

Guide to

SETOUCHI SAKE



<http://setouchitrip.com/>

To get to know Japanese sake, first start from Setouchi.

FROM SETOUCHI



米
+
水
=
酒

An abundance of “rice” ripens in the warm sunlight, and “water” transforms itself into a crystal stream polished by the mountains. In Setouchi with an abundance of quality raw materials indispensable to sake-making, many breweries still preserve the traditional techniques of sake-making.

The Seto Inland Sea, in which over 700 islands float along the western side of Japan, is the largest epeiric sea in the country. Its coastal area is called “Setouchi” and is a popular area among tourists as scenic towns dot the area.

Due to its mild climate, agricultural crop production thrives, and various kinds of sake rice, including top-grade rice such as “Yamada Nishiki” and “Omachi” indispensable to sake-making, are grown. Also, water that greatly influences the flavors of sake abounds. The pure groundwater polished by Setouchi’s mountains varies widely in quality from hard water to soft water, producing a deep range of tastes in sake. Because the land is blessed with such good quality raw materials, many sake breweries have been established and operated for generations in Setouchi.

Sake-making is said to have begun in Okayama in the Nara period (year 716), and since then, it has continued to evolve in Setouchi, where sake-making artisans have devised brewing methods ideal for the location and environment and brought many superior brands of sake into the world.

Nowadays, there still remain as many as 260 sake breweries preserving the traditions of sake-making in Setouchi. With a boom in the drinking sake in Japan and growing popularity overseas, sake breweries are experiencing a rejuvenation. While some breweries thoroughly observe the inherited traditional sake-making process, other breweries are tackling the challenges of making new sake that matches the needs of the times while still preserving the essential traditions.

If you explore Setouchi, where a great diversity of sake styles and flavors have been developed, you will discover “today’s” sake.



Setouchi, a gold mine of sake

There are many historic sake breweries that remain in Setouchi. Some of them have existed for more than 100 years. Why not explore some of the sake breweries, while enjoying the scenery, tastes and culture that remain in Setouchi?



Photos by: Masashi Fujimoto

Kintaikyo Bridge

This wooden arch bridge, extending over the Nishikigawa River in Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, is extremely rare in the world.



Itsukushima Shrine

This shrine located on Miyajima Island in Hatsukaichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture is a World Heritage site and also one of the Three Most Scenic Views in Japan.



Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter

In this townscape preservation district located in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture, the elegance of the Edo period remains, including beautiful white-walled buildings.



Photo credit: Himeji City

Himeji Castle

This famous castle located in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture was designated the first World Cultural Heritage site in Japan.



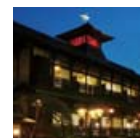
Naruto Whirlpools

The whirlpools occur in the Naruto Strait located between Naruto City, Tokushima Prefecture and Minamiawaji City, Hyogo Prefecture.



Ritsurin Garden

This Japanese stroll garden located in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture has been designated a national special place of scenic beauty.



Dogo Onsen Hot Spring

This hot spring having as long as 3000 years of history is located in Matsuyama City, Ehime Prefecture, and is said to be one of Japan's three oldest hot springs.



瀬戸内 酒蔵 体験記

Setouchi Memories of Sake Breweries

If you explore the sake breweries,
you will see Japan's
nature, culture and people.

You can see how sake is made at many sake breweries in Setouchi. Tastes having been maintained and raised over a long period of history exist at many of the breweries. If you visit these sites of sake-making, you will feel Japanese people's respect for water and rice, and the sacred aspects of sake-making. You can also taste and buy sake at many breweries. You will gain a deeper knowledge of Japan by seeing, feeling, and tasting sake inside sake breweries.

On these streets you can
feel a relaxing and unique
atmosphere where time
seems to have frozen.

It takes a lot of
hand-made work to
prepare the rice.

The soft and warm flavors of
sake will make your trip
more pleasurable.

Kanpai

Sake manufacturing process

01

[Rice polishing]

Brown "sake rice" is polished to remove fats and proteins that cause unpleasant tastes. Generally, the higher the sake grade, the more highly polished the rice used for brewing in many cases. For some Daiginjo, it takes two whole days to polish rice.

02

[Rice washing and soaking]

The bran remaining on the rice surface is washed away, and after that, the rice is made to absorb water as required. Since such well-polished rice that is used for high-grade sake absorbs water at a high speed, the soaking time is precisely controlled in seconds by using a stopwatch.

03

[Rice steaming]

The rice is steamed for about one hour. It is said that a finish of "gaiko nainan" with its outer side hard and inner side soft and elastic is suitable for propagation of koji mold (*Aspergillus*), and at this time, picking up and crushing part of it by finger to check whether the rice is properly steamed is called "hineri mochi (rice cake)."

04

[Koji making]

The steamed rice is spread out and cooled down, and is drawn in muro (koji-making room) kept around a room temperature of 30°C, on which koji mold is sprinkled to make koji (rice malt) taking two days and nights. The taste of sake changes greatly depending on the conditions of "hazekomi (action of yeast elongating bacterial threads into steamed rice) of the prepared koji.

05

[Shubo(fermentation starter)making]

Shubo (moto) is the culture of a mixture of koji, water and steamed rice with yeast added. "Sokujo-moto making (starter culture)" by adding lactic acid requires about two weeks. "Kimoto-style starter culture" using natural lactic acid bacteria doubles the number of the days just mentioned.



Foreign staff fascinated by sake-making train and work at some sake breweries.



06

[Moromi(fermentation mash)making]

Koji, steamed rice and water are added to shubo that is divided into three stages: "Hatsu-zoe (first stage)," "Naka-zoe (second stage)," and "Tome-zoe (third stage)." This is called "Sandan-jikomi (three-step preparation for fermentation mash)," in which starch is converted to sugar by enzymes, and sugar to alcohol by yeast. This fermenting fluid is moromi (fermentation mash).

07

[Pressing]

Moromi is pressed and divided into sake lees and sake. While the common "Yabuta type" machine pressing is quick and firm, there are also other ways of pressing, such as "Fukuro-shibori (bag-hanging)" to press moromi in cloth sake bags under their own weight, and "Fune-shibori" to press moromi in cloth sake bags under pressure as they are stacked in fune (a traditional press).

08

[Filtration]

The pressed sake is left for a period of time and turbidity called ori is removed from it (oribiki (removal of sediments)). In order to remove deposits and miscellaneous matter that still remain after that, the sake is filtered through charcoal or a filter. At this time, coarsely filtered sake is called "Nigori-zake."

09

[Hiire(pasteurization)]

Since enzymes, etc., remain in the pressed sake, the sake quality is unstable. So, in order to stop the enzymes from functioning and extinguish hiochi bacteria which cause bacterial contamination, heat sterilization is performed, which is called "hiire." Common sake is shelf-stable because it undergoes hiire twice.

