

# WM BROWN





# *Distillery Tour*





TENMILE DISTILLERY, which operates from within a century-old dairy barn situated on 78 acres of pristine farmland in Upstate New York's Oblong Valley, feels a world away from Manhattan. In reality, it's about two hours, and requires taking the Metro-North Harlem Line from Grand Central and then walking five minutes from the Tenmile River stop.

"It's a lot easier to name the distillery after the train station than it is to get the name of the train station changed to match the distillery," says Joel LeVangia, Tenmile's co-owner and general manager. "The train conductor already calls Tenmile, so it makes it easy for people."

For all its bucolic, upstate charms—the site includes an apple orchard, and barrels are rested in a former mill—the operation's stated purpose is to evoke the product of a more distant place, during a particular era: single malt Scotch whisky, as it would have been made from roughly 1820 to 1970, a period LeVangia views as the category's "zenith."

"We're dialing our process backwards in time... we want to do it as close as we can to the way it was done at that high point," says LeVangia, who believes that the globalization of single malt Scotch in the decades since—and the resulting scaling-up of production to meet demand—has led to corner-cutting and compromises.

Tenmile turns the clock back in a multitude of ways. For starters, the malt that goes into its whisky is fermented for a full seven days (compared to the 48- to 60-hour period now typical of Scotland), time enough for it to undergo a second fermentation to foster softer, subtler flavors. Distillation itself occurs in Scottish-made copper stills featuring upward lyne pipes, whose extended, giraffe-like length (easily spotted through glass curtain walls that provide visitors with an unobstructed view) results in a lighter, fruitier spirit, thanks to the in-

creased distance between the distillate's evaporation point and where it condenses.

"We're fermenting more slowly, distilling more slowly... and we don't have a production quota," LeVangia says.

Tenmile's story began in March 2017, when the grounds were purchased from Allan Shope, a renowned architect who'd previously remodeled much of the site in hopes of turning it into a winery. By January 2020, the stills were making their first run of whisky from 100 percent New York State-grown barley, just in time for the pandemic to slow down the production table.

Fortunately, the nascent business—under the direction of master distiller Shane Fraser, himself a Scottish import—was in no rush. "We would be the slow whisky movement," LeVangia says.

Following typical Scottish standards, Tenmile waited a full three years before releasing the first bottling, allowing it to mature in ex-bourbon casks and ex-pinot noir French oak barrels it had sourced from renowned Russian River Valley winery Williams Selyem. (In the meantime, it launched its Listening Rock Gin and Sinpatch Vodka, each distilled from locally grown wheat.) Little Rest, as the finished whisky was dubbed, finally came to market in April 2023. But enough of the juice was left behind to ensure that the expression will get progressively older as it is released each spring and fall, to coincide with the blooming of the dogwood trees and the changing of the leaves, respectively.

"Our stuff is still only five years old, and we think that in three years—or, when it gets to be between eight and twelve—we're really going to blow the doors off," LeVangia says.

In the meantime, Tenmile will continue to toil from its little corner of New York—and if you hear its name called out on the train, do consider stopping by.



MATT HRANEK