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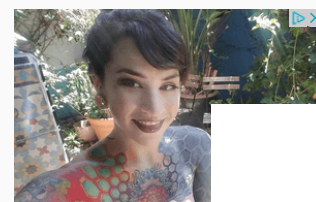
February 5, 2021 / Nick Leghorn

Whiskey Review: Andalusia Stryker Smoked Single Malt Whiskey



Texans love their BBQ as fiercely as New Yorkers love their bagels. Part of the reason behind that love of BBQ is the use of local wood to smoke the meats, releasing amazing flavors that you just don't get anywhere else in the world. But what if you take those same rich smoky flavors and infuse them into a whiskey? That's what Andalusia's Stryker is all about.

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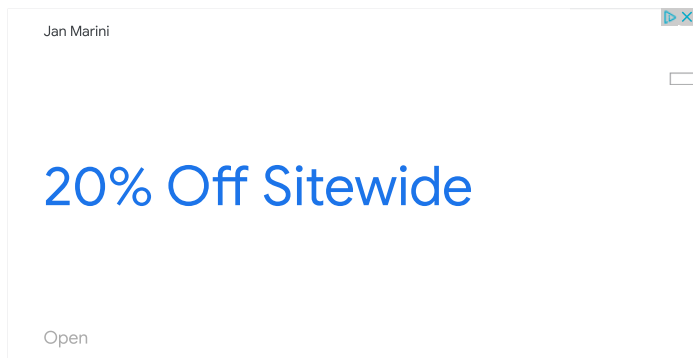


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History

Founders Tommy Erwin and Ty Phelps met while working at the Real Ale Brewing Company, a craft brewery just outside Austin. Tommy was a microbiologist running their lab, and Ty was the lead brewer at the time. The two formed a close friendship, and in 2014 they decided to take the plunge and break out on their own to start a distillery.

The concept they came up with was a two pronged attack on creating a truly great distillery. First and foremost: having a high-quality, locally-sourced craft distilled product. Second: taking advantage of a 2013 change in the Texas law that allowed them to sell whiskey in their tasting room, creating a truly great experience for those visiting their distillery.

They bought a piece of land and got to work, first grappling with the problem of what to name their distillery. After looking through some papers, they realized that the piece of land they were on was originally named Andalusia Ranches. After two years in development, they finally opened the doors in 2016.

The distillery remains a privately owned facility dedicated to local ingredients, including the use of rainwater collection tanks for use in the distilling process.

Product

- Learn More: [What's the Difference Between Whiskey, Bourbon, Scotch, and Rye?](#)

This whiskey starts with a grain bill of 100% barley. That barley is malted (meaning that it is allowed to germinate) which starts the chemical process changing the starch in the grains into sugar. Once the germination begins, the grains are heated to stop the process from continuing. For the Stryker version of this whiskey, those grains are heated and smoked using oak, mesquite, and apple wood — traditional types of BBQ wood from Texas.

Once the barley has been malted and heated, it is then cooked and fermented to turn those sugars into a mildly alcoholic beer. That “distiller’s beer” is then distilled three times in the Irish tradition (scotch whisky only goes through the still twice, typically) before being placed in a charred American oak barrel for a minimum of two years.

This whiskey is a [Certified Texas Whiskey](#), meaning that their spirit is a “grain to glass” production that is verifiably made here in the state of Texas.

Packaging

- Best French Whiskey
- Best Irish Whiskey
- Best Japanese Whiskey
- Best Mexican Whiskey
- Best Peanut Butter Whiskey
- Best Rum
 - Best Spiced Rum
- Best Rye Whiskey
 - Best Straight Rye Whiskey
- Best Scotch Whisky
 - Best Scotch Whisky Under \$20
 - Best Scotch Whisky Under \$30
 - Best Scotch Whisky Under \$40
 - Best Scotch Whisky Under \$50
 - Best Scotch Whisky Under \$60
 - Best Single Malt Scotch Whisky
 - Best Single Malt Scotch Whisky Under \$30
 - Best Single Malt Scotch Whisky Under \$40
 - Best Single Malt Scotch Whisky Under \$50
 - Best Blended Scotch Whisky
 - Best Blended Scotch Whisky Under \$20
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 - Best Blended Scotch Whisky Under \$40
- Best Single Malt Whiskey
 - Best Single Malt Whiskey Under \$20
 - Best Single Malt Whiskey Under \$30
 - Best Single Malt Whiskey Under \$40
 - Best Single Malt Whiskey Under \$60
- Best Straight Whiskey
 - Best Straight Bourbon Whiskey
 - Best Straight Bourbon Whiskey Under \$20
 - Best Straight Bourbon Whiskey Under \$30
 - Best Straight Bourbon Whiskey Under \$40
 - Best Straight Bourbon Whiskey Under \$50
 - Best Straight Bourbon Whiskey Under \$60
- Best Tequila
 - Best Tequila Under \$20
 - Best Tequila Under \$30
 - Best Blanco Tequila
 - Best Anejo Tequila



Overall, this is a pretty standard whiskey bottle — but with some striking label design.

