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Review: Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Bourbon Round Thirteen

Posted on July 28, 2014 by Christopher Null | [Leave a comment](#)

Round 13 of Buffalo Trace's "Single Oak Project" experiment is here, putting us into the final few stretches of whiskey flights in this bold, 192-bottle Bourbon experiment.

Previous rounds can be found here:

- [Round One](#) (including all the basics of the approach to this series)
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- [Round Six](#)
- [Round Seven](#)
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- [Round Nine](#)
- [Round Ten](#)
- [Round Eleven](#)
- [Round Twelve](#)

This slightly oddball release features Bourbons which were all aged in barrels made from the top half of the tree, while keeping the other variables such as entry proof (at 125 proof), and stave seasoning (12 months) the same. The remaining variables, recipe (wheat or rye), grain size, warehouse type, and char level vary. As always, all are bottled at 90 proof.

Overall, this round shows lots of variability with a number of standouts — barrel #109 being one of the best whiskeys in the entire series to date. Lots of good wheat whiskeys here (though there are a few bums in the batch, too), but overall there's plenty of variety in this round to keep things interesting. If nothing else, I think this round alone shows that barrels from the top of the tree have pretty much no impact on the finished spirit.

Complete thoughts on round 13 follow.

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #11 – Muted nose, with straightforward wood elements the clearest component of this whiskey. The body is wood all the way, very drying on the finish, and with only some dried herbal elements to give it much life or interest. Not a "bad" whiskey, but it's one of the most boring of the entire Project to date. **B-** (rye, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, tight grain, 17 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #13 – Very heavy on the wood, this is big oak in a glass, tempered a touch by some winey notes on the mid-palate. The finish is as woody as the attack, with hints of licorice. A bit plain, but if you're a fan of heavily wooded whiskeys, you may find more to like. **B-** (rye, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, tight grain, 18 rings/inch, concrete ricks, #3 char, top half of tree)

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- n Garnishes (9)
- n Gin (96)
- n Hangover (25)
- n Liqueurs (237)
- n Mixers (125)
- n News (187)
- n Recipes (204)
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 - n Rated A+ (23)
 - n Rated A (372)
 - n Rated A- (873)
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 - n Rated B- (311)
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 - n Rated C- (75)
 - n Rated D/F (60)
- n Rum (189)
 - n Cachaca (19)
 - n Flavored Rum (29)
 - n Spiced Rum (21)
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Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #43 – Clear orange character on the nose, with woody, smoky overtones. On the body, it's not 100% harmonious, the fruit and wood elements doing a bit of battle on the palate. But with a little time in the glass, things settle down and it develops some spicy, dark chocolate notes that give it a curious uniqueness. **A-** (wheat, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, tight grain, 21 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #45 – Indistinct nose, but a little salty and sweaty. Some chocolate note emerges after a time, giving the overall spirit a salted caramel/candy bar character to it. Overall the body is modest to restrained, and the finish is short and fleeting. **B** (wheat, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, tight grain, 17 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #75 – The nose brings out notes of tobacco, lumberyard, and slight hospital notes. The body is much softer and sweeter, with silky caramel, some citrus peel, and fresh cinnamon character. Hot on the tongue and fiery on the finish, which tends to dull any nuance here. **B** (rye, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, average grain, 14 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #77 – Heavy on cherry notes, this is a fruitier Bourbon with plenty of charm. The fresh fruit character is pretty and almost intense, finishing sweet so that it almost comes across like a strawberry ice cream or sorbet. Quite pleasant, if not wholly nuanced. **A-** (rye, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, average grain, 13 rings/inch, concrete ricks, #3 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #107 – Ample wood, but just on this side of being too hoary for easy drinkin'. This whiskey develops some curious notes — licorice, dark cherries, chocolate — but wood remains the most dominant component. Very good, but not the wild curiosity of #109... **A-** (wheat, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, average grain, 14 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #109 – A solid, well-balanced, yet unexpected spirit. The nose is both spicy and woody, with some really unusual overtones of racy incense. The body is silky sweet and lush, balanced with notes of raisins, mincemeat, sugar, wood, and some intriguing savory notes. This is a unique bourbon not just for the Single Oak Project, but for bourbons altogether. You may not like it as much as me, but it's so much fun to explore you'd be a fool to pass it up. **A** (wheat, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, average grain, 12 rings/inch, concrete ricks, #3 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #139 – Classic but hot on the nose, with big notes of vanilla and hefty lumberyard character. Similar on the palate, but it's those wood elements that begin to overwhelmingly dominate as the whiskey aerates. Finishes very dry, almost dusty. **C+** (rye, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, coarse grain, 10 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #141 – Notes of petrol and gas fires and burnt wood up front, particularly on the nose, leading this whiskey into a more savory funnel than the others in the Project. More sweetness develops on the body — a brown sugar and caramel character — which creates balance with the more savory, and somewhat jarring, early encounter. **B+** (rye, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, coarse grain, 8 rings/inch, concrete ricks, #3 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #171 – The indistinct nose offers vague cherry syrup notes alongside lots of raw alcohol character. The body is a bit gentler, but its charms are fleeting. Lots of tobacco smoke and leather here, with touches of motor oil creeping up on you on the astringent finish. **C** (wheat, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, coarse grain, 9 rings/inch, wooden ricks, #4 char, top half of tree)

Buffalo Trace Distillery Single Oak Project Barrel #173 – Initially racy, this spicebox of a whiskey settles into a nice little groove, offering well-rounded tones of applesauce, citrus oil, cinnamon, and mellow wood notes, particularly on the finish. This is a whiskey that invites exploration and revisiting, a lush spirit that balances sweet and savory with aplomb. A striking difference to #171. **A** (wheat, 125 entry proof, level 12 seasoning, coarse grain, 9 rings/inch, concrete ricks, #3 char, top half of tree)

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- n Vodka (321)
 - n Flavored Vodka (127)
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 - n Bourbon (216)
 - n Canadian Whisky (30)
 - n Flavored Whiskey (38)
 - n French Whiskey (3)
 - n Irish Whiskey (51)
 - n Japanese Whiskey (13)
 - n Rye (53)
 - n Scotch Whisky (246)
 - n Taiwanese Whisky (3)
 - n Tennessee Whiskey (24)
 - n White Whiskey/Moonshine (38)
- n Wine (769)
 - n Port & Sherry (34)
 - n Sake (12)
 - n Vermouth (9)

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