



SAKE

of HOKKAIDO

HOKKAIDO
JAPAN
2023

北海道 日本



A Great Rice-producing Region is a
Great Sake -brewing Region-
The Japanese Sake Culture of Hokkaido
Cultivated and Handed
Down from our Forefathers

For many years, it was thought that, being an extremely cold region, Hokkaido was not fit for growing rice. However, the wisdom of its forefathers combined with Hokkaido's own technology and selective breeding, a durable and high grade rice that could survive the harsh cold was cultivated. Thanks to such innovation, Hokkaido has garnered a strong reputation as one of the leading producers of sake rice in Japan. In addition to high quality rice, a good source of clean water is also required for brewing delicious sake. Due to the extremely cold climate of Hokkaido, there is an abundance of quality snowmelt and subterranean river water. This cold climate also makes it very difficult for bacteria to breed, which is why it is perfect for brewing sake. Hokkaido has the perfect terroir for Japanese sake. These unique features of Hokkaido are used in crafting sake.



Hokkaido's Proudful Sake Rice (Rice suitable for sake-brewing)

Originally, the cold environment of Hokkaido was unsuitable for growing sake rice. The success of cultivar improvement however, made it possible to grow sake rice that is capable of withstanding the cold and having an opaque core known as "shinpaku," which is needed for making sake. Currently three varieties of sake rice is being grown. Though "Yamada Nishiki" is the most widely produced sake rice in Japan, sake made with Hokkaido rice provides very different characteristics.

吟風 GINPU 彗星 SUISEI

The leading sake rice that was registered in the year 2000. It has a large white core known as "shinpaku," and is considered to have a high incidence rate. ("Shinpaku," or the opaque, white area of the rice grain has many spaces in which the koji bacteria enters to encourage fermentation. For this reason, rice grain with a larger "shinpaku," are more suitable for sake-brewing.) It produces a sake with full of aroma and rich boldness.

A variety created in 2006 by cross-fertilizing Hatsushizuku and Ginpu. Suisei is a low content rate of protein and other than being as thick as Ginpu, the grains are also large with high yielding capacity. It could be said that its aroma and taste are mild, and it produces a dry and refreshing sake.

きたしずく KITASHIZUKU

Introduced in 2014, Kitashizuku is the most recent variety of sake rice produced in Hokkaido. It has a large white core known as "shinpaku," is strong enough to withstand the cold, and has a high yielding capacity. It very minimal bitterness, making it capable of producing sake with a mild taste, somewhere between sakes made with Ginpu and Suisei.

The basics of Japanese sake

Japanese sake is mainly classified into 4 types based on the characteristics of its flavor and aroma.

The point is to pay attention to the aroma (flavor) of Japanese sake. Once you remember the 4 basic types of Japanese sake, you will be able to easily enjoy it.

Highly aromatic type Kunshu (aromatic)

Suitable as an aperitif because of its fragrant aroma and refreshing flavor. Like a white wine that is enjoyed for its aroma, it is unwaveringly popular outside of Japan.

[Characteristics]

Recommend for people who are new to Japanese sake. Its comforting and fragrant flavor is popular especially among women. To maximize its fruity aroma, be mindful of over-heating or over-chilling the sake.

[Recommended pairing]

White fish carpaccio, fresh spring rolls, vinegared seafood, rare chicken tenderloin with plum sauce

Recommended ways to serve

Temperature range	Recommendation level
Chilled about 5°C	●●●●●
Slightly chilled about 10°C	●●●●●
Room temperature about 15°C	●●●●●
Lukewarm about 40°C	●●●●●
Hot about 50°C	●●●●●

Types of sake /

Daiginjo-shu, Ginjo-shu, and others

Well-rounded and full-bodied type Junshu (rich)

Rich umami and the well-rounded taste of rice itself. It is fast becoming popular around the world because it gives off the classic taste of traditional Japanese sake.

[Characteristics]

This type is "What real Japanese sake is!" and is the perfect match for so-called "pub food". Suitable for warm sake, particularly "lukewarm sake", to thoroughly enjoy its full-bodied umami(taste).