10

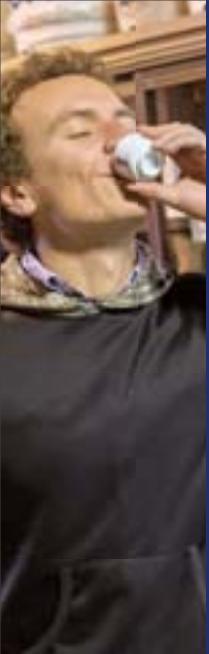
[Addition of water]

Most of fresh sake, which has an alcohol content of approximately 20%, is adjusted by adding water in order to make it easier to drink. Generally, it is adjusted to around 15%, while no water is added to some sake called "genshu (undiluted sake)."

11

[Shipping]

Thanks to refrigeration technology, sake is made and shipped in various states, such as "Nama-zake (unpasteurized sake)" without hiire, "Namazume-shu" with only a first hiire before pressing, and "Namachozo-shu" with only a second hiire before bottling. All three of these tastes are completely different.



Exploring sake breweries in Setouchi

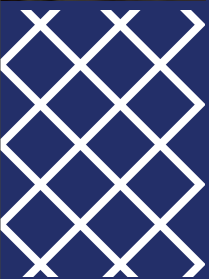
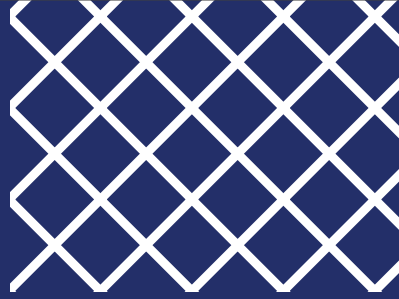
Sake tastes a thousand different ways.

That is because there are community-based histories and traditions as well as makers' hearts in relation to the number of sake breweries.

If you visit a sake brewery, you will deepen your travel experience and the taste of sake you drink.

And, you will surely desire to visit another sake brewery in pursuit of new encounters.

Why not travel to the Setouchi sake breweries, while enjoying the season, scenery, and human contacts?



- Inside of a sake brewery or related facilities can be observed.
- Pamphlet available in English
- English guide available (any of human, audio, and video)
- Drinking and eating space
- Tasting
- Souvenirs corner
- Liquor tax exemption available
- Consumption tax exemption available

Precautions for observation of sake breweries

For observation of sake breweries, follow staff's instructions since there are rules set by respective breweries, such as:
- Dress in clean clothing.
- Refrain from eating Natto, yogurt and other fungi from the previous day.

01 Akashi Shurui Jozo

Walk 10 minutes from JR Asagiri Station



This sake brewery places importance on traditional handmade methods using only locally produced sake rice grown in Hyogo Prefecture. On top of that, they also regularly produce innovative types of sake. Valuing Japan's identity with a large export volume, and earning an excellent reputation.

[Akashi Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.]

1-3, Okura Hachiman-cho, Akashi-shi, Hyogo
TEL:078-919-0277
MAIL:info@akashi-tai.com
Closed:Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



♣ **Junmai Daiginjo Akashi-Tai**
This sake allows you to enjoy the rich aroma of melon, lemon, bitter orange, green grass and sage as well as the taste of rice. This sake is served at high-class hotels and restaurants in London and Paris, and on cruise ships that sail around the world, such as the MS Queen Elizabeth.

02 Ibaraki Shuzo

Walk 15 minutes from JR Uozumi Station



Founded in the late Edo period (1848). Now, the ninth-generation young owner-toji (master brewer) brews together with a small number of brewers, dedicated to their passion in the making of Japanese sake. Their challenge has attracted great attention, such as the launch of an aromatic series using yeast extracted from natural flowers, while following long-standing tradition.

[Ibaraki Shuzo]

1377, Uozumi-cho Nishioka, Akashi-shi, Hyogo
TEL:078-946-0061
MAIL:rairaku@rairaku.jp
Closed:Open throughout the year
Hours:9:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Time required for observation tour: 60 min.
Booking:Required



♣ **Rairaku Hananokura Gekkabijin**
The brand name "Rairaku" symmetrical in Chinese characters stands for auspicious. As suggested by the name that can be read the same way both from the front and back. It is characterized by a straight flavor, brewed by traditional handmade methods without extensive processing.

03 Okada Honke

Drive 10 minutes from JR Kakogawa Station



"Seiten" is made by using the affluent river-bed water of the Kakogawa River, the largest river in Hyogo Prefecture, and 100% locally grown rice produced in the prefecture. This sake is a well-known brand popular for a mouth-watering tanrei (refreshing and dry) feel and a fresh flavor that is well-balanced between sweetness and dryness. Sake brewed and rooted in the community, aiming at local production for local consumption.

[Okada Honke]

1021, Noguchi-cho Yoshino, Kakogawa-shi, Hyogo
TEL:079-426-7288
MAIL:okadahonke.adf@gmail.com
Closed: Mondays
Hours:9:00 AM - 6:00 PM (10:00 AM - 5:00 PM on Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays)
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



♣ **Seiten Tokubetsu Junmai**
Refreshing dry sake made by using sake rice called Gohyakumangoku, which is locally produced in Kakogawa. A light drinking feeling ends with a floaty spread of sweetness and the aroma of rice.

04 Kiku-Masamune Shuzo

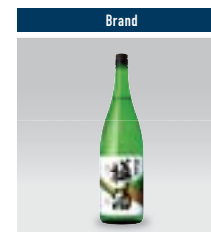
Walk 8 minutes from Hanshin Uozaki Station



"Japanese sake that keeps us from growing weary from drinking and complements cooking is typical." A refreshing taste without any unpleasant taste or a sharp sensation makes Kiku-Masamune an ideal dry sake. At the Sake Brewery Museum established as an annex, you can learn the history of sake-making and see treasured tools of the art.

[Kiku-Masamune Shuzo]

1-7-15, Mikagehon-machi, Higashinada-ku, Kobe-shi, Hyogo
TEL:078-851-0001
MAIL:m-goto@kikumasanune.co.jp
Closed:At year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:9:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Time required for observation tour:40 min.
Booking:Not required



♣ **Junmai-shu Kiku-Masamune Taru Sake**
This sake is characterized by the gorgeous and fruity aroma drawn out by its own yeast. The umami and afterglow characteristic of Junmai-shu are matched by the aroma of cedar barrels, expanding the flavor.

Exploring 酒 sake breweries in Setouchi

05 Kobe Shushinkan

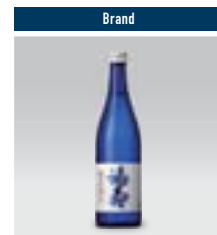
Walk 8 minutes from
Hanshin Electric Railway
Ishiyagawa Station



In 2008, "Fukuju" graced the tables of the Nobel Laureates Dinner in Stockholm, and attracted the spotlight from around the world. As a community-based brewery, they focus their energies on the promotion of the local brand of sake with observation tours provided with multilingual support, in order to ensure handing down the traditions of sake-making and enjoying sake.

