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There was a time when no one paid much attention to Japanese whiskies, as they were not exactly up to par with the amber spirit that has been produced in Scotland for more than a century. Today, however, things could not be any more different — Japanese whiskies are acknowledged to be among the finest in the world. In the past few years, whiskies produced from Japan's first malt whisky distillery, Yamazaki, owned by Japanese wine and spirits company Suntory Ltd, have been sweeping up accolades at international competitions, as well as garnering critical acclaim from connoisseurs and consumers alike. For instance, its Yamazaki single malt obtained the top prize at the 2003 International Spirits Challenge in London. Constructed in 1923 in the outskirts of Kyoto, the Yamazaki distillery is run by the third generation of the family. The goal at Suntory has always been to make whisky for the Japanese palate which is delicate and complex. Aside from this distillery, Suntory also has another one in Hakushu, located at the foot of Mt Kaikomagatake in Japan's Southern Alps. In 1929, Suntory launched Suntory Shirofuda, Japan's first genuine domestically produced whisky. Suntory Kakubin, a premium Japanese whisky was introduced in 1937 and is considered to be Japan's first authentic Scotch whisky. It developed an unparalleled variety of malt whiskies which brought to the market such products as Yamazaki single malt whisky (1984), Hakushu single malt whisky (1994) and Hibiki blended whisky (1989) to great acclaim. Come Aug 20, lovers of single malt whisky will be able to delve into the world of Suntory whiskies in a tasting dinner at the award-winning Japanese restaurant, Kampachi, at Hotel Equatorial Kuala Lumpur. The dinner features an exquisite 11-course Japanese dinner paired with three premium single malt Suntory whiskies. The event is jointly organised with Asiaeuro Wines & Spirits Sdn Bhd. Executive chef How Yoke Seng has crafted a menu that incorporates Kampachi's signature dishes. The dinner will be offering freshly prepared Zensai, or appetisers, such as Ika Tsurara Suizu (squid with vinegar sauce), Hokkigai Kimi Sushi (surf clam with egg yolk sushi), Kanimi Mayo Yose (crab meat mayonnaise jelly), Kamo Kunsei Tsubu Karashi (smoked duck with grain mustard), and Kaimo Dengaku (petite yam grilled with bean paste sauce), complemented with Yamazaki 25 Years Old Premium Single Malt Whisky. It is a super premium whisky carefully vatted from key malt's and available in limited quantities of only 12,000 bottles a year. Diners will also be served Yakimono or grilled dish — halibut marinated with bean paste and simmered Devil's tongue paired with Hakushu 25 Years Old Premium Single Malt Whisky. This whisky is made from selected malt whiskies in the Hakushu Distillery. Also on the menu is pan-fried Japanese beef with asparagus and mushroom cooked in teppanyaki style complemented with Hibiki 30 Years Old Super Premium Blended Whisky. Hibiki 30 Years Old is one of the finest blended whiskies in the world that won the Best Blended Whisky accolade at the World Whisky Awards in 2007 and 2008. Diners will also indulge in freshly cut Sashimi, Nimono (simmered dish) Shokuji (rice dish), Japanese melon and grapes for dessert. *This Suntory whisky dinner is on Saturday, Aug 20, at 7pm. It is priced at RM1,200++ per person. For reservations, call (03) 21617777, ext 8219/8444. This article appeared on the Live it! page, The Edge Financial Daily, August 11, 2011.*

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