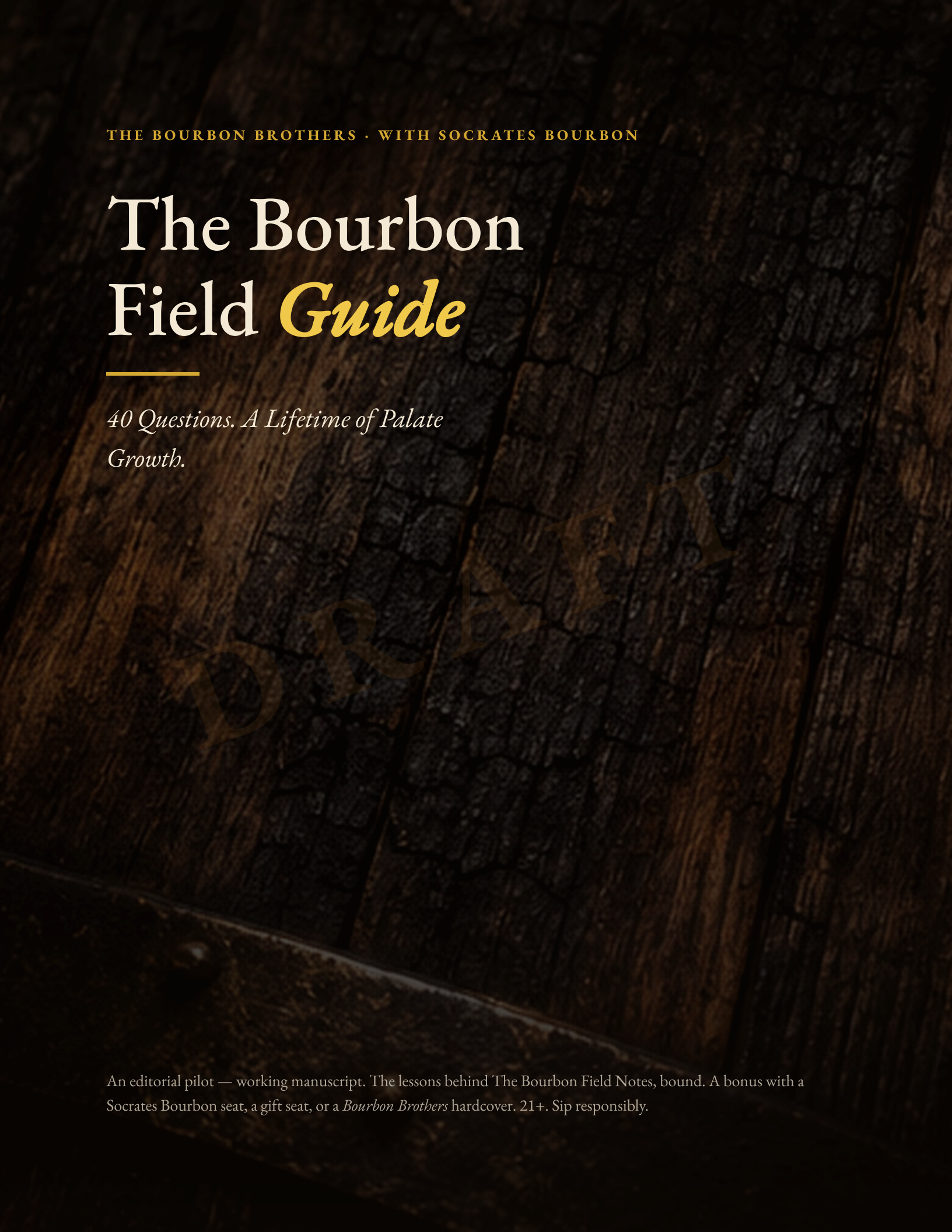


THE BOURBON BROTHERS · WITH SOCRATES BOURBON

The Bourbon Field *Guide*

40 Questions. A Lifetime of Palate Growth.

An editorial pilot — working manuscript. The lessons behind The Bourbon Field Notes, bound. A bonus with a Socrates Bourbon seat, a gift seat, or a *Bourbon Brothers* hardcover. 21+. Sip responsibly.

A NOTE TO THE READER

A place for curiosity

A short introduction to what this Field Guide is trying to do.