【Kobe Shushinkan】

1-8-17, Mikagetsuka-machi, Higashinada-ku, Kobe-shi, Hyogo
TEL:078-841-1121
MAIL:sakaik@shushinkan.co.jp
Closed:At year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
[January - November]
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



♪ Junmai Ginjo Fukuju

The blue bottle, which was served at the Nobel Laureates Dinner, captivated the world. Being characterized by a ripe peach-like rich aroma, it also goes well with cheeses and other western foods.

06 Sawa No Tsuru Museum

Walk 10 minutes from
Hanshin Electric Railway
Oishi Station



Although the old sake brewery that was built in the late Edo period and left intact had been open to the public as a museum, it was completely destroyed in the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. After, it was restored to its former state, and has been designated as an important tangible folk cultural property in Hyogo Prefecture. You can see what sake-making used to be like by following the exhibits step by step.

【"Old Sake Brewery" Sawa No Tsuru Museum】

1-29-1, Oishiminami-machi, Nada-ku, Kobe-shi, Hyogo
TEL:078-882-7788
MAIL:N/A
Closed:Wednesdays, and at Bon, year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:30 min.
Booking:Required for 10 people or more



♪ Tokubetsu Junmai-shu Jitsuraku Yamada-Nishiki

The rare Yamada Nishiki harvested in "Jitsuraku," a toku (special)-A area among the Yamada Nishiki producing areas is 100% used. Its sharp umami and fine mouth-watering feel are extraordinary.

07 Nadagiku Shuzo

Drive 5 minutes from
JR Himeji Station



This brewery is managed by a lady toji (master brewer), a rarity in Japan. With the aim of producing high-quality sake-making, small-batch production was started in 1994. Using local sake rice, their motto is "sake brewing painstakingly handmade one step at a time." The toji and young brewers pour their heart into sake-making as one day to day.

【Nadagiku Shuzo】

1-121, Tegara, Himeji-shi, Hyogo
TEL:079-285-3111
MAIL:misa-kawaishi@nadagiku.co.jp
Closed:At year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:20 min.
Booking:Not required



♪ Junmai Daiginjo Kiku no Shizuku

A masterpiece of tradition and excellence representative of Nadagiku. Its mild aroma and sharpness go well with sea bream and flounder served as sashimi as well as other white-fleshed fish from the Setouchi area.

08 Nishiyama Shuzojo

Walk 5 minutes from
JR Tanba-Takeda Station



Founded in 1849, this sake brewery is located at the center of Hyogo Prefecture, in Tanba, surrounded by abundant nature. Through year-round brewing, you can enjoy fresh seishu (refined sake) at any time. Their vision is to offer sake that will turn customers into lifetime sake lovers.

【Nishiyama Shuzojo】

1171, Ichijima-cho Nakatakeda, Tanba-shi, Hyogo
TEL:0795-86-0331
MAIL:main@kotsuzumi.co.jp
Closed:Irregularly
Hours:1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:30 min.
Booking:Required



♪ Kotsuzumi Rojo-Hana-Ari Aoi

It is astonishingly fruity and drinkable, fully drawing out the presence of Yamada Nishiki. The world's most influential wine critic, Robert M. Parker, Jr., gave it a score of 92 points.

09 Hakutsuru Shuzo

Walk 5 minutes from
Hanshin Electric Railway
Sumiyoshi Station



This majority brewery is representative of Nada in Kobe, a rich sake-making area in Japan. While upholding tradition, this brewery actively introduces new technology and upgraded facilities to meet the demands of the times. A museum and gallery under the theme "Learn and enjoy sake" to convey the appeal of Japanese sake from various perspectives offer an on-site experience.

【Hakutsuru Shuzo】

4-5-5, Sumiyoshiminami-machi, Higashinada-ku, Kobe-shi, Hyogo
TEL:078-822-8907
MAIL:soumu@hakutsuru.co.jp
Closed:At Bon, year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:9:30 AM - 4:30 PM
[Admission by 4:00 PM]
Time required for observation tour:40 min.
Booking:Required for groups



♪ Hakutsuru Tenku Hakutsuru-Nishiki

"Hakutsuru Nishiki" rice, brother sake rice to Yamada Nishiki and developed over a ten year period, is polished up to 38%, and only naturally dripping sake is collected for this proud symbolic product of Hakutsuru. Its apple and pear-like fruity aroma is appealing.

10 Akaiwa Shuzo

Drive 10 minutes from
JR Seto Station



In "Akaiwa," a major Bizenmai rice producing area, sake is brewed by using an abundance of specialty rice called Omachimai and Asahimai. The taste is mellow, flavorful and nutritious from the crystal-clear water in combination with finely honed traditional skills. Brewers are devoted to making good-quality sake as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

【Akaiwa Shuzo】

1113, Komoto, Akaiwa-shi, Okayama
TEL:086-955-0130
MAIL:info@akaiwa.co.jp
Closed:At year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:40 min.
Booking:Required



♪ Daiginjo Momo no Sato

This sake is characterized by a mellow aroma and rich flavor. This sake conveys the warmth and spirit of the brewers who have dedicated their efforts to making it.

Exploring sake breweries in Setouchi

11 Itano Shuzo Honten

Drive 7 minutes from
JR Ashimori Station



The roots of this area go back to the Momotaro legend, one of Japan's cherished folktales. As it is adjacent to "Kinojo Castle" where the demon having been dispelled by Momotaro resided, the name is also used as the brand name from these classic grounds. This long-established brewery adheres to traditional sake-making in winter (cold season brewing) as well by using the sake rice produced in the prefecture of "Hare-no-kuni Okayama."

[Itano Shuzo Honten]

2272, Oi, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama
TEL:086-295-0025
MAIL:futamo@iris.ocn.ne.jp
Closed:Sundays and national holidays
Hours:10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:45 min.
Booking:Required



❖ Ki no Jo Junmai Ginjo

This sake is known as the ancient drink of the demons and is masterfully reproduced. The "Akebono" sake rice produced in Okayama Prefecture is 100% used. The umami and rich body derived from the rice are well-balanced and well-matched with an appealing taste.

12 Koso Shuzo

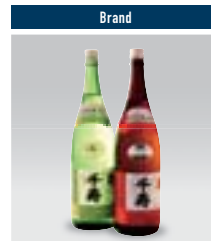
Take the Ryobi Bus bound for Ushimado from
Oku Station on the JR Aiko Line,
and walk seconds from the Konnoura bus stop



This sake brewery is located in Ushimado on the coast of the Seto Inland Sea, a port town that flourished during ancient times. "Senju" made in this area proved popular with the people who traveled by sea and waited for favorable winds and tide to set sail again. The appeal of this sake is that its taste is good both when warmed and chilled and is known as umakuchi, which is not too sweet and not too dry, allowing the drinker to never tire from that taste.

[Koso Shuzo]

4943-1, Ushimado, Ushimado-cho, Setouchi-shi, Okayama
TEL:0869-34-2002
MAIL:kousou@po.harenet.ne.jp
Closed:Sundays and national holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



❖ Senju Tokusen Karakuchi

This is a refreshing classic dry sake that goes well at meal times. When warmed, it becomes a flavorfully plump and round type of drink.

