

THE RIVER LEE

DOYLE COLLECTION • CORK

Media Release: 24th February 2016

* **Interviews Available:** Frank McHardy (West Cork Distillers) & Niall Daly (The Chocolate Shop)

* **Photography Issued By:** Kieran Harnett

The River Lee Whiskey Club Unveils the Perfect Irish Whiskey and Chocolate Pairing

***Experts from West Cork Distillers and The Chocolate Shop host a gastro
tasting to remember***

The River Lee Whiskey Club hosted an exclusive whiskey tasting masterclass titled '**An Evening of Whiskey and Chocolate Tasting**', in partnership with local experts **Frank McHardy**, from West Cork Distillers and **Niall Daly**, from The Chocolate Shop, that showcased a blend of the finest Irish whiskeys matched perfectly with a range of luxury chocolate sourced from all over the world.

The River Lee, which launched its Whiskey Club last year with a hugely successful 'Women & Whiskey' event, boasts a gorgeous riverside terrace known as the 'Terrace on the Weir' that offers guests commanding views of the River Lee and a warm, relaxed, convivial atmosphere. The hot-spot of Cork's social scene will feature the West Cork 10 Year Old Single Malt and Domori Occumare 77 chocolate on the bar menu so that social and overnight guests can enjoy the exquisite pairings experience.

McHardy, Master Distiller at the Skibbereen based distillery, brings over 50 years of expertise producing Irish and Scottish whiskeys. "Our vision for the future is to continue to excel in the art of whiskey innovation and furnish a reputation worldwide. Through our partnership with The River Lee and The Chocolate Shop, a new unique journey of tastes is being harvested. The combination of the West Cork Single Malt whiskey, aged for 10 years in sherry casks, with the 70% Venezuelan chocolate from The Chocolate Shop creates a wonderful gastro taste experience, bringing to life the subtlest of flavours of toffee, treacle and chocolate in the whiskey.", comments McHardy.

Daly, passionate owner of The Chocolate Shop, which boasts a location at Cork city’s famous English Market for the last 16 years comments, “Pairing whiskey and chocolate together is a relatively new flavour infusion, and it can be a case of trial and error due to the complexities of both products. Domori Occumare 77, a 70% rich dark chocolate from the Criollo Porcelana Bean I sourced from Venezuela, has an excellent roundness and persistence that creates an incredible union of apricot jam and cream with the West Cork 10 Year Old Single Malt.”

To guarantee the best results when matching whiskey with chocolate, McHardy recommends, “Taking the whiskey on the palette and swirling it around to allow the flavours to build. Once swallowed, place a piece of chocolate on the tongue, allowing it to melt slowly which will bring both profiles together. As the melt finishes, enjoy a little more whiskey to intensify the flavours even further. Try this with a number of whiskeys and fine chocolate to find the right harmony of flavours for you.”

The perfect match pairings demonstrated on the evening were:

No.	Pairings	Whiskey Flavour Notes	Chocolate Flavour Notes
1	West Cork Original Blend Whiskey & Michel Cluizel’s Mangaro Lait 50% – Madagascan Origin	Sweet citrus and vanilla, malt. Sweet nougat with hints of lemon zest.	Caramel, exotic fruits, gingerbread, honey with sultana on the finish.
2	West Cork 10 Year Old Single Malt & Domori Occumare 77 – 70% Venezuelan Origin	Malty, toffee, treacle notes. Hints of dairy milk chocolate	Apricot jam, cream and dried fruit. Excellent roundness & persistence, with low acidity and bitterness.
3	The Pogues Whiskey & Pralus Chuao 70% - Venezuelan Origin	Full-bodied, ripe fruits, nutmeg and sweet digestive biscuits	Earthy tones, muscovado sugar, lemon zest – Exceptionally smooth & a fine balance of bitter and acidity.

--- ENDS ---

For further information and images, please contact Peter Lynch, Edelman:

Email: peter.lynch@edelman.com
Phone: 01 678 9333 / 086 065 1449

Notes to Editor

About Cork:

Situated in the very South of Ireland, Cork is a lively cultural hub with an opera house, independent art galleries, museums and theatres, vibrant nightlife and a growing craft beer scene and hosts several festivals throughout the year – notably culinary, music and film.

Additionally it boasts a thriving foodie scene centred on the famous English Market and is ideally placed for visits to kiss the legendary Blarney Stone, the historic fishing town of Kinsale and the rest of Ireland's ruggedly beautiful southern coastline.

