

Suntory time: Japanese whisky named world's best in sour dram for Scotland

World Whisky *Bible* gives highest mark to Yamazaki single malt while spiritual homeland's ranking is dramatically watered down



← whisky from the Yamazaki distillery in Japan has been ranked the world's best. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/Guardian

- 1) Scottish drinkers could be forgiven for crying into their drams after a single malt from Japan was named the best whisky in the world for the first time.
 - 2) Whisky expert Jim Murray awarded a record-equalling 97.5 marks out of 100 to Suntory's Yamazaki Single Malt Sherry Cask 2013, hailing it as "near indescribable genius" in his comments in the forthcoming 2015 World Whisky Bible.
 - 3) Murray's tasting notes described the whisky, from the company's distillery near Kyoto in western Japan, as possessing "a nose of exquisite boldness" and as "thick, dry, [and] as rounded as a snooker ball".
 - 4) It is the first time since the guide was first published 12 years ago that the top award has gone to a whisky from Japan. The country's whiskies were once the butt of jokes but have won a slew of awards and widespread critical acclaim in recent years.
 - 5) To compound the pain felt in the spiritual home of the "water of life", this is the first time that not a single Scottish whisky made it into the top five in Murray's respected guide.
 - 6) Suntory's winning whisky is aged for 12 to 15 years in casks previously used for Oloroso sherry, giving it what Murray described as a "light, teasing spice".
 - 7) The drink is a far cry from the cheap, blended versions, mixed with water or drunk with soda and ice as a highball, favoured by Japanese office workers.
 - 8) Yamazaki – Japan's oldest whisky distillery – produced a limited 18,000 bottles of the prize-winning single malt and they are sold only online or at specialist shops for about US\$160 each.
 - 9) Masataka Taketsuru, who helped found the distillery in 1923, and his Scottish wife, Rita Cowan, inspired a popular TV drama currently being shown by Japan's public broadcaster, NHK.
 - 10) They met when Taketsuru was studying chemistry in Scotland – with a view to opening his own distillery back home – and married against their families' wishes before moving to Japan in 1921.
 - 11) In 1934 the couple opened the Dai Nihon Kaju (later to become Nikka) distillery in Yoichi on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido, where he and Rita are buried.
 - 12) Second, third and fourth places in this year's awards went to three bourbons from the US; the prize for best European whisky went to Chapter 14 Not Peated, from the English Whisky Company.
 - 13) Murray, who personally sampled almost 1,000 whiskies among the 4,500 being judged, warned Scottish distilleries that reputations counted for little now that other countries were producing their own world-class whiskies.
 - 14) "Where were the complex whiskies in the prime of their lives? Where were the blends which offered bewildering layers of depth?" he wrote. "It is time for a little dose of humility... to get back to basics. To realise that something is missing.【Tuesday 4 November 2014/the-guardian.com】
- bible:①聖書②(特定の分野の)必読本 water down:弱まる cry in one's beer(ビールを飲んで悲しみを紛らわす、悲しみに打ちひしがれる、みじめな思いになる)をもじった表現。dram は①重さの単位②略式主にスコットランドで、少量の酒(特にウィスキー) record-equalling: 過去最高タイの distillery: 蒸留酒製酒場 snooker ball:ビリヤードの一種、スヌーカー(引き締まっている、まるやかという意味か?) the butt of a joke 冗談のターゲット、物笑いの種 critical acclaim: 評論家の賞賛 compound:①構成される②(悲惨さなどを)増す water of life:命の水、酒 cask:大樽 far cry: 大違い bewildering:まごつかさせる、当惑させる
- ☆Ice breaker for active discussion☆
1. Are you a liquor connoisseur? Do you drink any alcoholic beverages?
 2. Japan's whiskey was once the 'butt of jokes'. What can you say about it?
 3. What do you think Mr. Murray wanted to say on the last paragraph?
 4. Can you think of any other cases where the favorite was beaten by a dark horse?
 5. Are you watching the TV drama mentioned on paragraph #6?
If so, please share the story.
 6. What are the difficulties that internationally-married couples might face?
 7. Make sentences using the following words: bible, spiritual, water down, distillery, acclaim, compound, bewildering and humility.

ウィスキーの父と言われる竹鶴政孝氏と妻のリタをモデルにした NHKの朝のドラマ「マッサン」が放映されている。竹鶴氏が、サントリー山崎蒸留所の初代所長を務め、日本初の本格ウィスキーを送り出したのが1929。ついに日本産ウィスキーが世界の頂点に達した。今回の「山崎シェリーカスク 2013」の受賞は、波紋を呼びイギリス人から「ショックである」「日本人はまねて改良する歴史を持っている」などコメントが寄せられている。2位はウィリアム・ララー・ウェラー、3位はサゼラック・ライ 18年、4位はフォアローゼス。