

SAKE

2017 portfolio



A MEMBER OF
THE WINEBOW GROUP

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Introduction to Craft+Estate Sake

Craft+Estate, a member of The Winebow Group and a national importer of fine wine and spirits, is proud to bring this exceptional portfolio of premium sakes to the U.S. market. Staying true to the company's long-term goals of representing family-owned estates, these sake producers are connected to the local traditions of their respective regions. Many of these breweries have been producing sake for centuries, employ local workers, and commission locally grown rice. This focus on hand-crafted, artisanal sake production aligns perfectly with Craft+Estate's culture, philosophy, and passion for the fine wine and craft spirits sector.

Family-operated estates: The sake breweries Craft + Estate has selected are all family-owned operations with strong ties to their local communities. Many have been producing for centuries, some going as far back as 1689. These sake houses are more than just breweries, they are staples of their communities; employing local workers during the winter, commissioning locally grown rice, and instilling a sense of pride and tradition in rural regions often overlooked by the urban population.

Diversity: Never ones to do things halfway, we were not content to bring in just a handful of sakes. Instead, we chose to represent the entire world of sake, complete with different styles, classifications, regions and breweries.

High Quality Products: As with wine, there is a large quality spectrum for sake. And as with our wine portfolio, we sought to import only the highest quality sake. The breweries we represent produce hand-crafted, artisanal sakes that are worlds removed from the mass produced, box sake that for far too many people has been their only exposure to this wonderful beverage. We at Craft + Estate are very excited about this project, and look forward to helping people learn more about a drink that has been enjoyed by the Japanese for over 2000 years.

History and Culture of Sake



Japan is a land of contrasts, a stark blend of modern and ancient, foreign and local. It is the country that has given us sushi and samurai, Hello Kitty and haiku. It is crisscrossed by bullet trains, and in just two hours one can travel from the bustling streets of Tokyo to the ancient temples of Kyoto. Nowhere is this tendency toward dichotomy more present than in sake, the country's traditional beverage. It is not uncommon to see shiny new machines housed in an ancient rural brewery that has been owned by the same family for generations, or a stylish new bottle containing sake made using traditional, labor-intensive brewing techniques. Both domestically and abroad, the sake industry has been reinventing itself in recent years, and small producers from the countryside are leading the charge with a range of innovative premium sakes.

The Japanese discovered sake nearly two thousand years ago, and it has enjoyed an esteemed place in their culture ever since. It is not only the drink of choice for many Japanese to this day, but also features prominently in the ceremonies and traditions of everyday life. It is served at celebrations of birth and marriage, as well as at the more somber occasions of death and departure for war. It is even given regularly as an offering at shrines for local Shinto deities.

So what is sake, and how is it made? Despite the fact that it is often referred to as rice wine, sake is not a wine. It is in fact closer to beer, although that description is not quite accurate either. Because rice is a starch, sake must be brewed. However, due to differences in the fermentation process, sake has a relatively high level of alcohol and no carbonation. It is thus a unique product, with its own range of flavors and styles. The remarkable thing about sake is that it can be made using only four ingredients: rice, water, koji-kin (a type of mold) and yeast. Only through a very delicate and complex brewing process can such a delicious product be made from such pure and simple sources.

Sake is often referred to as “the drink of the gods” because its original use was mostly in religious services and celebrations. In fact, the original brewing method called for someone to chew uncooked rice and spit it into a bowl to begin fermentation, and only young girls were allowed to perform this duty, as they were seen as the only ones pure enough to do so. While production methods have come a long way since then, sake continues to be a divinely enjoyable drink, different from wine but with a variety and depth that allow it to hold its own on any table or wine list.



A rice field shortly after planting (top). Tokyo tower (bottom left).
A view of Mt. Chokai in Akita (bottom right).



Enter the Kura



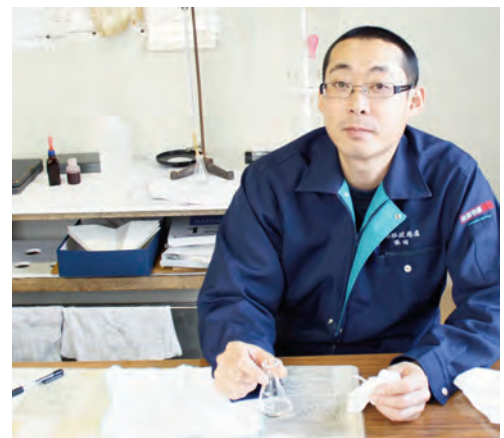
Sake is a brewer's art, and the kura, or brewery, is truly where the magic of sake occurs. For hundreds of years, skilled artisans throughout Japan have moved to the kura for the duration of the winter brewing season, leaving behind their snow-covered rice fields and their families. Months of arduous labor and careful precision are in store for these dedicated craftsmen, but by the time they return home in the spring, they will have transformed plain rice into the subtle and rewarding beverage known to us as sake.

The principal responsibilities of the kura can be divided into three different groups:

蔵元 Kuramoto (brewery owners): traditionally, they run the business side of the kura, and focus mostly on sales and public relations. However, recently kuramoto are becoming increasingly active in the operations of their breweries, some even going so far as to participate in the brewing process themselves!

蔵人 Kurabito (brewery workers): they are in charge of executing the individual steps of sake brewing. Typically, each worker specializes in a different section of the brewery or production process.

杜氏 Toji (master brewer): he (or as of recently, she) is responsible for directing the whole brewing process and determining the style of the sakes being produced as well as ensuring the smooth operation of the kura. The toji acts as a go-between for the kurabito and kuramoto, and is vital to the functioning of the brewery. Most toji are longtime kurabito who have risen through the ranks to attain a leadership role.



Naoki Suzuki, 19th generation heir of Hideyoshi (left). The kurabito at Chokaisan gather in the morning (center). The toji at Minato Harbor does some analysis (right).

蔵人家族

The long days and intense working conditions that have defined the kurabito's lives for centuries have given rise to an extraordinary closeness among workers, many of whom spend their whole adult lives working for the same kura. It is the toji's responsibility to foster and encourage these relationships in order to create a positive working environment. Over time, several sayings have been created to describe the ideal functioning of a brewery, and many continue to adorn the walls of the breweries to this day. Below are a couple examples:

蔵人家族 Kurabito Kazoku: roughly translates to “workers are family”. In the traditional system (still being practiced at some breweries to this day, including Minato Harbor), workers would leave their families and live at the brewery for the duration of the winter brewing season. After eating all of their meals together and working in tight conditions for over four months, it is not surprising that a close, family-like bond would form among the workers!

