

Lagavulin 12 year old (Diageo Special Releases 2010)

56.5%

There's precious little reticence about this beast, which leaps out of the glass blowing peat smoke everywhere — then comes raffia, Lapsang Souchong tea, seashore, wet rocks, Elastoplast, talcum powder, bog myrtle (laurel), vetiver, and the aromas of a just-expunged peat bonfire with apples baking on it. Huge and complex, in other words. The palate starts with a fug of smoke being belched at you (non-peat freaks look away, now) then distinct saltiness enlivens the tongue before everything plunges down; intense sweetness takes charge for a moment before it shifts into charred creosoted timbers. This begs for some water, and when it's added, out comes sandalwood and peat smoke and tar and an orris root-like character — it's not often I get gin-like notes on Lagavulin, but it's here — which rolls over you as you roll over and succumb to its power. After this year's sublime distillery-only bottling, it's clear that Lagavulin is in a real purple patch. Superb.

—Vol. 20, #1