13 Juhachizakari Shuzo

Drive 15 minutes from
JR Kojima Station



This sake brewery has a brand that features a purity like an innocent maiden and the silkiness of cherry blossoms. Since old times, this brewery has been known for its sake with umami that goes well with seafood from the Setouchi area. The brewers place importance on a balance between a mild aroma, rich taste, and unweariness sharpness.

[Juhachizakari Shuzo]

5-6-14, Kojima Tanokuchi, Kurashiki-shi, Okayama
TEL:086-477-7125
MAIL:info@juhachi.jp
Closed:Saturdays, Sundays, national holidays,
and at Bon, year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - Noon, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
(May to September only)
Time required for observation tour:50 min.
Booking:Required



❖ Juhachizakari Asahi Junmai Daiginjo Bizen 50
The Asahimai rice produced in Akiwa-shi, a leading rice-producing area in Japan, is used in the brewing process. The taste derived from low-temperature brewing to fully draw out the umami of rice is characterized by a fruity aroma and tender mouth-watering feel.

14 Tsuji Honten

Walk 10 minutes from
JR Chugoku-Katsuyama Station



When the brewery was established, it was granted the title of "Gozenshu" as the domain's sake for presentation. It is also a noteworthy brewery in which Okayama Prefecture's first lady toji (master brewer) has been making sake since 2007. NISHIKURA next door to the brewery, has a directly managed shop, cafe and restaurant, and is popular with tourists.

[Tsuji Honten]

116, Katsuyama, Maniwa-shi, Okayama
TEL:0867-44-3155
MAIL:info@gozenshu.co.jp
Closed:At year-end and
New Year holidays
Hours:10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



❖ Gozenshu Junmai Mimasaka

With a mild aroma, the strong umami of Omachimai rice is fully enjoyable in this Junmai-shu. When chilled, it goes down the throat smoothly and refreshingly, and when lukewarm, it offers a deeper taste.

15 Marumoto Shuzo

Drive 15 minutes from
JR Kamogata Station



Although grapes are typically grown at wineries, it is often not the case that rice is grown at a sake brewery. They start rice-growing for sake-making. They aim to be a sake "Domaine" using 100% home-grown rice. They brew only Junmai-shu taking full advantage of the taste of rice, which provides a feeling of fullness as if eating brown rice and mellow umami.

[Marumoto Shuzo]

2485, Kamogata-cho Honjo, Asakuchi-shi, Okayama
TEL:0865-44-3155
MAIL:info@chikurin.jp
Closed:Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays
(Sundays and national holidays between October and February)
Hours:9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



❖ Chikurin Junmai Daiginjo Taoyaka

Incredible aroma and smooth sweetness. A flavor like ripe muscat grapes spreads around the mouth pleasantly. Goes great with a variety of cheeses, carpaccio and other western-style dishes.

16 Miyashita Shuzo

Walk 3 minutes from
JR Nishigawara Station



The representative brand is "Kiwami Hijiri" made by using preparation water pumped up 100 meters from underground. This sake brewery's forte is dry sake in Okayama where sweet sake is typical. Under the guidance of a Bicchu toji who was named as a contemporary master craftsman, a junior toji who has inherited his skills creates sake that preserves tradition.

[Miyashita Shuzo]

184, Nishigawara, Naka-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama
TEL:086-272-5594
MAIL:info@mbsb.co.jp
Closed:Wednesdays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



❖ Daiginjo Kiwami Hijiri Mukashi-shibori Tobindori

This highest class of Daiginjo is sake slowly aged at low temperature in 18 liter bottles (tobindori). The fine balance between a fruity aroma and taste is exactly the essence of delightfulness. This is a sake treasure that should be slowly tasted as it is chilled.

Exploring sake breweries in Setouchi

17 Umeda Shuzojo

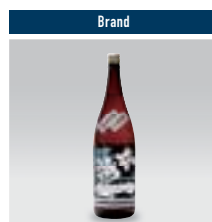
Walk 10 minutes from JR
Kaitschi Station



This sake brewery is located in the eastern part of Hiroshima City. Mt. Iwataki in the background is a gigantic rock mountain, and the subsoil water flowing from here is pumped up 60 meters from underground and used as preparation water. Having the belief of making sake everyone can relish, sake is brewed with a rich and friendly mouth-watering feel.

[Umeda Shuzojo]

6-3-8, Funakoshi, Aki-ku, Hiroshima-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:082-822-2031
MAIL:info@honshu-ichi.com
Closed:Open throughout the year
Hours:8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



Honshuichi Muroka Junmai Ginjo
This Junmai Ginjo is made by brewing "Senbon Nishiki" rice ideal for sake-making in Hiroshima with Hiroshima ginjo yeast. After bottling without filtration, it is put into ice storage. You can enjoy the fruity and refreshing taste.

18 Enoki Shuzo

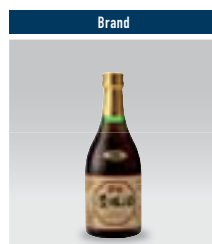
Take the Hiroden Bus from JR Kure Station,
and get off at Ono Shimin Center mae



Having a desire to make sake no one has ever experienced before and extend the range of Japanese sake, for the first time in Japan, they manufacture "Kijoshu" brewed with sake in place of water. The full-bodied, luscious, and rich flavor suggestive of brandy or wine having a rich and mellow flavor is a one and only. The small brewery on an island floating on the Seto Inland Sea is gaining attention from around the world.

[Enoki Shuzo]

2-1-15, Ono-cho Minamiondo, Kure-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:0823-52-1234
MAIL:info@hanahato.co.jp
Closed:Sundays and national holidays
Hours:10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:
Required by e-mail from the website



Hana Hato Kijoshu cellared for 8 years
With a raisin or nut-like flavor, it is full-bodied and mellow sweet. It is even delicious poured over vanilla ice cream and enjoyed just like dessert.

19 Kamoizumi Shuzo

Walk 8 minutes from
JR Saijo Station



This brewery is located in Saijo, a brewing area representative of Hiroshima. This brewery started sake-making with rice and rice malt alone in 1965 as a pioneer of junmai (pure rice) brewing, who spread the name "Junmai no Kamoizumi" across Japan. In recent years, they have expanded the appeal of Japanese sake not only in Japan but also worldwide through exports to Europe, the US, Asia, and other regions.

[Kamoizumi Shuzo]

2-4, Saijokamichi-cho, Higashihiroshima-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:082-423-2118
MAIL:info@kamoizumi.co.jp
Closed:Saturdays, Sundays,
and national holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



Junmai Ginjo Shusen Honjikomi
This Junmai Ginjo-shu colored pale gold by filtration without use of activated carbon offers an excellent mellow umami and richness intrinsic to rice as well as refreshing sharpness. It is the flagship brand representative of Kamoizumi.

