

# NO LONGER A DARK HORSE

ALBERTA PREMIUM DARK HORSE WHISKY RIDES TO VICTORY

*By Davin de Kergommeaux*

**ROB TUCKER KNOWS A LOT ABOUT RISK.** After years at the card table he wrote two books about gambling and then, in a surprising move, or perhaps not so surprising, he turned to whisky. Tucker is the Canadian whisky senior brand manager for global drinks giant, Beam Inc.

That same mettle that saw him determined to walk away from the tables a winner now steels his whisky backbone.

Tucker found whisky inspiration at the race track and, like a seasoned trainer, led Alberta Premium Dark Horse to victory as one of the most exciting new whiskies of 2012. This bold, singular whisky is named after one of the winningest thoroughbreds in history.

Dark Horse has Calgary roots that go back more than six decades when two very wealthy Albertans decided to build a distillery on the outskirts of Calgary. Max Bell and Frank McMahon were not whisky men, but their decision to distill 100% rye-grain whisky still adds about \$6 million to Alberta's farming economy annually. It's no coincidence they bought local. The world's best quality rye grain, so coveted by whisky makers right across North America, grows practically on the doorstep of the Calgary distillery.

McMahon had a penchant for racehorses. In 1967, a dark-coated yearling thoroughbred named Majestic Prince caught his eye and he invested a quarter of a million dollars in it. Two years later, his stallion won the Kentucky Derby, then injured a leg while winning the Preakness. Still, McMahon sent him on to Belmont hoping he would bring home the coveted Triple Crown. Majestic Prince came in second by four lengths, ending a promising racing career.

Tucker knows a lot about betting on a dark horse and was confident the Beam team could deliver. And after three decades at Alberta Distillers patiently crafting the finest of whiskies, Rick Murphy figured large in Tucker's plan. Murphy knew where the very best barrels were hidden. When some folks from Beam in the U.S. joined the project, Tucker knew he had a winning combination. "They started way too light," he says. "I just kept saying 'Go bigger, bolder, richer!' It was a complete team effort."

The image of the master blender as a solitary whisky whisperer wandering through dim warehouses searching out honey barrels, like that of the stern-faced poker player in a smoke-filled room, is a Hollywood stereotype. Today, making whisky involves the whole distillery team. The joy of finding just the right combination of barrels has even white-coated scientists in the quality control lab humming aloud.

Dark Horse, the newest whisky from McMahon's distillery, pays tribute to Majestic Prince and has a lot riding on it. "Dark Horse is a spicier, more robust whisky and, like Majestic Prince, it quickly makes believers out of people," says Tucker. "Younger consumers are really taking to these big bold brands. We want to address their tastes now, not wait until they are 40."

As young consumers embrace food pairing and cocktail culture, Dark Horse fills another niche. Matt Jones has the enviable title of Whisky Chef for Beam Inc.

"When cocktail meets culinary, finding that mixo-gastro crossover can be as simple as using the synergy of the whisky's flavour paired with complementary baking spices. This can also be as complex as a fat wash using

