



THE
ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO
SAKE
VINE
CONNECTIONS

JAPAN

SAKE BREWERIES & PREFECTURES



VINE CONNECTIONS

PREMIUM JAPANESE SAKE FACTS

700 A.D.

YEAR SAKE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE ORIGINATED IN JAPAN

1,000

NUMBER OF SAKE BREWERIES IN JAPAN TODAY



55%

OF JAPAN'S FARMLAND IS RICE PADDIES

15%-17%

AVERAGE ALCOHOL BY VOLUME IN SAKE

LESS THAN 6%

OF ALL JAPANESE SAKE IS CONSIDERED SUPER PREMIUM

31

NUMBER OF PREMIUM SAKE IMPORTED BY VINE CONNECTIONS

RICE VARIETIES

13

NUMBER OF RICE VARIETIES REPRESENTED IN VINE CONNECTIONS SAKE



SAKE RICE VS. TABLE RICE



HEIGHT:
sake rice is 25% taller than table rice



WEIGHT:
sake rice is heavier (weighs 25-30 grams)



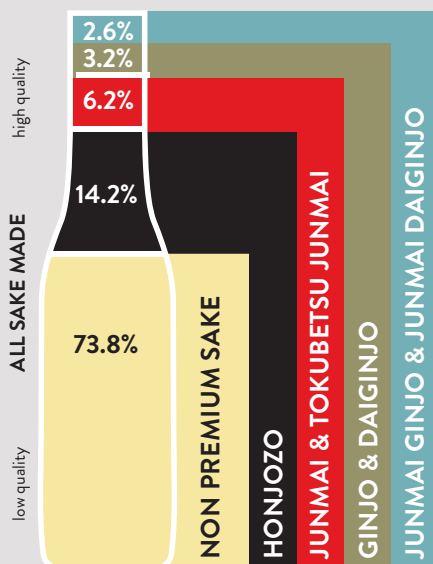
WIDTH:
a grain of sake rice is 20% larger than table rice



CONTENT:
sake rice has more starch, less fat, & less protein

SAKE GRADE LEVELS

Increasing quality, price, fragrance, complexity	↑ SUPER PREMIUM ↓ PREMIUM LOW GRADE	NON JUNMAI Brewed using Rice, Water, Koji Mold, & Distilled Alcohol	JUNMAI Brewed using Rice, Water, & Koji Mold only (NO Distilled Alcohol)	RICE MILLED TO:
		DAIGINJO	JUNMAI DAIGINJO	AT LEAST 50% (50% or more milled away)
		GINJO	JUNMAI GINJO	AT LEAST 60% (40% or more milled away)
		HONJOZO	JUNMAI	AT LEAST 70% (30% or more milled away)
		FUTSU "TABLE SAKE" Table sake often using automated brewing processes and plenty of distilled alcohol. Futsu represents about 75% of the entire sake market.		NO MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS





VINE CONNECTIONS SAKE PORTFOLIO

A comprehensive portfolio offering everything from the highest quality everyday sake to the ultimate drinking experience.

We have selected top breweries from 13 different Japanese prefectures spanning the entire country, from Hokkaido to Kyushu.

Vine Connections is the leading U.S. authority on Japanese sake and is known for its consistency of quality, supply, and price stability. Our approachable sake education, innovative marketing and packaging, and sales materials truly set us apart from our competitors.



ABOUT VINE CONNECTIONS

Vine Connections leads the charge for representing sake and wines that change minds – unearthing high quality sake and wines, regions, and people who inspire you to become part of the VC movement.

Vine Connections is one of the leading authorities and educators in the U.S. for Japanese ginjo sake, along with premium wine from Argentina, Chile, and California.

Based in Sausalito, California, Ed Lehrman and Nick Ramkowsky pioneered the first nationally-imported portfolio of artisan wines from Argentina in 1999, and then introduced Japanese ginjo sake from 11 brewers in 2001. These small, traditional family brewers produce the world's most delicious premium sake. In 2013, Vine Connections' "The New Chile Portfolio" revolutionized the category with boutique wines from Chile's diverse appellations. VC also represents a set of unique and innovative California wines.

Vine Connections champions regions and people that deserve to be known.

- UNCORK THE UNEXPECTED -



VINE CONNECTIONS

SAKE SENSEI

NICK RAMKOWSKY, the co-founder and owner of Vine Connections, has an extraordinary enthusiasm for championing unknown regions.



Nick started working as a wine buyer at North Berkeley Wine, a well-known wine shop in the Bay Area, while attending UC Berkeley. Upon graduation, Nick moved to France for a year to explore its wine country, and later began working in wholesale distribution when he returned to the US. He started Vine Connections with Ed in 1999 after a trip to Argentina where they had a vision of the great future of that wine country. Soon after, the company seized the opportunity to import sake and became leading experts in the premium ginjo category.

Nick is a visionary who leads VC's portfolio development, sake and wine quality, supplier relations, and sales strategy.

ED LEHRMAN is the co-founder and owner of Vine Connections, and he pairs a passion for sake and wine with a keen business acumen.



Ed's wine career started at the New York premier wine shop, Sherry-Lehmann, after he graduated from Duke University. He soon made it to California to get his MBA at UCLA before moving to SF to work at Kendall-Jackson and later Seagram Classics. He started his first business, Passport Wine Club, in 1994 and Nick became one of his main wholesale suppliers. Ed's sake epiphany came in 2001 at a dinner in SF where he tasted his first group of incredible ginjo sake with several Japanese brewers.

