Sake
Sake

• A fermented rice beverage that traces it roots back to 3rd century Korea
• Over 1800 breweries (kura) in Japan
• Saké = 15-18% alcohol
• Generally consumed within six months of bottling although aged sakes are brewed
Components of Sake: Rice

- Has tremendous cultural and historical significance in Japan
- Variations of soil, weather, and skill affect quality
- Over a dozen varieties of rice, called shuzo kotekimai, are officially classified and used to make saké
- Milling—and the amount of the rice kernel left after milling—affects quality and style of the finished saké
- The more the rice is milled (called seimaibuai) the more delicate and complex the saké
Seimaibuai

- Normal table rice

- Yamada Nishiki: 55% Ginjo Grade – 45% polished away

- Yamada Nishiki: 40% Daiginjo Grade – 60% polished away
Seimaibuai

• Percentage of the rice grain remaining after polishing

• Heart of the kernel (shinpaku) creates better quality and more elegant style of saké
  - 70% remaining=Junmai
  - 60% remaining=Junmai-Ginjo
  - 50% remaining=Junmai Daiginjo
Components of Sake: Water

- Kura set up in specific places because of water quality
- Some kura use pure, untreated spring or well water
- The major sake styles came into being based on whether the local water was hard or soft, and contained certain chemical components
- Water has the most profound effect on the character of the final product
Components of Sake: Koji

- A mould called Aspergillus Oryzae
- Crucial to brewing sake – may be used four times during the process
- Slightest difference in koji can dramatically affect the character and quality of the finished sake
Sake: Brewing Process

- The rice is washed and steam-cooked
- The rice is then mixed with yeast and koji (rice cultivated with a mould known technically as aspergillus oryzae)
- The whole mix is then allowed to ferment, with more rice, koji, and water added in three batches over several days.
- This fermentation, which occurs in a large tank, is called shikomi
- The quality of the rice, the degree to which the koji mould has propagated, temperature variations, and other factors are different for each shikomi
- This mash is allowed to sit from 18 to 32 days, after which it is pressed, filtered and blended, often through rough sack cloth bags.
Sake may be bone dry to sweet. Level of RS is often indicated on the label as a Sweetness/Dryness scale (Nihonshu – do). Negative values indicate sweetness. Positive values indicating dryness – Zero is neutral

- -10 = very sweet
- +10 = very dry
- Most sake falls between -5 and +3
# Special designation Sake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Max % rice grain remaining</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junmai</td>
<td>70% +</td>
<td>Provided the producer prints Semaibuai on the label and uses only water, Rice &amp; Koji, the milling process may now be higher than 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honjozo</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>A small amount of pure alcohol is added to the Sake before pressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginjo</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Labelled as Gingo the Sake will be Honjozo in style with alcohol added If no alcohol is added it will be labelled Junmai Ginjo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daigingo</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>If labelled Daigingog will be Honjozo in style wit alcohol added If no alcohol is added it will be labelled Junmai Daigingog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sake Styles

Junmai Daiginjo-shu – 50%
Junmai Ginjo-shu – 60%
Tokubetsu Junmai-shu – 65%
Junmai-shu – 70%
Pure rice, **no added alcohol**

Daiginjo-shu – 50%
Ginjo-shu - 60%
Tokubetsu Honjozo-shu – 65%
Honjozo-shu – 70%
**alcohol added**

Futsu-shu – normal saké
74% of all saké produced

Namasaké – unpasteurized, can be added to any of the above designations
% = seimaibuai, *minimum* amount left after polishing
# Sake Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genshu</td>
<td>undiluted, can be as high as 22% alcohol, can be any designation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimoto or Yamashai</td>
<td>earthy styles of sake utilising wild yeast and heavy stirring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namazake</td>
<td>non-pasteurized sake; incorporates all four seimaibuai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigori</td>
<td>milky, unfiltered, usually sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shizuku</td>
<td>“free run” - not pressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teruzake</td>
<td>aged in cypress casks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genshu</td>
<td>Sake from a smaller Kura (Brewery)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service of Sake

- Regardless of sweetness, quality sake is best served lightly chilled or at room temperature.
- The traditional practice of heating sake will affect the delicate nature of premium sake, but masks flaws in lower quality sakes.
- Sake may be served in wine glasses to enhance its aromas.
- The beverage is traditionally decanted from the bottle into a tokkuri, a ceramic, narrow-neck flask and then poured into ochoko (small cylindrical vessels) or, for the more ceremonial occasion sakazuki cups.
- If warm sake is requested, the tokkuri may be placed in a bath of hot water.
- Sake is generally meant for consumption shortly after the bottling date as it does not usually improve with bottle age.