和醸良酒 Wa-jo-ryo-shu: roughly translate to “harmonious brewing, good sake”. This phrase really emphasizes the interconnectedness of the kurabito. The brewing process is precisely scheduled and needs to run like clockwork on a daily basis. Even small errors can disrupt the entire rhythm of the kura, and lead to disastrous consequences both at that time and down the line.

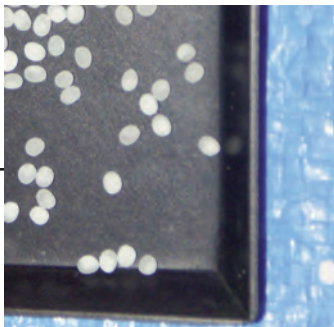


The kurabito at Manabito share a meal together (left). The Kurabito at the Minato “Harbor” brewery distribute the steamed rice (right).

BROWN RICE



POLISHING



WASHING/SOAKING



STEAMING



Sake Brewing Process



While region and ingredients are also important in determining a sake's profile, the production process is perhaps the most important factor. Not only is the toji's meticulous attention necessary during each step to ensure a high quality product, but several key choices along the way will result in drastically different styles of sake. This chart provides an outline of the basic brewing process, as well as an indication of where changes to this basic process yield different styles.

BROWN RICE There are around 100 strands of sake rice, although only about a dozen are widely used. Each strain has its own unique attributes, both in terms of size and taste. All rice, even the rice we eat, is brown when harvested, only becoming white after polishing.

Rice Polishing An extremely important step, polishing removes the harsher elements found on the outer layers of the grain, and leaves only the starches concentrated in the center. The milling percentage also determines the classification of a sake, from futsuu-shu, which has no requirement but is typically milled to about 80% of original size, to daiginjo, which is milled to 50% or less. The more of the grain that is milled away, the more complex, delicate and aromatic the resulting sake becomes.

Rice Washing/Soaking As when rice is cooked, sake rice needs to be washed and soaked before it can be used. This is the first of several steps in which water plays an important role.

Rice Steaming Again similar to cooking, the rice must also be steamed in order to soften the grains. This steamed rice is then used in several different parts of the production process.

KOJI Koji is the mash that results when steamed rice is sprinkled with koji-kin, a special kind of mold. As the koji-kin spreads over the rice, it begins to convert the starches found in the rice into sugars.

YEAST STARTER Also known as shubo, the yeast starter is formed by adding yeast to a mixture of koji and water. After time, the yeast in this mash becomes highly concentrated.

Yamahai/Kimoto: These terms refer to traditional brewing methods in which no lactic acid is used to create the yeast starter. This requires more time and labor, but the result is often an earthier, tangier sake with higher acidity.

KOJI & YEAST STARTER

(added)

FERMENTATION



PRESSING



FINAL STEPS/BOTTLING



Fermentation Finally, the koji and yeast starter are combined with additional steamed rice and water to begin the process known as multiple parallel fermentation. As the koji breaks the starch down, the yeast converts the resulting sugars into alcohol. By controlling the temperature of the mash, the brewers can determine how active the yeast is, and thereby change the profile of the sake. The entire process can take anywhere from about 20 to 40 days.

Pressing After the fermentation process is complete, the sake is pressed to separate the liquid from the remaining parts of the rice grains and other solids. A variety of pressing methods are used, from large pumps to more traditional wooden presses.

First Pasteurization Most sake is pasteurized before storage to kill off any remaining bacteria and allow the sake to be stored at higher temperatures.

Nama/Namachozo: Both these types of sake are not pasteurized at this point in order to keep a certain freshness which is lost during heating. They must be stored refrigerated at the brewery.

Storage At this point the sake is usually left in the brewery for several months before being released. This is typically done in large tanks, although some brewers prefer to bottle age their products.

Koshu: This style of sake is kept in the brewery and aged for about 2 to 5 years. While aging practices differ among breweries, the result is typically a sake with more intense flavors and aromas.

Filtering For many sakes, a carbon powder is added and the liquid is then run through a filter, removing unwanted flavor elements and any color the sake might have. However, particularly for higher grade sake, this step sometimes removes some of the desirable elements of the sake as well, and is therefore not performed.

Dilution Sake typically ferments to around 18% alcohol, and is usually diluted with water to bring that down to 15%. This is done to soften the sake and make it more balanced.

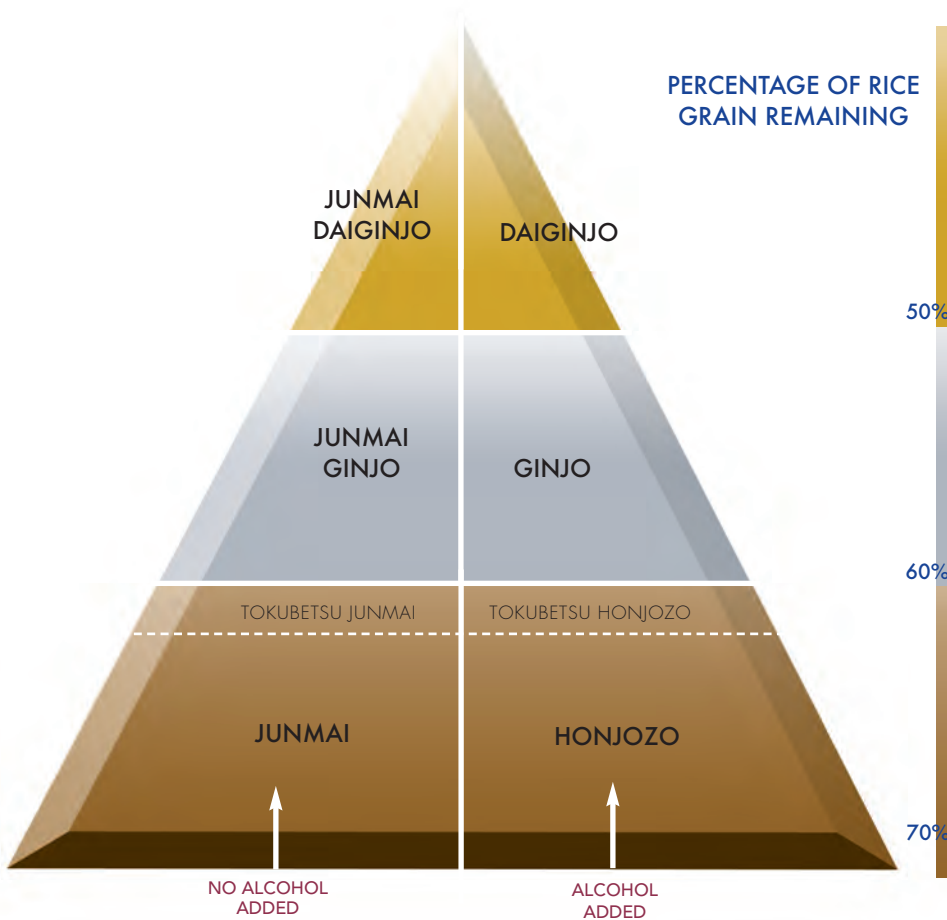
Genshu: Sake to which no water is added. It is a heartier style, and contains interesting flavors that are lost in dilution.

