which has had a role in whisky making all the way back to 1897 play a future role in whisky production.

"With the opening today, over the last three years we have expanded our malt whisky distillation by 17% as part of an annual capital expenditure commitment of £60m per annum. This investment continues and we have already begun work on significantly increasing capacity at The Glenlivet."



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First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, said: “Scotch Whisky is one of Scotland’s iconic brands and is in huge demand all over the globe due to the exceptional quality the industry produces. It is hugely important to the Scottish economy and its protected EU status means it has an unmatched international reputation.

“The Dalmunach Distillery is one of a 115 across Scotland and it is a sign of continued investment from Chivas Brothers. It’s also fitting that this facility opens in the Year of Food and Drink as we celebrate and promote the magnificence of our natural larder.

“We want to work with firms to sustain and build on the success the industry enjoys – this distillery will play its part in that and will also contribute to the continued growth of Scotland’s economy as a whole.”

The distillery architecture of Dalmunach has been inspired by the shape of a sheaf of barley reflecting the core ingredient of single malt whisky. It houses eight unique copper pot stills, with a tulip shape used for the wash stills and an onion shape used for the spirit stills, replicating those from the Imperial distillery which was situated on the site from 1897 until 2012. In a departure from tradition, the stills have been positioned in a circular design that provides a unique aesthetic for the future.

Other original features from the previous distillery have been carefully incorporated to ensure a sense of heritage remains intact. Red brick from the original mill building has been reclaimed to create a feature wall in the new entrance area, and wood from the original washbacks has been used to form an entrance ‘drum’ and adorn the gable walls of the new tun room which contains 16 new stainless steel washbacks. A new 9.5m diameter mashtun has been installed which draws spring water for production from the site’s original water sources. Dalmunach also features a unique hexagonal spirit safe housing four safes with a waterfall feature which is a first in the Scotch whisky industry.

The Dalmunach Distillery will not be open to visitors but will be visible from the nearby Speyside Way walking trail. Great care has been taken to ensure the external façade of the distillery is in-keeping with its surrounding environment and the traditional architectural style of the region, thus providing an interesting and fitting new viewpoint for passers-by.

The design and construction of the distillery was overseen from start to finish by Douglas Cruickshank, who stepped back from his role as Chivas Brothers’ Production Director two years ago to concentrate on the new build until its completion.

Douglas commented: “All the people involved are justifiably proud of their part in this very successful project. Dalmunach is a shining example of the collaboration of many functions within Chivas pooling their knowledge, experience and creativity to deliver a modern distillery that has surpassed all expectations in respect of visual impact, plant performance, energy efficiency and spirit quality.”



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The completion of the project is a fitting end to Cruickshank's career which began at the age of 15 at the Imperial Distillery, he now takes retirement having come full circle restoring distilling to the same location after a 16 year slumber.

