

## White Oak Akashi 5 year old

45%

The Eigashima distillery, on the Akashi Strait near Kobe, may be the least well known of Japan's single malt plants, but has a sound claim to be the country's oldest, as its license to make whisky was granted in 1919 — four years before Yamazaki was built. It has, however, specialized in shochu, and even now only turns its hand to whisky making for two months every year. This 5 year old — bottled for independent Japanese specialist Number One Drinks — represents a tentative move into the single malt market once more. Pale in color, it shows a typically Japanese cleanliness on the nose that's cut with a touch of waxiness. It opens with a scented angelica-like lift, there's even a whiff of something like gooseberry jam. As it opens, the aroma darkens slightly, showing a touch of roasted tea. Water brings out a little yeastiness (typical for some younger whiskies), alongside cucumber, borage, and lime. The palate is sweet with vanilla custard and a sweet, ginger-accented note leading to ripe pear. A charming malt, and already well-balanced for its age. Here's Japan at its lightest. £55. Price in US dollars converted at time of review.

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