

1. WORLD WHISKY AO (SUNTORY)



The "World Whisky AO" from Suntory is an outstanding blend that unites the five most renowned whisky-producing regions in the world: Ireland, Scotland, America, Canada, and Japan. Each region, with its distinctive production methods and the unique character of its whiskies, contributes to the individuality of "World Whisky AO."

"Ao" is Japanese for the color blue and symbolizes the oceans that connect these regions. The pentagonal bottle is another hallmark of this remarkable combination. With sweet and fruity aromas on the nose, combining vanilla and pineapple, the blended whisky makes a pleasantly inviting first impression. On the palate, notes of cinnamon and a hint of smoke emerge, followed by spicy oak.

2. TENJAKU



The Tenjaku whiskies are produced in the city of Fuefuki by Minami Alps Wine and Beverage Co. Ltd. The location is surrounded by mountains and is home to one of Japan's most renowned growing regions for grapes and peaches. The crystal-clear spring water that flows through the landscape is also used in the production of Tenjaku Whisky.

For Tenjaku, the skylark was chosen as a symbol. This bird is widely regarded as a harbinger of spring. To create the harmonious whisky, Master Blender Kenji Watanabe combines several whiskies of different ages. Tenjaku Blended Whisky is made from both grain and malt whisky. It features notes of fruit, vanilla, caramel, and oak.

3. TOKI (SUNTORY)



One of the largest Japanese whisky producers is the company Suntory, which is also behind the "Toki" whisky. The whisky is blended from malts produced at the Hakushu, Yamazaki, and Chita distilleries. The blend was developed by Shinji Fukuyo, Chief Blender at Suntory. After the individual components are married, the product is reduced to bottling strength with spring water and bottled.

In the glass, we can now swirl a pale golden whisky with sweet aromas of honey and vanilla. On the palate, these notes are joined by fruity aromas of grapefruit, thyme, and fresh peppermint. You may also add a few drops of water to the whisky, as this brings the notes of vanilla, honey, and apple even more to the forefront.

4. HIBIKI (SUNTORY)



To create the Hibiki expression, various distillates from Suntory's own distilleries are blended together. After a Japanese whisky was named "Whisky of the Year" in 2015, it was only a matter of time before the reserves of Japanese distilleries were nearly depleted. To bridge the resulting dry spell until new—and especially older—Japanese whiskies would become available again, Suntory responded, among other things, with the NAS whisky Hibiki Japanese Harmony.

With its sweet and fruity character featuring notes of lychee, banana, vanilla, caramel, honey, and chocolate, the whisky offers an appealing tasting experience. This special expression matures in five different types of casks, including Mizunara oak.

5. AKASHI (EIGASHIMA)



The Japanese distillery White Oak was founded in 1888 and was primarily known for producing sake and shochu. As early as 1919—and thus as the very first distillery in Japan—it was granted a license to produce whisky. The whisky began attracting increasing attention after the construction of a new distillery near the port of Kobe, where Akashi Blended Whisky has been made since 1984. In addition to various blended whiskies, the distillery also produces single malt, although this is available on the European market only in very limited quantities.

Akashi Red is aged in fine oak casks and is a particularly soft and fruity blended whisky. Aromas of fresh peaches, vanilla, and grapes are complemented on the palate by notes of almonds, oak, and citrus.

6. HATOZAKI (KAIKYO DISTILLERY)



The Japanese Kaikyo Distillery takes its name from the famous Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge, which stands at the foot of the distillery and is among the longest suspension bridges in the world. The founding Yonesawa family has been involved in distillation since 1917, although they only ventured into whisky production a few years ago. When the old stills had to be replaced in 2017, they designed new copper twin pot stills specifically for whisky distillation.

The brand name Hatozaki is derived from Japan's oldest stone lighthouse—the Hatozaki. This special Hatozaki bottling first matures in American oak casks before receiving a finish in casks previously seasoned with the Japanese plum liqueur Umeshu.