About The River Lee:

Set on a picturesque bend in the river, just a short walk from Cork city centre, The River Lee hotel occupies a unique position in this charming historic city. Ireland's 'second city' is a lively cultural hub with an opera house, independent art galleries, museums and theatres, vibrant nightlife and a growing craft beer scene and hosts several festivals throughout the year – notably culinary, music and film. Additionally it boasts a thriving foodie scene centred on the famous English Market and is ideally placed for visits to kiss the legendary Blarney Stone, the historic fishing town of Kinsale and the rest of Ireland's ruggedly beautiful southern coastline.

The River Lee hotel is one of Cork's leading business and social destinations. All aspects of Cork local life are played out here, from business events and family celebrations, to casual get-togethers in the hotel's highly popular Weir Rooms including the Weir Room Restaurant, Bar and Terrace on the Weir; a key location in Cork's growing food scene. Resident guests also have complimentary access to the hotel's in-house health and fitness club with a 20m swimming pool and spa.

About The Doyle Collection:

The Doyle Collection is a carefully curated collection of eight Irish family-owned luxury and urban hotels located in superb central locations in London, Dublin, Washington DC, Cork and Bristol.

Each hotel has a strong identity that is closely connected to its location and is unique in the way that has brought a cultural slice of its city into the fabric of the building and the guest experience.

What binds our hotels together is the Doyle service ethos - a real warmth and thoughtfulness that stems from being a much loved family business. Within The Doyle Collection, we believe that the difference between something good and something great is in the attention to detail.

Our definition of success is for our guests to feel that our hotels are more akin to a home or a private members club – and therefore want to return again and again.

Bios:

Frank McHardy – West Cork Distillers

Frank McHardy started his Whiskey career in 1963 as a general distillery worker with Invergordon Grain Distillery, three years later, he spent some time with Tamnavulin Distillery, where he developed a solid grounding in the manufacture and maturation of spirit into single malt scotch whiskey.

In 1973, he began working with Bruichladdich Distillery as a brewer before moving onto a management position at Springbank Distillery in Campbeltown, where for 10 years was responsible for spirit production, bottling and cask management.

Frank was keen to further his education and skillset in the industry, so successfully landed a position as head distiller with Bushmills in Northern Ireland in 1986. This was a much bigger distillery and operation, which saw Frank lead all production. He also learnt extensively about sourcing of casks which would mature whiskey for future case sales.

In 1996, his heart led him back to Springbank as he was approached by their chairman to fill the distillery manager role, which gave him the opportunity to run the entire distillery, source casks, deliver on promotional activities, while also traveling to many parts of the world. Springbank is the only distillery in Scotland which carries out 100% of the barley to whiskey process.

One of the highlights of his career, was when Hedley Wright, Chairman of JA & Mitchell asked him to oversee the refurbishment of Glengyle Distillery which closed down in 1925. In 2000, they began to source equipment like redundant stills from Ben Wyvis Distillery which saw Glengyle reopen in 2004.

After 50 years in the production of Scottish and Irish whiskey, Frank retired in 2013. However, he remains involved with Springback delivering special tours and acting as Headmaster for their annual whiskey school. Frank now owns his own company called Craigowan Distillers who consult for various companies in the distillery industry throughout the world.

Niall Daly – The Chocolate Shop

Niall Daly runs The Chocolate Shop in Cork city's English Market with his wife Rosemary. Chocolate is not just a passion, it has become a way of life and led to an increasingly successful business over the last 16 years.

It all started about 18 years ago, when he was wholesaling premium Belgian chocolate and he was inside the English Market in Cork queuing for olives with his daughter, and immediately it struck him. He spotted that the market was changing from just fruit and veg and butchers and fishmongers into something more. So he felt that there was an opportunity to open up a retail unit. The Chocolate Shop opened in 2000 with a mission to stock the largest range of finest chocolate under one roof.

Niall now searches all over the world for new, small-scale producers. His latest find is Akesson's, a company that makes single plantation chocolate from cocoa grown at its farms in Madagascar, Brazil and Indonesia, as well as sourcing unusual varieties of pepper and salt, vanilla and sugar.

The Chocolate Shop's French range has also expanded over the years to include Cluizel and Pralus chocolates. From Italy they have Amedei, Domori, Caffarel, and Venchi chocolate, with Marou direct from Vietnam, Menakao chocolate from Madagascar and Cote D'Or and Callebaut from Belgium.

The Chocolate Shop can even boast a number of high-profile admirers, including Britain's Queen Elizabeth, who browsed in the English Market during her Irish visit in 2011, actor Cillian Murphy who pops in regularly, former President Mary McAleese - who personally made a brief stop off to pick up a box of chocolate truffles during her presidency - and British Monty Python legend John Cleese.