This book begins with forty questions because questions are where almost every worthwhile tasting conversation begins. What am I smelling? Why can my friend find cherry when I cannot? Should I trust a tasting wheel? Why did I love a bottle last month and feel indifferent to it tonight?

The impulse to answer is understandable. The more interesting possibility, though, is to pay attention to the uncertainty itself. Bourbon invites comparisons with familiar aromas, places, food, weather, wood, and memory. Two people can make different observations in good faith. A public description can be informative without being a verdict.

What follows is meant to be read slowly, one curiosity at a time. The essays carry the ideas. Optional field pages give them somewhere to land. The Socrates experience, for those who want it, is another way to preserve a private first impression before seeing a wider public record.

There will be facts, and some science, and a few useful arguments. But the central promise is smaller and more personal: a lifetime of palate growth is not a march toward somebody else's vocabulary. It is the pleasure of noticing what matters to you.

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Where Did the Vanilla Go?
The Front Hall Problem

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A Place to Put a Pour
Pencil Marks on a Doorframe

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THE COMPLETE BOOK

Eight chapters. Forty questions.

The full map of the Field Guide. Chapters arrive as they are written.

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The invitation, the first impressions, the vocabulary that can wait.

02 The Nose: Finding the Chord · 6, 10, 12, 18, 30
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Flavor, texture, heat, and making room for independent judgment.

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CHAPTER 02

The Nose: Finding the Chord

Aroma families, expectation, and why some notes refuse to appear.



CHAPTER 2 · FEATURE · DRAFT · AUTHOR_REVIEW

Where Did the Vanilla Go?

How aroma, memory, and the music of a bourbon meet

Vanilla may be the hardest-working word in bourbon.

It appears on labels, in reviews, around tasting tables, and in nearly every introductory guide. A description promises vanilla, caramel, maybe a little toasted oak. Then a glass arrives, and what comes out of it is simply...bourbon.

There may be sweetness. There may be warmth. There may be an aroma that feels familiar but refuses to provide its name.

Does that mean the vanilla is hiding? Was the description exaggerated? Has someone failed to notice what everyone else seems able to find?

I think the more interesting question is what we mean when we say a flavor is *there* in the first place.

A chord is not a list of notes

Imagine hearing a piano chord.

The instrument plays several notes, but the ear receives a single musical event. One listener notices the bright top note. Another hears the weight of the bass. Someone who plays piano may recognize the harmony almost immediately. None of those people is necessarily hearing an entirely different instrument.

Bourbon gives me a useful version of that image.

When someone writes *vanilla, caramel, cinnamon, oak*, the words can make the glass sound like four separate objects waiting to be picked up. But an aroma arrives as a whole. Its elements mingle, overlap, and compete for attention. Some feel prominent. Others remain so quiet that they never become a name.

The description is a way of talking about the chord. It isn't sheet music that everyone will hear identically.

The analogy has limits. Musical tones and aroma molecules don't behave in the same physical way. Odor mixtures can interact in the nose and nervous system; one component can affect the perception of another. Still, the image helps me remember something important: **the whole impression is an**

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experience in its own right. It does not have to be disassembled to be meaningful.

Presence is not the same as prominence

Vanilla is a convenient example because bourbon's relationship with new charred oak makes vanilla-like aromas familiar territory. Compounds associated with wood, including vanillin, can contribute to those impressions. But a reviewer's *vanilla* is not a laboratory certificate proving exactly which molecules a particular taster has detected.

Sensory language is approximate by design. It is how we compare an unfamiliar mixture with familiar things.

And mixtures are complicated. Research on smell finds that combining odorants can change how strongly individual components are perceived. Ethanol, too, can influence which aromas are easy or difficult to detect. These observations help explain why a quiet aroma may be hard to isolate, though they cannot tell us exactly what any one person ought to smell in any one bourbon.

The distinction I care about is simple: something might contribute to an overall aroma without arriving as a clear, recognizable note.

In music, the bass can give a chord its shape without commanding our attention. In bourbon, a vanilla-like quality might lend roundness or sweetness without ever announcing itself as a vanilla bean.

Or it may simply not be a noticeable part of that particular experience.

Both are possible.

The familiar smell that won't take a name

Smell has an unusual relationship with memory. An aroma can feel powerfully familiar while the word for it remains just out of reach. It may conjure a kitchen, a wooden drawer, a summer afternoon, or a place that no longer exists—and still refuse to resolve into *cinnamon* or *orange peel*.

