



**MARS WHISKY**

## MARS WHISKY

NAGANO PREFECTURE

Est. 1949

[www.hombo.co.jp/marswhisky/](http://www.hombo.co.jp/marswhisky/)



The Hombo family, owners of Mars Whisky, first took out a license to distil whisky in 1949, although it was not until 1960 that it started making whisky – and not in Kagoshima, but at a purpose built plant in Yamanashi.

This was run by Kiichiro Iwai, who had been Masataka Taketsuru's immediate superior at the turn of the century and who was responsible for sending Taketsuru to Scotland in 1919 to learn how whisky was produced. Both men had worked for a firm, Settsu Shozo, which had intended to build Japan's first whisky distillery. Sadly when Taketsuru returned from Scotland, the firm was in administration.

He went to join Yamazaki, founded Nikka, and the rest is history. Iwai was a whisky man too, and when the plant in Yamanashi started, Iwai used Taketsuru's original report to make his whisky. It was unsurprisingly, heavy and smoky. Iwai was also responsible for the design of their pot stills and is considered a pioneer in the history and development of pot still whisky in Japan. He is one of only 4 Japanese, listed in the Top 100 most influential people in the history of whisky in the world. Yamanashi ran for nine years and when production there switched over to wine, distilling moved to Kagoshima, located in the south of Kyushu, where two tiny pot stills also made heavy smoky whisky.

In 1984, production was switched to the current Mars site in Nagano high in the Japanese Alps, which had been chosen because of its altitude (to encourage slow maturation) and the availability of soft granite filtered water. A style change was also brought in. This whisky was to be light. The few casks from this period show it to be Japan's sweetest whisky, filled with soft honeyed fruits. Unfortunately timing was bad, and this was the start of Japan's great whisky crash, and Mars closed in 1992.

With the market opening up again, Mars opened again in 2011 and currently there are only two blended whisky's available - Iwai Japanese Whisky, which is aged in bourbon casks, and the Iwai 'Tradition' Japanese Whisky which is aged in bourbon, sherry, American white oak casks and Japanese Mizunara casks, and is a little richer and fuller in flavour.



### Whisky Name

Style

**Iwai Japanese Whisky**

Pot Still Blended Whisky

Unit Size

750ml (RRP \$98)

Malts

Blended barley/grains

Cask Finish

Bourbon casks

ABV

40%

### Tasting Note

**Colour:** Rich gold, amber with hints of rose

**Nose:** Lovely, light, floral and sweet aromas. Notes of Cherry Ripe, juicy berries, roasted coconut and dark cacao. There is also a sweetness of marshmallows, sweet pears, candied ginger and a lovely honey suckle aroma.

**Palate:** Beautiful soft sweetness of gingerbread, raspberry and spiced honey with underlying flavours of dried fig and allspice

**Finish:** Soft malt finish, beautiful medium mellow finish of spiced port, ginger cookies, honey milk, and dried figs.

### Comments

Stunning, beautiful, soft whisky. Delicate but well balanced.

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**DEJA VU SAKE CO**

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### Whisky Name

Style

### Iwai 'Tradition' Japanese Whisky

Pot Still Blended Whisky

Unit Size

750ml (RRP \$110)

Malts

Blended barley/grains

Cask Finish

Bourbon cask, Sherry casks, American white oak casks and Japanese Mizunara casks

ABV

40%

### Tasting Note

**Colour:** Rich gold, amber

**Nose:** Malt, sweet honey, complex, peaty

**Palate:** Full bodied, sweet peat, orange marmalade, maple, burnt sugar cane, cedar, cigar

**Finish:** Distinctively full bodied, rounded, richer styler, long finish

### Comments

Soft and rounded, yet full bodied and mellow

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