

Scotch isn't just your dad's drink anymore, says local expert



By Brock Weir

Some university roommates kick in little more than junk food to keep the dorm room hopping, but Keith Scott lucked out.

The Aurora resident was a university student when he was first introduced to the wide world of scotch courtesy of his roommate, whose father worked for a large distribution company in New York. The roommate would go home every weekend and return with a ?plethora of spirits?, unknowingly sending Keith on a journey which would take him from San Francisco to Scotland, and almost everywhere in between, as a roving scotch expert.

After taking his passion and expertise to countless communities, October 9 will be a first for him as he brings his love of scotch to a hometown crowd.

Keith will be on hand Thursday, October 9, at a special scotch tasting event to benefit the Aurora Historical Society and CHATS ? Community & Home Assistance to Seniors. There, he will take ticket-holders on a journey through the history and nuances of five single malt scotches.

?The scotch and whiskey industry is such a growing sector right now,? says Mr. Scott. ?The distilleries in the States and Scotland are investing millions into increasing their capacity. Worldwide demand is outstripping supply, unfortunately, but we're fortunate in Canada because we do have a good supply chain of so many different kinds of scotches.

?I don't work for any particular distillery, but when I go out and make presentations, it is exciting for me to go out and share the passion and excitement for it. I have done presentations [all over the world] but I have never done one in my hometown after living here for 18 years so, for me, this is kind of exciting!?

From those early days of sipping a variety of scotches with his roommate, Mr. Scott says he has seen definite demographic shifts in who is drinking scotch. More often than not, women are becoming primary scotch drinkers in bars, he said, giving something still often perceived as ?your dad's drink? a new lease on life for a new generation.

?Mixologists are owning the bar right now,? he says. ?The Old Fashioned is one drink everyone remembers, but they are doing so many different versions of it. We were in a downstairs basement apartment that was converted to this small little bar and the magic I saw happening in that little bar will get to North America soon. There are hubs of innovation in the scotch and whiskey realm and you see it extrapolated throughout the world.?

As he travels around the world, eventually zeroing in here at home, Mr. Scott says he tailors his scotch tastings to both challenge stodgy misconceptions about scotch, as well as give tasters a new appreciation on how to get the most out of their libation. Floral notes in scotch can often dictate certain regions where they are produced, but sometimes more peaty malts can either turn people on or off.

‘If you’re paying the money for a bottle of scotch, you should not listen to the marketer, you should enjoy whatever you want,’ he says. ‘There are millions of dollars put into an industry to characterize a certain brand and if that is what you like, so be it, but you should never say you want to stick to one region. Try everything. That is why it is so exciting to have these tastings and that is why they are becoming more and more popular.’

‘This is just about giving an introduction to something I have such a passion for. This is a category in the spirit industry that is growing huge. To share it with neighbours is kind of nice, actually! There are so many falsehoods out there that it is always nice to correct them and have people walking away saying ‘How can we do that?’ All too often we default to our normal drink at a social function and if you are at somebody’s house or bar you’ll order the same old thing. If you can expand your repertoire of spirits, it is kind of nice.’

The Aurora Historical Society & CHATS' Scotch Tasting Event will take place at Hillary House (15372 Yonge Street) from 7 - 9 p.m. on Thursday, October 9. Tickets are \$60 per person (\$55 for AHS members). For more information call Kelley at 905-713-3373.