

SPECIAL TOP 20 WHISKIES ISSUE

Whisky

ADVOCATE

WHISKY OF THE YEAR

AND WHO MADE
OUR TOP 20

2019
MAKE IT YOUR BEST
WHISKY YEAR EVER

DISCOVER
FRENCH WHISKY

THE BEST
BIG BOX STORE
WHISKIES



1 WHISKY OF THE YEAR

Nikka From the Barrel

51.4%, \$65

PANEL RATING 94

JAPANESE BLENDED

For Nikka From the Barrel, it's been a long road to Whisky of the Year. This Japanese blend made its U.S. debut in 2018, but its inception dates back more than 30 years. In 1985, Nikka Whisky Distilling Company's blending team, led by Shigeo Sato, designed this whisky using both malt and grain whiskies produced at Nikka's Yoichi and Miyagikyo Distilleries. When taking into account the full array of casks—bourbon barrels, sherry butts, refill hogsheads, and more—over 100 different constituent whiskies are enlisted.

"From the Barrel" suggests barrel proof, but that's not the case. The blenders made a conscious decision to bottle at 51.4% (derived from 90 British Proof) to deliver maximum flavor impact. They succeeded.

Notably balanced and elegant, the colorful palette of whiskies combines for tremendous depth of flavor. Soft, sweet butter-scotch and orange peel meet poached pears and stone fruits. Earthiness appears as dried autumn leaves, coffee, old oak, and tobacco. Among the tangle of spices, tasters identified chili pepper, allspice, cloves, and universally adored its ginger note. Finally, wisps of smoke and sea salt. Overall, it feels generously malty, with the grain whisky lending broad sweetness and supple mouthfeel across the long finish.

Beyond its delightful flavors, Nikka From the Barrel presents some paradoxes worthy of contemplation over a glass. It is a classic, yet new to the U.S. It is typically Japanese, yet singularly magnificent. It is delightful sipped neat and also blossoms with water. Even the simple, squat bottle is in contrast to the profound complexity within. (Fortunately, the 500 ml bottle offered in other markets received a supersizing for U.S. drinkers.)

The great majority of new Japanese whiskies now arriving to our shores are so rare and so expensive that they seem intended only for elite whisky lovers. Nikka From the Barrel is a consummate Japanese blend for anyone to enjoy.

—Jeffery Lindenmuth