I find that far more interesting than treating the missing word as a problem to correct.

A tasting note can be precise without being universal. *Christmas baking* might be the most honest description available to one person. Another might separate that same impression into clove, sugar, citrus, and warm pastry. The second version is more granular; it is not automatically more truthful.

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This is where palate growth becomes personal. Over time, people may develop more associations and a more useful vocabulary for expressing them. That growth isn't necessarily a march toward the same final answer. It can be a growing capacity to recognize the character of one's own experience.

The aroma changes its entrance

There is another reason the language of nose, palate, and finish can be confusing: aroma does not reach us by only one route.

Some odor molecules reach the nose when we smell a glass. Others contribute to flavor when aromas from the mouth travel toward the nasal cavity during eating or drinking. Researchers call those pathways *orthonasal* and *retronasal* olfaction. They are related, but not identical, parts of flavor perception.

That helps explain why a flavor description can feel different before and after a sip. A person might notice little on the nose yet have a distinct impression on the palate, or the reverse. It would be too much to promise that a missing vanilla note will reliably emerge at a particular point. Perception is not that obedient.

Attention and expectation also join the performance. After reading the word *vanilla*, it can become easier to imagine what might count as vanilla-like. A familiar scent may fade into the background after repeated exposure. The glass may change in temperature or concentration. Any of these factors can alter what seems prominent.

The important thing is not to master a ritual that defeats them. It is to recognize that a tasting impression is alive to its circumstances.

Listening for the whole song

The more I think about the chord analogy, the less I want it to become another checklist.

Its purpose isn't to demand that every person identify the bass, melody, and harmony. It's a reminder that there is music beyond the individual notes. A bourbon can feel bright, heavy, playful, restrained, elegant, rough-edged, or wonderfully unclassifiable even when its individual aromas remain elusive.

A reviewer may admire the oak. A friend may remember the spice. Someone else may be moved by the balance of everything at once. None of those impressions needs to cancel the others.

The public record offers language and the company of other people's observations. But it cannot replace the experience of the person holding the glass. Their distance is not a report card. It is room for curiosity.

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So when the vanilla doesn't appear, I wouldn't call the moment a failure. The interesting part of the glass may be somewhere else entirely.

Perhaps the most memorable thing is not any individual note.

Perhaps it is the chord.

A question to carry: *When you remember a bourbon, do you remember individual flavors—or the character of the whole glass?*

Socrates reflection, optional: The Reveal in a Guided Pour works the same way: a private impression first, then the public record beside it. The space between them isn't a report card. It's where curiosity lives.

Optional companion page: A visual "chord in the glass" illustration: dominant impressions, quieter impressions, and the overall character of the pour. The graphic is a metaphor, not a claim about the chemical composition of a bourbon.

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CHAPTER 2 · ESSAY 2 · DRAFT · AUTHOR_REVIEW

The Front Hall Problem

Why a nose that has stopped noticing is not a nose that has failed

Every house has a smell, and the people who live there are the last to know.

A visitor steps through the door and catches it at once: coffee, a dog, old paper, last night's onions. The residents smell nothing. Then they come home from a long trip, and for a moment the front hall announces itself in full, as if a stranger's nose had been lent to them. Within minutes it vanishes again.

I think about that hallway whenever the subject of nosing bourbon comes up, because the question underneath is usually some version of *where did it go?*

The disappearing cherry

The glass can seem generous at first: something like stone fruit, a toasted edge, a sweetness leaning toward caramel. A few sniffs later it has gone quiet, or narrowed to a single sharp note. Sometimes the aroma a friend described, or one printed in the label notes, never turns up at all.

The explanations in circulation are confident and contradictory. The nose is worn out. The proof is too high. The mouth ought to be open; the mouth ought to be shut. The glass is the wrong shape. Water opens everything up; water flattens everything. Each comes with a technique attached.

I'm more drawn to a smaller question: what does anyone actually know? The answer is less than the confidence suggests, and more interesting. One caveat first. The research behind this essay turned up no bourbon-specific study of nosing technique, though the search was limited. What follows draws on general olfaction research, wine, rum, whisky model mixtures, and computer simulation. Each sits at some distance from a glass of bourbon on a table.

The well-established part

Human smell adapts. A review of human studies describes habituation to odors as relatively fast, specific to the odor involved, and reversible once exposure stops. It also suggests this isn't only a matter of tired receptors. Processing in the brain appears to play a large role. "My nose is numb" is a simplification, if a forgivable one.

