

Sake

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Some fun notes from a fine article starting at <http://www.winegeeks.com/articles/75> ...

Is it a Wine or a Beer?

Despite what you may have heard, Sake is not a wine, nor is it a beer, although it is similar to beer in the fact that both are fermented from a type of grain. The difference is that in beer the enzymes needed to convert the starch into a fermentable sugar are created during malting, whereas in Sake the enzyme to convert the rice into a fermentable sugar is a special mold known as *koji*, which must be propagated and added. Also, during Sake production, saccharification (the conversion of starch into sugar), happens at the same time and in the same vessel as the fermentation (these are two separate stages in beer production). As the rice is being converted into sugar, the yeast is converting the sugar into alcohol. This is what makes Sake fermentation so difficult – if saccharification happens too slow, the yeast will starve, and if it happens too fast, the yeast is overwhelmed and can't function so the sugar is not converted to alcohol. This process is known as "multiple parallel fermentation" and is the reason why Sake can ferment naturally to 20-22% alcohol (If you must know, the Japanese word for this is *heiko fukuhakkohhiki*, but don't ask me to pronounce it).

Premium Sake Styles

Junmai-shu

This is pure rice Sake made from rice, water and *Koji*. This Sake must have a minimum *Seimai Buai* of 70%. No other additives may be used. (*Jun* means pure – *Mai* means rice -- *Shu* means Sake).

Honjozo-shu

This is pure rice Sake with a small amount of brewer's alcohol (ethanol) added to the fermentation. The alcohol must be added during fermentation and is limited to 25% of the total alcohol by volume. It must also have a *Seimai Buai* of at least 70%. This style of Sake is lighter and more fragrant than *Junmai-shu*.

Sake Types

Junmai -- (june my) -- "Pure Rice" or a Sake made from only rice, water and koji.

Honjōzō -- (hon-joe-zoe) -- This is a Sake that is brewed with a limited amount of brewer's alcohol added.

Ginjō -- (gheen joe) -- "Carefully Selected Brew" The "Carefully Selected" phrase refers to the rice which must be polished to at least 60% of its original size.

Daiginjō -- (die gheen joe) -- "Great Carefully Selected Brew." The addition of the word great means the rice must be polished to at least 50% of its original size.

Genshu -- (ghen shoo) -- The word *Gen* means origin or base. This refers to the base or the undiluted Sake. Most Sake naturally ferment to 20% to 22% alcohol and are then diluted down. So *Genshu* means undiluted or full strength Sake.

Koshu -- (koh shoo) -- "Old Sake," which refers to aged or matured Sake. It will be seen written in various forms such as o-goshu meaning "great old Sake" or ko-koshu meaning "old old Sake" or hizoshu meaning "treasured Sake."

Nama-Zake -- (na ma zah-key) -- "Live Sake," which is also written as namashu. It refers to

unpasteurized Sake.

Nigori -- (knee go ree) -- "Cloudy," which refers to a Sake that has been coarsely filtered allowing some of the rice solids to pass into the bottled Sake.

Yamahai -- (yah ma hi) -- "To make a batch." This refers to producing a small batch of Sake in the very old time consuming traditional method.

Kimoto -- (kee moe toe) -- "Precious Mother" or a precious yeast starter that is created by slowly smashing the moto into a puree. This very time consuming old tradition produces very full flavored Sake.

Shizuku -- (shee zoo koo) -- "Droplets" or a free run Sake. The moromi is poured into Sake bags that are hung from the ceiling. The liquid Sake that drips out of the Sake bag is collected and bottled.

From <http://www.esake.com/Knowledge/Types/types.html> :

Five types of Sake:

- Junmai-shu (pure rice wine; no adding of distilled alcohol)
NOTE: Until recently, at least 30% of the rice used for Junmai sake had to be milled away. But the laws have changed, and Junmai no longer requires a specified milling rate. Nevertheless, the amount milled away must, by law, be listed somewhere on the label.
- Honjozo-shu (at least 30% of rice polished away; a tad of distilled alcohol is added)
- Ginjo-shu (at least 40% of rice polished away; with or without alcohol added; if bottle is labeled Ginjo, it means distilled alcohol was added; if labeled Junmai Ginjo, it means no alcohol added)
- Daiginjo-shu (at least 50% of rice polished away; again with or without added alcohol; if bottle is labeled Daiginjo, it means distilled alcohol was added; if labeled Junmai Daiginjo, it means no alcohol added)
- Namazake (special 5th designation for unpasteurized sake; incorporates all four above)

Bushido	Ginjo Genshu Premium Sake	\$4.99/180ml
Momokawa Silver Tanrei	Junmai Ginjo Craft Sake	\$12.59/750ml
Joy	Junmai Ginjo Genshu	\$17.99/750ml
Tozai Typhoon	Futsu-Shu Note: Fusu-Shu is "value" sake	\$14.99/750ml
Yoshi No Gawa	Echigo Junmai Sake Note: Echigo is a region	\$19.99/750ml
Gekkeikan	Nigori	\$8.99/300ml
Tozai Snow Maiden	Junmai Nigori	\$18.99/750ml