

Japanese RESTAURANT news

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The Magazine for Japanese Food Professionals Worldwide

June 2026

Vol. 35 No. 331 \$5.00



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**Where Terroir Meets Technology:
New Frontiers in Brewing**
-Insights from Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. and Kobe Winery-
地域と技術が織りなす醸造の今
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Publisher All Japan News Inc
Managing Editor David Kudo
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Designer Ritsuko Lynch
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Special Thanks to JETRO / JETAASC

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ジャパニーズ・レストランニュース

本誌はこの日本食レストラン業界にスポットをあて、何が流行っているのか、また繁盛店の紹介を通し、繁盛店のオペレーションや時代を生き抜くヒントを紹介し、最新の話題店舗や人気商品などを紹介し、日本食レストランの繁盛を応援します。また、アメリカの最新の食品衛生管理に関する情報なども提供し業界の発展に寄与します。

Mission of Japanese Restaurant News

This magazine spotlights the Japanese restaurant industry to introduce the latest trends and successful restaurants along with their operations to provide hints on how to survive the competitive restaurant industry. Further, this magazine introduces the latest restaurants garnering attention and popular products, along with the prosperity of Japanese restaurants. Lastly, this magazine also introduces the latest information on food sanitation and management to contribute to the development of the Japanese restaurant industry as a whole.



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Two sake products from Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. garnered the Gold Award at “2026 Monde Selection”

白鶴酒造の2商品が「2026年モンドセレクション」で金賞を受賞

Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd., a long-established sake brewery practicing traditional Japanese sake brewing skills and techniques, garnered the Gold Award in the Spirits & Liqueurs category of the international competition “2026 Monde Selection.”

The Monde Selection is a quality assurance institute organizing global assessments of food, distilled liqueurs, and beverages. Globally acclaimed brewers, master sommeliers, and other expert judges assess the quality of spirits & liqueurs and recognize entries of superior quality with awards (Grand Gold, Gold, Silver, and Bronze).

The two award-winning sake products from Hakutsuru that reflect their fastidious sake-brewing techniques are as follows:

<Gold Award>

Hakutsuru Daiginjo 720 ml
Hakutsuru Umeshu Genshu 720 ml
(awarded for 6 consecutive years)



日本の酒造りの伝統と技術が詰まった白鶴酒造株式会社は、国際品評会「2026年モンドセレクション」のスピリッツ&リキュール部門において金賞を受賞した。

モンドセレクションは食品、蒸留酒、飲料などについてグローバルな評価を提供する品質保証機関。スピリッツ&リキュールの品質評価は国際的に認められた醸造学者やマスターソムリエなどの専門審査員によって優れている商品に対して優秀品質の賞（最高金賞・金賞・銀賞・銅賞）が授与される。白鶴酒造のこだわりが詰まった2つの受賞商品は以下のとおり。

<金賞>

- ・白鶴 大吟醸 720ml
- ・白鶴 梅酒原酒 720ml（6年連続）

<<2026 Monde Selection Gold Award>> 《2026年モンドセレクション 金賞受賞》



Hakutsuru Daiginjo 白鶴 大吟醸 720 ml

First, let's introduce “Hakutsuru Daiginjo.” Hakutsuru's unique brewing techniques produce a fruity aroma, subtle flavor, and sake quality that pairs well with various cuisines. Brewed from rice grown in Japan and rice koji (malted rice), the rice polishing ratio is set to 50%. The flavor of this Ginjo sake with a delicate fruity aroma is especially high-quality.

The alcohol content of Hakutsuru Daiginjo is greater than 15%, but less than 16%. The Sake Meter Value is ± 0 . Excellent with food, this sake is recommended for pairing with various cuisines. Hakutsuru Daiginjo is also certified with the geographical indication (GI) of “Nadagogo.” GI “Nadagogo” is a geographical indication certified by Japan's National Tax Agency to protect sake brewed in Nadagogo.