The bottle itself is something we have seen time and again, which isn't to say it's a bad thing. This tried and tested design features a round body that tapers significantly from the base out towards the shoulder, and then gently rounds into a medium length neck. The whole thing is capped off with a plastic stopper.

What sets them apart here is the label on the bottle. A good deal of time and attention went into the design and, despite one of my pet peeves being large labels, I'll forgive it here. The art styling goes a long way towards making up for any obscuring of the whiskey. It evokes a turn of the century feeling (perfect for a town that also hosts the Blanco Pioneer Museum), but it manages to do so in a clean and modern way. No small feat, so kudos to their designer.

Neat

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Right off the bat, this whiskey is a shade darker than [their other triple distilled single malt whiskey](#). Since it's made using roughly the same process, this leads me to believe that this probably aged a bit longer in the barrel than the sister spirit.

Taking a sniff, there are definitely some good Texas BBQ aromas coming off the glass. I get the caramel and vanilla notes you would expect from the oak barrel aging, but there's also some mesquite and oak wood smoke mixed in. Even better, they are just the right intensity — saturated enough to be noticeable and add to the flavor combination, but not so "in your face" as to be overpowering. Just the right level.

Those aromas translate very well to the flavor of the spirit itself. At first, there's the usual caramel and vanilla notes with a bit of sourdough bread texture to it (probably from the malted barley), but that is very quickly joined by the wood smoke. Once again, oak and hickory are taking the lead, with a slight scrub oak smoke flavor lingering long into the finish.

And yet again, the smoke isn't overpowering. It absolutely steals the spotlight from the sweeter aspects, but it isn't as bold as something like the [Balcones Brimstone](#).

On Ice

Usually, with a little bit of ice, the flavors tend to calm down. Heavier and richer tones are mellowed out a bit, but at the expense of the lighter and sweeter aspects. In this case, though, there really aren't many lighter notes to begin with, so the results are pretty darn good.

The smoke was perhaps a little bit much for the caramel and vanilla flavors to handle when taken neat, but with a little bit of ice there's a better balance to the drink. The sweetness of the caramel comes through nicely throughout the sip and while the smoke flavors are toned down they still make themselves known. In the combination, I think I also start to pick up a little bit of dark chocolate. It's a nice balance that is delicious for sipping.

Cocktail (Old Fashioned)

There's some interesting dynamics going on here.

One thing I usually like in an old fashioned is the interplay between darker aspects of the whiskey and the fruity herbal aspects of the angostura bitters. In this case, the darker aspects are provided

courtesy of the BBQ smoke, and the combination of all those flavors (including the vanilla and sweet caramel) makes me think of taking a bite of apple pie after the end of a good smoky backyard BBQ.

It is absolutely delicious.

Fizz (Mule)

There are two things I'm looking for in a good mule. The first is a well-balanced interaction between the whiskey and the bitter ginger beer, and the second is a unique aspect that the spirit brings to the table that you don't see in vodka.

In this case, the sweet caramel and vanilla aspects of the whiskey do a great job balancing with the bitter ginger beer, bringing that flavor into check without completely quashing it. More like a complimentary duet instead of a battle to the death, which is great.

As for bringing something unique to the table, those smoky aspects are still present after all we've done to the cocktail. They have persevered, and in the process they add a depth and complexity to the cocktail that elevates it above a standard Kentucky mule.

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Overall Rating

I think this is an absolute win. They have made a single malt triple distilled whiskey that excellently incorporates some of the best flavors of their home state of Texas. It is one of the most truly local expressions of whiskey that I've had.

The only caveat I'm going to give on that is, just like with good Texas BBQ, your taste buds will be shot for the rest of the day. That smoke flavor has a tendency to stick around, and it can impact the flavor of things you eat or drink later. It becomes less pronounced in cocktails, and definitely is nowhere near as powerful as the [Balcones Brimstone](#), but still something of note. So, word to the wise: drink this last if you are drinking various spirits.

Andalusia Stryker Smoked Single Malt Whiskey.

Produced By: [Andalusia](#)

Production Location: [Texas, United States](#)

Classification: [Single Malt Whiskey](#)

Special Type: [Certified Texas Whiskey](#)

Aging: No Age Statement (NAS)

Proof: 50% ABV

Price: \$49.99 / 750 ml

Product Website: [Product Website](#)

Overall Rating:

All reviews are evaluated within the context of their specific spirit classification as specified above.

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Overall Rating: 5/5

A strikingly delicious whiskey from a new craft distillery.

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