[Recommended pairing]

Miso oden, cheese fondue, shiokara, potato salad

Recommended ways to serve

Temperature range	Recommendation level
Chilled about 5°C	●●●●●
Slightly chilled about 10°C	●●●●●
Room temperature about 15°C	●●●●●
Lukewarm about 40°C	●●●●●
Hot about 50°C	●●●●●

Types of sake /

Junmai-shu, Honjozo-shu, and others

Light and smooth type Soushu (refreshing)

A standard type that has a charming aroma that is simple and light. It has a refreshing taste that never tires, so it pairs well with a wide range of dishes.

[Characteristics]

A tanrei (light) type sake characterized by a refreshing taste that is widely appreciated. Another appealing aspect is that it can be paired easily with any dish. Enjoy its crisp taste by chilling it thoroughly.

[Recommended pairing]

Cold tofu, vegetable terrine, boiled leafy vegetables, fried chicken

Recommended ways to serve

Temperature range	Recommendation level
Chilled about 5°C	●●●●●
Slightly chilled about 10°C	●●●●●
Room temperature about 15°C	●●●●●
Lukewarm about 40°C	●●●●●
Hot about 50°C	●●●●●

Types of sake /

Futsuu-shu, Honjozoshu, Namazake, Namachozoshu, and others

Complex and mellow type Jukushu (aged)

A taste preferred by experts that is reminiscent of a rich and complex Shaoxing wine. Enjoy the world of profound "aged taste" woven in by time.

[Characteristics]

A special flavor that is condensed and deep produced by aging in low heat or room temperature for a long period of time. The rich and strong flavor is similar to spices and dried fruits; recommended to be paired with dishes and appetizers with rich flavor.

[Recommended pairing]

Grilled eel, mapo tofu, Japanese braised pork belly, dried fruits, azuki-bean jelly

Recommended ways to serve

Temperature range	Recommendation level
Chilled about 5°C	●●●●●
Slightly chilled about 10°C	●●●●●
Room temperature about 15°C	●●●●●
Lukewarm about 40°C	●●●●●
Hot about 50°C	●●●●●

Types of sake /

Long-term aged sake, vintage sake, and others

New sake breweries have opened! Tour Hokkaido through delicious sakes

As of September 2022, there are 14 sake companies and 16 breweries in Hokkaido. From historic icons that have been in business for over 140 years to brand new breweries, each is deeply rooted in the local environment, creating sakes that are unique to the region.

Visit breweries that allow tours, and you can also visit stores on site, or order and enjoy the feeling of travel in the comfort of your own home. Why not take the time to find your favorite sake.

Reasons for recent increase in Hokkaido breweries

In recent years, sake made in Hokkaido has been drawing attention thanks to its great quality and steady supply. The fact that the number of breweries in proportion to population is still few compared to the rest of the country, and that residents of Hokkaido do not drink as much sake made in Hokkaido, could mean that there is actually more of a future in Hokkaido sake.

It is often said "Great sake is made where great rice is made." This rings true concerning Hokkaido, which is why many new breweries are being established in Hokkaido.

"Traditional sake brewing" setting sights to be registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

On February 2022, at the Intangible Cultural Heritage Subcommittee Cultural Council held at the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, "traditional sake brewing" was selected as a suggested candidate to be a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (a list of representative human intangible cultural heritages). It is likely that sake, along with "washoku," which was registered back in 2013, will gain increased attention from all over the world.

Japanese sake trivia that you should know

Information given on the label

Chief brewer

The highest person in charge of sake brewing. The sake brewery entrusts full authority of sake brewing to the chief brewer to make sake.

Rice polishing ratio

After carrying out the process of rice polishing where the rice is polished, the ratio of the remaining rice is indicated in %.

Sake meter value

The quantified amount of sugar in Japanese sake. In general, the higher the positive number is, the drier the sake becomes, and the lower the negative number is, the sweeter the sake gets.

Acidity

The value indicating the amount of acid created in the Japanese sake brewing process such as lactic acid, succinic acid, malic acid, and others. The more acid the sake contains, the drier the sake tastes because the sweetness is negated.

Amino acidity

The value indicating the amount of amino acid that is the source of umami. Japanese sake includes about 20 types of amino acid such as glutamic acid, arginine, tyrosine, and others. Generally, sake with higher amino acid has a solid umami taste, while lower amino acid has a mellow and light taste.

For more details on Japanese Sakes of Hokkaido please visit

Hokkaido Sake Brewery Association

<http://www.hokkaido-sake.or.jp/>



For details concerning sightseeing in Hokkaido please visit

Hokkaido Tourism Organization

<https://en.visit-hokkaido.jp/>