まず紹介するのは「白鶴 大吟醸」。白鶴独自の醸造技術によりフルーティーな香りと淡麗な味わいを実現し、さまざまな料理と相性の良い酒質が特長。原材料は国内産の米や米こうじを用い、精米歩合は50%に設定。繊細でフルーティーな香りを持つこの大吟醸は、日本酒の中でも特に上質な味わいを楽しむことが出来る。アルコール度数は15%以上16%未満で、日本酒度は ± 0 。料理との相性も抜群で、さまざまな料理に合わせて楽しむことが出来る。さらに、GI「灘五郷」に認定されているのもポイント。GI「灘五郷」とは、灘五郷で造られた日本酒を保護するために定められた国税庁指定の地理的表示。

Ingredients 原材料名: Rice (grown in Japan), rice koji (made in Japan), brewer's alcohol
米（日本産）、米こうじ（日本産）、醸造アルコール
Rice-polishing ratio 精米歩合: 50%
Alcohol content アルコール分: Greater than 15% (以上), less than 16% (未満)
Sake Meter Value (SMV) 日本酒度: ± 0



Hakutsuru Umeshu Genshu 白鶴 梅酒原酒 720ml

A liqueur made from 100% Kishu Nanko Plums, steeped thoroughly using traditional methods, characteristic for its mellow aroma and rich flavor. Authentic plum wine made using no acidulant, food coloring, nor additives.

紀州南高梅を100%使用し、昔ながらの製法を用いてじっくり漬け込んだリキュールは原酒ならではの芳醇な香りと濃醇な味わいが特長。酸味料・着色料・香料無添加の本格梅酒。

Alcoholic Beverage 酒類の品目: Liqueur リキュール
Ingredients 原材料名: Plums, brewer's alcohol sugar (made in Japan)
梅、醸造アルコール、糖類（日本国内製造）
Alcohol content アルコール分: Greater than 19% (以上)
less than 20% (未満)

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Katsuya Uechi
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Yuji Matsumoto
Master Sake Sommelier
Finalist of the 2nd World Sake Sommelier Competition.
Graduated from Keio University Faculty of Law, Department of Political Science. Worked for Nomura Securities for 10 years. Former president of California Sushi Academy Former chief of planning dept. at Mutual Trading.

David Kudo
Sake Sommelier
Master Sake Sommelier
Born Kita-Akita City, Akita Prefecture. Took over as Executive Officer of the Japanese Food Trend News founded in 1991, when the predecessor was assigned back to Japan. Currently distributed as Japan Restaurant News (20,000 issues published electronically) in North America, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

日本酒業界の努力

美國人在一般餐廳的全套餐飲的平均單價約為20美元，包括酒水。假設平均主菜價格為14.50美元，在酒類上花費大約5.50美元。葡萄酒種類繁多，每杯約4至7美元（約180至200毫升），還有多種小瓶裝啤酒，價格為3.50至4.50美元。相比之下，日本的地酒（葡萄酒杯180毫升）換算價格約為每杯8.50至9.50美元。這個差異大約是2.5倍，而且酒的種類有限。

但是，來自日本的日本酒在這個價

Sake Industry's Corporate Efforts

The average amount an American spends at a full-fledged casual restaurant is, including beverages, about \$20. If we suppose the entrée is \$14.50, \$5.50 is spent on alcoholic beverages. The majority of glass wines are priced at \$4-7 for 180-220ml servings, and many bottled beers are \$3.50-4.50. Comparatively, sake from Japan with the same serving size as wine (180ml) is \$8.50-9.50. The price is 2.5 times higher, and the selections are more limited.

Japan-made sake utterly lacks selections in this price range. 720ml-bottle sake are sold in restaurants for \$40 and higher; this makes the product a challenge to order, or a special occasion-only option to many. Trader Joe's Charles Shaw made a splash in the wine world when it was introduced, and at \$2.99 for a 750ml bottle, it's still selling strong and bringing in new wine lovers. Many must have started with this "Two Buck Chuck," fallen in love with wine, and

begun buying more expensive wines. Initially considered as a threat to the normally \$4-5 wine industry, Charles Shaw contributed to expanding the wine industry that eventually benefitted all wine businesses.