Those experiments mostly used lab odorants such as lemon and acetic acid, not bourbon, and as far as I can tell no one has timed the course of a bourbon sniff. I have seen confident figures for how many minutes, or how many pours, a nose lasts before it gives out. I couldn't find evidence behind any of

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them.

The alcohol complication

Ethanol is in the glass along with everything else. In a 2024 study of spirits model solutions, ethanol in the vapor suppressed detection of key odorants, and the suppression grew as the ethanol concentration rose. Wine research points the same direction: ethanol can mute fruity character. These were model solutions and wine-strength drinks, not a pour at bourbon proof, and the proposed mechanisms are still hypotheses.

The sting in the nose may be a separate matter. A prickle is not the same as an aroma being masked, though the two are related and experiments don't always pull them apart.

Advice about nosing can sound like rival directions for operating an instrument. Glass shape, distance, pauses, a little water—each comes with a confident advocate. Some are useful customs, but the evidence consulted here does not establish a universal bourbon ritual. I find the quieter question more interesting: why does an aroma sometimes fade from attention?

Water is no simpler. A rum study at 40% ABV suggested dilution may soften ethanol's suppressing effect. A widely quoted computer simulation of one smoke compound, guaiacol, suggested it behaves differently at the surface of water-and-ethanol mixtures. Its authors added that aroma and taste are highly individual. A whisky dilution study reported that water shifts which compounds reach the air, some less and some more. My reading, and it's only a reading, is that water may change an aroma rather than simply amplify it.

There is also the difference between the glass and the sip. Reviews treat smelling through the nose and smelling from the mouth as distinct. One lab study found that sniffing habituated faster than smelling from the mouth, with partial cross-adaptation. The glass and the sip may be giving two separate reports.

And expectation counts for something. In another lab study, visual cues that matched an odor improved detection, and the effect faded as habituation set in. Whether a label's word list does anything similar is, as far as I know, untested.

What I make of it

None of this is bourbon-certified. What follows is interpretation.

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The front hall suggests a distinction I find useful: an aroma that is absent is different from one I've stopped noticing. A note that refuses to appear might be adaptation. It might be ethanol getting in the way. It might be my attention, or a descriptor someone else wrote sending me looking for the wrong thing. These explanations aren't exclusive, and I doubt I could tell which one is at work in any given glass.

So I'm less inclined to read a quiet nose as a failure, mine or the bourbon's. It may simply be what noses do.

I also like the visitor-and-resident idea. The first sniff is a visitor's, noticing everything at once. Later sniffs belong to a resident, who has stopped registering the hall but may know the house better. I don't think either is more truthful. They are two vantage points on one door.

[AUTHOR EXAMPLE NEEDED: a real moment when an aroma faded, or came back after stepping away from the glass, in John's own words]

A quiet nose isn't an empty glass. Whether the note I couldn't find was never there, or had simply become part of the wallpaper, is a question I suspect no amount of sniffing can settle.

A question to carry: *When an aroma you expected never showed up, did you wonder whether it was absent or whether you'd stopped noticing it, and how would you ever know?*

Socrates reflection, optional: Socrates asks for a first, unpolished read early, while the nose is still a visitor. In a Guided Pour, would you like to set down a first, unpolished read before The Reveal, and see later how it sits beside the public record? Not a score. A position.

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CHAPTER 05

The Tasting Memory

Paper, digital journals, and the meaning of a personal record.

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CHAPTER 5 · ESSAY 1 · DRAFT · AUTHOR_REVIEW

A Place to Put a Pour

A paper journal, a phone note, and the curious business of remembering bourbon

There is a particular kind of bourbon conversation that begins with confidence and ends with somebody scrolling through a phone.

We remember the bottle. Or we think we do. It was memorable, someone noticed something about the finish, and the next day the details have quietly traded places. Was that the bottle with the long neck? The one that suggested orange peel?

That is what appeals to me about a journal. Not a report card. Not another household administration project. Just a place where an impression can land before it disappears. A notebook will do, or a phone note, a label photograph, or an odd phrase that makes no sense to anyone else. The container isn't the important part. The small piece of an evening it manages to keep is.

Two different kinds of remembering

A collection record and a tasting journal may sit side by side, but they aren't quite the same thing.