7. FUJIMI (MATSUI SHUZO)



The bottles of Fujimi Blended Japanese Whisky feature an image of a samurai symbolizing the Bushido code of conduct. The number 7, also shown on the bottle, represents the seven virtues: courage, integrity, loyalty, respect, honesty, compassion, and honor. With these symbols, the Kurayoshi Distillery, founded in 1910 on Japan's main island of Honshu, sets high standards for itself and its products, which include not only whisky but also sake and shochu.

The blended whisky Fujimi—meaning "immortality"—matures for three years in American white oak casks. During this time, the whisky develops a pale yellow color. While the nose reveals slightly sharp aromas, it surprises on the palate with a mild, rounded character featuring fresh and fruity notes.

8. KANOSUKE



The Kanosuke Distillery was founded in 2017 in the southwest of Japan and is located on Fukiagehama, one of the longest sandy beaches in the country. This location offers a picturesque sunset, which is also depicted on the bottle of Kanosuke Whisky. Due to the distillery's coastal setting, the local climate naturally influences its products, resulting in whiskies with a richer and softer character.

Kanosuke Hioki is inspired by Irish pot still whiskies. It is produced at the Hioki Distillery from both malted and unmalted barley. Distillation takes place in a pot still that is normally used for shochu production. The Kanosuke Hioki is then aged in oak casks at the Kanosuke Distillery.

9. TSUNUKI (HOMBO SHUZO)



The Mars Tsunuki Distillery was opened in 2016 in the south of Japan, on the island of Kyushu in Kagoshima Prefecture. The region is known for its subtropical climate in summer and its bitterly cold weather in winter. These significant temperature fluctuations influence the whisky during its maturation period. In addition, the distillery has access to fresh spring water from the mountains, which gives its products a distinctive character.

The Mars Tsunuki Edition 2023 is matured primarily in a combination of first-fill and second-fill bourbon casks. On the nose, the single malt opens with sweet aromas of marmalade, followed by subtle peat smoke and honey. Fruity notes unfold on the palate, accompanied by fresh citrus aromas, vanilla, and malt.

10. THE TOTTORI (MATSUI SHUZO)



For this special The Tottori whisky, a combination of various Japanese whiskies is used, all of which matured for three years in toasted oak casks. The refined blend is produced by the Kurayoshi Distillery, founded in 1910 in Tottori Prefecture, located in close proximity to the seacoast. The distillery is also situated at the foot of Mount Daisen. The soft water sourced from there is exceptionally well-suited for producing both sake and whisky.

To preserve an unadulterated whisky character, the whiskies from the Kurayoshi Distillery are bottled without chill filtration. Fruity and lightly spiced aromas, along with sweet notes of vanilla and chocolate and floral nuances on the palate, create a pleasant and enjoyable tasting experience.

11. TOGOUCHI (CHUGOKU JOZO)



The Chugoku Jozo Distillery has been producing fruit liqueurs, sake, and shochu on the Japanese island of Honshu since 1918. Seventy-two years later, in 1990, the company began the production of blended whisky. However, the products are not distilled in Japan. The distillates are imported by the Japanese company from Scotland (malt whisky) and Canada (grain whisky). Only the processes of maturation and blending take place in Japan.

The ageing occurs in an unfinished railway tunnel in Togouchi, which was never completed. Togouchi Pure Malt is made from a combination of single malts aged between three and nine years, featuring subtle peaty notes. The maturation takes place in Sherry and Bourbon casks.

12. KOMAGATAKE (MARS SHINSHU)



Under the name Mars, many different whisky bottlings are released. These include the blends Cosmo and Kasei as well as the single malts Tsunuki and Komagatake. Production is overseen by the traditional Japanese spirits manufacturer Hombo Shuzo. The Komagatake bottlings are named after the highest peak of the Kiso Mountains, which is located near the distillery.

For the limited 2022 edition, a combination of fine Bourbon, Sherry, and Port wine casks is used for maturation. This gives the single malt floral and fruity aromas of apricots, bananas, and honey on the nose. On the palate, sweet notes of caramel and vanilla mingle with spicy hints of oak and pepper, as well as delicate nuances of ginger.