Bottling/Second Pasteurization Most sake is bottled right before shipping, although as noted before, some sake is also stored in bottle. At this point, it is usually pasteurized again to ensure that the product can withstand shipping conditions.

Nama: As opposed to namachozo, which undergoes the final pasteurization, nama sake is left completely unpasteurized.

Premium Sake Tokutei Meisho-shu

The premium sake category contains eight classifications, although it accounts for only 25% of total sake production in Japan (the other 75% is known as Futsuu-shu, or table sake).



MILLING PERCENTAGE:

(Measured as percentage of the original grain remaining)

Relevant Terms: Daiginjo, Ginjo, Honjozo

All sake is made from milled rice, but premium sake rice is more highly milled, resulting in a lower milling percentage. The more the rice is milled, the more ethereal, complex and fragrant the resulting sake becomes. The classifications refer to a legally required level of milling, and many brewers choose to exceed this amount in order to make an even more refined sake. The requirements are:

Daiginjo-50% Ginjo-60% Honjozo-70%

Note that Junmai does not have a requirement associated with it. Thus, junmai sake can be milled to any percentage, although is typically milled to nearly the same level as honjozo.

TOKUBETSU DESIGNATION

Relevant Terms: Tokubetsu Junmai, Tokubetsu Honjozo

Some sakes are labeled as tokubetsu, or special. This simply means that there is something unique about the sake: better rice, higher polishing or just that brewers paid special attention to the batch. The term only applies to the junmai and honjozo classifications. It is similar in concept to a riserva in wine, although it carries no legal requirements.

ADDITION OF ALCOHOL:

Some sakes have a small amount of brewer's alcohol added to them at the end of fermentation. This further breaks down certain components in the rice and helps pull those flavors into the sake. Because sakes are typically diluted before bottling, these alcohol added sakes do not have a higher overall alcohol level. In fact, they tend to be thinner on the palate and more aromatic, with a linear finish. Sakes to which no alcohol has been added are labeled with the word Junmai, and are typically rounder and creamier. It is important to note that neither style is seen as inherently superior to the other, and many of the finest sakes in Japan have some alcohol added.





Sake Styles

While classification can be useful in determining the quality of a sake (particularly within a brewery's lineup), it does not provide too much information about the overall profile of the sake. The only things indicated by classification are milling percentage and whether or not alcohol was added. While both are extremely important, there are many other factors which influence what kind of a product is in the bottle. The variety of rice, type of yeast, water and region can all provide clues as to how the sake will taste. Unfortunately, many of these details are often not included on the bottle. There is, however, one detail that is almost always written on the label, and it is usually even in the name of the sake: style.

Much like with beer, where one is concerned primarily with whether it is a stout, pilsner, lager, etc., the style of a sake is determined by changes to the standard production process. Therefore, a sake with no style indicated (i.e. a "regular" Junmai), employs all the usual production methods. If, however, that same sake was aged for 5 years instead of being released right away, it would become a Junmai Koshu, with Koshu being the style of the sake that indicates an abnormally long aging period. Styles can apply to any of the different classifications, and provide a wealth of information about the likely profile and ideal pairing of the sake. It should also be noted, however, that as opposed to classification, style has no legal implications or requirements. It is merely an attempt by the brewer to provide an indication to consumers about what the sake might taste like, and how it was made.

These are the most commonly seen styles of sake:

Genshu: Undiluted sake which does not have water added prior to bottling. It is therefore left at the higher alcohol level to which the sake normally brews (around 18-19%), making it suitable to pair with heavier foods or enjoy as an after-dinner drink.



Nama: Unpasteurized sake which must be kept refrigerated at all times. It typically has a fresher and livelier palate, with a bolder flavor profile. It is often released seasonally in early spring, immediately following the end of brewing season.



Nigori: Sake which is run through a courser press after fermentation, leaving it slightly cloudy. It is up to the brewer how much rice sediment to leave in, and therefore how thick the sake is. While much Nigori sake is sweet, it can be made quite dry as well.



Namachozo: Sake that is stored unpasteurized, then pasteurized once at bottling. It retains some of the freshness of Nama sake, but is much more stable. Often shortened to Namacho.



Koshu: Sake which is aged by brewers for anywhere from three to five years. While practices differ greatly among brewers, Koshu sake tends to have more earthy and intense flavors and aromas.



Yamahai/Kimono: These terms refer to brewing methods in which the yeast starter is made in a more traditional method in which lactic acid is not added, but rather allowed to develop naturally. The creation of the yeast starter therefore requires both more time and labor. The methods tend to impart gamier, more pronounced flavors to the sake, as well as higher acidity.





FOCUS: Sake Rice

All rice is not created equal, and Japan is famous for producing some of the world's highest quality rice. Individual seedlings are grown in a nursery before being planted by hand in the paddy. This ensures even development and consistent quality. There are many different varieties of rice, and about 100 are used to make sake. Higher-end sakes use sake-specific rice varieties, which are larger and have the starch concentrated in the center. Their larger size makes this sake rice more difficult to grow, but able to be highly milled without breaking. Every rice variety has its own unique attributes, and will contribute greatly to the body and flavor of sake. While larger producers buy rice from all over the country, smaller brewers use predominantly local rice, adding a regional profile to their products that makes them distinct.





秋田

All About Akita

Sake Stats

- **Total Production: 4th**
- **Consumption per capita: 1st**
- **Local Rices: Akita Sake Komachi, Menkoina, Akinosei**
- **Toji Guild: Sannai**
- **Regional Style: smooth, full bodied, food-friendly**

Prefecture at a Glance

- **Population: 1,107,828 (45th)**
- **Area: 11,612 km² (6th)**
- **Industries: Agriculture, Rice Growing, Sake**
- **Largest City: Akita City**