There is no need to dramatically reduce quality to reach this price point, but Japanese corporations should be able to achieve a certain level of it, considering what has been achieved in the past with home appliances and cars.■

日本酒業界の取り組み

アメリカ人がフルダイニングカジュアルレストランで使うの平均単価は飲み物を含め約20ドル前後。アントレーの価格が14.50ドル平均とした場合、アルコールに費やす金額は5.50ドル前後である。ワインのセレクションは一杯(約180-200ml)で約4ドル〜7ドルで多くあり、また、ビールも小瓶で3.50〜4.50ドルで多くの選択肢がある。それに比べ日本からの地酒は大体ワイン一杯180ml換算で8.50〜9.50ドルとなる。この差

は約2.5倍であり、しかも種類が限られているのである。

しかし、日本からの日本酒はこの価格帯でのバラエティーが日本酒にはまったくない。現在の720 mlでレストラン販売価格が40ドル以上でのこの価格帯ではなかなかの勇気のいる選択または、特別な日以外は対象外となる。ワインの世界では一時期話題を呼んだトレーダー・ジョーズの"Charles Shaw"の2.99ドルワイン（750ml）は現在でも健全であ

り、多くのワイン愛好家を育成している。まずは3ドル投資をして気に入ったら徐々に価格の高いワインへとのもり込んだ人は多くいるはずだ。当初は、4ドルから5ドル前後のワイン業界は、脅威と感じたらしいが逆にワイン人口が相対的に増え全体のパイが広がったと言える。

何も品質を極端に下げ、この価格にする必要はないが、電化製品、自動車など日本の過去の例から見ると企業努力次第で可能なのではないだろうか？

사케 업계의 노력

미국인이 본격적인 캐주얼 레스토랑에서 지출하는 평균 단가는 음료를 포함해 약 20달러 전후다. 메인요리 가격이 평균 14.50달러라고 가정했을 때, 술값으로 지출하는 금액은 5.50달러 전후다. 와인은 한 잔(약 180~200ml)에 약 4~7달러로 다양한 종류가 있으며, 맥주도 작은 병에 3.50~4.50달러로 선택의 폭이 넓다. 이에 비해 일본산 사케는 대체로 와인 한 잔(180ml) 분량에 8.50~9.50달러 정도다. 이 차이는 약 2.5배에 달하며, 그 종류도 한정되어 있다.

하지만 일본산 사케의 경우 이 가격대에서 선택의 다양성이 전혀 없다. 현재 720ml에 레스토랑 판매가격이 40달러가 넘는 이 가

격대에서는 꽤나 용감한 선택이거나 특별한 날 외에는 대상에서 제외된다. 한때 와인계에서 화제가 되었던 트레이더 조의 'Charles Shaw' 2.99달러짜리 와인(750ml)은 지금도 여전히 견재하며, 많은 와인 애호가들을 양성하고 있다. 우선 3달러를 투자하고 마음에 들면 점차 고가의 와인에 빠져드는 사람들이 많을 것이다. 처음에는 4달러에서 5달러 전후의 와인 업계가 위협을 느꼈다고 하는데, 오히려 와인 인구가 상대적으로 늘어나면서 전체 파이가 커졌다고 할 수 있다.

품질을 극단적으로 낮춰서 이 가격으로 만들 필요는 없지만, 가전제품, 자동차 등 일본의 과거 사례를 볼 때 기업의 노력 여하에 따라 가능하지 않을까?

Brewery Owner



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Nanbu Bijin Inc.
Fifth Generation
Brewery Owner

Timothy Sullivan
Sake Samurai



Takao Matsukawa
International
Sake Sommelier
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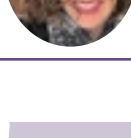
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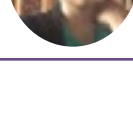
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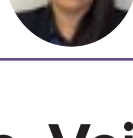
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Sake Sommelier



Don Lee
Sake Sommelier
Yama Sushi
Owner Chef



Eda Vuong
International
Sake Sommelier
Mutual Trading



Masae Kusada
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Sake Samurai



Hirohisa Kikuchi
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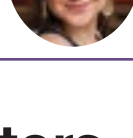
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Eduardo Dingler
Sake Ambassador



Kurtis Wells
Mixologist



Koji Aoto
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Sake Sommelier
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Sake Sommelier
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Anime, Voice Actors, and Japanese Sake Part 1

アニメと声優と日本酒 その1

酒豪大陸

California SAKE CHALLENGE

by Kosuke Kuji 224



Kosuke Kuji

Fifth Generation Brewery Owner
Nanbu Bijin, Inc.

