



CASKMASTER

The Scotch Malt Whisky Society's Blind Tasting Championship 2026

Competition Rules and Terms and Conditions

1. Whiskies eligible for use in the CASKMASTER Championship will be SMWS cask strength bottlings and can be from any country of origin, e.g., Scotland, Ireland, India, etc. They will be SMWS bottlings only, served in 15ml samples.
2. The eight whiskies to be featured on the day of each heat and the grand final will have all the information you would find on the SMWS bottle label.
3. On the day of the competition, entrants will be seated at tables before eight pre-poured 15 ml glasses of malt whisky. Each glass will be labelled 1, 2, etc., up to 8.
4. Upon being seated and at the commencement of the competition, entrants will be supplied with a sheet of paper listing nine malt whiskies with the full SMWS bottle label information. The list of nine whiskies includes the eight whiskies on the table, plus one "red herring". The sheet will have a box for you to fill out with the number of the sample you think matches each label.
5. Entrants must put their name in BLOCK CAPITALS at the top of the answer sheet. Unidentifiable or illegible answer sheets will be disqualified.
6. Entrants will have thirty (30) minutes to assess the eight whiskies and identify which is which. Entrants must nominate their selections on the answer sheet with a numerical answer in each box for which whisky is which, with one box left blank for the red herring. Only one, distinct number should be entered in each box. Each number (1-8) should only be entered once.
7. There shall be no conferring amongst entrants during the competition. The competition is an individual event.
8. Entrants shall not bring to the table any item, chart, book, notes, device, etc., that may be deemed as assisting them in their task. Phones / devices shall be switched off for the duration of the competition. Any entrant found using such items for the purpose of gaining an advantage will be disqualified.

9. Still water and pipettes will be available, should entrants wish to reduce their whiskies. Spittoons will also be available.
10. At the conclusion of 30 minutes, the MC shall announce “All pens down”. The answer sheet will then be collected for judging.
11. The judges will score the answer sheets. Entrants will receive one mark for each correct answer and no mark for each incorrect answer. There will be no penalty (negative) marks for incorrect answers. In the event that the same number is entered more than once, no marks will be awarded.
12. Once the sheets have been marked and scored, they will be returned to each competitor, and the correct answers will be announced one by one.
13. Upon adding up the scores on all the answer sheets, the top five scoring entrants will be awarded 1st to 5th place, respectively. If any of those places are tied, we will go to a taste-off.
14. The taste-off will be top tied scores only (that could be all joint scores in the top 5) and will be in the following format:
 - The tied competitors assessed in groups (tied 1st place together, tied 3rd place together etc.) and members of each group will compete with the other members of that group.
 - Taste-off participants will be presented with three different whiskies and will be supplied with a list of six possible whiskies, that is, the three whiskies on the table, plus three red herrings. Taste-off participants must nominate their selections on the answer sheet with a numerical answer in each box for which whisky is which, with three boxes left blank for the red herrings.
 - Taste-off participants will be given a maximum of five minutes to attempt to identify the three whiskies and fill in the answer sheets.
 - Taste-off participants can finish before the end of the five-minute period.
 - When finished before the end of the five-minute period, participants should raise their hand to indicate when they have finished.
 - Taste-off participants will receive one mark for each correct answer and no mark for each incorrect answer. There will be no penalty (negative) marks for incorrect answers. In the event that the same number is entered more than once, no marks will be awarded.
 - If two or more competitors are tied on score, competitors will be ranked in the order that they completed their sheets.
15. The CASKMASTER Grand Final takes place on the 12th of November 2026 at The Vaults, Leith. Travel for those competing in London will be booked and paid for by SMWS. The same rules will apply for first round and taste off.
16. Entrants to the Championship and after party must be over the age of eighteen . No employees of the Artisanal Spirits Company or their families will be permitted to enter.