20 Kirei Shuzo

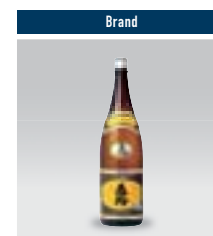
Walk 5 minutes from
JR Saijo Station



The name of Kirei Shuzo located in Saijo has grown in reputation and popularity as a city of sake in Japan as much loved by sake drinkers nationwide, and implies long life and eternal prosperity, derived from the words "tsuru wa sennen, kame wa mannen" (a crane lives for a thousand years and a turtle lives for ten thousand years). The brew is a strongly dry sake in Hiroshima where most of the sake is known to be sweet, attracting many fans of Japanese sake.

[Kirei Shuzo]

8-18, Saijohonmachi, Higashihiroshima-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:082-422-2171 MAIL:kirei@5.dion.ne.jp
Closed:At year-end and New Year holidays,
and others irregularly
Hours:9:00 AM - 4:00 PM (10:30 AM - 4:00 PM on
Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays)
Time required for observation tour:10 min.
Booking:Not required



Kirei Josen

This refreshing dry sake is known as a classic. It goes well with a wide variety of dishes, such as sashimi, boiled fish, and hot pots, and is perfectly compatible with meals, and the flavor never grows tiring.

21 Fujii Shuzo

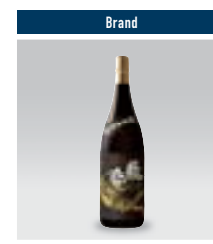
Walk 13 minutes from
JR Takehara Station



This is a time-honored brewery located in Takehara, a scenic town facing the Seto Inland Sea and once flourishing in the salt-making industry. Blessed with water as crystal-clear as underground water used as tap water, an excellent quality is ensured. The unwavering definition of sake-making of Ryusei is "sake complementing the individuality of food" adhering to 100% junmai (pure rice).

[Fujii Shuzo]

3-4-14, Honmachi, Takehara-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:0846-22-2029
MAIL:y.fujii@fujiiishuzou.com
Closed:Mondays
Hours:10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Not required



Ryusei Junmai Daiginjo black label
This is the representative Ryusei brand using 100% Yamada Nishiki rice. The full-bodied type has the aroma of a ripe banana, sweetness of rice malt, and full richness of rice.

22 Miyake Honten

Take the bus from
JR Kure Station and
get off at Hondori 7-chome



Sempuku was named after two inspirational women who provided faithful support to the founder, Seibe Miyake: "Sem" from his wife's name and "Puku" from his mother's name. Once having operated an overseas factory in addition to a domestic one, they have recorded the largest volume of production in Japan. For their achievements, it was decided to inscribe "Sakeo (king of sake)" as part of the brand name. Even now, they deliver a well-traveled Japanese sake beyond the borders of Japan.

[Miyake Honten]

7-9-10, Hondori, Kure-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:0823-22-1029
MAIL:yoshida-sakae@sempuku.co.jp
Closed:At Bon,
year-end and New Year holidays
Hours:10:30 AM - 3:30 PM
Time required for observation tour:20 min.
Booking:Required



Shinriki Kimoto Junmai

This Junmai-shu is brewed by polishing "Shinrikimai" rice, the origin of Sempuku, at 85% close to the rice-polishing rate of the Meiji and Taisho periods, and brewing just like in those days. Each bottle demonstrates a loyalty to sake-making.

Exploring sake breweries in Setouchi

23 Asahishuzo

Drive 10 minutes from
JR Suo-Takamori Station



As a brewery of 100% Junmai Daiginjo brewed with Yamada Nishiki, the media has become fixated with this sake and its high profile has now caught the attention of all the world. With the introduction of technology and facilities that enables year-round brewing, the finest quality sake under the motto "Making every effort for customers who drink this sake" is offered.

[Asahishuzo]

2167-4, Shutomachi Osogoe, Iwakuni-shi, Yamaguchi
TEL:0827-86-0120
MAIL:shop@asahishuzo.ne.jp
Closed:January 1
Hours:Twice a day:
from 11:00 AM and from 2:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required (Up to 5 people at a time)



♣ Dassai Niwari Sanbu

This representative brand has popularized Dassai. This sake brewed by polishing high-grade Yamada Nishiki rice to remove more than a quarter of the outer portion taking 80 hours to complete the process captivates even those who drink Japanese sake for the first time.

24 Yamagata Honten

Drive 5 minutes from
JR Kushigahama Station



This is a small sake brewery facing the old Sanyo-do Road. Sake, umeshu (plum wine), and other alcoholic beverages. Committed to "Making beautiful sake," sake is brewed wholeheartedly with the belief that if sake is made heartily, it will convey the brewery's feelings all over the world.

[Yamagata Honten]

2933, Oaza Kume, Shunan-shi, Yamaguchi
TEL:0834-25-0048
MAIL:kahori@ccsnet.ne.jp
Closed:Saturdays, Sundays,
and national holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



♣ Chotokusen Daiginjo Moriko

A mellow, fragrant aroma and delicate taste go well with sushi, sashimi and seafood dishes.

25 Miyoshikiku Shuzo

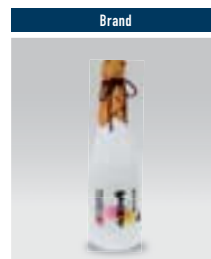
Walk 5 minutes from
JR Awa-Ikeda Station



Miyoshikiku takes its name from "its fragrant aroma, its color pastel, and its beautiful taste." This locally-based small sake brewery is located in a cold climate area ideally suited for sake-making in the upper reaches of the Yoshinogawa River, one of the three major rivers of Japan, as if in the mountain's embrace north to south. While being rustic like Tokushima, it is characterized by a never tiring, rich taste.

[Miyoshikiku Shuzo]

1661, Ikeda-cho Sarada, Miyoshi-shi, Tokushima
TEL:0883-72-0053
MAIL:miyoshikiku@yahoo.co.jp
Closed:Irregularly
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



♣ Miyoshikiku Zaka Suigetsu

A heavy mouthfeel unique to Daiginjo and a refreshing taste when drinking are well fused into an artistic taste.

26 Chiyonokame Shuzo

Drive 5 minutes from
JR Uchiko Station



This long-established brewery preserves its sake-making tradition handed down over 300 years dating from the Edo period using local rice, water and air. The brewers devote their energies to growing rice without use of pesticides (reducing the amount of pesticides; reduced pesticide cultivation), growing quality sake rice in cooperation with local farmers while the brewers themselves participate in rice-planting.

[Chiyonokame Shuzo]

1294-1, Hiraoka, Uchiko-cho, Kita-gun, Ehime
TEL:0893-44-2201
MAIL:shoko_kameo@i.softbank.jp
Closed:Inquire
Hours:Inquire
Time required for observation tour:60 min.
Booking:Required



♣ Gingatetsudo Junmai Daiginjo

This is Junmai Daiginjo using rice cultivated without using pesticides under local contract. It is aged at a low temperature of 0 - 3°C for a prolonged period of time to bring about a richly aromatic and mild taste. It is recommended to freeze it and then drink as a sherbet.

