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Walsh Whiskey: An Innovative Spirit-Maker Looks to Write the Next Chapter

I love the romance of this industry, just like the wineries in France. Ireland's grape is barley and our wine is whiskey.

—Bernard Walsh, co-founder and managing director, Walsh Whiskey¹

It was a crisp April afternoon in 2024, and Bernard Walsh was literally knee deep in muck. The Walsh Whiskey founder had just returned from an exhausting overseas trip and was now engaging in his favorite pastime—mucking out the barn of his Irish farmhouse. As his pitchfork moved methodically between straw and wheelbarrow, he reflected on his quarter century in the spirits industry and could not help but feel a deep sense of satisfaction.

After all, during that time the former software executive had launched two phenomenally successful craft Irish whiskey brands, thereby helping to disrupt an industry long dominated by a few lumbering legacy distillers. One of Walsh's flagship brands, Writers' Tears, had quickly established itself as the leading super-premium Irish whiskey brand in Canada, while also developing an enthusiastic following in the United States among writers, musicians, and other creative types. The Irishman, his other flagship brand, had also found success in North America and was making inroads in Europe, Asia, and other global markets.

Moreover, Walsh's whiskeys were racking up awards for excellence in international competitions including, most recently, a double gold at the 2023 International Wine and Spirits Competition. Other accomplishments included designing and building a state-of-the-art whiskey distillery and visitors center in County Carlow and then selling his company in 2021 to a multinational drinks corporation with the resources and distribution networks to take his brands to new heights.

To top it off, Walsh, who remained in his role as managing director of Walsh Whiskey after the acquisition, had recently been honored by his peers with the Chairman's Award from the Irish Whiskey Association for his contributions to the global renaissance of the Irish whiskey industry. Yet the Tipperary-born entrepreneur

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