

Yoichi 15 year old

45%

Nikka's first distillery is located in the eponymous town on the western coast of Hokkaido. Here, power is the key. Deep and rich with a distinct oiliness — somewhere between linseed and cod liver — there's also plenty of smoke in the mix as well, and a little hint of black olives in brine with ripe apples lurking behind. I hate making comparisons between Japanese and Scotch single malt but if I was forced to, Yoichi reminds me most of Springbank (edging into Longrow). Water dampens the personality too much for me; best have it full-on and uncompromising. Rather than the palate showing a slow procession of flavors along the tongue, this is a layered whisky; coal-like, oily, and richly fruited with a distinct saltiness on the sides, ably demonstrating that Japan has almost as much variety on offer as scotch. £76.95.

—Vol. 19, #3