

Bar Talk & Weekend hideout

Kampala elite gather for whisky experience

Palates at work. An exclusive tasting of Diageo's 2025 special releases in Mutungo immersed guests in the art of whisky. Every sip, swirl, and scent revealed the depth, craft, and quiet prestige of the spirit.



**Bar
Talk
with
Tony
Musho**

BY TONY MUSHOBOROZI

Recently, at a hilltop residence in Mutungo, Kampala, James Byaruhanga, popularly known as Byaru, and his wife Tasha Nkwanzu, hosted an elite whisky tasting. The evening brought together friends and associates from business, technology, media, hospitality, and entertainment. The setting was calm, the atmosphere deliberate. The focus was whisky. Not just any whisky but Diageo's 2025 special releases.

Whisky special releases are the distillery's way of saying, "We don't do this every day, and so don't get too comfortable." They are small-batch, limited-edition drops made from rare or well-aged whisky, basically the VIP section of the whisky world. Some get fancy with wild cask finishes or experimental tricks, like the distillery is flexing a bit just to see what happens. Others show up to celebrate big milestones, acting like a birthday party where only a few lucky guests get invited. Because they are rare and a bit show-offy, they usually cost more, but hey, exclusivity has never been cheap.

A host between two worlds

Byaruhanga, CEO and managing director of Roke Cloud, a subsidiary of Roke Telkom, also sits on the board of Private Sector Foundation, Uganda, representing ICT. Alongside his corporate high roles, he is also connected to Kampala's entertainment scene through House of DJs and major event productions such as Blankets & Wine. The man is big waters on the night scene. The evening reflected this dual identity. Structured, but social. Professional, but relaxed.

A guided introduction to whisky

The session was led by reserve ambassadors Melanie Kaita and Steven Baguma from Uganda Breweries Limited. Guests were introduced to the making of single malt whisky. Production methods were explained. Tasting principles were demonstrated.

The rare whiskies to taste were five. Clynelish 18

CONNECTION

Byaru, moving easily among his guests, appeared less like a host showcasing luxury, and more like a curator of experience, bringing people together to explore something nuanced and for many, entirely new.

The event reflected a growing pattern in Kampala's elite circles. Experiences are becoming the new meeting spaces. Whisky was the subject. Connection was the outcome.



Radio personality Gaetano Kaggwa took an active role in the conversation, describing one whisky as "very robust". PHOTO/TONY MUSHOBOROZI

Years, Talisker 14 Years, Singleton of Glen Ord 17 Years. Lagavulin 12 Years and Oban 12 Years. Each whisky came from a single distillery. Each was made from 100 percent malted barley. The focus was on understanding the subtle differences. Palates were tasted to their very limits. Guests were encouraged to observe the whisky first. Then smell it. Then, taste it slowly. The ambassadors emphasised patience throughout the session. Patience.

"The journey to enjoying whisky involves all the senses; sight, smell, taste, and touch," she explained, as she encouraged guests to slow down and engage fully.

The experience moved deliberately. Glasses were studied. Notes were discussed. Reactions varied. Wildly. Some guests were familiar with whisky culture. Others were encountering it for the first time.

Conversation at the table

The tasting was interactive. Guests compared aromas and flavour profiles. Discussions developed around texture, spice, and finish. Radio personality



Did you know that...? The journey to enjoying whisky involves all the senses; sight, smell, taste, and touch," Melanie Kaita, reserve ambassador,

Gaetano Kaggwa took an active role in the conversation, describing one whisky as "very robust," which sparked laughter around the table. Gaetano is the kind of seasoned communicator who can turn anything into a punchline.

Beyond whisky

The evening also included a brief message from Uganda Tourism Board CEO Juliana Kaggwa, who encouraged guests to explore local tourism destinations. She connected leisure with national travel experiences. "There is a lot this country can offer, please, take sometime and visit our sites," she said.

Food and atmosphere

The tasting was paired with a curated menu by Shisha Nyama. The dishes were rich, bold, and grounded in familiar flavours. Later in the evening, grilled meat from Tasha Deli anchored the dining experience. The food provided balance to the structured tasting. It kept the atmosphere grounded and social.