

FOOD AND DRINK

Enjoy the Taste of Scotland

Whether your clients are looking for a family-friendly bar or a romantic restaurant, they'll find it in Scotland. Scotland's unspoiled environment and a climate without extremes provide the ideal conditions to produce high-quality food products. Our first rate seafood, beef, lamb, game, dairy produce, fruit and vegetables as well as, of course, whisky, give our cooks and chefs one of the world's best national larders to work with. What's more, we've developed a nationwide Quality Assurance scheme to ensure your clients have the best possible dining experience. All quality-assured businesses are assessed not only on food, but also on ambience, cleanliness and service. Check out www.eatScotland.com – it will help you confidently recommend restaurants to your clients, and even help plan a gastronomic tour of Scotland!

Top 5 Whisky and Scottish Dishes

- 1) **Haggis** is made from sheep's 'pluck' (heart, liver and lungs) minced with onion, oatmeal and spices and is traditionally served with 'neeps and tatties' (Scots: yellow turnip and potatoes, boiled and mashed separately) and a 'dram' (i.e. a glass of Scotch whisky), especially as the main course of a Burns supper. However it is also often eaten with other accompaniments, or served with a Whisky-based sauce. www.macsween.co.uk
- 2) **Arbroath Smokies** are prepared using traditional methods dating back to the late 1800s, involving salting and smoking the local Scottish fish, haddock. Having achieved a unique status (being named part of the EU's Protected Geographical Scheme), Arbroath Smokies are now Scotland's equivalent to Parma Ham! www.arbroathsmokies.net
- 3) **Islay Malt Whisky** is Scotch whisky made on the isle of Islay, the southernmost of the Inner Hebridean Islands located off the west coast of Scotland. There are eight active distilleries on the island, as of early 2008, with a ninth being made ready for production. The distilleries along the southeastern coast of the island, Laphroaig, Lagavulin, and Ardbeg, have the strong peaty character which is considered to be characteristic of the Islay malts, and is ascribed both to the water from which the whisky is made and to the peating levels of the barley. www.islaywhiskysociety.com
- 4) **Speyside Malt Whiskies** are single malt Scotch whiskies, distilled in Strathspey, the area around the River Spey in Moray and Badenoch and Strathspey, in northeastern Scotland. It is home to approximately half of Scotland's malt whisky distilleries. This small area of land located to the north west of Aberdeen produces mellow, sweet, malty and particularly fruity malty whiskies. Follow the world-famous Malt Whisky Trail through Speyside to seven working distilleries, including a fascinating cooperage and a historic distillery. www.maltwhiskytrail.com
- 5) **Scottish Seafood** is the best seafood in the UK. Travel around the coast of Scotland and you can sample the very best lobster, oysters, crab, mussels and prawns caught the very same day by local fishermen. The Scottish seafood trail takes you along the west coast to some of Scotland's best restaurants, famous for their world-class seafood. www.theseafoodtrail.com

Whisky, the Water of Life

Ask people what they associate most with Scotland and you'll probably get a variety of answers – tartan, golf and Robert Burns would certainly all be mentioned. But the most common answer is likely to be whisky.

Acknowledged as Scotland's national drink, whisky – in the Gaelic, *uisge beatha* (pronounced oosh-ga beh-huh), meaning 'water of life' – has been produced here for longer than anyone can remember. Something that began centuries ago as a way of using up rain-soaked barley after a wet harvest, the whisky industry has now grown into one of the country's biggest earners, bringing in hundreds of millions of pounds every year. If whisky is one of your clients' primary interests, then be sure to arrange a tour through a specialist in Scotland who can help you build a whisky itinerary. Did you know that Scotland has two whisky trails? The Malt Whisky Trail in Speyside and the West Coast Malt Whisky Adventure. Check out www.maltwhiskytrail.com and www.whiskycoast.co.uk for more information.