Based in the Sausalito office, Ed is involved in the day-to-day management of Vine Connections. He leads long-term strategy development and oversees all departments.

MONICA SAMUELS is one of the country's most accomplished sake professionals and leads the Vine Connections team through education, marketing, and sales to drive retail, restaurant, and consumer demand.



With over 9 years of experience, Monica brings a unique perspective to the industry. She was the Sake Ambassador at Southern Wine & Spirits in New York as well as the Corporate Sake Sommelier at the Sushi Samba restaurant group. She has a unique understanding of pairing sake with food, particularly outside of traditional Japanese settings.

Monica holds several professional sake honors, including an esteemed judging role for the annual US National Sake Appraisal. She was recently named a "Top 40 under 40 - America's Most Influential Tastemakers" by Wine Enthusiast Magazine. Additionally, Monica is a Level 3 Certified Instructor for the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) and has lectured on sake for the Culinary Institute of America's academic program.

JOHN GAUNTNER is recognized as the world's leading non-Japanese sake authority and expert. John was instrumental in compiling the Vine Connections sake portfolio. A long-time resident of Japan, he has written several books and articles about sake and is often regarded by the industry as the person who made sake popular outside of Japan.

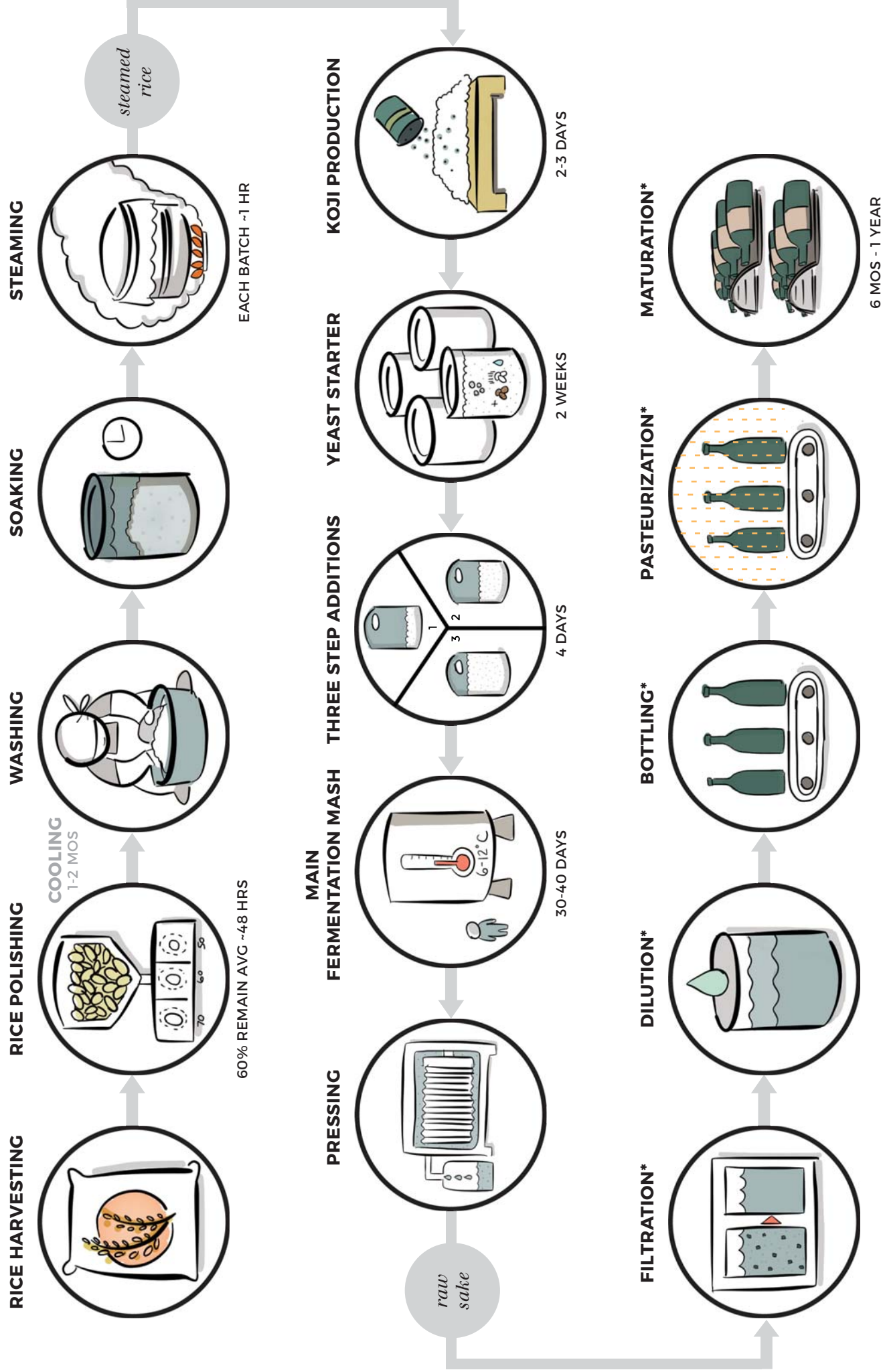


John is the only non-Japanese certified Master of Sake Tasting in the world and has also achieved the very difficult Sake Expert Assessor certification from Japan's National Research Institute of Brewing. No other non-Japanese in the world has both of these certifications.

