vinetur

The Macallan released a documentary tracing the transatlantic journey of its whisky casks

The 30-minute film argues that sherry-seasoned oak casks provide 100% of the spirit’s color and nearly 80% of its flavor

Thursday, November 26, 2026



The Macallan has released a 30-minute documentary with photographer Steve McCurry that traces the transatlantic supply chain behind the oak casks used in its whisky, turning a technical part of production into the center of a brand film about craft, materials and control.

The documentary, Mastery Beyond Reason, is directed by Denis Delestrac and narrated by McCurry, who has previously worked with the Scotch whisky house. The film follows the route from oak forests and sawmills in Ohio and northern Spain to cooperages, vineyards and wine cellars in Jerez de la Frontera, and finally to Speyside in northern Scotland, where The Macallan produces its single malt whisky.

The company said the casks shown in the film provide 100% of the whisky's natural color and nearly 80% of its flavor, making them one of the most important parts of the production process. That emphasis on casks has long been part of The Macallan's identity, but the documentary is designed to give a closer look at the people and industries involved in making them, from timber specialists to coopers and sherry producers.

According to The Macallan, one of the central points of the film is that the company now owns and supervises the full process behind its sherry-seasoned casks, an approach that is unusual in the whisky industry, where many producers buy casks through outside suppliers without overseeing every stage. In the documentary, the company presents that model as a way to improve traceability and protect consistency in the final spirit.

The film includes contributions from teams at Coopers Oak in Ohio and Tevasa Forestal Group in northern Spain, as well as staff from Valdespino's vineyards and cellars in Jerez. It also features Kirsteen Campbell, The Macallan's master whisky maker, and Jane Graham, the company's managing director for cask operations. Their appearances underline how closely the documentary ties the brand's taste profile to decisions made long before the whisky reaches a barrel in Scotland.

McCurry's presence gives the project a visual identity beyond a standard corporate feature. Best known for documentary photography, he guides viewers through the route as a witness to the process rather than as a technical expert. The company said the idea was to use his eye for people and place to connect the industrial, agricultural and artisanal stages of cask making. In that telling, the documentary is less about distillation itself than about a long chain of work that begins with trees and ends with matured spirit.

The release also includes a hospitality component. The visual journey is paired with six cocktails created by Josep Roca, the sommelier and co-owner of El Celler de Can Roca in Spain. The Macallan said each drink corresponds to one of six key stages in whisky production and was designed to translate those steps into aroma and flavor. The cocktail element expands the documentary into a broader lifestyle and sensory

campaign rather than a standalone film release.

In November, the company also held a holiday event in Madrid built around the same concept. Guests attended a screening of the documentary and moved through a series of spaces intended to highlight the aromas, textures and production stages behind The Macallan’s whiskies. The event focused in part on the company’s long relationship with Valdespino, the Jerez producer involved in seasoning casks used by the distiller.

The Macallan, founded by Alexander Reid in 1824, is one of the best-known names in single malt Scotch whisky and has spent years building its public image around wood management, natural color and long maturation. Its use of sherry-seasoned European and American oak casks from Spain has become one of its most recognizable selling points, especially in premium and luxury segments of the whisky market.

The new documentary places that cask story at the front of the brand’s message. Rather than focusing on tasting notes or collectible releases, it centers on the people who cut the wood, shape the barrels and prepare them with sherry before they are sent to Scotland. By doing so, The Macallan is presenting its supply chain not only as a production system, but as part of the value and identity of each bottle.