

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Johnnie Walker releases limited-edition Blue Label with musical campaign

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Umami, a rich and savory flavor often associated with meat, especially those that are grilled or smoked, makes its debut within the new Johnnie Walker launch. Image credit: Johnnie Walker

By ZACH JAMES

Scottish whiskey distiller Johnnie Walker is giving a familiar favorite a rare new flavor.

The Diageo-owned brand's Blue Label is getting an update with the Blue Label Elusive Umami, a limited-edition release made in collaboration between Johnnie Walker's master blender Emma Walker and Japanese three Michelin-starred chef Kei Kobayashi. In accordance with the new drop, a musical marketing endeavor centered on the sensorial nature of the beverage and featuring a new song from American music producer and DJ Honey Redmond known by the stage name Honey Dijon has been launched.

"This limited edition release represents our commitment to push the boundaries of what's possible in whisky and Johnnie Walker Blue Label Elusive Umami does just that," said Julie Bramham, global brand director at Johnnie Walker, in a statement.

"In partnering with Chef Kei to create this unique liquid, we're driving intrigue and excitement to recruit a new generation of whisky lovers enhancing a traditional drinking moment to create an immersive experience that elevates all of the senses."

New notes

Umami, a rich and savory flavor often associated with meat, especially those that are grilled or smoked, makes its debut within the new Johnnie Walker launch.

The Blue Label Elusive Umami combines the richness and dense flavors that make up the "fifth taste" with notes of sweetness, drawing upon blood oranges, red berries, grilled pineapple and "sweet wood spice." Hits of salt and pepper compound on the caramelized miso base to create a long and fruity finish.



Blue Label Elusive Umami is an incredibly rare beverage to distill due to its complex combination of flavors. Image credit: Johnnie Walker

“Umami possesses a mysterious quality that ignites our senses, revealing sumptuous taste, complexity and depth,” said Mr. Kobayashi, in a statement.

“Encapsulating that alluring flavor through Johnnie Walker Blue Label Elusive Umami allows you to immerse your palate in an exquisite Scotch Whisky of subtle richness.”

The new limited-edition beverage is incredibly elusive to distill, as its name denotes.

Only one in 25,000 casks of Blue Label produced at inland and coastal distilleries holds the unique notes once matured, making each bottle a hand-picked, uber-exclusive experience.



Each bottle comes in a protective, yet stylish, gift box. Image credit: Johnnie Walker

Although it was exclusively available at the Johnnie Walker Princes Street distillery in Edinburgh in September 2023, Blue Label Elusive Umami is now available around the globe as of Oct. 16. In the U.S. it retails for \$370 per bottle.

“When we set out to create Johnnie Walker Blue Label Elusive Umami, it wasn’t just a blending experience, but a gastronomic exploration,” said Ms. Walker, in a statement

“Getting acquainted with the intensity of the umami flavor was the key to creating this exceptional Scotch Whisky.”

Musical attachment

To celebrate the new release, Johnnie Walker is partnering with the Grammy-award-winning Ms.Redmond to create a musical accompaniment to the beverage.

Called "Earthly Delights," the song is backed by an otherworldly film, showcasing the artist transformed into a variety of gold-colored statues in front of colorful and often galactic backdrops.

In the video, Blue Label Elusive Umami appears frequently amidst the same explorations of flavor and sensorial experiences present throughout the rest of the content.

'Earthly Delights' by Johnnie Walker Blue Label x Honey Dijon

In another entry into this musical campaign, Ms. Redmond appears on camera in conversation with Ms. Walker herself.

"What inspired the creative process behind Earthly Delights' were really the notes of Elusive Umami: smokey, earthy and with a unique finish," says Ms. Redmond, in the video.

"So, I really wanted to connect the sensory of sound with the sensory of taste," she said. "Whenever you create music, it's just about combining the different elements that sort of fit together in a way that gives an emotional reaction.

"All of the elements dance together."

The Sound Of Umami by Johnnie Walker

In creating the sound behind the song, Ms. Redmond utilizes nature sounds to ground the performance amidst the grand and otherworldly visuals surrounding the piece. This follows a recent uptick of music-based activations within luxury.

In July 2023, French Cognac brand Rmy Martin teamed up with American singer-songwriter Usher for a new campaign ([see story](#)), seemingly kicking off the season of music industry ties.

The very next month, French fashion house Louis Vuitton launched a new series called "Beyond Music," spotlighting the work and performance of Congolese-Belgian singer-songwriter Marie-Pierra Kakoma, who goes by the stage name of Lous and the Yakuza ([see story](#)). A few weeks later, online retailer Farfetch ([see story](#)) and Rmy Martin ([see story](#)) unveiled their own respective celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the hip-hop genre.

More recently, during Paris Fashion Week, Italian fashion house Valentino worked with English singer-songwriter FKA Twigs to reveal its upcoming spring-summer 2024 collection ([see story](#)).