13. SHINOBU



Surrounded by majestic mountains and the Sea of Japan, the Shinobu Distillery is located in Niigata Prefecture on Japan's main island of Honshu. For the distillery's founder and master blender, Ken Usami, it is the perfect place to create Japanese craft whiskies. In 2017, the Shinobu Distillery became the first distillery in Niigata Prefecture to receive a license to produce whisky. Shinobu is the Japanese word for "forbearance," and accordingly, their whiskies are crafted with great care and patience.

After maturing in former Bourbon and Sherry casks, Shinobu Pure Malt receives a finish in fine casks made from Japanese Mizunara oak. These impart a pleasant spiciness to the whisky, complemented by exotic spices, dried fruits, and roasted nuts.

14. THE CHITA (SUNTORY)



Since 1923, Suntory, a leading beverage company in the Land of the Cherry Blossoms, has been expanding the art of Japanese whisky. Under the Suntory name, distilleries such as Hakushu, Yamazaki, and, since 1972, the Chita Distillery are operated. The distillery was built by Keizo Saji, Suntory's second master blender, on the Chita Peninsula in Japan. There, the production is dedicated exclusively to grain whiskies.

At first glance, the term grain can be somewhat misleading, since all whisky is essentially made from grain. However, grain whiskies are distilled primarily from unmalted grain. The components used to create The Chita whisky mature in three different types of casks: American white oak, Spanish oak, and wine casks.

15. SAKURAO



The Sakurao Brewery & Distillery Co. Ltd. was founded in 1918 in the city of Hatsukaichi in Hiroshima Prefecture. Its excellent location, close to both the sea and the mountains, offers outstanding conditions for whisky maturation. The distillery operates warehouses in various locations, each with different climatic conditions that produce exceptional whiskies.

With aromas of raisins and cocoa, as well as notes influenced by the nearby Seto Inland Sea, the Sakurao Sherry Cask also offers a fruity flavor reminiscent of dark cherries and oranges, combined with subtle peaty nuances. The bittersweet finish is complemented by delicate oak aromas.

16. AMAHAGAN



The whiskies of the Amahagan brand are produced by the Nagahama Distillery, which was founded in 2016. Located on the shores of Lake Biwa, it is the smallest whisky distillery in Japan. On just 26 square meters, the team led by Master Blender Takashi Kiyoi crafts high-quality blended malt whisky. To match the size of the distillery, the smallest pot stills in Japan are used. The name of their whiskies, Amahagan, is a reversal of the distillery's name.

Amahagan Peated combines peated malt whisky from the Nagahama Distillery with unpeated malt whiskies from another part of the world. Alongside pronounced peaty notes, Amahagan Peated reveals aromas of ripe peaches and baked apples on the nose. Delicate roasted notes and fresh citrus fruits stand out on the palate.

17. THE SAN-IN (MATSUI SHUZO)



Discover one of the fascinating Japanese whisky creations with The SAN-IN Blended Whisky. This high-quality spirit is produced by the Kurayoshi Distillery, located in the Tottori Prefecture in western Japan. The region's warm climate, along with the pure water used in production, results in light and refreshing whiskies with a smooth taste.

Maturation in fine American white oak casks gives the San-In EX-Bourbon-Barrel a fresh and sweet bouquet, with aromas of vanilla and maple syrup on the nose. The palate is caressed by fresh pears in combination with notes of lemongrass, vanilla, and a hint of biscuit. In the soft finish, fruity nuances of pear reappear.

18. HINOTORI (AIOI UNIBIO)



How better to celebrate a birthday in the world of whisky than with an excellent dram? In 2019, the Hinotori Distillery gave itself exactly this gift for its 70th anniversary by releasing the Hinotori 5 Year Old, a blended whisky. The distillery is located on Honshu, the main island of Japan. There, the blend of grain and malt whiskies is matured in refill Mizunara oak casks, without the use of chill filtration or added colouring.

Depicted on the bottle is a phoenix, a magical bird symbolising rebirth – called Hinotori in Japanese. This whisky presents itself fresh and fruity, with aromas of flowers and exotic fruits, along with notes of apple, pear, and vanilla.

