



WHISKY DRINKER'S DILEMMA

The Fife Arms

A look inside Bertie's, a jewel box of a bar with an unrivalled bottle collection.

Queen Victoria's eldest son, King Edward VII, was affectionately known as Bertie. With a reputation for being a playboy and bon vivant, Bertie indulged in life's finer things—including a good glass of whisky. It follows, then, that the Fife Arms Hotel near Balmoral Castle, an estate originally purchased by the King's parents, should name its new whisky bar Bertie's.

Styled as a "whisky library," Bertie's offers 365 unique bottles catalogued according to flavour profile, from fragrant through fruity to rich and smoky. Whisky librarians including Mark Shedden, manager of Bertie's Whisky Bar, are on hand to walk guests through a tasting of each profile or pull bottles according to whisky connoisseurs' individual taste. And it's a good thing they are, because the design of the bar, with its intoxicating mix of mirrored shelves, velvet-upholstered seating, and dark, intricately carved oak makes every last bottle glimmer with individual appeal.

Design firm Russell Sage Studio created the snug, sumptuous space that seats just

15, making visitors feel as though they've gained admission to an exclusive club. The library feel extends to the furnishings, though it's less local book repository and more private reading room. Outside, a multipurpose courtyard terrace serviced by Bertie's staff is the designated smoking area for those wishing to partake in the whisky bar's cigar menu. The snack menu was designed with the same decadence in mind. "I have a firm belief that anything can be paired to anything as long as it is thought out correctly, and this is exactly why the decision was made for caviar and chocolate," Shedden explains.

As an evening at Bertie's stretches into the early morning (the bar remains open until 3 a.m.), guests would be remiss not to lean back in their overstuffed armchair to look toward the ceiling, which scenic painter Mark Sands has adorned to look as though it's been covered in antique leather, a nod to the leather-bound books that would have lined the shelves in a different kind of library during Bertie's time. **Corrina Allen**