

Ichiro's Malt

**Mizunara Wood Reserve
(bottled 2010), 46%**

The Ichiro of the title is Ichiro Akuto, scion of the family which owned the now demolished Hanyu distillery, and proprietor of the brand new and incredibly cute (yes...distilleries can be cute) Chichibu distillery — even the name's cute. This release is a vatting of different (un-named) single malts from more than one distillery which have been aged in Japanese oak (mizunara, or Q.Mongolica). Mizunara has a highly distinctive aromatic spectrum — the Japanese say that it smells of temples, specifically the incense which scents Zen temples, but while totally accurate, that's not much help if you haven't been to one. Think of a heavy, exotic aroma of allspice, sandalwood, even redwood, and you're almost there. In fact, if you think of the perfumed aspects of rye, but turned up a notch, then you're in the right ballpark. In this one there's even a hint of trail bar — maybe it's a hike in a California old-growth forest. The palate is soft and slow to start, then picks up mouthwatering acidity — there's that rye parallel. Green plum and peach, balanced with spiciness on the end. Once encountered, never forgotten. £85. Price in US dollars was converted at time of review.

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