17. Entry and registration in the competition shall be by full prepayment of the entrance fee. The Standard SMWS Event Terms and Conditions (at the foot of these rules) apply.
18. The judges' decision is final in all matters, and no correspondence shall be entered into. By entering the Competition, competitors agree to be bound by these Rules.
19. **CASKMASTER The Scotch Malt Whisky Society's Blind Tasting Championship 2026** is subject to cancellation up until 14 days prior to the event with full refund on your The Scotch Malt Whisky Society's Blind Tasting Championship 2026 ticket being issued. The Scotch Malt Whisky Society accepts no responsibility for any other losses incurred from other expenses (flights, accommodation, etc.) arising from the cancellation or postponement of the event. If cancellation or postponement is a distinct possibility, SMWS will make every effort to inform members and ticket holders at the earliest opportunity.
20. The prizes for CASKMASTER The Scotch Malt Whisky Society's Blind Tasting Championship 2026 are as follows:
 - 1st prize in the Grand Final: one place on Coppercairn Speyside tour (Date TBC) & a lifetime Scotch Malt Whisky Society membership.
 - Prizes for 2nd & 3rd places in the Grand Final: a bottle of SMWS whisky
 - 1st to 5th places in each heat win entrance to the CASKMASTER Grand Final on 12th November 2026. In the event that any heat winners are unable to attend, the next placed competitor from that heat will be offered the place in the Grand Final.

Event Terms and Conditions

"Event" means an event held at a Venue.

"Venue" means the SMWS Members Room venue or other venue as stated on the Ticket.

"Ticket" means any ticket for an Event.

1. All Tickets are sold subject to these terms and conditions and any other rules and regulations referred to herein or that may be applicable to the Event or Venue at any time.
2. Only customers holding a valid Ticket will be admitted to an Event.
3. Events may only be attended by individuals over the age of 18 or the legal drinking age of the country where the event is taking place. Please refer to any other the restrictions advertised at the time of booking your Ticket. It is your responsibility to check that you and your guests are permitted to attend the Event and have the appropriate Ticket(s). Upon purchase, please check Tickets carefully as mistakes cannot always be rectified after purchase.

4. Tickets are not issued on a sale or return basis, and refunds will not be made on returned Tickets.
5. Your Ticket may be invalidated if any part of it is removed, altered or defaced. The Society will not be responsible for any Ticket that is lost, stolen or destroyed. It is not always possible to issue duplicate Tickets. If duplicates are issued, a reasonable administration fee may be charged.
6. Ticket offers (if any) are subject to limited availability. Unless otherwise stated, only one offer per Ticket shall apply. Proof of identity and concession entitlement (for example proof of age, employment or student status), if relevant, may be requested.
7. If you have any specific access requirements or concerns, please discuss any such issues before purchasing the Tickets with The Society by contacting member services at memberservices@smws.com or call 0044 131 555 2929 (Mon-Fri 9am-4.45pm). The Society will use its reasonable efforts to assist with any such special access requirements or concerns.
8. Tickets are sold subject to the Society's right to alter or vary the advertised Event where reasonably necessary. Event details are subject to potential change.
9. Where an Event is cancelled or re-scheduled, the Society will use its reasonable endeavours to notify you using the details you provided at the time of booking. The Society does not guarantee that you will be informed of such cancellation before the date of the Event. It is your responsibility to inform the Society of any change to the contact address, telephone number or email address you provided at the time of purchase.
10. Refunds are only considered on major cancellation, material alteration or by special exception determined by the Society in its sole discretion. For the purposes of these terms and conditions:
 - (a) 'major cancellation' is the cancellation of the Event in full (and not rescheduled).
 - (b) 'material alteration' is a change (other than a rescheduling) which, in the Society's opinion, makes the Event materially different to the Event that ticket purchasers, taken generally, could reasonably expect. In particular, please note that the following are not deemed to be 'material alterations': changes to the line-up of the Event; adverse weather conditions; curtailment of the Event where the majority of the Event is performed in full; and delays to starting an Event; and
 - (c) 'special exception' is an exception determined by the Society in its sole discretion. Where an Event is cancelled, rescheduled and you cannot or do not wish to attend the rescheduled Event or where there is a material change to the Event, you will be entitled to claim a refund in accordance with this clause.