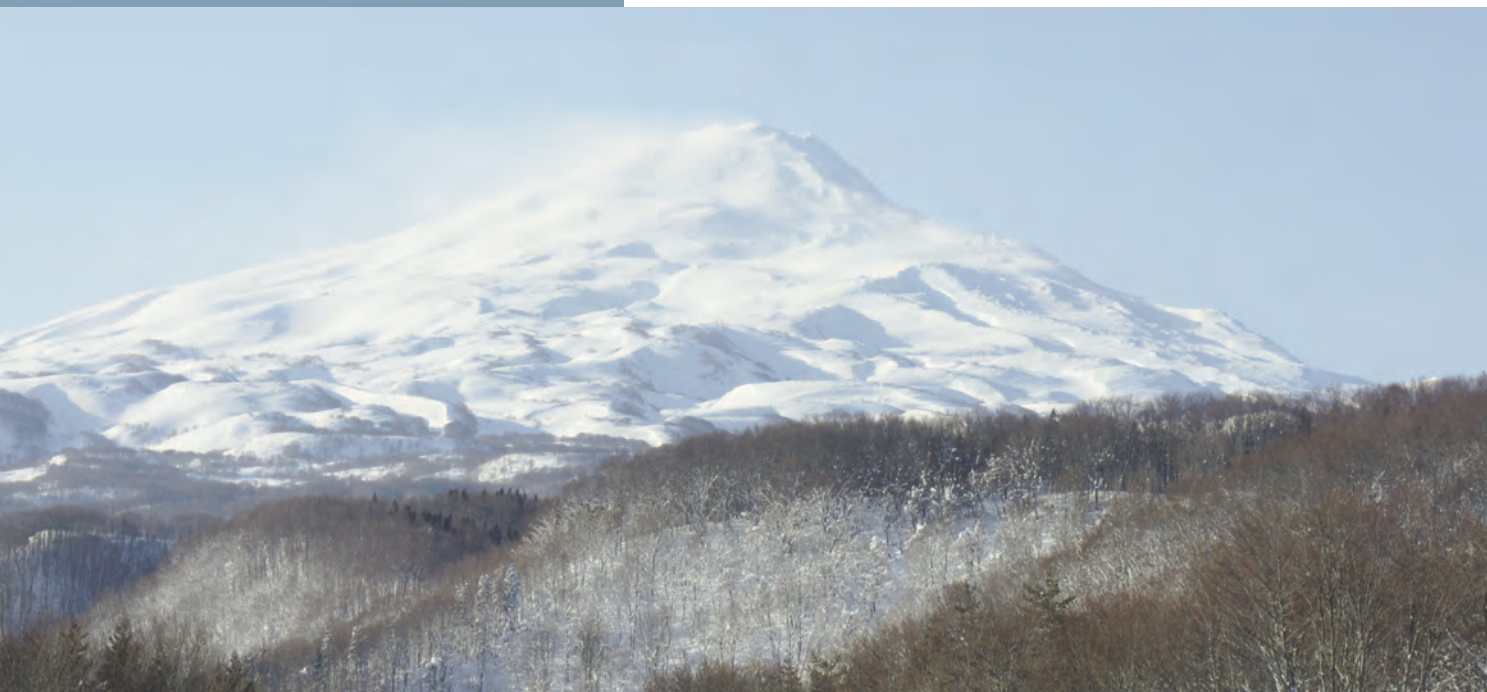
Located in northwestern Japan, the coastal region of Akita is surrounded on all sides by mountains. The relative isolation caused by this distinctive geography allowed Akita to develop a unique culture and cuisine that can still be experienced today. The region is famous in Japan for having lively local festivals, delicate handicrafts, soothing hot springs, tranquil winters, delicious rice and of course top quality sake. In fact, Akita is so well known for its sake that it is often referred to as bishu okoku, the “empire of beautiful sake”. This is not lost on the locals either, who are said to have the highest per-capita consumption of sake in all of Japan!

The sake of Akita is a true expression of the region. Brewers strive to use only locally grown rice, ensuring that the essence of Akita can be found in every bottle. They also make sake that matches beautifully with the local cuisine. In a region that is historically mountainous and snow-covered in winter, food had always needed to be salted or pickled for preservation. And the sake served alongside such heavy flavors needed to be rich and expressive. These characteristics can still be found in Akita sake, and allow it to pair well with savory dishes from all cuisines. With over 50 active brewers and ranking 4th in total production, Akita is an important sake producing region with a unique style that should not be missed!



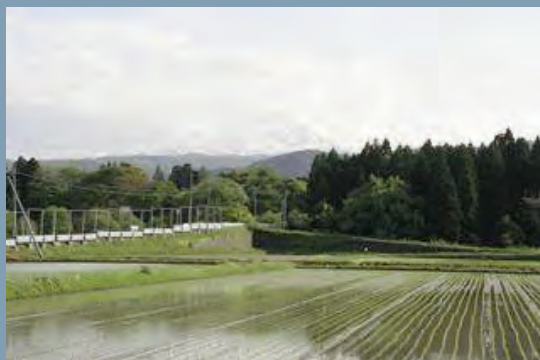
A local Akita favorite, a Kiritanpo pot pairs well with the local sake. Akita rice fields (right),





鳥海山

The majestic Mt. Chokai (top). Fields at the foot of the mountain where rice for the brewery's sake is grown (bottom).



CHOKAISAN

Tenju Shuzo – Founded 1874

Located in the town of Yashima on the foothills of the beautiful Mt. Chokai, Tenju Shuzo sits in the shadows of the so-called “Fuji of Akita.” The mountain is not only a source of wonder and inspiration to the local people, but also of incredibly pure water which can be used in brewing. Perhaps this is why, despite a population of only 5,000, Yashima is host to several sake breweries. Tenju Shuzo is among the oldest of these breweries, having been founded in 1874 by Eikichi Ohi. Six generations later is it still run by the Ohi family, with brothers Takeshi and Hitoshi now at the helm. Despite a long tradition of premium sake at the brewery, president Takeshi does not shy away from innovation. In addition to making sure his brewery is equipped with the latest brewing technology, much of which has been developed in the brewery, he also pioneered research into a new strand of sake yeast derived from flowers. This unique ingredient provides the wonderfully perfumed bouquet for which their sake is known.

Not only does Mt. Chokai provide clean water for brewing, it also creates ideal climatic



Brewery Awards

Los Angeles International Wine & Spirits Competition **GOLD MEDAL**

International Wine Challenge **SILVER AND BRONZE**

Joy of Sake Honolulu **GOLD MEDAL JUNMAI DAIGINJO CLASS**

International Sake Challenge **SILVER MEDAL**

International Wine Challenge **BRONZE MEDAL**

National New Sake Competition **GOLD MEDAL**

CHOKAISAN JUNMAI DAIGINJO

720ml

MILLING: 50%

RICE: Miyama Nishiki

SMV: +1 (Semi-Dry)

ALCOHOL: 15%

SERVE: Chilled

A unique yeast derived from flowers gives this exceptionally elegant sake a floral and fruity bouquet. With tones of licorice, fresh herbs and asian pear, this Junmai Daiginjo is matchless in balance. Enjoy as an aperitif, or with sashimi, oysters, and cheese.

