LA TRIBUNE DU DR PATOCHE

"COULD TOO MANY WHISKIES KILL WHISKY ?
THE NECESSARY QUEST FOR BALANCE"

The global whisky market has never been so dynamic. New distilleries are popping up all over the globe, from the United States to France, including Japan and Taiwan, not forgetting Scotland and Ireland. The shelves of wine merchants and supermarkets are overflowing with a stunning diversity of single malts, bourbons, ryes, French, Indian whiskies, and many others. This effervescence, as delightful as it may be for the enthusiast, nonetheless raises an essential question: **"Could too many whiskies, in the long run, kill whisky?"**

It's not about advocating for scarcity or regretting globalization. Diversification is a richness; it offers consumers an unprecedented aromatic and cultural palette. But this frenzy, dictated by growing demand, particularly in the premium and super-premium segments, poses a double risk to the industry: that of **quantity at the expense of quality** and that of **market saturation**.

The Mirage of Overproduction...

The first threat is the most insidious. To meet the explosion in demand, particularly for whiskies with an age statement (such as 10, 12, or 18 years old), both major houses and young ventures have massively increased their production capacities in recent years. However, whisky is a product of time. A 12-year-old Scotch single malt cannot be rushed!

Faced with commercial pressure, the risk is seeing a proliferation of shortcuts. This includes the use of **inferior quality casks**, **shortened aging** for "No Age Statement" (NAS) versions, **excessive dilution** to maximize volumes, or even **abusive coloring**.

While high-end whiskies continue to shine, the informed consumer can already perceive a **decline in quality** in some entry or mid-range references. If most of the offer degrades, even slightly, the overall brand image of whisky—that of a noble and patient spirit—is threatened.

Speculation and Inflation that drive away the connoisseur

The second deviation is the **surge in prices**, fuelled by increasing production costs, but also by fierce **speculation** on rare or limited-edition bottles. Whisky has become a financial asset, a form of investment that **has sent prices skyrocketing beyond all reason**.

This inflation transforms a product of pleasure and tasting into an inaccessible collector's item or a simple tool for speculation. By excluding a portion of passionate enthusiasts who can no longer afford to keep up, whisky is being cut off from its historical consumer base, **in favour of investors who will never drink it**. The market becomes strained, fragmented, and small distilleries find themselves in difficulty faced with general overcapacity.

The Urgency of Discernment

For diversity not to become synonymous with confusion, and for growth not to turn into a speculative bubble, the industry must find its way back to wisdom.

1. **Priority to Quality and Transparency**: Brands must resist the temptation of quantity and be more transparent about the origin of casks, maturation methods, and eventual filtration.
2. **Educate the Consumer**: The role of wine merchants and specialized media is crucial to guide the enthusiast through this plethora of options and protect them from "bad deals".
3. **Value Patience**: Time remains the main ingredient of whisky. Distilleries committed to the long term and refusing compromises will be the guardians of tradition and quality.

Whisky is the art of waiting. If the thirst for profit pushes the industry to skip steps and flood the market with hasty production, there's a risk of transforming a world heritage into a standardized mass product. The excess of whiskies, in this scenario, wouldn't kill whisky, but it would **make its soul disappear**.

It's time for the industry to put **respect for time and taste** back at the heart of its strategy.

The balance between **tradition and innovation**, between **quantity and excellence**, is the only guarantor of whisky's longevity and nobility.

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Dr Patoche