



# TASTING BRIEF

JANUARY 30, 2026



Caol Ila was established in 1846 by Glasgow businessman Hector Henderson on a scenic site overlooking the strait between Islay and Jura — its Gaelic name literally means “Sound of Islay.”



# THE DISTILLERY

Early years were turbulent: after financial struggles it passed into the hands of Norman Buchanan in 1854 and then to whisky stock traders Bulloch Lade & Co in the 1860s. By the late 19th century annual production had grown considerably, yet like many distilleries of the era it continued changing hands as the Scotch industry evolved.

The 20th century brought greater stability under corporate ownership but the distillery endured temporary closures during the Great Depression and World War II because of barley shortages. In 1972 the original buildings were largely demolished and **rebuilt into a modern facility** with increased capacity and six stills, making Caol Ila the largest producer on Islay.

Under the broader umbrella of what would become **Diageo**, Caol Ila spent much of its history supplying spirit to blends like Johnnie Walker Black Label, with single malt bottlings only becoming widely available from the late 1980s onward (notably through the Flora & Fauna and Classic Malts ranges). Today it remains both a key component in major blends and a respected single malt in its own right, known for its lighter Islay style with floral, peaty, and peppery notes.



# CAOL ILA II YEAR 2024 SPECIAL RELEASE

**Region** Islay

**ABV** 57.3%

**Price** \$99.99

**Cask** refill ex-wine casks

This release is unpeated, a departure from Caol Ila's typical smoky style, and focuses instead on the interplay between rich nuttiness and orchard fruits, along with hints of spice and fresh green notes at its 57.3 % ABV.

## Distillery Tasting Notes

**Nose** Bright orchard fruit aromas, especially fresh green apple, and delicate spice accents, with a nutty creaminess underlying the initial impression.

**Taste**

On the palate the whisky is creamy, rich and nut-driven, showcasing nutty character balanced with orchard fruit flavors. The influence of shorter fermentation and part-filled still distillation gives it a gloriously creamy mouthfeel with apple and spicy highlights.

**Finish** Of a good length, again nutty, finishing dry and with a pinch of warming spice that carries on in the aftertaste.





## 12 YEAR

**Region** Islay

**ABV** 43%

**Price** \$69.99

**Cask** ex-bourbon

A classic, approachable Islay single malt: lighter peat than many Islay counterparts, balanced maritime character, and a smoother, more familiar smoky-saline profile — often considered a great introductory peated Scotch.

### Distillery Tasting Notes

**Nose** Subdued, citric fruitiness with a fresh, appetizing opening alongside hints of olive oil and eventually potpourri or scented hand-soap. little or no trace of smoke.

**Taste** A sweet start leads into pleasant, light fragrant smokiness. A light to medium body and balanced profile at natural strength. Adding water brings out light acidity and a touch of salt, while sweetness remains present, contributing to a complex balance of primary tastes.

**Finish** Sweet smokiness in the lingering, slightly sour finish.





## SINGLE CASK NATION CAOL ILA 15 YR 2009

**Region** Islay

**ABV** 57%

**Price** \$129.99

**Cask** Refill Bourbon  
Hogshead

**Cask** #181342

This is perhaps one of the most expressive ex-Bourbon casks of Caol Ila we've (Single Cask Nation) experienced to date. Sometimes their whiskies are coastal; sometimes they're citrusy; occasionally they're like chocolate and tobacco; and sometimes like grilled summer seafood on the pier. This cask is all that in one fell swoop.

### Distillery Tasting Notes

**Nose** Classic Islay peat smoke with bright lemon citrus zest, fresh coastal salinity, and hints of

**Taste** Bold peat up front, complemented by lemon, sea spray, and smoked meats. When water is added, additional notes like icing sugar and black tea develop, revealing deeper complexity without overpowering the core peaty character.

**Finish** Long and savoury, with lingering tar, burnt rope, coastal brine and a hint of soot, delivering an enduring classic Islay style until the very end.





# SIGNATORY CAOL ILA 2010 BARREL SELECT

**Region** Islay

**ABV** 57%

**Price** \$249.99

**Cask** Refill Bourbon  
Hogshead, sherry finish

Signatory Vintage Scotch Whisky Company is a Scottish independent bottler — meaning they don't distill whisky themselves (except at Edradour, which they own as a distillery separate from their indie bottling business) but instead source whisky from distilleries across Scotland and bottle it under their own labels. They focus heavily on single cask and single malt releases, often highlighting the individuality of each barrel rather than blending for uniformity.

Signatory Vintage is widely regarded as one of the most discerning and prolific independent bottlers in the world, with thousands of individual releases and strong whisky community recognition for quality and depth.

## Distillery Tasting Notes

**Nose** Peat and smoke are front-and-center — think smoked bacon, ripe red cherries, dried vine fruits and a hint of damp ash. These expressions often show a robust maritime smokiness with sweet dark fruit and sherry resin notes in the background.

**Taste** Oily, full-bodied mouthfeel with smoke and peat mixing with rich dark flavours — creamy caramel, raisin compote, cocoa nibs, and BBQ-like char.

**Finish** The finish tends to be long and evolving — lingering sherry sweetness or dried fruit with drying oak and smoldering embers.