Wine Spectator's Top Recommended Pick **VERY GOOD**

International Sake Challenge **GOLD MEDAL**

International Wine Challenge **SILVER MEDAL**

conditions for rice cultivation. Nobody is more familiar with this than Shunji Sato, who is toji at Chokaisan during the winter, but during the summer becomes head farmer of the team that grows the sake rice used at the brewery. Having this intimate connection with all stages of sake making allows him to create sakes exactly as he wants them. His ultimate goal, he says, is to brew a sake that gives the drinker the sensation of looking up at the gorgeous Mt. Chokai on a clear winter's day. It is the sincere hope of the Ohi brothers that when consumers first taste Chokaisan Junmai Daiginjo, they too will get a sense of the beauty of the mountain after which it is named.

FOCUS:

Flower Yeast *hana koubo*

Flower Yeasts are sake brewing yeasts that were isolated from various Japanese flowers and adapted to sake brewing. They impart enticing floral and fruity notes to the sake. Chokaisan was instrumental in the research and development of these new yeasts, and remains one of the leading producers of flower yeast sake.

This aromatic style sake is particularly suitable for being enjoyed out of a wine glass. In fact, the brewery was chosen to help Reidel design their Daiginjo sake glass, and a Chokaisan sake was even selected in a competition as the best sake to drink from a wine glass!



出羽鶴

DEWATSURU

Akita Seishu – Founded 1865

According to family records, the Ito family has been growing rice in Akita for more than 17 generations. The family's expansion into sake began in 1865, when founder Jushiro Ito converted a 150-year old Edo-era thatched-roof estate into the Dewatsuru sake brewery. Generations later, the brewery is still run by the Ito family. President Tatsuru Ito works closely with his son Yohei to bring Dewatsuru's award-winning sake to consumers in Japan and throughout the world. The brewery's philosophy is that "Good harmony makes good sake." Dewatsuru values everything local and strives for a harmonious relationship between man and nature. The Ito family's history as rice growers explains the importance they place on using only local and unique rice varieties. The Dewatsuru brewery is even certified to produce organic sake, one of only a few such breweries in all of Japan.

The brewery is also blessed with exceptionally soft water, which ensures the naturally smooth taste for which Dewatsuru sake is known. The Kariho brewery, also run by the Ito family, is located within miles of Dewatsuru, but has much harder water. The result is a drastically different style of sake.

Yohei is proud to introduce Dewatsuru sake to the United States. Dewatsuru translates as "crane of the Dewa region," and brings to mind the beautiful birds, graceful and regal, showing off their plumage in the snow-covered countryside. The name conveys the refined elegance of the Dewatsuru line of premium sake.





DEWATSURU KIMOTO JUNMAI

720ml, 1.8L

MILLING: 65%

RICE: Miyama Nishiki and Menkoina

SMV: +3 (Semi-Dry)

ALCOHOL: 14%-15%

SERVE: Chilled, Room Temperature, and Warm

A great, full bodied sake that reveals mellow taste and character. The higher acidity resulting from the time and labor-intensive kimoto brewing method makes this sake a great match for meatier mushrooms and grilled vegetable, fish or chicken.



DEWATSURU SAKURA EMAKI ROSE

360ml

MILLING: 60%

RICE: Asamurasaki and Okunomurasaki

SMV: -24

ALCOHOL: 11.5%

SERVE: Chilled

With a beautiful and enticing pink hue derived from the color of the rice, this sake has elegant aromas of cherry and plum blossoms, underscored by notes of apples and berries. On the palate, the sake is silky smooth with a touch of sweetness that is balanced by a crisp acidity and a light texture that creates a balanced, transcendent sake.



DEWATSURU JUNMAI NIGORI

300ml, 720ml

MILLING: 65%

RICE: Akinosei and Menkoina

SMV: 3

ALCOHOL: 14%-15%

SERVE: Chilled

This elegant, ultra-fine nigori gives a hint of almond to the ripe melon and crisp green apple notes that distinguish this semi-dry sake. A food friendly delight that gives texture without becoming cloying. Unlimited food pairings; Enjoy with salads, appetizers, tartare, poultry, and tempura.



STORY BEHIND: Purple Rice

In the romantic snow country of Akita Japan, just five minutes from Akita Seishu Brewery, in Daisen is the ancient archeological site of Hotta No Saku, an active fort built for the Yamato Imperial Court in the Heian Era 792-1185 AD. When it was excavated, 1000 year old "Murasaki Mai", purple rice grains from faraway lands in southeast Asia, were found. These grains were the origins of purple rice strains developed over a millennium to grow in northern regions. In 1996 the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries along with the Association for the Revitalization of Ancient Rice petitioned Akita Seishu brewery to craft sake made with this ancient heirloom purple rice strains. Honored and inspired, Mr. Ito challenged his master sake brewers to capture the magnificent cherry blossom blush of color of this ancient rice. So Sakura Emaki came to be. Sakura means cherry blossom and refers to the beautiful flower, so emblematic of Japan, while Emaki refers to the illustrated scrolls on which the first ever novel "The Tales of Genji" was written and preserved. Enjoy a bottle of this unique sake and write your own great tale. Kanpai!





HIDEYOSHI

Suzuki Shuzoten – Founded 1689

Suzuki Shuzoten is one of the oldest continually operating sake houses in Japan, and one of Akita's most well known and respected breweries. Founded by Matsuemon Suzuki in 1689, the brewery has been run by the Suzuki family for 19 generations. Their sake still bears the name Hideyoshi, given to them by a feudal lord Satake. It is said that he tasted all of the sake in Akita and judged the sake of this brewery to be the very best. Hide, "excellence," and Yoshi, "goodness," refer to the high quality of the brewery's product, while the combination of the two words form the name of the legendary feudal warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi. For over three centuries, Suzuki Shuzoten has strived to live up to the high standards set by the Hideyoshi name. How has Suzuki Shuzoten been able to brew such premium sake generation after generation? The answer begins with the sake rice they use, which is almost always of higher quality and milling than is typical for the classification. This yields smoother sakes, with incredibly long finishes. Furthermore, the brewery is committed to using only local Akita rice, imparting the deep, rustic flavors that make their sakes so exceptionally food friendly. Add to that the skill and dedication of long-time toji



HIDEYOSHI NAMACHO HONJOZO
300ml

MILLING: 65%
RICE: Menkoina
SMV: +0.5 (Semi-Dry)
ALCOHOL: 14%-15%
SERVE: Chilled

This once-pasteurized sake is distinguished by its freshness and clarity, with hints of toasted nuts, fresh bread, and lychee. Mildly sweet, its depth and vibrancy allow it to pair well with crisp salads, tempura, sashimi and poultry.