One records the bourbon: the name, proof, batch, age statement, where it came from, perhaps what it cost. Those details are useful because they're comparatively stable. They can be searched, sorted, and checked against the label.

The other records an encounter with that bourbon. It is less tidy by nature. A pour might seem bright one evening and more restrained another. A note might say *orange peel*, while the next visit to the same bottle suggests nothing of the sort. Even an enthusiastic description can sound foreign when revisited months later.

I don't see this as a flaw in the journal. It may be the most interesting part of it.

The bottle hasn't necessarily changed very much. The person meeting it has brought a different set of expectations, memories, circumstances, and attention. A tasting note is not a laboratory report about a liquid. It is a small record of what that liquid meant to someone at a particular moment.

Paper has its pleasures. So does a screen.

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An old-fashioned notebook asks very little of us. It opens, it waits, and it doesn't interrupt with a message about tomorrow's weather. A handwritten page also collects little accidents that digital systems tend to erase: a crossed-out adjective, an arrow pointing to a late thought, a stain that puts us right back at the table.

A phone, on the other hand, is usually within reach. It can hold a photograph of the label, a quick phrase, or a voice memo made before the impression disappears. Weeks later, a search for *cherry* can bring together bottles that otherwise have nothing obvious in common. A digital journal can also reveal how a personal vocabulary changes over time.

Neither medium guarantees that the observations will be more thoughtful. Neither has a monopoly on authenticity.

I suspect the more useful distinction is between a record a person enjoys returning to and a record that becomes an obligation. The beautiful leather journal abandoned after six entries has no inherent advantage over a handful of honest notes in a phone. Likewise, a sophisticated app filled with fields may have less meaning than one handwritten sentence that catches exactly what was memorable.

The medium is a container. The experience is the reason to keep it.

The words that belong to us

Tasting language can be intimidating because it sometimes sounds so certain. Vanilla bean. Candied orange. Leather. Toasted marshmallow. There is an impression that a serious taster is expected to find the correct nouns and assemble them into a fluent report.

But those words are comparisons, not ingredients printed on the back of a cereal box.

I have more affection for a peculiar but sincere description than for a polished list borrowed from someone else's review. A phrase like *the inside of a grandfather's tackle box* may be utterly useless to a stranger and instantly recognizable to the person who wrote it. That doesn't make it a universal aroma descriptor. It makes it a personal landmark.

Science offers a modest reason to take language seriously without overselling it. Odor, memory, and verbal description interact in complicated ways. Some research suggests that distinctive descriptions can relate to later odor memory; other studies show that verbal labels don't always improve recognition, and can change how pleasant a smell seems. In other words, putting an aroma into words can shape our recollection, but it doesn't preserve the smell itself. The notebook is not a second nose.

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That seems worth remembering when two friends describe the same bourbon differently. The difference is not necessarily a contest someone must win. It may be the beginning of a better conversation.

Before the world tells me what I tasted

There is one idea that has grown increasingly interesting to me: the difference between a private first impression and the description that arrives afterward.

Once I've read *vanilla and dark cherry*, those words are difficult to set aside. They create a set of possibilities. The next encounter with the glass may still be entirely genuine, but it now takes place in the company of a suggestion.

I like the notion of preserving a small, unpolished impression before the public description enters the room. Not because the first impression is more accurate, and certainly not because it deserves to be defended against new information. Its appeal is that it belongs to the moment before comparison.

Sometimes the eventual label notes may illuminate something that was only half-formed. Sometimes they may describe a bourbon I can't find in my own glass at all. Both outcomes seem useful. Neither calls for embarrassment.

A private impression and the public record can be useful to each other without either becoming a verdict. What interests me is the space between them: what I noticed before the suggestion, what someone else noticed afterward, and what each makes possible to see.

The journal becomes a story

A tasting journal takes on another character when it accumulates over time. One page may say little. A dozen pages can begin to show recurring interests: the aromas that catch our attention, the kinds of finishes we remember, the bottles we keep thinking about long after the glass is empty.

An entry can also preserve something that has nothing to do with flavor. Who was there? What were we celebrating? Why did this particular bottle end up on the table? The details might never help someone identify a bourbon blind, but they may become the reason the entry matters ten years later.

That is the journal I find most compelling: not a ledger of correct answers, but a record of curiosity.