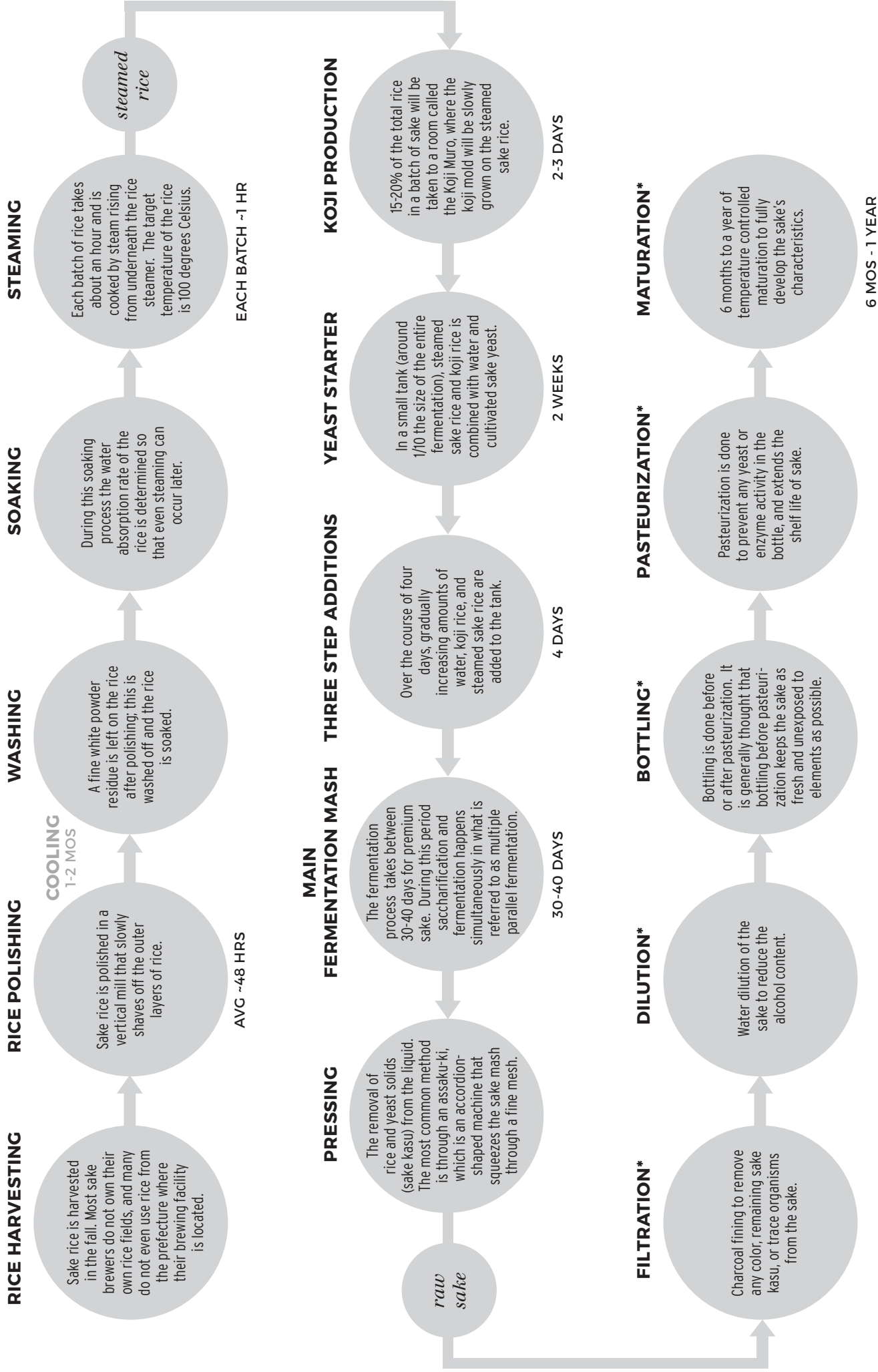
He is the founder of the not-for-profit Sake Education Council and has educated over one thousand sake professionals worldwide through his Sake Professional Course.



STEPS OF SAKE PRODUCTION



STEPS OF SAKE PRODUCTION

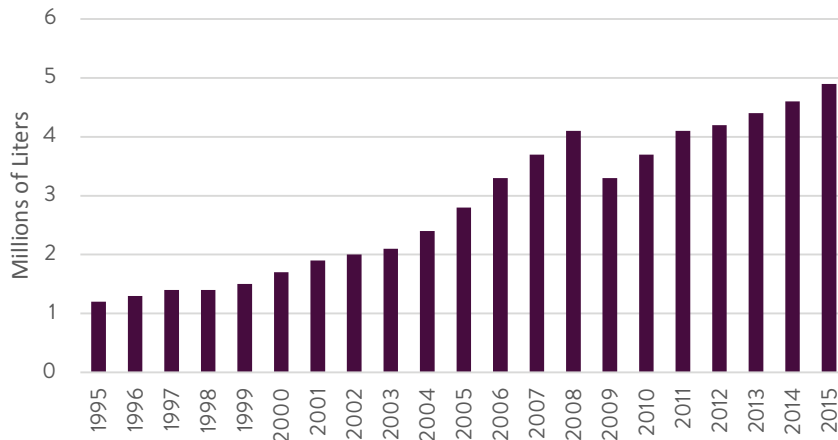


SAKE CONTINUES TO THRIVE

4.9 millions of liters of sake imported to the US in 2015.

47% increase in sake import volume over the last 6 years.

Volume of Sake Imports - Japan to US



Sake imports have **INCREASED** every year for the past 15 years except during the 2009 recession.

SAKE SALES SURGE AT VINE CONNECTIONS

30%

increase in shipment revenue from 2012 to 2015.

15%

increase in revenue from 2014 to 2015.