HIDEYOSHI LACHAMTE
CARBONATED SAKE 280ml

MILLING: 65%
RICE: Akita Komachi
SMV: -79
ALCOHOL: 8%
SERVE: Chilled

A playful straw-lemon in color with medium-fine perlage and a persistent mousse, this sparkling sake shows lively notes of white peaches and honeysuckle that are underscored by hints of toasted almonds and minerality. On the palate, this sake is demi-sec with a perfect texture and zesty acidity that unfold over a lengthy finish.



HIDEYOSHI FLYING PEGASUS
DAIGINJO KOSHU 720ml

MILLING: 40%
RICE: Yamada Nishiki
SMV: +4.5 (Dry)
ALCOHOL: 16%-17%
SERVE: Chilled

The symbolic golden gourd is but a humble vessel for this exceptional, limited-production Daiginjo. It is an exquisite blend of 3, 5 and 8 year aged, ultra premium sake. Meticulous aging retains both the crystal clarity and elegant aromatics of dates, nuts, and dried mushrooms. Pair with fine cheese, foie gras and wagyu, or savor alone as an after dinner drink.

Shigemasa Ishizawa, and you can see why Hideyoshi sake consistently finishes strongly at competitions.

The brewery has developed a reputation not only for producing at a high level, but also for making sakes that are truly unique. There can be no better example of this than the remarkable Flying Pegasus Daiginjo Koshu. Limited to a production of only 300 bottles a year, it is made using a blend of 3, 5 and 8 year aged sake, combining the unique attributes of each into an infinitely complex whole. With such high-quality, singular sakes, it is no wonder that Hideyoshi sake has been embraced by connoisseurs and novice sake drinkers alike.

FOCUS: Aged Sake (*koshu*)



Most sake is consumed fresh, stored for only a couple months at the brewery and consumed within about a year of bottling. Some brewers, however, choose to age a small amount of their sake, sometimes for up to five years or more. This extra maturation allows the sake to continue to develop, typically imparting a yellow hue and intense, earthy aromas. Sake can be aged in tank or bottle, at room temperature or refrigerated, and each of these decisions will have an impact on how the sake matures. A well-aged sake becomes deep and complex, offering yet another way to enjoy this extremely versatile beverage.



MANABITO

Hinomaru Jozo – Founded 1689

Founded in 1689, the Hinomaru Jozo brewery has been producing sake for more than 320 years. Its rich history and loyal fan base have allowed the brewery to specialize in premium production, so much so that it has stopped producing Futsuu-shu all together. For the sakes in the Manabito line, this dedication to excellence means that most of the sakes are bottle-aged for an extra year before being released. This unique practice, more similar in concept to wine, is a source of great pride for the brewery. According to owner Jouji Sato, “the bottle aging prevents oxidation and flavor loss, and preserves our exceptional quality.”

The brewery’s meticulous attention to detail in sake making extends to their rice as well. All of the sake rice used in the Manabito sakes is specially commissioned by the brewery. Many of the farmers who spend the warmer months growing rice then spend their winters as brewery workers, turning that rice into sake. The name Manabito translates to “sincere person”, and is a tribute to these workers who toil all year long to create such wonderful sake.

With sakes that are both traditional and refined, it is no surprise that Manabito has been able to survive for such a long time. In 2014, Hinomaru Master Brewer, Ryouji Takahashi received the prestigious Chrysanthemum Yellow Ribbon award. The award is the equivalent of a lifetime achievement award for unprecedented achievement in professional craft and exemplary personal character. In the 400 years of Emperor awards, only 20 sake toji have been bestowed such an honor.



MANABITO GINJO

720ml, 1.8L

MILLING: 60%

RICE: Ginnosei

SMV: +5 (Dry)

ALCOHOL: 15%-16%

SERVE: Chilled

Exquisite! This Ginjo is crisp and clean. Its dry entry builds to a surprisingly rich, mineral finish. Its unique character envelops a wide range of pairings that will bring out the best in everyday food.

Brewery Awards

*Wine Spectator's Top
Recommended Pick*

OUTSTANDING

The National New Sake Awards

GOLD MEDAL

*Los Angeles International
Wine and Spirits Best of Class*

SILVER MEDAL

*Los Angeles International
Wine and Spirits*

BRONZE MEDAL

*Los Angeles International
Wine and Spirits*

GOLD MEDAL

Sannai Excellence Awards

SECOND PRIZE



The old kura at Manabito (top). Sake being stored outside during the winter (center). The kurabito work to grow rice during the summer (right).





みなと

MINATO “HARBOR”

Naba Shoten – Founded 1815

Located near Tsuchizaki Harbor in Akita City, one of the largest ports of northwestern Japan, Naba Shoten sake has been a local favorite since it was first brewed in 1815. In honor of the fishermen and other inhabitants of the port, who have been the brewery’s most loyal customers, it produces sakes that match extremely well with the grilled and fried seafood commonly eaten in the area. One reason for this is the traditional Yamahai brewing method, which the brewery helped revive. The method is more time and labor intensive, but results in the higher acidity for which their sakes are known.

Because the brewery is located in the city, it is one of only a few in all of Japan to still practice the ancient dekaseki system, in which brewery workers leave their homes and families in the countryside and move into the brewery for the duration of the four-month winter brewing season. The constant presence of such skilled and dedicated workers ensures continual monitoring of brewing conditions, leading to wonderfully smooth and balanced sakes.

When the young Katsuhiko Fujita took over as toji not long after Hisashi Naba inherited control of the brewery from his father, some people expressed concern over the future of the brewery. However, the duo silenced skeptics, and promised great things to come, when they took home a Gold Medal in the National New Sake Competition in each of their first two seasons working together. The brewery is clearly still in very capable hands, and Mr. Naba is looking forward to making fans of his sake in the United States as well.





FOCUS: *Kimoto and Yamahai*

The terms Kimoto and Yamahai both refer to more traditional methods for making the yeast starter. Sake yeast requires lactic acid to develop, so most breweries add it in directly in order to make the process faster and more consistent. However, before this dynamic was properly understood, lactic acid had to be induced to develop on its own, and Kimoto is the name given to the original process for doing that. The Kimoto method takes twice as long as the modern quick-brewing method, and involves a time and labor-intensive pole-ramming process (pictured here). In 1909, it was discovered that by manipulating temperature and other factors, the effort of pole-ramming could be spared, and the Yamahai method was born. Soon thereafter, the importance of lactic acid was fully understood, and almost all breweries switched to the modern quick-brewing method.

Some smaller breweries, however, cherish these traditional methods, and the interesting sakes they create. Both Kimoto and Yamahai style sake are higher in acidity, with gamey, deep flavors. This makes them particularly food friendly, especially when trying to find a match for heavier foods. It is truly a category worth exploring, especially if you want to experience sake more similar to what people used to drink hundreds of years ago.



