

Hazelburn 8-Year-Old

J. & A. Mitchell Co. | www.springbankdistillers.com



Tasting notes

A relatively light, fruity, faintly resinous nose, with developing lemongrass and floral notes. Sherbet, malt, and vanilla on the attractive, sweet, and lively palate, which also features some flecks of brine. Spicy oak, black pepper, and a hint of smoke in the finish.

Region and country of origin Highlands, Scotland
Distillery Springbank, Campbeltown, Argyll
Alcohol content 46% abv
Style Single malt

Hazelburn was first bottled as a limited-edition 8-year-old in 2005, and so successful was it that the 6,000 bottles sold out within a matter of weeks. The following year, Hazelburn became a permanent feature of the Springbank distillery portfolio, and in 2009, a 12-year-old variant joined the range.

Like Longrow, the Hazelburn brand takes its name from one of Campbeltown's many "lost" distilleries. With Glengyle having been revived in 2004, there are now only three active distilleries, although in the past distilling has taken place on no fewer than thirty-four sites within the Royal Burgh.

Of Campbeltown's lost distilleries, Hazelburn in the Longrow area was ultimately the largest and most significant. The first record of its existence dates from 1825, though distilling may well have taken place earlier. In 1845, with business booming, a new, enlarged Hazelburn distillery was constructed in Millknowe Street. The new plant boasted no fewer than nine 6,000-gallon (23,000-liter) washbacks and three stills, and its 7,000-gallon (26,500-liter) wash still was the largest in Campbeltown.

The twentieth century brought a sharp decline in the fortunes of Campbeltown as a whisky-making center, and distilling ceased at Hazelburn in 1925. Two years later, the distillery was absorbed into the Distillers Company Ltd (DCL), and Hazelburn's extensive warehousing continued to be utilized for the maturation of whisky from a number of DCL distilleries until 1983. Today, only a comparatively small section of the Hazelburn complex survives. **GS**

Hazelburn CV

J. & A. Mitchell Co. | www.springbankdistillers.com

Region and country of origin Highlands, Scotland
Distillery Springbank, Campbeltown, Argyll
Alcohol content 46% abv
Style Single malt

Hazelburn is one of three different single-malt whiskies produced by the family firm of J. & A. Mitchell Co. in their historic Springbank distillery, situated in the heart of the ancient port and distilling center of Campbeltown. While Springbank whisky is effectively "two-and-a-half-times" distilled, and Longrow whisky is double-distilled and heavily peated, Hazelburn differs from its stablemates by being unpeated and triple-distilled. Springbank distillery operates its own floor maltings, and the malt destined for Hazelburn is air-dried, with no peat being burned in the kiln.

According to a company spokesperson, "Instead of using the conventional double-distillation method, Springbank boasts three stills and operates a form of partial triple-distillation. The wash is pumped into a wash still, where the liquid is boiled. The resulting distillate produced, called low wines, is transferred to the low wines still, where it is boiled a second time. The product of this distillation, called feints, is then transferred to the spirit still, from which the spirit 'cut' is collected. At Springbank, the wash still is fired from the bottom by live flame, and the spirit stills are heated by steam coils from inside. It is thought Springbank is the only distillery in Scotland to do this."

Hazelburn is the youngest of the trio of malts to be made at Springbank and was first produced in 1997. The initial bottling took place in 2005, and maturation of Hazelburn spirit occurs in a mix of ex-sherry and ex-bourbon casks. The CV variant of Hazelburn carries no age statement and was introduced in 2010. **GS**



Tasting notes

Initially slightly herbal on the nose, with acetone and cigarette packet. Citrusy and malty with time. Orange, ginger, vanilla, and sherbet zest on the spicy palate. The finish is medium in length and spicy, with a slight suggestion of salt. A fresh, breezy, aperitif whisky.

Hakushu 18-Year-Old

Suntory | www.suntory.com



Tasting notes

On the nose there are delicious fruits veering to the overripe, plus pineapple and a telltale hint of smoke. The palate is sweet yet complex. The finish is hot and smoky, but in a good way. The residual sweetness is swept away by lingering warmth.

Region and country of origin Yamanashi, Japan
Distillery Suntory Hakushu, Matsubarakami
Alcohol content 43% abv
Style Single malt

Hakushu is mostly made in smaller casks, and whisky in smaller casks tends to mature more quickly than that in large casks. When Suntory set about creating a Hakushu 18-Year-Old, it included a greater proportion of whisky from larger sherry casks in order to balance the maturity. The 18-Year-Old has more of a sherry-matured profile than the younger whiskies, but in the past very little spirit at the Hakushu distillery was filled into sherry casks. That shortage has now been addressed but, as the whisky industry always has to wait patiently for maturation to take place, the problem persists. Launched on March 7, 2006, the 18-Year-Old was very well received, winning gold medals at the International Spirits Challenge and the International Wine & Spirits Competition.

Distiller Mike Miyamoto commented: “We would like to keep up the quality of the 18-Year-Old, but if the 18-Year-Old sells more than expected, it becomes very difficult. We didn’t expect that Hakushu would be selling this much at first. It is a nice surprise, but . . .”

The cask makeup includes some European oak sherry casks—a mixture of first and second fill—that make a big difference. A Hakushu matured in sherry casks is different from a Yamazaki matured in sherry casks. Usually sherry casks add heaviness, making the whisky overwhelmingly robust, but Hakushu is different. This expression does have extra body, but the sherry casks somehow seem to enhance the pleasantly refreshing sweetness of Hakushu. Single malts like this illustrate perfectly how Japanese whisky has created its own identity in recent years. **MM**

Hakushu 25-Year-Old

Suntory | www.suntory.com



Tasting notes

Ripe fruits, sweet vanilla, and banana custard on the nose. Clean green forest notes. Starts quite sweet on the palate but develops with alacrity into mouth-watering overripe fruit and tobacco. To finish there is a long tussle between the smoke and the fruit.

Region and country of origin Yamanashi, Japan
Distillery Suntory Hakushu, Matsubarakami
Alcohol content 43% abv
Style Single malt

Launched on February 5, 2008, Hakushu 25-Year-Old is the creation of Suntory’s chief blender, Mr. Koshimizu. The story goes that he made a prototype, consisting of three different Hakushu whiskies matured in a bourbon hogshead and sherry casks, then presented it to the master blender.

According to distiller Mike Miyamoto, “The master blender didn’t agree with him, so Koshimizu had to come back to him—not only once or twice but many, many times. Koshimizu was struggling, so he actually went with some prototypes to one of the leading barmen in Tokyo, Mr. Nakamura at Erika, an independent bar in the Ginza district, to see what he thought of these different whiskies. Mr. Nakamura made a very blunt comment, with no compliments at all. He said, “Koshimizu-san, what are you afraid of?” This was an experienced bartender in the late 1960s. He knew that Koshimizu-san wasn’t confident in his samples. The advice the bartender gave Koshimizu is that you have to be confident in yourself, no matter what you make; otherwise, “don’t bring it to me.”

Koshimizu-san then knew that none of the samples would be satisfactory. He went back to create lots of new samples from scratch rather than modify those already presented. He assembled samples from a huge number of casks—“maybe a thousand of them”—and, in his research, he encountered some unusual (meaning bad) whiskies. Again according to Miyamoto, Koshimizu-san had a hunch: “What if I use just a tiny bit [of unusual whisky] in my formula?” and he did. Look what happened—a superb whisky. **MM**