- 1 The National Research Institute of Brewing compiled this guide for consumers to use as a reference when reading sake product labels and is based on knowledge acquired through research on prices and product labels.
- 2 A digital PDF version of the guide is available to download via the our homepage.
- 3 Please read the precautions on the homepage before creating guides based on the digital file.



Glossary of Sake Label Terms

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st edition released March 2004
4th edition released December 2023
Third printing 2025



Glossary of Sake* **Label Terms** To help you discover vour favorite sake* 0

^{*} Sake made exclusively from domestic rice and produced in Japan is labelled as 日本酒 nihonshu.

What's on the label?

1 to 7 are compulsory by law. The law also requires the following information to be displayed: nama-zake storage / drinking precautions and the use of sake made overseas. Tokutei meisho ABV -アルコール分 (premium grade) (ginio, 16度以上 iunmai, honiozo, etc.) 17度未満 2 Ingredients Seimai buai (water is not listed) -原材料名 (Rice-polishing ratio) ┌米(国産) (compulsory for tokutei 3 Rice production 米こうじ (国産米) meisho) location 醸造アルコール Rice variety 精米歩合60% When displaying 8 to it must be in 清酒 Category accordance with laws and regulations. (Sake made exclusively 720mℓ The same applies for from domestic rice and produced in Japan is storage period, terms labelled as 日本酒 indicating superior nihonshu.) Another word quality, geographical for sake often displayed indication, and organic. on the label is 清酒 seishu 製造年月 2023.2 東広島の酒 1 Production 6 Content by location volume Terms indicating style (genshu. nama-zake. Name of namachozo-shu. ki-ippon, taruzake) producer or 製造者:酒類総合研究所 production 広島県東広島市鏡山3-7-1 facility Production date 二十歳未満の飲酒は法律で禁止されています。 Warning about underage drinking

Sake may also have a back label. This label mainly displays product descriptions and data to be used as a reference to quality.

製品の特徴

- 酒造好適米を贅沢に使いました
- 伝統の生もとを採用、手造りにこだわりました
- ・旨味に富んだ辛口本醸造酒です

山田錦 精米步			
きょうかい	きょうかい701号		
日本酒度	+ 5		
酸度	1.6		
アミノ酸度	1.6		
	きょうかい 日本酒度 酸度		

甘口 やや甘口 やや辛口 辛口 おすすめの飲み方

甘辛

冷やして	室温	ぬる燗	熱燗
	ΔΟ		0

Glossary of Terms Contents

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Production period
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We compiled this glossary of often used sake labelling terms, to use as a reference when reading sake labels to help you find something to your liking.

*Other regulations such as for character size and labelling methods are stipulated in the law on liquor business associations and Food Labelling Act.

1

Label terms

Ingredients)

原料米 Genryomai

Rice used to make sake. As well as ordinary eating rice, various types of rice are used including a special type particularly suited to brewing called 酒造好適米 shuzokotekimai.

酒造好適米(酒米) Shuzokotekimai (Sakamai)

The names given to varieties of rice particularly suited to sake brewing. It is also called sake specific rice. It tends to be much larger than ordinary rice and contains a shinpaku. Famous varieties include YAMADANISHIKI. The recent development of new varieties all over Japan and revival of old ones is enriching the diversity of sake. Over 100 varieties are grown across Japan.

心白 Shinpaku

A term given to the starchy core in the rice and or its opaque white appearance. The presence of a *shinpaku* is a desirable feature of rice for sake brewing.



山田錦 YAMADANISHIKI

Representative variety of sake specific rice grown throughout Japan. A favorite among *tojis* (brew masters) not only for its ease of brewing, but also its taste.

五百万石 GOHYAKUMANGOKU

A variety of sake specific rice grown mainly in the north of Japan and Niigata Prefecture.

美山錦 MIYAMANISHIKI

A variety of sake specific rice grown mainly in the northeast of Japan and Nagano Prefecture due to its cold resistance.

雄町 OMACHI

The oldest variety of sake specific rice grown mainly in Okayama Prefecture. Its unique depth of flavor has earned it a cult following.

精米歩合 Seimai buai

A number that shows how much of each rice grain has been removed during the polishing process, expressed as a percentage of the weight of white rice relative to that of the original brown rice. It is also called the rice-polishing ratio. For example: a 40% seimai buai means that 100kg of brown rice was polished down to leave 40kg of white rice.