19. YAMAZAKURA (SASANOKAWA SHUZO)



In the northeast of Japan lies the Sasanokawa Shuzo distillery. The company entered the sake and shochu business in Fukushima as early as 1765. In 1946, it was granted a licence to distil whisky, and in 2016 the Asaka Distillery was opened.

The Yamazakura Kuyuri Peated is a premium blended whisky that is matured for at least three years in ex-bourbon and ex-sherry casks. As a result, the finished blend displays an intense ochre colour and a wide range of aromas. Incidentally, Kuyuri is the Japanese word for "smoky", already hinting at the character of the whisky.

Alongside fine peaty aromas on the nose, sweet hints of vanilla and caramel appear. Fresh citrus fruits and spicy oak greet us on the palate, accompanied by subtle smoky notes.

20. NIKKA



In 1918, Masataka Taketsuru was tasked with creating a Japanese whisky. To fulfil this mission, he travelled through Scotland to uncover the secrets of whisky production. In 1924, he built a Japanese distillery on behalf of a major beer producer and, only a few years later, was able to realise his dream of establishing his own distillery on the island of Hokkaido. The name of this distillery: Yoichi.

In 1969, a second distillery named Miyagikyo began operations. Today, the whiskies from both distilleries are sold under the name Nikka. For Nikka From The Barrel, more than 100 different malt and grain whiskies are blended and then left to mature for several additional months in selected casks. The result is an intense aromatic profile - as if drawn freshly from the barrel!

21. KUJIRA (MASAHIRO SHUZO)



The Japanese Masahiro Distillery is responsible for the Kujira Ryukyu whiskies. It has existed since 1883 and is therefore one of the oldest family-run distilleries on the island of Okinawa. The tropical island lies in the far south of Japan. Due to the warm temperatures, the whiskies produced there mature more quickly than in other places, resulting in a more robust aroma and a more intense flavour.

Kujira Ryukyu Single Grain Whisky is made from 100% high-quality Indica rice. It matures for 5 years in first-fill American white oak casks. The result is an appealing whisky with aromas of sweet caramel, vanilla, liquorice, and spicy oak on the nose, which continue on the palate.

22. YAMAZAKI



Founded in 1923 as Japan's first malt whisky distillery, it is located on the outskirts of the former capital Kyoto. One of the decisive factors for choosing this location at the time, besides the excellent water quality, was the warm climate of the region, which allows Yamazaki whisky to mature into an especially refined spirit. As in Scotland, these Japanese whiskies are produced using the traditional pot still method.

Yamazaki 12 Year Old is a top-quality single malt matured in three different types of casks: American (ex-bourbon), Spanish (ex-sherry), and Japanese oak. The result of this maturation is a multi-layered, harmonious composition of the highest calibre, with aromas of tropical fruits, vanilla, and spices.

23. MARS (SHINSHU MARS)



Behind the Mars Cosmo whisky stands the Japanese distillery Mars Shinshu, founded in 1985. Located at an altitude of 798 meters, the distillery is the highest in the country. The cooler temperatures cause everything to progress a bit more slowly, resulting in a whisky that tastes softer and fuller-bodied while also carrying the cool character of the region.

For the limited Mars Maltage Cosmo Wine Cask Finish, casks formerly used to mature red wine from the company's own Japanese winery are used for the finishing period. This imparts fine aromas of figs, banana chips, and apricots to the whisky. On the palate, these are joined by notes of honey, spices, and dark fruits, followed by a long finish with woody nuances.

24. HAKUSHU



Half a century after the opening of the Yamazaki Distillery, Master Blender Keizo Saji built the Hakushu Distillery in Japan. In that year—specifically 1973—he found the ideal location for a distillery in an area deep within the forests of a mountain called Kaikoma, in the Japanese Akaishi range.

The climate surrounding the distillery makes it possible to create a truly distinctive malt whisky. Above all, the soft and pure water plays a major and decisive role. Hakushu 12 Years is one of the few peated whiskies from Japan, yet its smokiness remains very moderate. Since peat cutting has little tradition in Japan, the peat used for production actually comes from Scotland.