11. Liability for the cancellation, rescheduling of an Event, or for material changes to an Event, will be limited to the face value of the Ticket purchased. Personal arrangements including travel, subsistence, hospitality and accommodation relating to the Event which have been arranged by you are at your own risk and the Society shall not be liable for any loss of enjoyment or wasted expenditure beyond the Ticket face value.
12. In order to claim your refund for a cancelled Event, please apply in writing to the Society, enclosing your unused Tickets (a) within 3 months after the original proposed date of the Event for a cancelled or rescheduled Event, or (b) as soon as possible for prior to the Event for an Event which has been materially changed.
13. The Society will not make any refund if Tickets and/or the relevant notification are not received within the above timeframes. Refunds will only be made to the person who purchased the Tickets.
14. The Society reserves the right to refuse you entry to and/or eject you from the Event and/or Venue (and may take appropriate action to enforce this right) in reasonable circumstances including without limitation for health and safety or licensing reasons; if you behave in a manner which has or is likely to affect the enjoyment of other persons at the Event; if you use or display threatening, abusive or insulting words or mannerisms; if you are found in possession of any prohibited item or substance; if, in the Society's reasonable opinion, you are acting under the influence of alcohol or drugs; if you fail, when required, to produce proof of identity or age; if you refuse to comply with the Society's security searches; if you breach these terms and conditions; or if your Ticket is void. No refunds will be given to you if you are refused entry or ejected due to your own behaviour.
15. If before or during the Event you have a complaint in relation to the Event (including without limitation in relation to your ability to view the Event), please contact a staff member promptly since complaints are very difficult to deal with after the Event. The Society will use its reasonable endeavours to rectify the situation which is the cause of your complaint, however under no circumstances shall the Society be under any obligation to rectify the situation. If before the Event you have a complaint or query in relation to your Ticket, please contact the Society.
16. By attending an Event, you give your express consent to The Society taking video or still photography during the Event, includes filming through CCTV which may be carried out for the security of customers or the prevention of crime. you give your express consent to the Society using photographs and/or video recordings including images of you both internally and externally to promote the Society. These images could be used in print and digital media formats including print publications, websites, e-marketing, posters, banners, advertising, film, or social media. If you do not wish your image to be used in this way, please make that known to a member of staff at the Event.

17. Images on websites can be viewed throughout the world and not just in the United Kingdom and some overseas countries may not provide the same level of protection to the rights of individuals as EU/UK legislation provides.
18. You can ask the Society to stop using your images at any time, in which case it will not be used in future publications but may continue to appear in publications already in circulation.
19. The Society reserves the right to conduct security searches at the entrances, on the site or when leaving and confiscate any item which in the opinion of the Society may cause danger or disruption to other persons at the Event or is one of the items not permitted in the Venue as listed in any of the Conditions. The following types of items may not be brought into any Venue: laser pens; fireworks or flame and/or smoke devices; your own food and drink (unless permitted by the Venue); bottles, cans or glass containers (unless permitted by the Venue); any item which the Society or Venue considers could be used as a weapon (including sharp or pointed objects such as knives); illegal substances and other intoxicating substances whether legal or not. Smoking is strictly prohibited except in designated smoking areas. The Society or Venue reserves the right to eject any person found smoking in prohibited areas within the Venue, without refund.
20. Depending on the type of Event, every effort to admit latecomers will be made at a suitable break in the Event, but admission for latecomers cannot always be guaranteed.
21. You must comply with any and all instructions given to you by the Society and/or all Venue staff and with all Venue regulations. The Society reserves the right to restrict access to parts of the Venue.
22. You must not leave any bags or other items of personal property unattended in the Venue. Any personal possessions or other items (including without limitation clothing, wallets and mobile telephones), which are found in the Venue, shall only be retained by the Venue for a limited time following their discovery. Please contact the Venue as soon as possible to collect any items left at the Venue which belong to you. you may be required to show reasonable proof of identification and ownership upon collection.



**THE SCOTCH MALT
WHISKY SOCIETY**