The next time a familiar bottle appears, an old note may offer an interesting companion to the new impression. Perhaps the two agree. Perhaps they disagree completely. Either way, something has been recovered from a moment that otherwise would have disappeared.

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The glass is temporary. The conversation with it doesn't have to be.

A question to carry: *What was the last bourbon you remember vividly—and what, exactly, do you remember about it?*

Socrates reflection, optional: In a Guided Pour, Socrates keeps your personal read first and sets it beside the public record afterward. The comparison isn't a judgment of whether you passed; it's another perspective on the same experience. Not a score. A position.

Optional companion page: A one-page journal with room for the bourbon, the occasion, a few personal words, and an overall impression. No required score, no prescribed vocabulary, no correct answer.



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CHAPTER 5 · ESSAY 2 · DRAFT · AUTHOR_REVIEW

Pencil Marks on a Doorframe

On keeping a tasting history without pretending to remember everything

A familiar bottle can be surprisingly difficult to name later. "The one with the tall neck," someone says. "Perhaps a red seal?" A photograph might settle it; otherwise there is only the conviction that it was memorable. A tasting journal begins with that ordinary mystery: what survives of a moment when its label has gone missing?

I suspect the scene is familiar, and it may be why people ask how to remember every bourbon they've ever tasted. I understand the ambition. I'm just not sure *every* is the word doing the most honest work.

Three things hiding inside "remember"

"Remembering a bourbon" seems to cover at least three separate jobs.

The first is identification: the name, the proof, the batch or barrel, the date, where it was poured. These details are stable, and they're the ones whose absence stings most. The second is the impression: what the aroma suggested, how the flavor moved, how it finished. That one is slippery by nature. The third is context, which I suspect gets left out most often. Who was at the table? What had I heard about the bottle beforehand? Did I know the price when I took the first sip?

Identification has its own wrinkle. Different batches, and different single-barrel selections under the same label, can taste different from one another. A note about "the same bourbon" may really be a note about one particular bottle.

What words can and can't do

Some bourbon educators say tasting notes are for memory more than for reviewers and judges, and I like that framing. The research on words and smell memory is more tangled than the slogan, though, and nearly all of it comes from wine rather than bourbon.

The first piece is naming. Studies of people in Western cultures find that we're generally poor at naming smells and flavors, and that experts have only a modest advantage. A comparison of wine and coffee experts found that experts lean on source-based words like *vanilla* within their own field, while novices more often reach for evaluative ones like *nice*. That describes how two groups differ. It doesn't show that borrowing an expert's vocabulary sharpens anyone's nose.

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Whether naming helps memory is less settled. One review reports that language influences odor memory among novices, and that naming a smell helps people remember it. Yet in work by Croijmans and colleagues, wine experts had better recognition memory for wines than novices did, but not for wine-related or everyday odors. When silent verbalization was blocked, the experts' memory for wine odors didn't suffer. The authors concluded that once expertise is acquired, language doesn't play a causal role in odor recognition memory. These were wine studies with small groups of experts, and the research behind this essay turned up nothing bourbon-specific.

My own reading, offered as a reading only: words may do more for a beginner at the moment a memory forms. A written note may do something different for everyone, serving as a handle for finding an evening again. That second part is a plausible interpretation, not a finding.

The note written with the label in view

Context complicates things further. In wine studies, people rate the same wine more favorably when told it costs more. A brain-imaging study reported that the effect of price cues rose across three price-cue conditions, replicating earlier work, and compared those ratings with a blind tasting a week later. A 2026 study of Málaga wines likewise found label-informed ratings higher than blind ones. The authors of one economics working paper note that their design can't separate "tasted better" from "remembered as better." The direction is consistent. The size of the effect for bourbon is unknown.

I don't take this as a reason to distrust our own enthusiasm. I take it as a reason to like a note that mentions what I knew going in. *Heard this one is hard to find* is honest context, not a confession.

A mark with a date

Many houses have a doorframe somewhere with pencil marks on it. A line, a date, a name, occasionally a misspelled one. The marks aren't the child. They don't make anyone grow. They make growth visible later, to someone standing in the doorway with a cup of coffee.

A tasting history may work the same way. In the material I reviewed, I found no direct evidence that a journal produces palate growth, the slow development of personal sensory awareness, and no bourbon research on the question at all. The role a journal can reliably claim is humbler: it keeps a record. For me, that record is what lets growth be noticed at all.