6%

increase in points of distribution from 2014 to 2015.

Source: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/gats/default.aspx>

DECODING A BACK LABEL

Vine Connections was the first importer to develop a sake back label that clearly outlines the important facts for describing or learning about each sake. These include:

- BRAND NAME
- PRODUCT NAME
- GRADE
- FLAVOR PROFILE
- ORIGIN
- RICE VARIETY USED
- BREWERY OR SAKE FACT

The bottle graph shows the % of each grade of sake produced in Japan, and the darkened area shows the grade level of the particular sake.

RIHAKU "Dance of Discovery" Sake

Grade: Junmai	Profile: smoky, sweet, clean
Prefecture: Shimane	Rice: Kannomai

Made with a recently developed rice that is only used in Shimane Prefecture. The "mai" in the rice name Kannomai means dance.

720ML, ALC. 14.8% BY VOL.

GLUTEN FREE.

SERVE SLIGHTLY CHILLED.

IMPORTED BY
VINE CONNECTIONS
SAUSALITO, CA
www.vineconnections.com

GOVERNMENT WARNING:
(1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL, WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS. (2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY, AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIHAKU SHUZO CO. LTD.
PRODUCT OF JAPAN.

8 35603 00575 2

SAKE SERVING SUGGESTIONS

POURING ETIQUETTE

Japanese culture places importance on respecting each other during all customs, including sake consumption.

- Pour sake with both hands by holding the neck of the bottle or carafe as much as possible.
- Pour each other's cups when sharing sake.

DRINKING VESSELS

- Serve sake in a wine glass for the ultimate sensory experience.
- More traditional vessels include wooden box cups (masu), porcelain cups (ochoko), and carafes (tokkuri).



TOP 6 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SAKE

Myth #1 Sake should be drunk hot.

There is a great range of enjoyable temperatures to drink sake, but serving it steaming hot masks its subtlety and exacerbates the alcohol.

Myth #2 Sake is low in acid relative to wine.

Sake lacks the acids associated with wine (tartaric and malic), but it is higher in amino acids than wine is. This makes it a perfect pairing for food.

Myth #3 Sake is high in alcohol.

Sake yeast is only capable of fermenting a beverage until it reaches 20% alcohol, and the sake is usually diluted afterward to bring down the level of alcohol to 14 to 18%.

Myth #4 Sake should be cheap.

Large format bottles of table sake are inexpensive, but the same is not true for premium sake. The high quality raw materials and the careful precision that goes along with crafting the beverage is very expensive.

Myth #5 Sake causes hangovers.

Excessive drinking of any alcohol will eventually cause a hangover. However, premium sake has no sulfites, additives, or preservatives, which is what many people believe to cause hangovers.

Myth #6 Sake oxidizes in the same amount of time as wine does.

Once opened, premium sake will remain fresh for at least one week. Some sakes stay fresh for even longer!



HOW TO SPEAK SAKE (Sah-kay) 酒

Genshu 原酒 (G'en-shoe): Undiluted sake that is often higher in alcohol and more concentrated in flavor and texture.

Ginjo 吟醸 (Geen-joe): Premium sake. Indicates a special and painstaking brewing process that produces a sake that is layered and complex, light and fragrant. Must have a seimaibuai (milling rate) of at least 60%.

Jizake 地酒 (jee-zah-kay): Local sake made by small brewers from a particular region, similar to the beer term "micro-brew."

Kanpai 乾杯 (kahn-pie): Cheers!

Kimoto 生もと (key-mo-toh): Traditional type of yeast starter with no lactic acid added. The yeast is activated by mashing the rice and koji into a paste with long poles. It takes around a month, resulting in savory, often gamey flavors.

Koku 石 (koe-koo): Originally, a measurement of rice defined as enough to feed one person for a year. For sake, a measurement of 180 liters used for describing a brewery's production capacity.

Koji 麹 (koh-jee): Mold that prompts the sake fermentation process.

Koshu 古酒 (koh-shoo): Sake deliberately aged in either bottle or tank. It must be kept at low temperatures in order retain a clear color and have a subtle roundedness and richness in texture.

Kura 蔵 (koo-rah): Sake brewery

Moto 酒母 (mo-toh): Yeast starter, also known as "shubo." An extremely high concentration of yeast cells is cultivated in a mixture of rice, koji, yeast, and water.

Nomikai 飲み会 (noh-mee-kai): A get-together or event focused around drinking.

Sakenomi 酒飲み (sah-kay-noh-mee): Someone who likes to drink.

Seimaibuai 精米歩合 (say-my-boo-eye): The degree to which rice has been polished (milled) before brewing. A value of 60% means that the rice has been milled so only 60% of the rice kernel remains (40% of the kernel has been ground away).

Shinpaku 心白 (sheen-pah-koo): The hard, white center of sake rice comprised of starch.

-Shu 酒 (shoo): Another reading of the Japanese character meaning sake (which, in Japan, refers to any alcoholic beverage). This suffix is officially part of all sake types (e.g. junmai-shu, ginjo-shu) but is often dropped in abbreviation.

Toji 杜氏 (toe-gee): Head brewer of a brewery.

Tokubetsu 特別 (toe-koo-bet-sue): Special. Any sake labeled "tokubetsu" has been brewed in some special way. This may mean a high milling rate, a very low temperature fermentation, or a very special rice strain.

Yamahai 山麩 (yah-mah-hai): Yeast starter with no lactic acid added; yet instead of mashing the rice and koji together (kimoto), the koji enzymes work to dissolve all rice so that sake yeast can activate. Similar flavor profile to Kimoto.