27 Nishimoto Shuzo

Walk 5 minutes from
JR Iyo-Miyanoshta Station



Founded more than 200 years ago, this traditional brewery is located in Uwajima, a small town in the southwest of Shikoku. The brewery's president who is also Ehime Prefecture's oldest toji (master brewer) preserves the locally used sake-making ingredients. Kasuzuke made by pickling in sake lees, Japanese pickling melons and cucumbers that are grown in farms is also popular. It is a locally treasured item in which you can taste Japanese sake by pickled foods.

[Nishimoto Shuzo]

855, Mima-cho Miyanoshta, Uwajima-shi, Ehime
TEL:0895-58-2008
MAIL:nakaya@toranoo.com
Closed:Saturdays and Sundays
[May be open between November and December]
Hours:10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Time required for observation tour:30 min.
Booking:Required (Up to 10 people at a time)



♣ Junmai Daiginjo Tora no O

Specially selected Yamada Nishiki rice produced in Hyogo Prefecture is polished up to 38% to make luxurious Junmai Daiginjo. An elegant and mouth-filling taste and aroma unique to Yamada Nishiki can be fully enjoyed.

28 Yagi Shuzobu

Walk 15 minutes from
JR Imabari Station



"Yamatan Masamune" which has a sharp taste was named after the noted sword "Masamune." This brewery brews high-quality sake using nature's gift of crystal-clear subsoil water from Mt. Ishizuchi, the highest peak in western Japan and the Shikoku Mountains. With devotion to quality, the brewers put their hearts and souls into sake-making, and also make contributions to restoring earlier techniques by tackling the challenges of kamejikomi (crock brewing) that once supported sake-making.

[Yagi Shuzobu]

3-3-8, Asahi-machi, Imabari-shi, Ehime
TEL:0898-22-6700
MAIL:yagi@yamatan.jp
Closed:Sundays and national holidays
Hours:9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
[April to December only]
Time required for observation tour:90 min.
Booking:Required



♣ Yamatan Masamune Ginjo-shu

This Ginjo-shu is brewed with the Matsuyama-mitsui sake rice produced in Ehime Prefecture. This sake proves popular due to a tannin (refreshing and dry) mouthfeel with an elegant fruity aroma pleasantly spreading throughout the mouth.

As English-speaking guide is not available, but there are many other attractive sake breweries.

There are many other locally-based sake breweries producing choice sake,
for which an English-speaking guide is not available.
Explore the Setouchi area,
and discover sake breweries that appeal to your sense of taste while enjoying the differences.

29 Kikuchi Shuzo

Drive 10 minutes from
JR Shin-Kurashiki Station



The sake brewed preserves the tradition of "being quality-oriented" as their motto with the use of water from the Takahashigawa River boasting excellent water quality and a Bicchu toji's prominent skills that are always highly regarded at respective competitive shows.

[Kikuchi Shuzo]
1212, Tamashima Agasaki,
Kurashiki-shi, Okayama
TEL:086-522-5145
MAIL:sanzen@kikuchishuzo.co.jp



Brand **Sanzen**

30 Shiragiku Shuzo

Drive 15 minutes from
JR Bicchu-Takahashi Station



Traditional "umakuchi" sake is brewed only using sake rice, including Okayama's specialty rice and their original sake rice, with importance placed on the natural goodness of Okayama's advantage in sake-making.

[Shiragiku Shuzo]
163-1, Shimohina, Nariwa-cho,
Takahashi-shi, Okayama
TEL:0866-42-3132
MAIL:taiten@mx1.tiki.ne.jp



Brand **Taiten Shiragiku**

31 Muromachi Shuzo

Drive 15 minutes from
JR Bicchu-Hirose Station



This brewery has a history of more than 330 years. Their creed is to make local sake only using Omachimai rice produced in Okayama Prefecture and the Omachi cold spring water. This sake has reached a highly acclaimed position in international alcoholic beverage competitions.

[Muromachi Shuzo]
1342-1, Nishinaka, Akaiwa-shi,
Okayama
TEL:086-955-0029
MAIL:info@sakuramuromachi.co.jp



Brand **Sakura Muromachi**

32 Kamotsuru Shuzo

Walk 5 minutes from
JR Saijo Station



Only using the best possible rice, water and toji, all effort is made to brew during the cold season and by handmade sake-making. Tradition is preserved in the making of Kamotsuru-specific high-quality sake, placing importance on the umami of rice.

[Kamotsuru Shuzo]
4-31, Saijo Honmachi,
Higashihiroshima-shi, Hiroshima
TEL:082-422-2121
MAIL:order@kamotsuru.co.jp



Brand **Kamotsuru Gold**

33 Iwasaki Shuzo

Drive 6 minutes from
JR Higashi-Hagi Station



This brewery is located in Hagi facing the Sea of Japan. You can enjoy the umami and sweetness of rice that goes so well with seafood. Making use of regional features, this is community-based sake-making.

[Iwasaki Shuzo]
58, Higashita-machi, Hagi-shi,
Yamaguchi
TEL:0838-22-0024
MAIL:info@fukumusume.jp



Brand **Choyo Fukumusume**

Sake breweries in the Okayama-Hiroshima- Yamaguchi-Kagawa area



34 Kanemitsu Shuzo

Walk 5 minutes from
Kami-kagawa Station
on the JR Ube Line



This representative brand was named after "Santoka," a haiku poet from Yamaguchi Prefecture, who loved traveling and sake. A traditional taste produced with sharply honed skills, commitment to sake-making, and thorough obsessiveness.

Brand **Santoka**

[Kanemitsu Shuzo]
5031, Kagawa, Yamaguchi-shi,
Yamaguchi
TEL:083-989-2020
MAIL:info@santouka.com



35 Nagayama Shuzo

Walk 10 minutes from
JR Asa Station



This brewery aims to make local sake by using the qualities of nature of Yamaguchi Prefecture. Its sharp, rich taste is highly regarded by many cooks as a sake that maximizes the taste of dishes.

Brand **Yamazaru**

[Nagayama Shuzo]
367-1, Oaza Asa, Sanyonoda-shi,
Yamaguchi
TEL:0836-73-1234
MAIL:nsg@ymg.urban.ne.jp



36 Nagayama Honke Shuzojo

Drive 10 minutes from
JR Koto Station



The dry sake is brewed with good-quality medium-hard water the source of which is a karst tableland. Under the concept of "healing and taste of rice," the aim is to make "SAKE" a world-class brewed alcoholic beverage.

Brand **Taka**

[Nagayama Honke Shuzojo]
138, Oaza Kurumaji, Ube-shi,
Yamaguchi
TEL:0836-62-0088
MAIL:masayuki-n@tiara.ocn.ne.jp



37 Yachiyo Shuzo

Drive 30 minutes from
JR Hagi Station



This small sake brewery is located in Hagi, having a rich history. The sake brewed creates an elegant aroma as well as an elegant sweetness by using Yamada Nishiki cultivated with reduced pesticides in their own rice fields. They aim to be a sake Domaine engaged in each process from rice-growing to sake-making.

