Handy Storage Guide to Sake

How to keep delicious sake delicious

The aromas of sake are extremely subtle, delicate,
changeable, and easily lost so correct storage is essential.

There are three factors that damage sake: temperature, light, and oxygen

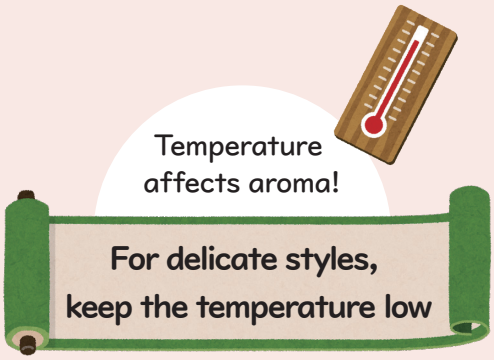
Temperature

When in Doubt, Store Sake in a Cool Place!

Temperature management is key to preserving sake's delicate aromas. It is best to follow the manufacturer's recommended temperature, but it is also okay to store in a cool place like a wine cellar: 5-15℃/40-60℉.

Keep *Nama-zake*/Sparkling sake & *Ginjo-shu* at 4℃/40℉ or Lower

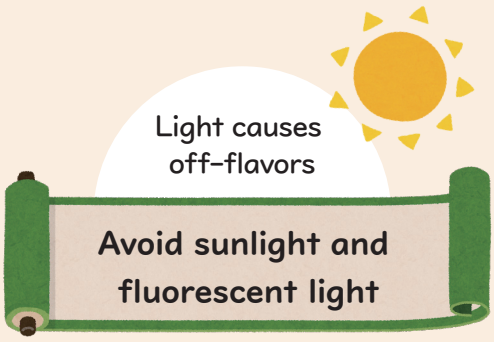
As these styles of sake are particularly sensitive, they need to be stored at much lower temperatures: 4℃/40℉ or lower.



Light

Store Sake Away from Light

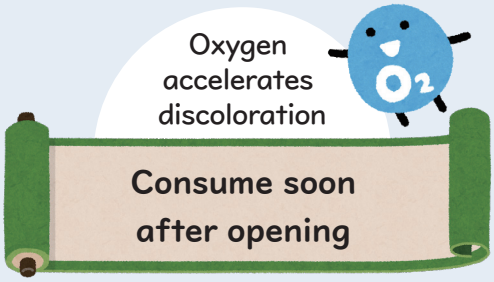
Contact with light can damage sake's taste, aroma, and color. As with wine and beer, avoid storing and displaying sake near light sources. Use non-UV LED lights and UV-cut film. If UV light cannot be avoided, wrap the bottle in paper to protect it.



Oxygen

Seal Tightly after Opening

While sake has a higher resistance to oxygen than wine, it is not impervious. Always ensure a tight seal after opening and consume within 1 month. Always store sake upright (NOT sideways) to reduce the area exposed to oxygen.



*This is a general guide and may not apply to all types of sake.

Sake Dislikes Warm Places

Sake that has been stored too long starts to gain stale, burnt and sulfurous odor called *hine-ka*, which tend to increase as the ambient temperature rises.

High temperatures may also cause the *ginjo-ka*, fruity/floral aromas that some types display, to fade and or deteriorate.

Sake also dislikes UV rays

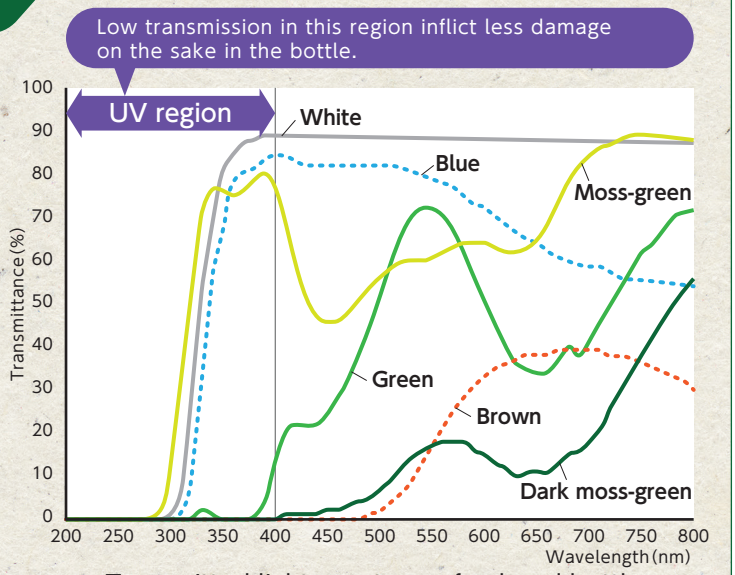
These short light waves tan human skin and cause an unpleasant onion-like odor called *nikkoshu* (light-struck odor) in sake and decompose amino acids, which lead to the bitter taste.

The Link Between Bottle Color and UV Rays

Perhaps you have wondered why sake, wine, and beer are often sold in brown color or dark color bottles. While not so aesthetically pleasing, this color is used to stop light from passing through the glass and changing the quality of the contents.

The graph on the right shows the correlation between bottle color and light transmission. High transmission in the UV region of 400nm or less damages the sake. We can also see that brown and green bottles let less light pass through than other colors.

UV rays are a constituent of not only sunlight but also fluorescent light.



Transmitted light spectrum of colored bottles

Sake Type Glossary

●Types that are refrigerated (4℃/40˚F or lower)

Nama-zake	Non-pasteurized sake* that offers a fresher flavor profile.
Sparkling sake	Sake containing carbon dioxide gas. Some types called sparkling cloudy sake still contain yeast.
Ginjo-shu	The category known for its delicate fruity aroma. Includes *jummai ginjo-shu*, *jummai daiginjo-shu*, *ginjo-shu*, and *daiginjo-shu* grades.

* Sake is normally sterilized by heating twice before shipping to stabilize it and make it suitable for long storage.

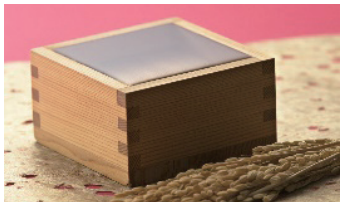
●Types stored in a cool place (5-15℃/40-60˚F)

Jummai-shu	Rich rice-derived flavor profile.
Long aged sake	Sake aged intentionally before shipping. Sometimes labelled as *koshu*. Displays a unique flavor profile including aromas reminiscent of caramel, nuts, spice.
Misc.	*Honjozo-shu* and standard sake offer different flavor profiles from the above.

Refrigeration Glossary

In Japan, you can buy special fridges capable of storing as low as -5℃/20˚F. Because sake's alcohol by volume is higher than wine and beer, it does not freeze at this temperature.

However, please be advised that at around -18℃/0˚F or lower, there is a high risk it will freeze and or the bottle will shatter.



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