Born May 11, 1972. Entered Tokyo University of Agriculture's Department of Brewing and Fermentation. In 2005 became the youngest person ever to receive the Iwate Prefecture Young Distinguished Technician Award. In 2006 was selected to be a member of the board of trustees of his local alma mater, Fukuoka High School. Currently is featured in a number of media outlets including magazines, radio, and television.

*Positions of Public Service:
Chairperson, Cassiopeia Corporation Youth Conference;
School Board Member, Fukuoka High School, Iwate Prefecture, Vice-Chairman, Technology Committee, Iwate Prefecture Brewers and Distillers' Association

A pillar of Japan's cultural heritage, sake earned a place on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2024.

And then there's Japanese anime—another pillar of the nation's subculture, captivating audiences across the globe. From Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba to One Piece and Dragon Ball, these iconic titles continue to command massive international followings.

Bringing these animated worlds to life are the voice actors—the seiyuu—whose performances shape the very soul of each story. The depth, emotion, and atmosphere of anime owe an immense debt to their craft, and in many ways, they stand among Japan's most defining actors on the global stage.

日本の伝統文化である日本酒。2024年にはユネスコの世界無形文化遺産にも登録されました。

そして、同じく日本のサブカルチャーとして世界を席巻する「日本アニメ」。

鬼滅の刃、ワンピース、ドラゴンボール、どれも世界で大人気の作品です。

そのアニメに命を吹き込んでいるのが「声優」さんです。

アニメの世界観はこの声優さんの力によるところが非常に大きく、日本を代表するアクターだと私は考えています。

Yet behind its dazzling global success, the world of anime is anything but easy. The content itself is celebrated worldwide for its immense creative power and cultural value—and the revenue it generates is nothing short of enormous. The content itself commands immense value and generates significant revenue worldwide, a testament to its powerful appeal. And still, when measured against that strength, the recognition and compensation afforded to voice actors often fall short. It's long felt as though seiyuu deserve far greater acknowledgment for the vital role they play. I've loved anime for as long as I can remember. For years, I dreamed of collaborating with it—but the industry felt so vast, so formidable, that I eventually set the

idea aside. Then I noticed something unexpected: many of the very voices that bring anime to life—the seiyuu themselves—share a deep appreciation for Japanese sake. That realization opened a new path. By partnering with these voice actors, I began launching a range of collaborative projects that bridge the worlds of anime and sake in a fresh, meaningful way.

By bringing voice actors' talents beyond the realm of anime and into dialogue with Japan's traditional culture of sake, I set out to express their artistry in new ways—and to expand how their value is perceived.

With this initiative now underway, I'll be sharing more in the coming installments about these collaborations and the stories behind them. ■

しかし、アニメの世界はなかなか厳しい世界で、アニメ自体のコンテンツの力と価値は世界中から高く評価され、アニメに対する収入も莫大だと思います。

その強力なコンテンツ力に対して声優さんの価値はまだ低く、もっと声優さんは評価されて良いと思っています。

私は昔からアニメが大好きでしたが、アニメコンテンツとコラボレーションするのはアニメの世界があまりにも巨大コンテンツ過ぎて難しく、あきらめていまし

たが、アニメに命を吹き込んでいる、そのアニメを代表する声優さん達に日本酒好きが非常に多い事あって、声優さんとコラボして活動を様々開始しました。

声優さんの価値をアニメだけではなく、日本の伝統文化である日本酒と一緒にすることで、さらに違う形で表現したり、価値を広げたりする活動をスタートしましたので、次回以降はそういった活動のお話をしていきたいと思っています。

日本酒百味百題

Yeast is a general term that refers to single-celled microorganisms (fungi) that propagates due to germination or cell division. Yeast has the effect of breaking sugar down to alcohol and carbon dioxide

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What is yeast...? 酵母とは何か

(gas). Approximately 5 ~ 10 microns (1 micron = 1/1,000 of 1 millimeter) in size, yeast comes in various shapes – egg-shaped, sphere-shaped, sausage-shaped, etc. Similar to mold, yeast is naturally distributed throughout the natural world (called wild yeast).

Sake does not use food ingredients with distinct characteristics (like grapes pressed to produce wine), nor does it use secondary food ingredients to add aroma (like hop used to add aroma to beer). Since the sake characteristic is greatly influenced by the yeast properties, it is important to select the proper yeast that suits your purpose. Yeast creates the distinct Ginjo aroma as well.