Brand **Yachiyo**

[Yachiyo Shuzo]
3306, Oaza Kibeshimo, Hagi-shi,
Yamaguchi
TEL:0838-86-0221
MAIL:satorukaba@e-hagi.jp



38 Nishino Kinryo

Walk 10 minutes from
JR Kotohira Station



Since the Edo period, it has been called "Sanuki no Konpira sake" and loved by local drinkers. The aim is to produce a sake with a plump and round mouth-watery taste and relaxed feeling.

Brand **Kinryo**

[Nishino Kinryo]
623, Kotohira-cho, Nakatado-gun,
Kagawa
TEL:0877-73-4133
MAIL:mail@nishino-kinryo.co.jp



39 Morikuni Shuzo

Drive 8 minutes from
Kusakabe Port



This sake brewery located on Shodoshima floating on the Seto Inland Sea is a rare small island brewery. While preserving tradition, this brewery established in the current Heisei period enjoys introducing innovative steps in its sake-making.

Brand **Mori**

[Morikuni Shuzo]
1010-1, Umaki Ko, Shodoshima-cho,
Shozu-gun, Kagawa
TEL:0879-61-2077
MAIL:info@morikuni.jp



To know and choose better tastes Explore the tastes of sake in Setouchi

How many tastes and aromas does sake have?

Are there any other alcoholic beverages that have an infinite number of tastes depending on the differences in raw materials, making, how to drink...?

While being preserved by tradition, sake brewing techniques actually progress and evolve day by day.

Among them, frequently seen designations are picked up and introduced. Even a little knowledge of the following should make your world of sake even more delicious.

Specially designated sake

This designation is based on the Act on Securing of Liquor Tax and on Liquor Business Associations. According to raw materials, manufacturing methods, rice-polishing rate, and so on, sake is classified in to eight types: "Ginjo-shu," "Daiginjo-shu," "Junmai-shu," "Junmai Ginjo-shu," "Junmai Daiginjo-shu," "Tokubetsu Junmai-shu," "Honjozo-shu," and "Tokubetsu Honjozo-shu."

Seasonal limited sake

In Japan, having four seasons, there are seasonal sakes that can only be tasted during a particular time of the year. In general, sake-making begins around October, and the initially made sake is released first as "Shin-shu," "Hatsu-shibori," or "Shiboritate." It is a sake version of Nouveau that has attractive bouquet due to its fresh taste. When the new sake is aged passing spring and summer in the brewery, it is called "Hiyaoroshi" or "Akiagar" and is shipped during the cool season around September and October. The taste mildened and enriched by the aging process is one of the features of Japanese autumn. Furthermore, with the hope that people will enjoy sake pleasantly even during summer when they lose their appetite, "Natsu-zake" saw its debut around 2007. Various types of Natsu-zake have appeared, such as a refreshing type like white wine, and a higher-proof Genshu type to drink with ice as it is chilled. Refreshingly cool bottle designs should also be noted.

Muroka nama genshu

Muroka nama genshu (unfiltered, unpasteurized, undiluted sake) is the freshest type bottled as it is pressed. Because of the filtrationless making process, the sake is gold-colored, having a fizzy gaseous feeling specific to genshu, with its rich aroma and punchy taste spreading throughout the sake drinker's mouth. The original color, aroma and taste of sake can be relished.

Shizuku-zake (droplets sake)

This is one of the sake pressing methods. Without applying pressure, sake dripping naturally is collected, which requires time and effort. Since this is a special pressing method, the production volume is small, and the sake is often presented at Shinshu Kanpyokai (new sake tasting competition) or the like. As the sake is collected in 18 liter containers called tobin, it is also called "Tobin-kakoi" or "Tobin-dori."

Nigori-zake

Sake is transparentized by filtering through sake bags for pressing or with a press after alcoholic fermentation of rice. Nigori-zake is in a turbid state because it is coarsely filtered in the pressing process. In many cases, it has a slightly sweet aftertaste, derived from flavors of rice. According to the turbidity, the name can change to "Usu-nigori." There is also a Nama (unpasteurized) type that is shipped in the new sake season.

Kimoto

This is a traditional way of making sake with the use of the power of nature, which had been common up until the Meiji period. The taste is a complex mixture of wildly strong acidity and deep richness. The strong nature of sake further expands into a deeper taste when it is warmed. It appears as if this type of sake conveys the long history of Japanese sake.

Kassei-shu

Kassei-shu is a new style of sake and a sake version of sparkling wine. As in the case of champagne making, there is a diversity of sake from a full-fledged type by the in-bottle second fermentation method to casual type by carbon dioxide injection. It is recommended to enjoy this sake, which is filled with a new daintiness, for a toast or just like a dessert.

Appeal of "Kan-zake (warmed sake)," reaching the pinnacle of umami of sake!

Being drinkable in different temperature zones, such as at room temperature or chilled, is sake's special appeal. Among other alcoholic beverages in the world, only sake seems to be commonly served warm. Heating it increases its umami and its mouth-watery sensation becomes mild. The taste spreads magically. According to the heating temperature, it is called by an atmospheric name specific to sake as Hitohada-kan (about 35 degrees), Nuru-kan (about 40 degrees), Tobikiri-kan (55 degrees or higher), and so on.



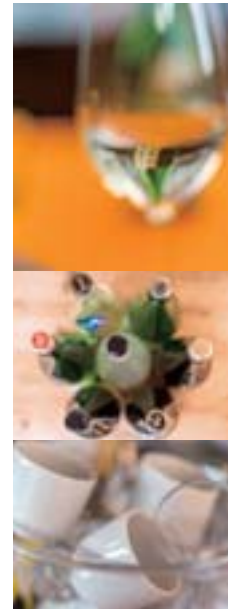
- ① Shizuku-zake: Kirei, Daiginjo (tobindori) (Kirei Shuzo) ② Nigori-zake: Hana Hato, Nama Nigori-zake (Enoki Shuzo)
- ③ Kimoto: Ryusei, Kimoto Bizen-Omachi Tokubetsu Junmai (Fuji Shuzo) ④ Kimoto: Hana Hato, Kimoto Junmai (Enoki Shuzo)
- ⑤ Kan-zake: Chikurin, Fukamari Junmai (Marumoto Shuzo) ⑥ Kassei-shu: Dassai, Junmai Daiginjo Sparkling 50 (Asahishuzo)
- ⑦ Specially designated sake (Daiginjo-shu): Kamotsuru Tokusei Gold, Daiginjo (Kamotsuru Shuzo)
- ⑧ Specially designated sake (Junmai Ginjo-shu): Juhachizakari, Yamahai Junmai Omachi Seirahime (Juhachizakari Shuzo)
- ⑨ Seasonal limited sake: Kamoizumi, Junmai Ginjo Shiboritate Nama-zake (Kamoizumi Shuzo)
- ⑩ Seasonal limited sake: Taka, Tokubetsu Junmai Fukamari (Nagayama Honke Shuzo)
- ⑪ Muroka Nama Genshu: Taiten Shiragiku, Junmai Ginjo Okayama Omachi 55 (Shiragiku Shuzo)