Yopparai 酔っ払い (yoh-pahr-eye): To be drunk.



HOW TO BUILD A SAKE RETAIL SHELF SET

Sake Intro: shelf space for 4 sake SKUs



TRY: Tozai Typhoon
SIZE: 720 ml or 1.8 L



TRY: Tozai Typhoon
or Tozai Living Jewel
SIZE: 720 ml



TRY: Tozai Snow Maiden
SIZE: 300 ml or 720 ml



TRY: Tozai Blossom of Peace
SIZE: 720 ml

1 Sake for Drinking
Warm & Cooking

1 Entry Level
Premium Cold Sake

1 Nigori
(Cloudy Sake)

1 Plum Sake

Sake Stepping Up: shelf space for 6 sake SKUs

+



TRY: Takaterjin Sword of the Sun,
Rihaku Dance of Discovery,
Chiyonosono Shared Promise, or
Tozai Well of Wisdom
SIZE: 300 ml or 720 ml



TRY: Konteki Tears of Dawn,
Konteki Pearls of Simplicity, or
Gingga Shizuku Divine Droplets
SIZE: 300 ml or 720 ml

1 Premium Sake,
Elegant & Complex

1 Super Premium Sake,
Daiginjo or Junmai Daiginjo

Sake Pro: shelf space for 12+ sake SKUs

+



TRY: Fukucho Moon on the Water,
Kanbara Bride of the Fox, or Nambu
Bijin Southern Beauty
SIZE: 300 ml or 720 ml



TRY: Yuho Rhythm of the Centuries
or Rihaku Dreamy Clouds
SIZE: 300 ml or 720 ml

Additional Junmai Ginjo
Selections

Additional Categories:
kimoto, yamahai, sparkling, dry nigori



VINE CONNECTIONS

AMA NO TO

The epitome of the “local” farm-to-table movement, Ama No To *only* uses rice, water, and labor from its own prefecture.

WHY DOES AMA NO TO STAND OUT?

- 1) This is a true “Grower’s Sake”—the rice growers also make the sake, creating an intimate synergy with the raw materials. They only use rice from fields close enough to see from the brewery.
- 2) Ama No To translates to “Heaven’s Door,” referring to the prefecture which is at the northernmost tip of Japan. The label image is an icon of good fortune from Amaterasu, the Shinto Sun Goddess who is believed to have brought light to the world and cultivated Japan’s first rice fields.
- 3) Toji Moriya-san is a critically acclaimed chef who brews his sake specifically to improve a meal.

BREWERY LOCATION: Akita Prefecture

SAKE

• **Heaven’s Door** (Tokubetsu Junmai): This incredibly well-balanced and complex sake takes its time to express itself in the glass. Layers of dried flowers and baking spice give way to savory salinity that make this sake the perfect pairing for pickled and fermented foods.



All rice is farmed within sight of the brewery.



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BUSHIDO

As the first Japanese sake on tap, Bushido represents the endless possibility of innovation in a category that is steeped in ancient history.

WHY DOES BUSHIDO STAND OUT?

- 1) Sake on tap is unique, consistent, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly. Each keg stays fresh for 18 months untapped and 3 months tapped.
- 2) “Bushido” is the code of honor and morals developed by the Japanese samurai. This traditional code stresses loyalty, self-discipline, and bravery.
- 3) Bushido can be run through a standard beer tap line, making it a seamless addition to any restaurant or bar.

BREWERY LOCATION: Kyoto Prefecture

SAKE

- **Bushido Way of the Warrior** (Junmai Genshu): This undiluted sake is 18% alcohol and can stand up to a variety of foods or be used in cocktails. Tropical notes of passionfruit, mango, and peach with hints of white flower and anise.



Handcrafted tap handles



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CHIYONOSONO

Known as the Junmai expert, Chiyonosono was the first brewery to stop adding distilled alcohol to its sake after the rice shortages of World War II, paving the way for the popular Junmai category.

WHY DOES CHIYONOSONO STAND OUT?

- 1) Originally a rice wholesaler, Chiyonosono specializes in rice cultivation. Chiyonosono has access to heirloom strains and brews sake with distinctive rice textures and aromas.
- 2) The brewery is located on the southernmost island of Kyushu—the gateway into Japan—known for Asian and European cuisine, historic architecture, and distinct regional culture.
- 3) Chiyonosono also crafts shochu, Japan's other native alcohol beverage made from distilling raw materials like rice, barley, or potatoes. It can be served neat, on the rocks, or with mixers.

BREWERY LOCATION: Kumamoto Prefecture

SAKE

- **Shared Promise** (Junmai): A commitment from the brewery to make premium sake despite agricultural hardships like those of WWII. Soft, expansive texture with aromas of orange blossom.
- **Sacred Power** (Junmai Ginjo): A sake made with the heirloom rice Kumamoto Shinriki which was out of use for 50-100 years. The revitalized rice creates a bold sake loaded with briny ocean flavor and umami.
- **8,000 Generations** (Shochu): A crisp rice shochu with hints of honeydew and a medium body. Its rice origins make it a true sake-lovers shochu, and it is a great cocktail mixer.
- **Black Warrior** (Shochu): A barley shochu with robust flavors of caramel, almond, and earth tones followed by a complex finish.



President Masaharu Honda

FUKUCHO

Fukucho's female brewery owner, Miho Imada, is also the Toji – a rarity in Japan to have both jobs done by the same person.

WHY DOES FUKUCHO STAND OUT?