Food and Whisky Festivals

CELTIC FOOD AND DRINK FESTIVAL

26th April, 11am-4pm

Scottish Crannog Centre, Kenmore, Perthshire

Going back to the Iron Age at the Scottish Crannog Centre needn't mean mouldy old grub. The aroma of Celtic spit-roast at this food and drink festival would be enough to make anyone's mouth water. The festival's prehistoric cooking demonstrations include not just the spit roast, but pit cooking, bread baking and other ancient techniques, local smoked meats, dairy products and tasty herb and meat dishes all washed down with authentic beverages.

Website: www.crannog.co.uk

THE SPIRIT OF SPEYSIDE WHISKY FESTIVAL

1st-10th May

All across Speyside, Aberdeenshire

Celebrate whisky, music, food and fun at the biggest ever Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival at the opening event of Homecoming Scotland's Whisky Month. Whisky lovers can look forward to a 10-day extravaganza across stunning Speyside, a region which produces some of the most famous malts in the world.

The special Homecoming Scotland 2009 programme will mark the event's 10th anniversary, bringing some exciting new events, including a series of distillery open door days, smugglers' trails and whisky/food matching dining opportunities.

There is also the Scottish Serenade – a dramatic musical celebration of Speyside's heritage and traditions. And don't forget to take in the way-marked Malt Whisky Trail. With only three out of the top 10 best selling malts produced outside Speyside, this is a festival not to be missed!

Website: www.spiritofspeyside.com

LOCH FYNE FOOD FAIR

9th-10th May (11am-6pm)

Next to the Loch Fyne Oyster Bar, Clachan, Cairndow, Highlands.

A celebration of local food with a farmers' market and food stalls including producers such as Winston Churchill Venison, Isabella's Preserves, Gillies Fine Foods and Fyne Organics. Drinks are supplied by Fyne Ales plus specially selected wines from Europe and New Zealand.

Stalls open 11am-6pm. Free admission during the day. No tickets required. (parking £3 per vehicle).

Website: www.lochfyne.com

ISLAY MALT AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

23rd-31st May

Various venues, Islay

Feis Ile – the Islay Festival of Malt and Music – was founded by the local people of Islay in 1986 to celebrate the heritage and culture of Isle of Islay.

Since 2000 *Feis Ile* has been run in conjunction with the distilleries of Islay and Jura and Port Ellen Maltings. Each distillery has its own open day, putting on special events. Islay has a wealth of musical talent which is very much in evidence at the ceilidhs, while mainland artists are also brought to the island for the festival week.

Website: www.islayfestival.org

HIGHLAND FEAST

Every weekend in September

Across the Highlands and Islands

This is the 11th successful year of the North's biggest food and drink festival staged in a number of diverse and dramatic locations across the beautiful Highlands and Islands. Celebrating the finest food, drink and hospitality the Highlands have to offer, Highland Feast's established recipe is based on three key 'ingredients' – Fresh. Local. Quality. Events include culinary cruises, porridge-making championships, farmers' markets, distillery visits and Nairn Fresh Food Fun Day. These packages offer tailor-made Feast packages and affordable family deals to guests and visitors attending Highland Feast events.

Website: www.highlandfeast.co.uk

Farmers' Markets

Local growers and producers take personal pride in the food they bring to their Farmers' Market and want you to enjoy it. The emphasis is on freshness, quality and value for money. Buying locally means you can ask how the food is produced and grown and at the same time customer feedback is appreciated by the producer.

Buying locally also reduces food miles and the stages in the food chain from fork to plate. It puts money back into the local rural economy thereby sustaining and creating jobs.

Most Farmers' Markets are held monthly and at weekends and are run by farmers and producers themselves or by town centre management companies, local councils, community councils or private companies. All have their main focus on top quality foods and products, grown and produced locally.

Many markets widen their appeal by including garden plants and handcrafts and by inviting producers from all parts of Scotland to attend their markets, giving the public real choice and a unique opportunity to see the variety of food produced on a small scale in Scotland.

For more information and Scottish Farmers' Markets Calendar please visit a website of Scottish Association Farmers' Market Members: www.scottishfarmersmarkets.co.uk

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Want to know more about Scotland?

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