From left to right: brown rice, seimai buai 70%, seimai buai 40% white rice

Main production areas of sake rice



Source: Specifications of Agricultural Products (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) * Top 10 varieties by inspection volume

What precautions should be taken with storage after purchasing?



Take care with temperature, light and contact with oxygen. It is recommended to keep nama-zake, sparkling sake, and ginjo-shu refrigerated. For these and all other types of sake, a dark cool place is best. Oxygen effects the quality, so after opening the bottle, close it tightly and consume as soon as possible.



麹米 Kojimai

Rice used to make the koii.

掛米 Kakemai

Steamed white rice that is added directly to the fermentation mash.

米こうじ(米麹) Kome koji

Steamed white rice inoculated with a mold called 麹菌 kojikin. Kome koji is also called rice koji. The mold secretes enzymes which break down the starch in the rice into qlu-



cose that the yeast can then eat and turn into alcohol.

醸造アルコール Jozo arukoru

Brewers alcohol made by fermenting sugarcane molasses or grain and then distilling. Used to adjust the flavors of sake.

Components

アルコール分 Arukoru-bun

Amount of alcohol (ml) contained in 100ml of sake displayed with a % or the Japanese *kanji* 度 (*do*).

日本酒度 Nihonshu-do

A measure of the specific gravity of sake which provides an indication of how sweet or dry the sake is. A number higher than 0 indicates less residual sugar while a number lower than 0 indicates more.

酸度 San-do

A measure of how much acid the sake contains. Sake with a higher acidity will taste richer. As acidity masks sweetness, sake with a high acidity will feel drier.

アミノ酸度 Aminosan-do

A measure of how many amino acids the sake contains. More amino acids create a more robust profile, while fewer create a lighter one.

Tokutei meisho

特定名称 Tokutei meisho

A grading system included in the Sake Manufacturing Process Quality Labeling Standards set out by National Tax Agency. Sake must fulfill certain conditions to display a grade as shown on page 10.

吟醸酒 Ginjo-shu

Sake made by slowly fermenting polished rice at low temperatures, a process called 吟醸造り ginjo-zukuri. In the old days, tojis (brew masters) would use all their skill to make ginjo-shu for competitions, and it was considered an art form that was rarely marketed. One of the biggest characteristics of ginjo-shu is its subtle, fruity aroma called 吟醸香 ginjo-ka. As warming highly aromatic ginjo-shu damages its aromas, it is often drunk chilled or at room temperature.

Nihonshu-do & 甘辛 Amakara (sweet/dry)

The *nihonshu-do* is a unique scale that displays the specific gravity of sake. Measured at 15°C, the *nihonshu-do* of sake weighing the same as water at 4°C is 0. Sake that is lighter reads higher than 0 (+) while sake that is heavier reads lower (-).

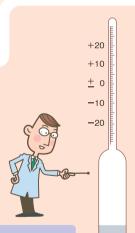
The specific gravity of sake varies with its components: more alcohol reduces its gravity and increases its *nihonshu-do*, while more sugar increases its gravity and decreases the *nihonshu-do*.

As the number changes with sugar levels, the *nihonshu-do* was adopted as a yardstick to measure a sake's sweetness/dryness. However, to compare the specific gravity of the sugar content of sake using the *nihonshu-do*, all sake must have the same ABV. Also, as acidity masks sweetness, when comparing sake with identical sugar content, those with higher acidity will feel drier. In other words, it is difficult to

accurately measure the sweetness/ dryness of sake with the *nihonshu-do* alone. In recent years, a new indicator has been proposed, which is a calculation of both sugar levels and acidity.

Measuring the nihonshu-do

A floating scale (日本酒度計 nihonshudokei (sake meter)) as shown in the figure on the right is floated in sake adjusted to 15°C and a reading taken. The nihonshu-do can also be calculated from the sake's specific gravity.



Nihonshu-do =(1/specific gravity - 1)×1443

5

本醸造酒 Honjozo-shu

There are many types, but all have had a small amount of brewers alcohol added before pressing the fermentation mash (separating the liquid from the lees) to adjust the taste, which means that this grade is often drunk warm or hot.

Production period

As a rule, a term indicating production period such as 製造年月 seizonengetsu followed by the date (年 year and 月 month) the sake was packaged is displayed. Example, 製造年月X年X月.

Organic display

The Japanese words for organic, 有機 yuki and オーガニック organic can be displayed on the label if the sake meets JAS (Japanese Agricultural Standards), such as passing grading according to JAS ACT for 95% of the weight of ingredients, and by obtaining organic JAS certification. This labelling also requires the affixing of the "有機JAS" mark.