- 1) Hiroshima is the birthplace of Ginjo sake and is known for remarkably soft water that requires expert skill to use in sake production. Once mastered, the soft water enables a highly controlled, precise fermentation, resulting in vibrant fruit aromas.
- 2) Miho-san's passion and curiosity for sake brewing is truly amazing: to date she has revived a local heirloom rice that was out of use for hundreds of years, created her own hybrid yeast starter, and experimented with brewing sake using white koji.
- 3) There are around 30 female tojis in Japan, but when Miho-san started brewing there were far fewer. Her extreme dedication to her craft encourages the future of women in this industry.

BREWERY LOCATION: Hiroshima Prefecture

SAKE

- **Forgotten Fortune** (Junmai): Miho-san revived Hattanso rice, an extinct heirloom breed, by devoting over 10 years of her life to learning how to grow it and brew with it. She mills the rice less than most Junmai sake because she believes it results in the best expression of its flavor, balance, and complexity. Hiroshima has more oyster beds than anywhere else in Japan, influencing the amazing pairing offered with oysters.
- **Moon on the Water** (Junmai Ginjo): This vibrant showstopper aromatically jumps out of the glass and will make you fall in love with sake. It is a natural match for sweet, succulent shellfish like lobster and scallops, but surprising pairings like bittersweet chocolate work, too.



President and Toji Miho-san



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KANBARA

Powerful, big, bold sake from Japan's most popular brewing region, Niigata, which is otherwise known for producing light, clean sake.

WHY DOES KANBARA STAND OUT?

- 1) Kanbara's bold style comes from brewing sake that is *muroka* (not charcoal filtered).
- 2) The husband and wife co-owners come from families with sake backgrounds and Toji Kenichiro-san has made sake for over 50 years, giving Kanbara a long history of talent and experience.
- 3) The sake is named after the region's "Fox Bride" festival that celebrates agriculture and rice growing. The annual celebration features fox costumes and a bridal procession.

BREWERY LOCATION: Niigata Prefecture

SAKE

- **Bride of the Fox** (Junmai Ginjo): With a 50% polishing rate, this sake could technically qualify as a Junmai Daiginjo, but the remarkable savory notes give it a much broader food pairing versatility that identifies more with the style expected from Junmai Ginjo. It is made with classic Ginjo style yeast, resulting in unique, earthy persimmon notes and maritime umami. One of the best meat pairings in the portfolio.



Owners Dr. Shunichi Sato and Yoshiko Sato



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VINE CONNECTIONS

KONTEKI

Konteki's culture centers around 15th century ideals of Zen Buddhism and “wabi-sabi,” the belief that beauty within the arts should be understated and pure – just like sake.

WHY DOES KONTEKI STAND OUT?

- 1) Kyoto is the birthplace of sake and is home to the local Fushimi Mizu, one of Japan's most prized water sources of soft, pure water.
- 2) Well-respected rice farmer Masayasu Tanaka grows rice for the brewery. He is famous for growing some of Japan's best quality Yamada Nishiki rice, considered the pinnacle of premium sake rice.
- 3) Konteki presents a unique opportunity to demonstrate the differences in the tasting profiles of a Junmai Daiginjo and a Daiginjo. The two sake are made in the same way (same rice, yeast, milling rate, length of fermentation), but Tears of Dawn has a small amount of distilled alcohol added after fermentation to open up aromatics and lighten up the overall impact.

BREWERY LOCATION: Kyoto Prefecture

SAKE

- **Pearls of Simplicity** (Junmai Daiginjo): More subtle and nuanced than most highly aromatic Junmai Daiginjos. Aromas of white flower and Asian pear with rich minerality and rice texture.
- **Tears of Dawn** (Daiginjo): Lush notes of tropical banana, anise seed, and truffle. Finishes velvety and dangerously smooth.



Toji Takakura-san



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MANTENSEI

Mantensei creates elegant expressions of umami through sake that can be enjoyed at a wide variety of temperatures.

WHY DOES MANTENSEI STAND OUT?

- 1) Mantensei polishes their rice to 50% even though the sake is not a Daiginjo in order to create extreme drinkability alongside rich umami and savory notes—a rare balance.
- 2) President Touda-san makes sake that can be enjoyed at a wide range of temperatures and has been recognized at numerous warmed sake competitions.
- 3) They use a higher-than-usual ratio of koji rice to bring out distinctive notes of smoke, honey, and soy.

BREWERY LOCATION: Tottori Prefecture

SAKE

- **Star-Filled Sky** (Junmai Ginjo): Aged in tank for 3 years, this umami-rich sake finishes dry and clean from precise fermentation and water minerality. This unusual juxtaposition makes it stand out as a savory sake that can carry you through an entire meal and will not weigh you down.



Rice farmers



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NANBU BIJIN

The brewery was built around a respected well in the region of Nanbu, which is known for its lush natural reserves and mineral-laden water – perfect for making sake.

WHY DOES NANBU BIJIN STAND OUT?

- 1) The brewery president is an internationally-minded man whose mission is to spread sake throughout the world. The style is notably wine-like to appeal to other cultures.
- 2) “Nanbu Bijin” means “southern beauty” and is a Japanese term that celebrates the beauty of women, interpreted as the brewery’s vision to create a clean, feminine elegance in its sake.
- 3) Toji Yamaguchi-san was voted one of Japan’s ‘100 Greatest Craftsmen’ and is highly regarded throughout the country.