While there are various types of yeast, the type described here is the typical fermentable yeast, *saccharomyces*, of which the *saccharomyces cerevisiae* is the most representative yeast for brewing with strong alcohol fermentation capabilities, often used as baker's yeast (yeast to make bread), beer (beer brewer's yeast), wine (wine producer's yeast), and other general uses to brew alcohol. *Saccharomyces* sake – referred to as sake yeast - belongs to the *saccharomyces cerevisiae* species and is used to brew Japanese sake. Sake yeast can produce highly concentrated alcohol up to 20 percent, characteristic for its strong fermentation capabilities under low-temperatures.

Also, yeast used to ferment alcohol consists of two types: top fermentation yeast and bottom fermentation yeast. For example, the main yeast used to brew beer worldwide - such as in Japan and Germany - is the bottom fermentation yeast, which ferments under the fermentation mash; while yeast used

to brew English ale or stout, etc., is top fermentation yeast, which ferments on top of the fermentation mash and bubbles while fermenting. Brewer's yeast is classified as top fermentation yeast, the same type of yeast as ale and stout.

Generally, quality sake yeast is highly aromatic and characteristic for its strong fermentation capability, while low in the ability to generate acid. Currently, the widely used quality yeast is the "Association Yeast," distributed by the Brewing Society of Japan. However, each prefecture is actively developing its own yeast. Long-established sake brewers have their unique yeast attached to their buildings, bed soil, etc., and this yeast is called home-grown yeast." Traditional sake brewing procedures cultivated this home-grown yeast to produce sake yeast. However, in recent years, small to medium-sized regional breweries are starting to see a revived application of this "home-grown yeast."■

◆ ◆ ◆

酵母というのは出芽または分裂によって増殖する単細胞の微生物（菌類）の総称で、糖分をアルコールと炭酸ガス（二酸化炭素）に分解する作用を持つ。イーストともいう。大きさは5～10ミクロン（1ミクロンは1000分の1ミリ）ほどで、卵形、球形、ソーセージ型など多様な形をしている。カビと同様に、自然界に広く分布する（野生酵母と呼ぶ）。

日本酒はワインのブドウのように個性のある原料を使うわけではなく、ビールのホップのような香味を付け加える副材料も用いない。日本酒の特色は酵母の性

質に大きく影響されるため、目的に合った酵母を選ばなければならない。吟醸酒に特有の芳香をつくるのも酵母である。

酵母にはいろいろな種類があるが、典型的な発酵性酵母はサッカロミセス属の酵母である。なかでも、サッカロミセス・セレビシエに属する酵母は、最も代表的な醸造用酵母でアルコール発酵力が強く、パンの発酵（パン酵母）のほか、ビール（ビール酵母）、ワイン（ブドウ酒酵母）など酒類全般の醸造に使われている。日本酒の醸造に用いるのは、分類上はサッカロミセス・セレビシエに属するサッカロミセス・サケで、清酒酵母とも呼ばれる。清酒酵母は、20%もの高濃度までアルコールを生成でき、低温下での発酵にも大変強いのが特徴である。

また、酒類の発酵に使用する酵母には、上面発酵酵母と下面発酵酵母とがある。たとえば、日本やドイツをはじめとする世界中の主なビールの酵母は、もろみの下部で発酵する下面発酵酵母だが、英国のエールやスタウトビールなどに用いる酵母は、もろみの上部で発酵し、発酵中に高泡が盛り上がる上面発酵酵母である。清酒酵母は、エールやスタウトビールの酵母と同じ上面発酵酵母に分類される。

一般に、優良な清酒酵母には、発酵力は強いが酸をつくる能力は低く、香りが高いなどの特徴がある。現在、優良酵母として広く使用されているのは、日本醸造協会から頒布されている「きょうかい酵母」だが、県単位での独自の酵母の開発も盛んになっている。ところで、永年醸造を続けてきた酒蔵には、固有の酵母が建物や床土などに付着して住みついており、この酵母を「家つき酵母」と呼ぶ。かつての伝統的な酒造りでは、この家つき酵母を培養して酒母を造っていたが、近年、地方の中小蔵などで、この「家つき酵母」の復活、応用化の動きが目立ってきている。



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米国酒焼酎蒸留酒研究所

Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America was founded with the purpose to promote further understanding of Japanese sake, shochu and beer in a shared where 500 million people enjoy wine in North America. We strive to increase Japanophiles by furthering understanding of the sake culture through online Japanese sake and shochu colleges and books related to Japanese sake, shochu and beer, etc. Especially sampling parties directly approaches consumers and no doubt contributes to expanding the market. Also, our final purpose is to facilitate communication with sake breweries, sake producers, and distribution companies, etc., to introduce Japanese sake, shochu and beer to American consumers in a way that's easy-to-understand.

Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America 米国酒焼酎蒸留酒研究所

Japanese sake type

- Differ according to the combination of flavor and aroma

Knowing the type of Japanese sake helps to select sake according to your purpose. The diverse characteristics of Japanese sake brewed across over 1,500 sake breweries nationwide vary greatly in flavor, even within the same brand, depending on the ingredients and production method used.

There is no definite flavor characteristic of Junmai or Ginjo for example, as some are sweet while others are dry. Also, sweet sake flavor further varies widely in richness, fruity sweet, or refreshingly sweet, etc.

Therefore, various classifications are possible depending on your chosen criteria. For example, the rice polishing ratio could be another reference point to narrow your sake type. The lower the rice polishing ratio, the more refreshing the flavor. The higher the rice polishing ratio, the stronger the flavor.

Sake can also be classified according to how you enjoy your sake. Some sake types are more flavorful when enjoyed chilled, while others are more flavorful enjoyed hot. Refreshing sake and Ginjo are delicious chilled, while rich sake like Kimoto-Junmai is delicious hot.■

日本酒のタイプ

一味や香りの組み合わせによって異なる

日本酒のタイプを知ることによって目的に応じた酒を選ぶ。日本全国1500以上の蔵で作られている日本酒の特徴は千差万別で、同じ銘柄でも原料や製造方法の違いによって味わいが全く異なることもある。

純米酒だから、吟醸酒だからこうと、断言できるものではなく、それぞれ甘口もあれば、辛口もある。また、甘口の中にもコクのある甘口、フルーティーな甘口、さっぱりとした甘口などがありバリエーションは幅広い。

どこに注目するかによって様々な分類が可能である。例えば精米歩合に注目して味を類推することができる。精米歩合が低い酒はさっぱりとした味に。精米歩合が高い酒は味が強い強くなりやすい。

飲み方によって分類することもできる。日本酒には、冷やして、飲むのに向くものと、温めて飲むのに向くものがある。さっぱりとした、酒や吟醸酒は冷やすと美味しく、生酛系純米酒のようなコクのある酒はお燗にすると美味しい。

**ONLINE
SAKE Class**

Sake Navigator

Presented by Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America



Tokyo Jizake Strolling

by Ryuji Takahashi

東京地酒散歩



Ryuji Takahashi

Regional Sake Specialty Store "Ji Sakeya" Owner, Master Sake Sommelier, Shuto-Meijin, and the charismatic guru of ordinary sake. Plans and manages events and seminars with his own unique flare to introduce the appeal of Japanese sake and cuisine, unaffected by the latest trends, while managing a jizake retail store.

As Summer Arrives, Japan's Sake Industry Enters a New Season

夏を迎える日本酒業界

In recent years, prices across the Japanese sake market have been steadily rising. While it is natural for discretionary items to follow the upward trend seen in essential goods, there is a crucial difference: sake is, at its core, a luxury rather than a necessity. As a result, unlike everyday staples, these price increases are more likely to trigger noticeable consumer restraint and a pullback in demand.

On top of this, the increasingly prolonged and intense summer heat is dampening consumer appetite, creating a double blow that could make this summer a challenging season for Japan's sake industry. Interestingly, a similar pattern can be seen in other premium indulgence categories. According to coffee bean wholesalers—another representative of the world of discretionary goods—coffee prices are also rising. While iced coffee offers some relief during the hotter months, bean sales still reportedly drop significantly compared to the winter season.