**THIS BOLD, SINGULAR WHISKY IS NAMED AFTER ONE OF THE WINNINGEST THOROUGHBREDS IN HISTORY.**

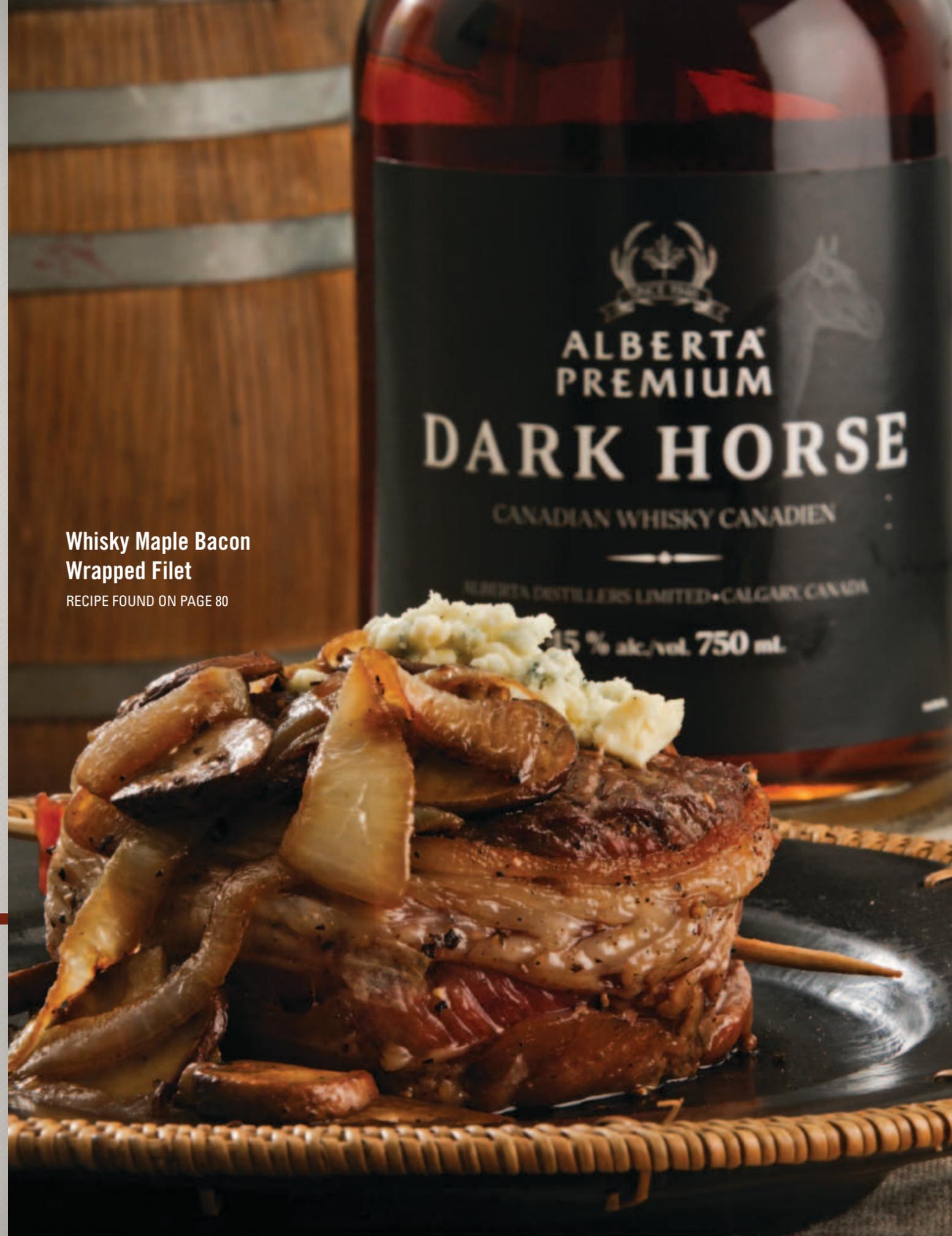
an element of each food course in the cocktail, which has become more conventional to cocktail focused restaurants in recent years. Imagine a bacon-fat washed Dark Horse Manhattan or Old Fashioned with a Dark Horse infused bacon-wrapped filet mignon!" he enthuses.

Rob Tucker was sure Dark Horse was a safe bet, even as he put the prestigious Alberta Premium name on a rye whisky that includes dashes of corn and smidgens of sherry. Or was he? When asked, he replies, "It all starts with honesty." Then a poker-faced Tucker asks dreamily, "Isn't it just beautiful how the components work so well together?"

**Davin de Kergommeaux is the author of the award-winning book, Canadian Whisky: The Portable Expert, and reviews Canadian whisky on his website, [canadianwhisky.org](http://canadianwhisky.org)**

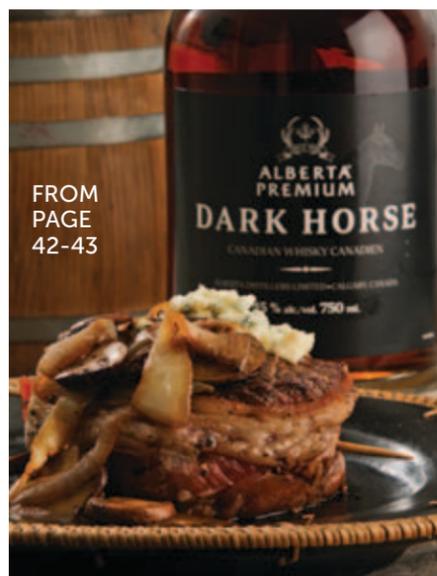


Watch the 2 minute video to learn how to make this great cocktail. Scan the QR code or go to [FlavoursWorld.ca](http://FlavoursWorld.ca)



**Whisky Maple Bacon Wrapped Filet**

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CUSTOM CONTENT RECIPE

### ***Whisky Maple Bacon Wrapped Filet***

By Matt Jones, Whisky Chef, Beam Inc.

SERVES 5

- 1 lb bacon
- 5 beef medallion filets
- 1 white onion
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 ¼ cups (16 oz) Dark Horse
- ½ cup of dark grade Canadian maple syrup
- Cracked peppercorn

Cook all but 5 strips of bacon (you will need them later) on medium heat evenly, flipping once until crisp. Remove bacon, letting grease drip back to pan. (Make BLT.)

When grease has cooled enough not to burn, transfer to sealable container. Add 2 cups Dark Horse to bacon fat, mix thoroughly, seal and let stand to room temperature and then refrigerate 24 hours. Fat will separate on its own and solidify. Strain all fat away from whisky using cloth filter. Keep fat for mushroom and onion sauté.

Marinate uncooked bacon strips in ¼ cup whisky, ¼ cup maple syrup, and cracked peppercorn for minimum half hour or overnight covered in refrigerator.

Chop onions and mushrooms, sauté with tablespoon Dark Horse flavoured bacon fat 5-7 minutes. Prepare 5 beef filets, wrap and pin with marinated bacon and glaze with remaining marinade. Pan sear with mushrooms and onions, and then wrap in foil and bake to order.



Watch the 2 minute video to learn how to make the Bacon Infused Old Fashion cocktail pairing. Scan the QR code or go to [FlavoursWorld.ca](http://FlavoursWorld.ca)