Geographical indication

A Geographical Indication (GI) is a system promoting appropriate use of a geographical origin as a shared property on labels and indicates that production area is correct and quality standards have been adhered to. For alcoholic beverages in Japan, the Director-General of the National Tax Agency designates them based on the "Labeling Standards for GI on Alcoholic Beverages" established by the National Tax Agency, and in principle, they are labeled with an indication that clearly indicates that it is a GI: 地理的表示 chiriteki hvoii. Geographical Indication. GI.

Types or Denominations

新酒 Shinshu

Sake made in the current brewing year (from July 1 to June 30 following year). Shinshu has a lovely fresh taste and aromas.

古酒 Koshu

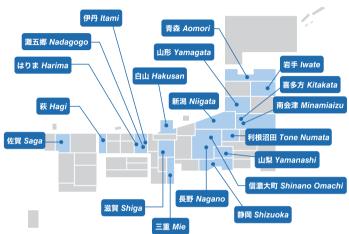
Sake made in the previous year or even earlier. The type is smoother with mature aromas.

長期貯蔵酒 Chokichozoshu

Sake stored and matured for long periods. In the old days, sake was thought to be unsuitable for long-term maturation, but thanks to advances in manufacturing methods and other factors, delicious long-term matured sake is becoming more commonplace. There is a wide variety, from *ginjo-shu* types to richer types. It is sold under the names X 年貯 該酒 Xnenchozoshu (Xyr matured sake), 穆藏酒 hizoshu, 大古酒 daikoshu.

Designation status of geographical indications for sake

日本酒 NihonshuOnly sake made exclusively from domestic rice and produced in Japan can be labelled 日本酒 *nihonshu*.



* The coloring on the map is done by prefecture and does not necessarily correspond to the area of origin.

Does the production date on the label mean it is best to select the newest sake?





No, you don't have to worry about the date that much. As with beer, unpasteurized sake labelled as 生酒 nama-zake should be as new as possible, but pasteurized sake should not deteriorate for 2-3 months unless storage conditions are poor.

neisho

Orgar displ:

Geographica indication

Denominations

原酒 Genshu

Sake that has not had water added to it after pressing. The omission of water means the sake has a higher ABV and is also richer. Cutting with water or hot water is a tasty way to enjoy it.

牛酒 Nama-zake or Nama-shu 生詰め酒 Namazume-shu 生貯蔵酒 Namachozo-shu

After pressing, sake is pasteurized to halt the activity of leftover microorganisms and enzymes, a process called 火入れ hi-ire. Generally, there are two pasteurizations: one before storage, and one after storage before bottling. As unpasteurized sake avoids the component changes associated with heating, it has fresher flavors and aromas that are suited to drinking chilled. 生酒:unpasteurized

生詰め酒:pasteurized only once, before storage

生貯蔵酒:pasteurized only once, after storage and before bottling

貴醸酒 Kijo-shu

A unique syrupy, sweet sake devised at National Research Institute of Brewing. The unique thing about kijo-shu is that it is made by replacing some of the water that is added to the fermentation with sake. This method was partly inspired by a recipe for brewing with old sake called しおり shiori, which was found in the engishiki — an ancient book about laws and customs from 794-1185

生一本 Ki-ippon

A junmai-shu that is the product of a single production facility, similar to single malt whisky.

低アルコール酒 Tei-arukorushu

Sake with a low ABV. Many products have been released in response to consumer preference for lighter sake. There is a wide variety available including sparkling, sweet and or sour sake, and nigorizake.

樽酒 Taruzake

Sake with woody aromas from storage in wooden casks.

冷やおろし Hivaoroshi

In the old days, sake brewed in the winter was pasteurized once and stored until the autumn to achieve a more rounded taste, an improvement called 秋上がり akiagari. It was then put in casks and shipped. The name hivaoroshi comes from the fact it was shipped cool without any further pasteurization. As it is namazume and fragile, many shops refrigerate it, but many people enjoy its flavors and aromas at room temperature or lukewarm.

活性清酒(にごり酒) Kassei seishu (nigorizake)

A sake that is opaque and cloudy in appearance because it was lightly filtered through a coarse mesh. This type can be pasteurized to stabilize quality or released as a nama-zake. Fresh kassei seishu should be handled with care because the yeast is alive and may ferment at ambient temperatures creating CO2 gas.