MINATO HARBOR YAMAHAI NAMA GENSHU

720ml

MILLING: 67%

RICE: Miyama Nishiki

SMV: +1 (Off-Dry)

ALCOHOL: 20%-21%

SERVE: Chilled or on the rocks

Undiluted, unpasteurized, and Yamahai! Expect bold, full bodied sake with yeasty aromas of bread, and heightened notes of mushrooms. Its robust flavors and powerful acidity allows it to pair with heartier foods, such as steak and barbecued meats. Mix it in a cocktail or serve it on the rocks.

Understanding Sake Labels

Despite their beauty and simplicity, sake labels can be quite intimidating. However, with a little training, they quickly become much more manageable. When examining a bottle, the first step is to turn it around, as all Craft + Estate Sake selections have style, specifications and even food pairings listed in English on the back label. However, for those wishing to delve a little deeper and interpret front labels, even a little knowledge can go a long way. Observe the label below:



The first thing to note about sake labels is that the naming system is rather confusing. This is because almost all companies produce under a meigara or brewery name. The above sake, for example, is from the Akita Seishu company, even though this information is not present on the label (although it appears on the back label). Rather, the label shows only the brewery name, Dewatsuru. For many products, particularly those of lower grades, the brewery name is also the sake name, and is only qualified by the classification. For example, this same company produces a Kimoto Junmai under the Dewatsuru brand, which is simply called Dewatsuru Kimoto Junmai. However, because the Junmai Daiginjo shown above is at the top of the Dewatsuru line, Akita Seishu decided to give it the additional name Hihaku. It should also be noted that these names are often thematically related, and are typically quite beautiful. Thus, dewatsuru translates as “crane of the Dewa [region],” while hihaku means “white wings.”

Commonly Used Characteristics

Daiginjo:	大吟醸
Ginjo:	吟醸
Junmai:	純米
Honjozo:	本醸造
Tokubetsu:	特別
Koshu:	古酒
Genshu:	原酒
Nama:	生
Namachozo:	生貯蔵
Yamahai:	山廃
Kimoto:	生もと

The next step in interpreting labels is understanding a little about the characters written on them. For the most part these characters are kanji, or the Chinese symbols used in Japanese. While visually pleasing and rather poetic, they are difficult to read for a number of reasons, even to those somewhat familiar to the Japanese language. This is because the brewers often choose relatively rare characters, use old or unique pronunciations, or write them in a stylish but hard to read brushstroke style. The good news, however, is that this applies predominantly to the sake name and brewery name, which is almost always listed in English near the bottom of the label. The other characters, explaining the sake’s classification and its style, are usually written in easily read characters which are always the same. Therefore, if one takes the time, it is not too hard to begin to recognize them. They will typically appear, as in the label above, to the side of the name and in a clearer font.

Serving Sake

For those new to sake, one of the most daunting things about it can be figuring out how best to serve it. This is largely because it is often served in a wide array of vessels, and at a range of different temperatures. Much of this has to do with changes in technology and consumption preferences over the years, but it is also important to note that there is no one standard, and one should consume sake in whatever way feels most appropriate.

Temperature It is a common misconception that sake should be served hot. In fact, most premium sake should be served chilled, preserving the balance and more delicate aromas. The majority of hot sake is mass produced sake that is served from an 18 liter box that has been sitting heating machine all day. The heat actually impairs the tongue's ability to taste the sake's flaws. It is a shame to serve premium sake this way. That being said, there is a tradition of serving warm sake in Japan, particularly during the winter months in colder regions such as Akita and Niigata. These sakes should be served gently warmed (ideally heated in a double-boiler), never piping hot. In the end it is matter of preference, and many sake are enjoyable at a range of temperatures, a versatility that is unique in the beverage world.



Vessels

Tokkuri/Ochokko: The combination of a carafe (tokkuri) and small cup (ochokko) is the most commonly seen method of serving sake. When drinking warm sake, the tokkuri is an effective way to maintain the temperature of the sake for longer. And the small size of the ochokko ensures that it is emptied and refilled often, something important in Japan, where it is customary to pour for your guests. Unfortunately, the ochokko also limits one's ability to appreciate the subtler components of a sake, particularly one that is more aromatic in style.



Masu: This 180ml wooden box was originally a unit of measurement for rice, seen as roughly the amount one person could eat in a single meal. When sake was first produced, it was brewed in tanks of the same wood, so it was natural to serve the sake in the masu they already had lying around. Now that sake is made in stainless steel tanks and stored in glass bottles, the aromas and flavors of the masu generally overwhelm the sake, so it is not recommended to drink sake from one. For this reason most restaurants that choose to use a masu either use a lacquer version or put a glass of the same size inside it, allowing them to keep the aesthetic without ruining the sake. Although the masu is becoming increasingly rare, it is still the standard unit of measurement for sake, which is why most bottles come in the 720ml and 1.8L sizes.



Stemware While not traditional, wine glasses might be the best vessels for appreciating sake, particularly the more aromatic Ginjo and Daiginjo grades. A small white wine or port glass is ideal for most sakes, and should be used the same way as when drinking wine. Swirling the glass will aerate the sake, releasing aromas and enhancing appreciation of its subtler aspects. Even in Japan, many sake bars are now serving sake in glassware (or stemless glasses).



How to Taste Sake

For those familiar with tasting wine, the basics of tasting sake will seem very similar. This is because a lot of the same methods and concepts apply. However, the ranges for many of the components are different, as is what to expect. Therefore, starting again from the beginning is not a bad idea. It is also important to remember that what is being tasted is not wine, and should not be judged on the same scale.

Serving and Glassware One of the first difficulties that arises when people go to taste sake is that they are often unsure of how and even where to even pour the sake. This is because sake is usually served in one of several traditional Japanese containers, and can be both chilled and heated. The quick response is that sake can be served perfectly well in a wine glass, and should generally be served chilled.

Color Although sake is naturally a light amber color, it is typically charcoal filtered to make it completely clear. However, some brewers prefer not to filter, preserving certain flavors which are removed along with the color during filtration. Also, Koshu can become a darker yellow color, while Nigori sake is purposefully made a cloudy white.

Nose Sake features a wonderful array of aromas, ranging from subtle to quite pronounced. The bouquet can be anywhere from rice, nuts and yeast to flowers, green fruits and grass. It is important to think of the overall balance between these components, and it is seen as a problem if one element, such as yeastiness, is dominant. It should also be noted that some sakes are purposefully made to have very little aroma, and this is not necessarily a flaw.

