

# Whisky expert is celebrating first anniversary

'I see a bright future for Inverness,' says **Ferit Gur**, owner of Highland Whisky Shop

Small Business Focus  
in association with  
Inverness  
**BID**  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Highland Whisky Shop, 23  
Castle Street, Inverness  
IV2 3EP  
T: 01463 592055  
**For more information  
about Inverness BID:**  
T: 01463 714550  
E: info@inverness.uk.com  
www.invernessbid.co.uk

## Q How would you describe your business to a stranger?

**A** Highland Whisky Shop in Castle Street is a local specialist in quality Scotch malt whisky and Scottish craft gins. We carry a stock of more than 300 single malts and 30 gins displayed in categories around the walls of our spacious, refurbished premises. It makes browsing easy – and a pleasure.

Whisky is my passion. I run the shop with my wife Sila and I'm available to give advice and recommendations from my years of experience in the drinks industry to customers looking for a special gift or celebrating a special occasion.

We work directly with small and medium-sized distilleries in the Highlands and Islands and several distribution companies which supply a larger portfolio of brands.

We have a tasting station where drams can be sampled from a selection of our bottles. I can tell customers about the distilleries, whisky production, which types of casks are used and share my knowledge to guide them through the range of malts available.

Some customers also ask about buying whisky as an investment and I can advise them on what to look for and what to avoid.

## Q What inspired you to start the business?

**A** I love malt whisky and it was always my dream to open a shop dedicated to it.

I am originally from Istanbul in Turkey and came to England to study and worked in marketing for almost 10 years. I also went into business in the drinks industry, initially importing wines to the UK. I went back to Turkey in 2009 and started my own company



**Ferit Gur is the owner of Highland Whisky Shop.**

importing Scotch malt whisky which was growing in popularity. My wife and I returned to the UK in 2018 to build a new life in Scotland and I worked as a business consultant to distillery companies and built up a strong network.

We moved to Inverness just before the pandemic lockdowns and used that time to develop our plan for the whisky shop which opened in September last year.

## Q How has your business developed?

**A** We are celebrating our first anniversary this month. We invested heavily in expanding our product range and a major refurbishment of the shop with a completely new interior.

## Q How are you moving forward post the Covid-19 pandemic?

**A** After a busy start, the end of last year was quiet because of the Omicron variant. But since the end of March business has grown with a local customer base developing and lots of visitors coming to town looking for some interesting whiskies which they cannot find at home. It enabled us to employ two part-time staff.

## Q What is your vision for Inverness city centre?

**A** I see a bright future for Inverness. Major

investments including the castle project, a whisky distillery and brewery, and large hotels will be offered more to encourage visitors to stay longer in the city centre as an alternative to other attractions in the area.

In turn, this will hopefully create more restaurants, bars and trendy coffee shops and independent, authentic shops like ourselves serving both the visitors and the locals throughout the year.

## Q What lessons have you learned from your time in business?

**A** I had always worked with the trade but now for the first time I am directly involved with the customers.

I have learned the importance of giving good quality service to everyone coming into our shop as we are different from other off-licences and supermarkets because we give lots of recommendations. Offering the right malts is critical and experience is vital.

## Q Can you tell us something interesting about yourself?

**A** I started wild swimming this summer – it is very unusual for a Turkish guy to do in these temperatures, but it is good for your mental health.

I do not use a wetsuit but swim in my trunks – but maybe not when winter comes!

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