スパークリング清酒 Supakuringu seishu

There are mainly two ways to produce gas in sake: naturally through the activity of the yeast, and by adding carbonated gas.

Tokutei meisho (premium grade) and conditions

Tokutei meisho	Ingredients:1	Rice-polishing ratio ³	Ratio of koji used	Typical flavors and aromas 4
Ginjo-shu	Rice, rice <i>koji</i> , brewers alcohol	60% or less	15% or more	Unique fruity aroma from <i>ginjo-zukuri</i> , pleasant appearance.
Daiginjo-shu	Rice, rice <i>koji</i> , brewers alcohol	50% or less	15% or more	Unique fruity aroma from <i>ginjo-zukuri</i> , pleasant appearance.
Junmai-shu	Rice, rice koji	_	15% or more	Pleasant flavors, aromas, appearance.
Junmai ginjo-shu	Rice, rice koji	60% or less	15% or more	Unique fruity aroma from ginjo-zukuri, pleasant appearance.
Junmai daiginjo-shu	Rice, rice koji	50% or less	15% or more	Unique fruity aroma from ginjo-zukuri, and particularly pleasant appearance.
Tokubetsu junmai-shu	Rice, rice koji	60% or less or use of a special technique	15% or more	Pleasant flavors, aromas, appearance.
Honjozo-shu	Rice, rice <i>koji</i> , brewers alcohol	70% or less	15% or more	Pleasant flavors, aromas, appearance.
Tokubetsu honjozo-shu	Rice, rice <i>koji</i> , brewers alcohol	60% or less or use of a special technique	15% or more	Pleasant flavors, aromas, appearance.

- *1 Must be made with rice that passed an inspection grade 3 or higher or equivalent quality.
- *2 Amount of brewers alcohol must not exceed 10% of the weight of polished rice.
- *3 When displaying a grade on the label, rice-polishing ratio must also be displayed.
- *4 While ginio-zukuri lacks a clear definition, it generally refers to a brewing process which ferments highly polished rice at low temperatures to create unique aromas.

Why is brewers alcohol used as a raw ingredient?



Brewers alcohol is generally added to balance flavors and aromas, to enhance aromas and create a lighter sake. Alcohol-added ginjo-shu is well known for having enhanced aromas.

Sake brewing terminology

酵母 Kobo

The generic name given to the Saccharomyces cerevisiae strain of yeast and related fungi which produce alcohol from sugar. It is a milky, oval-shaped fungus about the size of a red blood cell in the human body (5-10 µm). In the food industry, such as in the production of alcohol and bread, strains with properties suited to each have been selected or improved over a long history of use. The yeast used in sake brewing is called 清酒離县 seishu kobo.

家(蔵)付き酵母 le (kura) tsuki kobo

An ambient sake yeast inhabiting the sake brewery. In the old days, this yeast naturally reproduced inside the *shubo* (starter), so its quality was often directly connected to the quality of the sake. Nowadays, it is common to isolate yeast from famous breweries or to use superior yeast bred by researchers, and some breweries even isolate and preserve their own to use.

きょうかい酵母 Kyokai kobo

Yeast which the Brewing Society of Japan distributes. When distribution began in the 1868-1912, breweries who were not blessed with good *le (kura) tsuki kobo* saw a significant improvement in sake quality.

酒母 Shubo

Sometimes called \$\overline{\text{tm}}\ moto\$, the purpose of this starter is to grow the yeast into a healthy population. The starter is made from steamed white rice, rice \(koji\), water, and yeast (often added). The starter is made very acidic (conventionally by adding lactic acid), because almost all bacteria and microbes are weak to acid. Only the yeast which is strong to acid can grow.

生酛 Kimoto

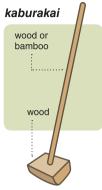
A traditional starter-making method. Requiring both labor and time, in this starter, lactic acid produced by lactic acid bacteria that grow inside the tank keeps other wild bacteria and microbes at bay while the yeast grows. Yeast cultured this way is robust and often creates dry sake with lots of flavors.

山廃酛 Yamahaimoto

Developed in 1868-1912 at National Research Institute of Brewing, it is an upgrade of kimoto. With higher polished rice dissolving more easier, the most laborious stage of kimoto called 山卸 yamaoroshi could be abolished.

What is 山卸 yamaoroshi?