Palate The true breadth of sake is found on the tongue. While each style has characteristically different profiles, there is a great deal of variation within each classification as well. Here is a list of what to look for:

Sweetness/Dryness One of the easiest characteristics to recognize. Most sakes fall in the semi-dry range, although there are certainly products on both extremes. It is also important to keep in mind that while SMV is related to dryness, it is not a perfect indicator, and each sake should be judged on its own.

Acidity While the range of acidity in sake is not as large as in wine, its relative importance is similar. Therefore, it is one of the key distinguishing features when comparing different sakes. It also has a large influence on how a sake pairs with various foods.

Texture Even among clear sakes, there is a notable difference in texture and mouth-feel. Some feel very light and clean, while others are a bit chewier. Junmai sakes especially often seem to be slightly thicker.

Umami “Umami” is a term that has been gaining recognition in the food world in general, and refers to a basic taste (like sweet, sour, bitter, etc) that is described as “richness” or “deliciousness”. Scallops, parmesan cheese and mushrooms are all said to have umami. Sake can also have umami, and to varying degrees. This is also a stylistic choice, and a great sake can have a lot or a little umami. When pairing sake with food, it is best to march umami with umami.

Simplicity/Complexity Because of the wide range of polishing ratios, this factor becomes very important for sake, particularly when selecting the appropriate product for a given situation. The more highly polished Ginjos and Daiginjos will be more refined, but also more delicate, and might not pair as well with heavier foods. Simpler Honjozos and Junmais are also ideal for casual settings and can usually be served at a wider range of temperatures.

Finish As with other drinks, the finish of a sake is important as well. Some will disappear quickly, while others will linger for a while. Depending on the style of sake, either might be preferable.

Sake and Food Pairing

Sake is made to go with food. It is rare in Japan to drink without at least snacking on something, and most sakes are not at their best unless they are enjoyed alongside a meal. Sake also pairs with a lot more than just sushi! While a delicate Daiginjo can indeed be a great pairing with raw fish, sake has a broad spectrum of flavors and can be an excellent match for an equally wide range of foods. A hearty, acidic Kimoto sake is perfect with fried foods, while undiluted Genshu can stand up to steak and BBQ! Even oysters can have their flavors enhanced and their brininess toned down if matched with the right sake.

When deciding which sake to choose in a particular situation, classification is probably the most important factor. Lighter and more refined Daiginjos and Ginjos are best with equally delicate foods that will not overpower them, and are a wonderful way to celebrate a special occasion. The richer Junmai and Honjozo sakes, conversely, are great for everyday enjoyment and will match better with more flavorful foods. The style of a sake and the region it comes from can also provide a great indication of what profile to expect which foods to pair with.

While it may sound complicated to have to consider so many factors, because sake has lower acidity than wine, it is exceptionally food friendly and rarely will you encounter a pairing that absolutely doesn't work. You may overpower your sake with too rich a food (or vice-versa!), but it certainly won't ruin your meal. So don't worry too much, and make sure to experiment on your own.

Below are some recommendations we came up with for pairing our sakes, but we encourage you to try them with your favorite dishes as well!

	Sushi/Sashimi	Salad	Vegetables	Grilled Fish	Chicken	Beef	Pork	Shellfish	Tempura	Spicy Food	Cheese	Chocolate	Cocktail	Apertif	After-Dinner	Chilled	Room Temp	Warm
Chokaisan Junmai Daiginjo	•	•	•	•				•	•		•			•	•	•		
Dewatsuru Kimoto Junmai			•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•		•	•		•	•	•
Dewatsuru Sakura Emaki Rose	•	•	•	•				•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Dewatsuru Junmai Nigori	•	•	•	•	•			•		•	•		•	•		•		
Hideyoshi Namacho Honjozo	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•						•		
Hideyoshi Lachamte Sparkling	•	•	•	•				•		•	•	•				•		
Hideyoshi Flying Pegasus Daiginjo Koshu				•		•				•	•				•	•	•	
Manabito Ginjo	•	•	•	•				•	•					•		•		
Minato "Harbor" Yamahai Nama Genshu			•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•		

Sake Glossary

Daiginjo The highest grade of premium sake, with a milling percentage of 50% or less.

Futsuu-shu (Seishu) Sake that is not classified in one of the premium categories, and does not have a minimum milling requirement. Often what is drunk locally near the brewery.

Genshu Undiluted sake, to which no water is added prior to bottling. Typically 18-20% ABV.

Ginjo Super premium sake, with a milling percentage of 60% or less.

Honjozo Premium sake, with a milling percentage of 70% or less.

Junmai Sake made using only rice, koji-kin, water and yeast. No alcohol is added after brewing. Can apply to the Daiginjo and Ginjo grades as well.

Koji-kin A mold used to convert the starches in rice into sugar. When it is combined with steamed rice, the resulting mash is called koji.

Koshu Sake which is aged for anywhere from three to about five years before being released.

Kura The sake brewery. It is staffed by kurabito, literally “people of the brewery.”

Masu Traditional wooden box used to serve sake. Holds 180ml.

Milling Percentage The level the rice is milled to before being used for brewing. It is measured as the amount of the original grain remaining. Also known as seimaibuai.

Nama Unpasteurized sake which must be kept refrigerated at all times.

Namachozo Sake that is pasteurized only once, after bottling. Does not necessarily need to be kept refrigerated, but care should be taken with storage.

Nigori Sake which is cloudy, because some of the rice solids are left in the sake after brewing.

Ochokko Small cups used for drinking sake, usually filled from a tokkuri.

SMV The Sake Meter Value is a measure of specific gravity, and gives an impression of the overall sweetness of the sake. The higher the number, the drier the sake. Also known as nihonshu-do.

Toji The master brewer, who oversees the brewing process and the operations of the brewery. It is his job to maintain harmony among the brewery workers.

Tokkuri Carafe used to serve sake, usually for sake that has been heated.

Tokubetsu Sake made with extra care or special ingredients. The term applies to the Junmai and Honjozo classifications.

Tokutei Meisho-shu The eight premium sake classifications: Honjozo, Junmai, Tokubetsu Honjozo, Tokubetsu Junmai, Ginjo, Junmai Ginjo, Daiginjo and Junmai Daiginjo.

Yamahai/Kimoto Traditional brewing methods in which the yeast starter is made in a more labor-intensive manner and without the addition of lactic acid, therefore requiring longer to develop. Sakes made in this way tend to be earthier and have higher acidity.

Yeast Starter Concentrated yeast population necessary to start fermentation. Made by combining yeast, water and koji. Also known as shubo or moto.





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CRAFTANDESTATE.COM

4800 COX ROAD • SUITE 300 • GLEN ALLEN, VA 23060 • TEL: 804.752.3670 • FAX: 804.752.3685

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