Sake in Setouchi extends beyond national cooking borders

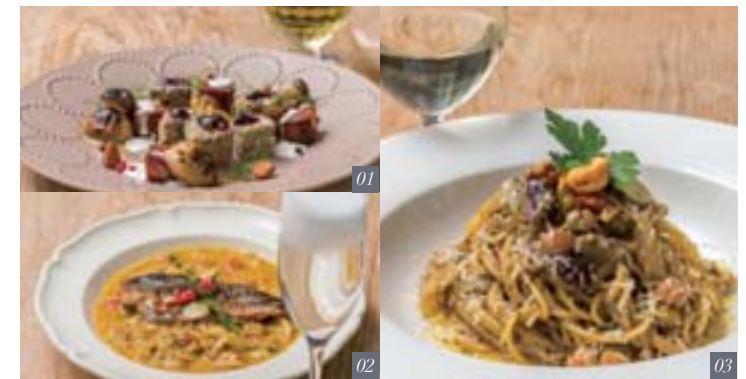
Appeal of sake extending beyond national cooking borders

The combination of sake and western-style foods that breaks down stereotypes such as a sake should be served only with Japanese food is transcending not only Japanese but also people outside of Japan. A wide selection of sake is enjoyable to drink in various ways. The combination of sake and dishes is lightheartedly enjoyable just like red or white wine selected as "a thick taste for a meat dish" or "a light taste for a fish dish." There are more and more restaurants serving sake not for

"eccentric rarity" but as "a drink best suited for a particular dish." There are also other reasons why sake goes well with various dishes. Japanese people eat various foods originating from both the West and the East together with rice as a staple food. Since rice goes well with a wide variety of dishes, sake made from rice could also be well-matched with any dish depending on the condition. Enjoy sake not only at meals while traveling but also at your everyday table.



Combination of sake and western dishes enhances mutual tastes



01. Pâté de Campagne, aged bacon, smoked nuts, spicy mushroom sauté, etc., are arranged on a plate. What pairs well with the solid taste is aged sake of a unique body and richness. Some people say that it blends with the taste of the dish in the mouth having a feeling of a brandy-like flavor.
02. Fish stewed with lemongrass, coconut milk, and various spices is arranged on a plate. The richness of coconut milk and the stimulation of spices are appetizing. What goes well with this unique taste is soda-watered sparkling sake. The inside of the mouth is refreshed and the taste of the dish is accentuated.
03. This pasta is dressed with a ragu sauce in which umami is densely condensed by simmering chopped liver together with spices. What is consistent with the pronounced taste is Junmai-shu such that the umami of a fluffy rice is perceptible. The flavor as if wrapping the whole makes us feel the powerful burst that makes our palates surrender to the dish.

Shirozake

Originally, "Toka-shu" with peach (momo) blossoms soaked in sake because it led to "Momotose" literally meaning a hundred years was drunk at Joshi-no-Sekku (girls' festival) on March 3rd. In the middle Edo period, however, Shirozake came into fashion as it was easy to drink, and it reportedly took the place of Toka-shu. Shirozake is made by adding mirin (sweet cooking rice wine) and shochu (a distilled spirit) to steamed rice, brewing for a certain period of time, and milling it. This sake is sweet and mellow having a unique flavor. Unlike amazake, it has an alcohol content of around 9%.



For Japanese people, sake is familiar as it is enjoyed at mealtimes, while it is also drunk during festivals, events and other special occasions with various wishes in mind. Japan's unique sake culture having been passed down for generations is introduced here.

Sake on special occasions



Shobuzake

As one of the ceremonies performed to drive away evil spirits with the use of "Shobu (Japanese iris)" at Tango-no-Sekku (boys' festival) on May 5th, Shobu roots are chopped and soaked in sake for about 30 minutes. If the roots cannot be easily obtained, you can enjoy graciousness together with an aroma by pouring sake in a cup with Shobu leaves in it, which is not as strong as roots. Other ceremonies having been performed to drive away evil spirits include "Shobu-yu (bath with Shobu leaves)" and "Shobu-makura (iris pillow)." From ancient times, the scent of Shobu has been believed to rid the body of evil spirits and disease, and in fact, it is said to be much-prized as an oriental medicine in China.

This sake with chrysanthemum flowers (kiku) floated or soaked is drunk at Choyo-no-Sekku (chrysanthemum festival) on September 9th of the lunar calendar. It is said to have originated from a Chinese custom. According to the philosophy of yin and yang, the largest single-digit odd number "9" is considered to be yang (positive). Since September 9th duplicating 9 is ominous with too much yang power (positive energy), the festival is said to have originated for reasons of purification. In China, the chrysanthemum is believed to have life-prolonging power, and in Japan, the nobility during the Heian period drank Kikuzake while appreciating chrysanthemum flowers to pray for a long life. It is still held as an event at temples and shrines.



Kikuzake



Otoso

This sake made by marinating "Tososan," a combination of several crude drugs, in sake and mirin is drunk to pray for a year of perfect health. On New Year's Day, the whole family drinks it with a special-purpose sake set called "Tosoki" in order from the youngest to the oldest, while chanting "Hitori kore nomeba ikka kurushimi naku, ikka kore nomeba ichiri yamai nashi (When everyone drinks it, the family will never suffer, and when the family drinks it, one li (about 4 kilometers) will be clear of diseases)." The sake in which the flavors of various crude drugs are eluted is strongly unique, but it can be made easy to drink by adjusting the amount of mirin. It may be called an alcoholic beverage for medical purposes rather than a New Year's ritual drink.

Sake Matsuri (festival)

Saijo-cho, Higashihiroshima-shi, Hiroshima

Saijo in Higashihiroshima underwent dramatic development by the soft water brewing method from the late Meiji period to early Showa period. "Sake Matsuri" is a festival held in Saijo called "Shuto (sake town)" as one of the three major sake brewing locations in Japan. The festival takes place every October, with many kinds of events at multiple sites around JR Saijo Station. The festival becomes crowded with more than 250,000 visitors from all over Japan for two days, and one of the most popular sites is the "Sake Hiroba" square. Since about 1,000 brands of local sake from around the nation can be comparison-tasted, many sake drinkers are drawn to the festival. Also, each of the seven sake breweries along the Sakagura-dori Street runs their own events, and the sake limited to Sake Matsuri has attracted the attention of many sake drinkers.



Photo credit: Higashihiroshima City Tourism Association

Exploration of Nada no Sakagura (sake breweries in Nada)

Higashinada-ku and Nada-ku, Kobe-shi, Hyogo

Nada in Hyogo is counted as one of the three major sake brewing locations in Japan. Nada-Gogo consisting of five areas has been known as a sake-producing location from old times. "Exploration of Nada no Sakagura," a stamp rally event to learn Nada's sake culture in a pleasurable manner is carried out in Nada over a period of one month from mid-October. With the participation of sake breweries in three areas of Nada-Gogo, the bus service "Nada no Sakagura Meguri Bus" makes a stop at each sake brewery. At each sake brewery, you not only learn Nada's sake-making history and culture but also enjoy a variety of events. Of course, you can taste Nada's choice sake. If you collect stamps by exploring the sake breweries and enter a drawing, you may win the grand prize.



Photo credit: Kobe City