It also takes some pressure off. A note written last year may disagree with one written today, and nobody is at fault. They're two marks with two dates. A doorframe doesn't scold a seven-year-old for failing to match a six-year-old.

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The image has a limit I'd rather admit. Height has a tape measure; tasting doesn't. A mark on a doorframe can be checked against something outside the child, while a tasting note can only be checked against the person who wrote it. A note can be dated, surprising, or outgrown. It can't really be graded.

[AUTHOR EXAMPLE NEEDED: a real moment when an old note, a label photo, or the absence of any record changed how he saw a bourbon on revisiting it]

Containers fail

Doorframes have a flaw of their own: they stay with the house. Notebooks end up in the wrong coat, apps shut down, and spreadsheets turn up in a folder named something like *Bourbon_FINAL_v3*. One piece of wine-side advice says that starting and continuing consistently matters more than the tool, and I found no evidence that any one tool beats another. I don't have a tidier answer, and I'm not sure one exists.

I'm not sure the goal is to remember every bourbon. Most will fade, the way most ordinary Tuesdays do. A few dated marks might be enough to show that someone was standing there, and roughly how tall: the name, a word or two, what I knew, and who was in the room.

A question to carry: *If a tasting history could hold only one thing, would you want to find the bourbon, the impression, or the evening?*

Socrates reflection, optional: Before The Reveal in a Guided Pour, what would you like to remember about this moment a year from now, and what do you already know about the bottle that might color your read? There is no required answer; it's an invitation to notice.

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FIELD PAGE 01

The Memory Map



A journal page for the thing you remember, not the thing a bottle is supposed to contain. It can be completed from memory or with a current glass. No score is required.

BOTTLE OR MEMORY

OCCASION / PEOPLE / PLACE

THREE WORDS THAT BELONG TO THIS EXPERIENCE

WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE DETAILS FADE?

IF YOU REVISIT IT, WHAT MIGHT YOU BE CURIOUS TO NOTICE?

Connection: Socrates can keep an independent first impression and place it beside public descriptions at The Reveal. This is an optional next step, not a test.

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FIELD PAGE 02

The Chord Map



An illustration of a personal impression, not a laboratory analysis of chemical compounds. You may map a current glass, an older tasting note, or a remembered aroma.

THE WHOLE CHORD — THE CHARACTER OF THE BOURBON

WHAT STOOD IN THE FOREGROUND

WHAT REMAINED QUIET OR UNCERTAIN

WHAT BECAME MORE APPARENT AFTER READING SOMEONE ELSE'S NOTES

A QUESTION WORTH CARRYING TO THE NEXT ENCOUNTER

Connection: Compare the words in your original impression with the public record only after saving the first read. Agreement isn't the objective. Curiosity is.

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ART IN REVIEW

Every illustration, for approval

Draft only. Nothing here is approved until John says so; each moves from draft to approved in art.json on his word.



cover · brief 01 · approved
Charred stave + iron hoop, dark enough for cream type. Slightly soft (upscaled); keep unless a sharper pass comes back. Brief 02: kept.



Chapter 1 · Before the First Sip · brief 02 · approved
Empty glass, a filled unlabeled corked bottle behind (first take had an empty-looking bottle; regenerated). Quiet top.



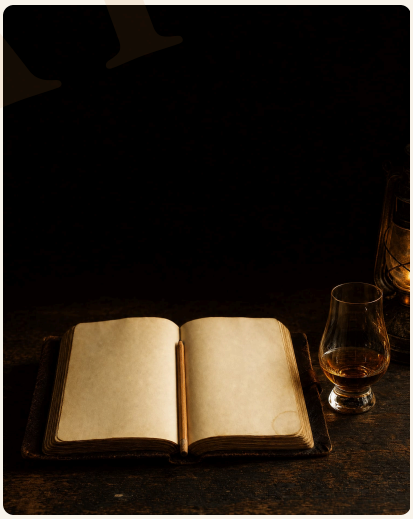
Chapter 2 · The Nose: Finding the Chord · brief 01 · approved
The strongest of the set: one glass, vapor resolving into three bars of light, quiet top third. Recommend approve. Brief 02: kept as the style anchor.



Chapter 3 · The Palate & the Finish · brief 02 · approved
Nearly empty glass, legs on the wall. Quiet top.