BREWERY LOCATION: Iwate Prefecture

SAKE

- **Southern Beauty** (Junmai Ginjo): The medium-hard water in Iwate gives this sake marked minerality and is complemented by white wine aromatics of pear, grass, and muscat grape.
- **Ancient Pillars** (Junmai Daiginjo): Milled to 35%, this elegant, lush Junmai Daiginjo is bold and robust due to being nama-chozo genshu (once pasturized and undiluted). Concentrated with floral, herbal, and white pepper notes and a vibrant wild strawberry flavor. This is the perfect pairing for smoked fish and caviar.



President Kuji-san



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RIHAKU

Rihaku is named after the famous Chinese poet from the 8th century, Li Po, who was known to drink a big bottle of sake and write a hundred poems.

WHY DOES RIHAKU STAND OUT?

- 1) Rihaku boasts one of the highest average milling rates of all Japanese sake breweries—a testament to its dedication to high quality.
- 2) Each Rihaku sake in the portfolio is made with a different type of sake rice, demonstrating how the deliberate style of a producer can be expressed by four rice types.
- 3) The ancient Prime Minister of the Shimane Prefecture named this brewery Rihaku because of the way that these sake inspire poetry. The calligraphy on the label is his original handwriting.

BREWERY LOCATION: Shimane Prefecture

SAKE

- **Dance of Discovery** (Junmai): Brewed with a newly developed rice called Kan no Mai that withstands cold climates and is full of personality, and it takes a fair amount of expertise to work with. The specific milling rate of 68% employed in this sake results in a smoky, saline rice flavor that is perfect with yakitori.
- **Origin of Purity** (Junmai Ginjo): This sake is a personal project from Rihaku's new president and toji, Yuichiro Tanaka. The use of flower yeast and heirloom Omachi rice, along with bottling this sake as an undiluted genshu, creates a much bolder brew in contrast to the pristine style established by his predecessors.
- **Wandering Poet** (Junmai Ginjo): This Junmai Ginjo made with Yamada Nishiki rice has the ability to complement even the most wine-unfriendly vegetables like asparagus, artichoke hearts, and broccoli rabe.
- **Dreamy Clouds** (Tokubetsu Junmai Nigori): Rihaku was the first brewery to make a dry, lightly cloudy style of Nigori sake. Dreamy Clouds, brewed with Gohyakumangoku rice, presents an opportunity to move Nigori drinkers forward to new styles of sake.



President/Brewer Tanaka-san's entire family helps out in the brewery, even his son Shun Ichiro.



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TAKASAGO

Crafted at Takasago brewery, Ginga Shizuku is the only sake in the world to be drip-pressed in an ice igloo.

WHY DOES TAKASAGO STAND OUT?

- 1) As the coldest place in Japan, Hokkaido prefecture is known as the “land of ice.” The brewery’s igloo remains about 28° F with 90% humidity where unwanted bacteria cannot survive, allowing the brewery to make the purest sake possible.
- 2) The drip-pressing method involves putting fermented rice lees into canvas bags so that only the most refined sake slowly drips out with no pressure applied to the mash.
- 3) The region is a culinary mecca known for seafood like crab and sea urchin, which has influenced the brewery to create a Junmai Daiginjo that is more food-friendly than others.

BREWERY LOCATION: Hokkaido Prefecture

SAKE

- **Divine Droplets** (Junmai Daiginjo): The most food friendly luxury sake with complex aromatics, herbal notes, and flavors of lychee, banana skin, and grapefruit.



Ice igloo for drip pressing



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TAKATENJIN

In a region of endless sunshine and pristine water sources, brewery Doi Shuzo stands out as an iconic producer of the fruity, dry style of sake that the area is known for.

WHY DOES TAKATENJIN STAND OUT?

- 1) Takatenjin is brewed at Doi Shuzo, which is recognized for its environmentally-friendly use of solar power, on-site water treatment, and other renewable energy sources.
- 2) Pure water put Shizuoka on the map for its tea production and its concentration of wasabi fields—two delicate products that require flawless water like sake does.
- 3) The most common yeast from Shizuoka, Hase-Doi, originated at this brewery and is named after the brewery's legendary Toji, Hase-San, and the Doi family that owns it.

BREWERY LOCATION: Shizuoka Prefecture

SAKE

- **Sword of the Sun** (Tokubetsu Honjozo): Bright and refreshing, this sake is the perfect choice for daytime drinking and is the brewery employees' drink of choice. The juniper botanicals and cucumber notes make it the perfect gin lover's sake.
- **Soul of the Sensei** (Junmai Daiginjo): This sake commemorates the life of the previous Toji who was a Brew Master Sensei and one of the “Four Guardians of Heaven” from the prestigious Noto Toji Guild. A rare combination of concentrated fruit aromatics and dry mouthfeel in a Junmai Daiginjo.



Green tea fields in front of Mt. Fuji.
Image provided by Shizuoka Tourism Agency



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VINE CONNECTIONS

TENSEI

Tensei is a multitalented brewery defined by an entrepreneurial spirit, an international outlook, and a laid-back surfer atmosphere.

WHY DOES TENSEI STAND OUT?

- 1) The cultured and forward-thinking brewery has a hand in other enterprises as well, including a beer brewery, a Japanese restaurant, an Italian restaurant, a bakery, and an art gallery all on site.
- 2) Tensei is inspired by Kanagawa's beautiful coastline and surfer culture. The town is also the birth place of the famous Japanese woodblock art, *The Great Wave*.
- 3) This small production brewery makes less than 8,000 cases per year, and because of its hip reputation and popularity in Japan, most of it is not exported.