In contrast, categories such as tobacco appear far less sensitive to price fluctuations. Even with steady price increases, many smokers—driven by long-standing nicotine dependence—do not readily change their habits, even when costs double compared to earlier

years. Demand also tends to remain largely unaffected by seasonal shifts. Younger smokers, moreover, often have no reference point for past pricing levels, and with the emergence of alternatives such as electronic cigarettes, the sense of 'rising cost' may feel less pronounced than expected. Among sake enthusiasts, younger consumers are said to spend surprisingly generously on sake. However, the overall number of people who drink it on a regular, everyday basis remains relatively small. While there are always a few devoted drinkers across all age groups who stick exclusively to sake even in the height of summer, overall consumption still declines significantly during the hot season. In many cases, it is gradually displaced by other alcoholic beverages such as beer and highballs, which tend to dominate summer drinking occasions.

As long as record-breaking heatwaves continue, this situation is unlikely to change. Many producers attempt to offset the downturn by introducing refreshing seasonal sake and proposing new ways to enjoy Japanese sake, yet the results remain a world apart from winter sales figures. From summer through autumn, local breweries—having already completed

their brewing season—turn their focus elsewhere, with sake events and tasting gatherings held across various regions in an effort to keep the culture alive during the off-season.

However, even these efforts are beginning to face new challenges. Outdoor events are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain under the intensifying summer heat, leading to a gradual shift toward indoor venues. This transition brings its own complications: venue costs are typically higher indoors, which in turn pushes up participation fees. As a result, attendance among sake enthusiasts may also be affected. At the same time, breweries may be required to take on a larger share of sponsorship responsibilities, potentially placing additional financial strain on their operations. In such

a scenario, these events risk becoming dominated by major brands and well-established labels, leaving smaller local breweries with fewer opportunities to showcase themselves and connect directly with consumers.

With the rise of remote work in recent years, the long-standing habit of grabbing a beer after work may be gradually fading. Yet, it is also possible that the image of Japanese sake itself has not significantly evolved over the past few decades. In Japan, even wine culture reflects a certain temperature-conscious mindset—few people reach for chilled red wine, for example, with red typically served at room temperature and white well chilled. As long as these associations persist, sake may continue to struggle to position itself as a natural choice for hot summer days. ■

ここ数年、日本酒の価格が軒並み上昇している。生活必需品の価格が上がっているのも同様に嗜好品の価格が上がっていてもおかしくないのだが、生活必需品と大きく違うのは、嗜好品はあくまでも嗜好品なのでかなりの買い控えが出てくるということである。そして年々長くなる夏の猛暑による購買意欲の減退のダブルパンチで今年の夏は日本酒業界にとって苦しいものとなるのではないだろうか。因みに嗜好品の代表仲間である珈琲豆屋に聞くと、やはり珈琲豆の価格は高騰しており、プラス夏場はアイスコーヒーというアイテムが有るが、冬に比べるとやはり豆の売り上げは大きく落ちるらしい。それに比べ、タバコなどは多少の値上がりは何のその。ニコチン中毒者は昔に比べて倍の価格くらいでは辞めない人が多いし、季節も関係ない。若い喫煙者は昔の価格を知らないし以前は無かった電子タバコなども有るので、特に高くなったとは思わないのかもしれない。それで言うと日本酒愛好家も若い人は意外と日本酒にお金をかけるらしいが、如何せん日常日本酒を飲む絶対数が少ない。全年齢層で真夏でも日本酒だけの人は多少いるが、やはり夏場の消費量は大きく減り、同じアルコール飲料のビールやハイボールに取っ

て代わられてしまう。記録的な猛暑が続くかぎり、この状況は変わらないだろう。各社、涼しげな季節酒や新たな日本酒の飲み方の提案で乗り切ろうとするが、結果冬の売り上げに比べたら雲泥の差である。夏から秋にかけては、地酒酒蔵は造りが終わっているの、色々な場所で日本酒イベントも行われる。しかしそれも、屋外イベントは猛暑で段々と不可能になってきていて、屋内イベントが増えてくる。そうすると、屋外イベントに比べ、場所の利用代も高くなり、イベント参加費が上昇する為、日本酒愛好家の集客にも影響が出てくるだろう。もしかしたら酒蔵の協賛部分も大きくなり、酒蔵の経営に負担が出てくるかもしれない。そうすると、人気銘柄や大手メーカーだけが参加するイベントになり、小さい地酒酒蔵としてはPRの場所を失っていくかもしれない。在宅ワークが増えた昨今、仕事帰りにビールという習慣は多少薄れつつあるはずだが、もしかしたら日本酒のイメージがこの数十年大きくは変わっていないのかもしれない。確かに、冷えた赤ワインを飲む人も少ないのが日本人。赤ワインは常温、白ワインは冷えた状態などと言っているうちは暑い日に日本酒とはならないのかもしれない。