The first stage of kimoto is to divide up the mixture of steamed white rice, rice koji, and water into 6-8 shallow tubs called 半切り桶 hangiri-oke. Next, the mixture is naturally cooled, and occasionally mixed. Then, about 15-20 hours since building the starter, teams of 2-3 brewers use a long wooden pole called かぶら櫂 kaburakai to grind the mixture about 3 times every 3 hours until the water-soaked rice becomes a smooth paste. This grinding is called 山卸 yamaoroshi or 酝摺り motosuri, and it was a very tiring task for brewers because it required a lot of patience and hard labor often in the late, cold hours,





速醸酛 Sokujomoto

The most popular conventional starter method which was devised at National Research Institute of Brewing. Due to the addition of lactic acid before the yeast, the method is faster than kimoto and yamahaimoto.

もろみ Moromi

The fermentation mash containing the starter, steamed white rice, rice koji, and water. The process of adding the ingredients to the tank is called 住込み shikomi. Inside the tank, saccharification of steamed white rice by koji enzymes and alcohol fermentation by yeast takes place simultaneously, a cycle called multiple parallel fermentation. After around 20 days of fermentation, it becomes sake.

粕歩合 Kasubuai

Indicates the amount of #\(\text{h}\) kasu (lees) remaining from the mash after fermentation and pressing as a weight ratio of lees to mass of rice used. For example, a 100kg batch of rice that leaves 25kg lees after pressing has a 25% kasubuai. The kasubuai for most sake is generally 30% or less, but for daiginjo-shu it can be 50-60%.

滓下げ Orisage

Brewers use persimmon juice to make the proteins sink to the bottom and rack them off, a process called 洋下*fi orisage*. During storage, proteins dissolved in the sake change and become insoluble making the sake cloudy.

Other terms

活性炭 Kasseitan

Powdered active carbon that brewers add to stabilize the quality of sake. Generally, brewers disperse a small amount in the sake to absorb off-flavors, etc. before filtering. However, as it can be a way of imparting individuality, each brewery has its own unique way of using it.

あらばしり Arabashiri

The first pressing of sake. The next is called 中垂れ nakadare and the final pressing is called 責め seme. Freshly pressed sake contains a little CO2 gas, and a rich fruity aroma produced by the yeast during fermentation and the aroma of rice koji.

鑑評会 Kanpyokai

Conducted by a public organization for the purpose of improving the skills of brewers. Following a judging by experts, feedback is shared to the producers and superior quality sake is announced as 全賞酒 kinshoshu (gold-award winning sake).

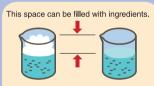
全国新酒鑑評会 Zenkoku shinshu kanpyokai

A sake competition co-sponsored by the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association and National Research Institute of Brewing with a focus on *ginjo-shu* made during the current brewing year. Every year since it began in 1911, breweries enter many sake to try and win gold.

Main kyokai kobo (for sake) types and characteristics

Types		Oh		
Foaming	Non Foaming	Characteristics		
No.6	No.601	Robust fermenter with modest aroma, suitable for light sake.		
No.7	No.701	Gorgeous aroma suitable for both ginjo-shu and regular sake.		
No.9	No.901	Short fermentation yielding a pronounced fruity aroma.		
No.10	No.1001	Long low temp fermentation yielding pronounced fruity aroma with low acidity.		
No.11	No.1101	Yields sake with clean finish and few amino acids, even in long fermentations.		
No.14	No.1401	(金沢酵母 <i>Kanazawa kobo</i>) Low acidity. Suitable for making premium grades of sake through a low temp medium-length fermentation.		
_	No.1501	(秋田流 <i>Akitaryu</i> / 花酵母AK-1 <i>Hana kobo</i> (AK-1)) Suitable for making premium grades sake with pronounced fruity aroma and low acidity through a low temp long fermentation.		
_	No.1801	Gorgeous aroma and mild taste.		
_	No.1901	Yields sake with suppressed ethyl caproate aromas, slightly higher acidity but richer than with No.1801.		
_	mde-D1	It is possible to suppress the stale smell component DMTS (Dimethyl Trisulfide) that forms during storage.		





A normal sake yeast fermentation mash

An awanashi kobo fermentation mash

泡なし酵母 Awanashi kobo

From about day 4 to day 10 of the fermentation, sake yeast covers the fermentation mash in a layer of foam. Awanashi kobo is a yeast that was modified to not produce this foam. The absence of foam has several advantages. Firstly, the tank requires less cleaning. Secondly, with no risk of the tank overflowing due to the foam, the tank can be filled to the top which means the same tank yields more sake. Awanashi kobo was developed and realized at National Research Institute of Brewing.