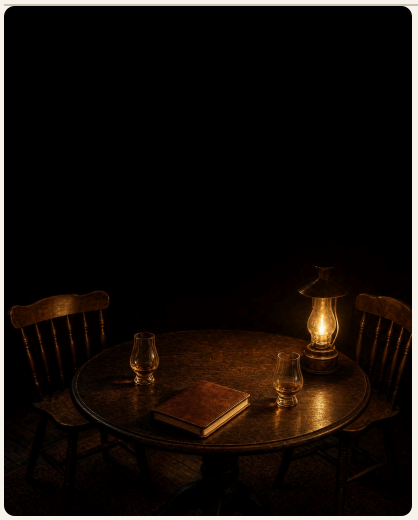


Chapter 4 · The Art of the Tasting · brief 02 · approved
Two glasses, pale gold and copper, a water carafe, a cloth. Quiet top.



Chapter 5 · The Tasting Memory · brief 02 · approved
Brief 02 redo (API, one call). Blank pages, plain pencil in the gutter, faint ring stain, one glass, a lantern edge at right; quiet top. Passes rule 1. Brief 01 version: visual-briefs/out/2026-11-08/.

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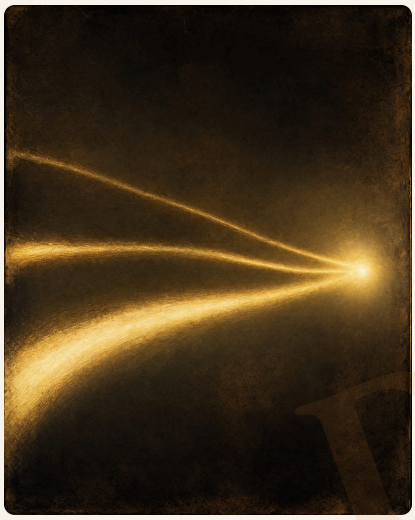
Chapter 6 · Practice & the Shared Pour · brief 02 · approved
Round table, two small pours, two empty chairs, closed journal, one lantern. No people.



Chapter 7 · Technology & the Modern Taster · brief 02 · approved
Glass, a phone with a blank amber screen, a brass compass (ticks only, no letters).



Chapter 8 · A Personal Bourbon Library · brief 02 · approved
Blank-spined books, three plain corked bottles clearly filled (pale gold, amber, deep copper) — regenerated Nov 10 on John's word ("redo the library plate with filled bottles"); the first take's bottles read as empty.



chord map · brief 02 · approved
Brief 02 redo. Painted streams on aged paper; lowest brightest and widest, all converging at one point. Passes.



memory map · brief 01 · approved
A watercolor landscape rather than a gold-ink map, but it lands the one idea (a path back to one glass) and has no text. Recommend approve as is. Brief 02: kept.

DRAFT

RESEARCH & AUTHOR NOTES

What the essays can claim

Background references for the editor, not a substitute for the author's final fact-check. Every row of each essay's ledger is still to be opened by a person.

Thomas-Danguin et al. (2014), *The perception of odor objects in everyday life*: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4040494/

Goldberg et al. (2018), *Factors affecting the ortho- and retronasal perception of flavors*: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27646486/

Wang & Cadwallader (2024), *Ethanol's Pharmacodynamic Effect on Odorant Detection in Distilled Spirits Models*: https://www.mdpi.com/2306-5710/10/4/116

Ayabe-Kanamura et al. (1997), *Effect of verbal cues on recognition memory and pleasantness evaluation of unfamiliar odors*: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9293587/

Sources of variation in bourbon whiskey barrels: a review (2021): https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jib.660

NIAAA, *What Is A Standard Drink?*: https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/what-standard-drink

Caution: findings from odor mixtures, model spirits or controlled laboratory settings do not establish what any one person must perceive in a particular glass. First-person claims need the author's sign-off. For adults of legal drinking age, without encouragement to drink more.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Bourbon Brothers™ Method is human-authored, by John McKillop, from fifteen years at the DGC bourbon club's table and the novel *Bourbon Brothers*. These essays were drafted with AI from research briefs and edited by John (this copy still carries unedited drafts in a proposed voice). Socrates, the guide in the app, is Claude running that Method.

Socrates Bourbon is an educational tasting companion, a learning tool for appreciation, not an invitation to drink. We encourage moderation, discourage irresponsible consumption, sell no alcohol, and make no health claims. 21+. Sip responsibly.

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