



THE BEST SCOTCH UNDER \$50

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(illustration: Elizabeth Reyes)

You know who knows best which bottles to buy? The people who pour and sell drinks—that’s who. We asked dozens of top bartending and spirits industry professionals to tell us which bottles they love and why.

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Heads up: The numerical order below is not organized by importance or quality; it’s an alphabetical list, not a ranking. Prices are averages and can vary from state to state.



1: ABERLOUR 12 YEAR (\$49)

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“It’s a beautiful expression of Speyside malt with sherry influence—all that is great about that combination.”—H. Joseph Ehrmann, owner of San Francisco’s [Elixir](#)



2: ANCNOC 12 YEAR (\$42)

“It’s a pretty and delicate malt showing the non-sherry Speyside style.”—David Y. Dong, bartender at New York City’s [North End Grill](#)



3: [ARDBEG 10 YEAR](#) (\$49)

“If you like peaty [scotches](#), this is your go-to. It’s an amazing scotch known for its intense smokiness, but it’s complex at the same time.”—
Tomas van den Boomgaard, beverage manager at [The Langham, Chicago](#)



4: [AUCHENTOSHAN BARTENDER'S MALT](#) (\$45)

“I worked to blend this malt with bartenders from around the globe. It’s a limited-edition release and features a variety of different barrel finishes. It’s great for the scotch nerd in your life.”—Jonathan Shock, head bartender at Detroit’s [Prime + Proper](#)



5: [AUCHENTOSHAN 12 YEAR](#) (\$46)

“It’s a fantastic triple-distilled Lowland whisky and a great quality scotch for exploring another region than Speyside.”—Sam Willy,
restaurant manager at New York City’s [Gabriel Kreuther](#)



6: [BANK NOTE](#) (\$19)

“This is a blend of five-year-old scotches that brings sweetness in the first taste of vanilla and light fruits to finish with oak barrels. I use it
for [Rob Roys](#).”—Mcson Salicetti, head bartender at New York City’s [Crimson & Rye](#)



7: BANK NOTE PEATED RESERVE (\$26)

“It’s a workhorse blended scotch perfect for making cocktails. Initial roundness leads to a dry, spicy finish with just a hint of peat.”—Paul McGee, owner and bartender at Chicago’s [Lost Lake](#)



8: BLACK BULL 12 YEAR (\$49)

“It’s a beautiful blend that’s 50 percent malt and 50 percent grain at 50 percent ABV. It’s a really interesting blend—a lot of sherry influence, dried red fruit, toffee and even some peat. I think a lot of people trying this for the first time wouldn’t even think it was a blend.”—Brian Means, bartender at San Francisco’s [Mina Group](#)



9: COMPASS BOX GREAT KING STREET ARTIST'S BLEND (\$42)

“It’s a really fantastic high-quality blended scotch. John Glaser won the innovation award multiple times ,and this explains why.”—Willy



10: THE FAMOUS GROUSE (\$28)

“An easy-to-use bottle with well-balanced content, The Famous Grouse can work great with many types of cocktails, both stirred or made with fresh citrus.”—Lucinda Sterling, managing director at New York City’s [Middle Branch](#)



11: GLENFARCLAS 12 YEAR (\$49)

“The curve of the neck, the simple colors and the blue sleeve contribute to an aesthetically and ergonomically delightful pour, and I guess it doesn't hurt the product inside is an absolutely lovely example of the more approachable Speyside style. It looks right at home on the shelf at the cabin.”—Peder Schweigert, general manager at Minneapolis' [Marvel Bar](#)



12: GLEN GRANT 10 YEAR (\$45)

“This wonderful Speyside is a great entry-level scotch.”—Ann-Marie Verdi, co-owner and beverage director at Los Angeles' [Bellwether](#)



13: GLEN GRANT 12 YEAR (\$47)

“It's a beautiful single malt with a flavor profile going from orchards to gingerbread.”—Willy



14: GLENMORANGIE THE ORIGINAL 10 YEAR (\$38)

“It's a very well-established brand and for good reasons. This scotch is very well-balanced with the right amount of fruity, spicy and floral notes. It's a big bang for your buck.”—Van den Boomgaard



15: HIGHLAND PARK MAGNUS (\$49)

“Magnus has a light smoke and great vanilla notes. It’s a single malt for a great price, and notes of oloroso sherry run through the spirit.”—

Max Green, senior bartender at New York City’s [Amor y Amargo](#)



16: HIGHLAND PARK 12 YEAR (\$48)

“The Orcadian peat in this scotch offers some smoky yet floral notes. There are hints of oloroso sherry which add to the perfect balance of smoky and sweet. It’s perfect for an [Old Fashioned](#).”—Salicetti



17: ISLE OF SKYE 8 YEAR (\$28)

“This blended whisky has a high amount of single malt, giving it plenty of body to stand up to mixing and elegant enough to drink on its own.”—Schweigert



18: LAPHROAIG 10 YEAR (\$46)

“This scotch is perfect for those that like a peaty yet balanced scotch. Cracking open a bottle of Laphroaig is like walking through a Christkindl market with the smell of roasted candied nuts in the air with slight hints of vanilla and anise.”—Gil Izaguirre, beverage director at Chicago’s [Honey’s](#)



19: MONKEY SHOULDER (\$43)

“It’s a great scotch for anyone. Seasoned scotch drinkers love it, and folks that are switching from bourbon to scotch take to it easily given its similar price point and mild complexity.”—Blake Pope, beverage director at Davidson, N.C.’s Kindred



20: SHACKLETON BLENDED MALT (\$37)

“Whyte & Mackay (the owners of Jura and Dalmore distilleries) bring back a bit of history with this scotch. Most importantly, the aromatics on this are lovely. With hints of butterscotch and Golden Grahams, it will have you thinking you’re at Granny’s.”—Izaguirre



21: STRONACHIE 10 YEAR (\$44)

“What a bargain! It tastes of honey with a medium finish.”—Verdi



22: TALISKER STORM (\$49)

“I’ve always loved Talisker 10-year-old, but as whiskey stocks get tighter, it sure is nice to taste the quality of Talisker whiskies without the sticker shock. This blend has undisclosed Talisker whiskies of different ages and slightly less peat than the 10-year-old. The creaminess and tropical fruit remind you why Talisker is a favorite among even the hardest to please malt snobs.”—Neal Bodenheimer, owner and bartender at New Orleans’ Cane & Table and Cure



23: **TOMATIN 12 YEAR** **(\$36)**

“This whisky sees time in both bourbon and sherry barrels, providing vanilla, spice and savory nuttiness.”—Jamie Jennings, general manager and sommelier at Tulsa's [Hodges Bend](#)

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