

# McConnell's Irish Whisky now available in SA

One of Ireland's most cherished whiskey brands, McConnell's Irish Whisky, embarks on a new chapter in its journey as it's now available in South Africa. This whiskey is now within reach for South African connoisseurs, thanks to the renaissance led by the Belfast Distillery Company in collaboration with Firebrand Africa.



John Kelly, chief executive at McConnell's Irish Whisky. Image supplied

With roots tracing back to the year 1776, McConnell's Irish Whisky boasts a storied past, founded by the esteemed McConnell family, who were revered blenders, bottlers, and distillers in Belfast City over three centuries. A testament to their success, McConnell's thrived for more than 150 years, etching its name in the annals of Irish whiskey history. However, the whiskey industry faced its trials in the form of fire, war, political turmoil, and technological advancements, leading to a decline in the 1930s.

Fast forward to 2019, and McConnell's Irish Whisky has experienced a revival, spreading its wings to over 40 global markets. Now, with great anticipation, the Belfast Distillery Company eagerly anticipates the inauguration of the new McConnell's Distillery and Visitor Experience. Housed in a Grade A listed building - A wing of The Crumlin Road Gaol - this venture promises a journey into the heart of McConnell's legacy.

John Kelly, chief executive at McConnell's Irish Whisky, recently graced South African shores, bringing with him the compelling story of McConnell's and its ambitious future endeavours, coinciding with his attendance at Whisky Live.

Kelly remarked, "In partnership with Firebrand Africa, we are thrilled to introduce McConnell's Irish Whisky to South Africa, sharing the rich history and heritage of our brand with this region. Our schedule is bustling, with planned visits to Cape Town and our participation in Whisky Live in Johannesburg, where we will present our portfolio of premium products.

"I am eager to meet fellow whiskey enthusiasts and share the remarkable journey of McConnell's Irish Whisky, including our esteemed 5-Year and Sherry Cask Finish expressions."

Carolina van der Horst, managing director of Firebrand Africa, expressed her excitement: "We are delighted to welcome McConnell's into our brand portfolio. John's presence in South Africa for the launch of the Sherry Cask Finish and Whisky Live presents a wonderful opportunity to introduce these expressions to a wider audience, paving the way for exciting new launches and activations in 2024."

During his visit, Kelly showcased two of McConnell's award-winning products. The original McConnell's Irish Whisky 5 Year, a blend of Irish malt and grain whiskies, gently matured in select bourbon casks, imparting notes of vanilla sweetness, ripe fruits, butterscotch, and pepper spice. This 5-year expression is bottled at 43% ABV.

Also debuting in the South African market is McConnell's Sherry Cask Finish, aged for five years, initially matured in first-fill select Bourbon barrels and then finished in the finest Oloroso Sherry Casks, unveiling rich aromas of dried figs, dark chocolate, and lingering spice. It is bottled at 46% ABV, non-chill filtered.

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