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Iain Hooley of the sold-out Victoria Whisky Festival enjoys a glass of 18-year-old Highland Park.

A taste of Whisky Fest



EVENTS

Banish the winter chill with a wee dram of golden nectar at the four-day Victoria Whisky Festival, which opens tonight. Unfortunately for the last-minute crowd, all festival events are sold out, including Saturday's Consumer Tasting evening.

This is the seventh year for the popular event, which has been

called the best-organized whisky festival in the world by some.

More than 90 presenters and product ambassadors from distilleries from around the world are participating in the event.

"The festival is an opportunity for people to meet the distillers themselves," says Lawrence Graham, president of the Greater Victoria Whisky Festival Society, a non-profit organization. "It is an opportunity to educate people about the product."

Up to 1,400 locals and out-of-town visitors are expected to sample some of the 165 whisky brands available. Whiskies on offer hail not only from Scotland, but from India, Japan, United States, Eng-

land, Ireland and Canada — including two from Vancouver Island.

Several workshops will be available during the festival for those wishing to learn more about whisky, including one on the art of pairing whisky with chocolate.

Organizers urge participants to leave their cars at home. Fourteen vehicles will be available, along with volunteer drivers, to chauffeur people home after the event.

The festival runs Thursday to Sunday. Proceeds benefit Crimestoppers and radio station 100.3 The Q's TLC Fund For Kids Basketball Camp.

For more information, go to victoriawhiskyfestival.com.