BREWERY LOCATION: Kanagawa Prefecture

SAKE

- **Song of the Sea** (Junmai Ginjo): A rare opportunity to try sake made with Yeast #9 sourced from the brewery itself, rather than from the National Research Institute of Brewing. The result is a saltwater taffy salinity that evokes memories of the beach.
- **Thousand Waves** (Tokubetsu Junmai Yamahai): Only 1,000 bottles of this sake are made each year. Hand-bottled and numbered in custom ceramic after aging in special caves beneath the brewery that were originally used as bomb shelters during WWII. The yamahai method and aging give it thought-provoking notes of hazelnut, candied mushroom, and tart yogurt.



Toji Tetsuro Igarashi



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TENTAKA

Located in a region known for its pure rivers and natural beauty, Tentaka has created a sustainable microcosm to preserve and support future generations of sake.

WHY DOES TENTAKA STAND OUT?

- 1) President Ozaki-san's passion for the environment has led the brewery to use local ingredients, to reuse production byproducts, and to get Organic Certification in Japan, the US, and the European Union—one of only two breweries with triple certification.
- 2) Brewed in a landlocked region, Tentaka sake is locally treasured with only a small amount of sake leaving the prefecture. It celebrates the local flavors of rustic, savory, and meaty foods by brewing rich sake with high acidity.
- 3) Tentaka translates to “hawk in the heavens,” a prosperous Japanese symbol that is thought to bring good fortune to the brewery.

BREWERY LOCATION: Tochigi Prefecture

SAKE

- **Hawk in the Heavens** (Junmai): A go-to sake for barbeque, this rustic high acid sake is a great representation of traditional Junmai style that you would find in Izakayas throughout Japan.
- **Organaka** (Organic Junmai): This is also a yamahai sake, though not published on the bottle; the intention being to create a completely natural product with nothing added. Careful tasting will reveal hints of smoke and crisp acidity from the yamahai process.
- **Silent Stream** (Junmai Daiginjo): Out of the 24 grades of Yamada Nishiki rice, this sake is made from the very highest (Toku A Tokuju-Mai), polished down to an exceedingly labor-intensive and costly 35%. It is made in the non-pressed free run shizuku style resulting in the ultimate luxury.



Tentaka Brewery



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TOZAI

Tozai is the authentically Japanese sake that bridges the gap between East and West and is an invitation for all to enjoy Japanese sake.

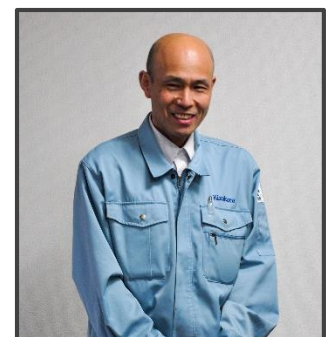
WHY DOES TOZAI STAND OUT?

- 1) Tozai's style is approachable for sake pros and novices alike, taking sake out of the "special occasion" category and making it an everyday drink.
- 2) Each Tozai sake is a classic representation of its style and grade.
- 3) Be transported to Japan just by looking at Tozai—the labels feature hand-painted koi fish, traditional Japanese kanji, and origami paper patterns.

BREWERY LOCATION: Kyoto Prefecture

SAKE

- **Living Jewel** (Junmai): Named after Japan's colorful koi fish that represent good fortune and luck. Light and easy drinking with aromas of banana and white grape.
- **Snow Maiden** (Junmai Nigori): This cloudy sake has vibrant notes of honeydew melon, raw pumpkin, and radish. Creamy texture with a bright, surprisingly dry finish.
- **Well of Wisdom** (Ginjo): This sake has juicy watermelon and citrus notes and a racy white pepper finish.
- **Typhoon** (Futsu-shu): A table sake of remarkable quality with rustic banana bread and nut notes. Sturdy enough to handle being warmed or mixed in cocktails.
- **Blossom of Peace** (Plum Sake): Plum blossoms are known as "The Flowers of Peace" in Japan and symbolize growth, renewal, and awakening. Local, all-natural aodani plums are soaked in Tozai sake for over three months. The bracingly sour plums result in an incredibly balanced sake with tart, juicy acidity on the finish.



Toji Wakai-san

YUHO

Unapologetically unconventional, Yuho experiments with brewing components and techniques to produce sake that have a wild, gamey characteristic with pronounced acidity and remarkable texture.

WHY DOES YUHO STAND OUT?

- 1) President Miho Fujita, a single career woman from Tokyo with no prior knowledge of sake, and Toji Yokomichi-san, who left his corporate job to pursue sake, do not follow traditional brewing methods—they brew the sake they enjoy drinking.
- 2) Yuho means “happy rice” and also refers to the city’s supposed numerous UFO sightings.
- 3) Miho-san believes her sake can stay open for longer than most – she personally likes to drink them after being open for 1-2 months.
- 4) Ishikawa is home to the lively Abare “Fire and Violence” Festival, which playfully pays homage to the deity of destruction.

BREWERY LOCATION: Ishikawa Prefecture

SAKE

- **Eternal Embers** (Junmai): Bread pudding aromatics of raisin, nut, and fig. Pairs with a wide variety of dishes from paté to pecan pie. Aged for 1 year in bottle to add rich texture and umami flavor.
- **Rhythm of the Centuries** (Kimoto Junmai): The ancient kimoto (pole ramming) method employed in the production of this sake along with the extensive 4 years of bottle aging at low temperatures result in a powerful, complex brew. Notes of pickled mushroom and soy caramel give way to elegant notes of chamomile, bergamot, and walnut.



Yuho brewing team with Miho Fujita
Photo courtesy of Sake Today Magazine



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