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2026 FOOD EVENT CALENDAR JUNE-JULY

JUNE

IDDBA – International Dairy Deli Bakery Association

6/7-9

New Orleans, LA
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
www.iddba.org

IDDBA 2026 brings together today's leaders and tomorrow's innovators for the industry's premier event dedicated to dairy, deli, bakery, and foodservice. Join more than 10,000 attendees and 1,000+ exhibiting companies to explore the latest products, trends, and fresh ideas to help grow your business. Network with influential industry leaders, gain valuable insights from experts, and experience the energy of a community driven by a shared passion for food. Designed for serious buyers, merchandisers, and executives, IDDBA 2026 is the once-a-year opportunity to make meaningful connections and stay ahead in a rapidly evolving industry.

BevNET Events: Beverage, Food, and Beer

6/10-11

Metropolitan Pavilion, NY
www.bevnet.com/events/bevnetlivenyc2026/venue_1

The NYC 2026 edition takes place June 10–11 in New York, NY, and will feature the 28th edition of the New Beverage Showdown, alongside expert-led panels and insights from some of the industry's most impactful leaders. Build Your Network for the Year Ahead / With nearly 56% of attendees being C-level executives, you're not just collecting business cards — you're forging relationships with founders and decision-makers. Many brands report meeting their first investor, distributor, or strategic partner at BevNET Live. Learn What's Working Now / Hear candid insights from successful beverage founders on scaling, fundraising, retail strategy, and navigating supply chain challenges. Spot the Next Big Trends / Get ahead of shifts in functional ingredients, sustainability, better-for-you categories, and alternative packaging. Both Poppi and Liquid Death pitched in BevNET's signature pitch competition before they were sold in retailers nationwide.

Benchmark Against the Best / See how your brand stacks up by learning directly from competitors and category leaders. Whether it's packaging design, retail strategy, or innovative formulations, you'll leave with concrete ideas to strengthen your next stage of growth.

Western Candy Conference

6/10-14

San Antonio Resorts, TX
Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort & Spa
www.westerncandyconference.org/conference

The Western Candy Association is a non-profit trade organization that has served as vital resource for professionals in the confectionery industry for 92 years! Our mission is to foster a strong, supportive community for manufacturers and suppliers, while addressing key government affairs that impact these sectors. The annual Western Candy Conference is the association's flagship event. This professional conference brings together industry leaders for networking, community building, educational sessions, and the exchange of innovative ideas. It serves as a prime opportunity for members to collaborate, learn about industry trends, and address key issues affecting the sector. Through its events and advocacy efforts, the Western Candy Association helps create a platform for growth, innovation, and education in the confectionery industries.

LAWineFest 2026

6/13-6/14

Burbank, CA
www.lawinefest.com

The 21st Annual LAWineFest is moving this year – to the celebrated Los Angeles Equestrian Center in Burbank on beautiful tree shaded grounds, where Hollywood glamour meets equestrian tradition. The Center offers wide-open grounds, natural shade, and a relaxed outdoor atmosphere for wine lovers! This secluded haven boasts privacy, stunning mountain views, and provides a serene and picturesque setting for any occasion.

Home to numerous dressage, polo and competition events, and 500 beautiful horses, the Equestrian Center's visitors are also known to enjoy life's little luxuries including fine wine and dining. Bordering the vast expanse of Griffith Park, Burbank offers a blend of studio culture, local charm, and scenic outdoor spaces just minutes from the heart of Los Angeles. The area is home to major film and television studios, vibrant dining districts, and iconic parkland that stretches across the foothills. Centrally located between the 5 and the 134 Freeways, the LA Equestrian Center is within easy access from numerous high profile residential areas such as Los Feliz, Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Sherman Oaks, Encino and Pasadena, to name a few.

Coffee Fest Chicago

6/13-14

Chicago, IL
NAVY PIER
www.coffeefest.com

Coffee Fest has been serving the specialty coffee and gourmet tea industries since 1992. Viewed by most as the best trade show in America and around the world specifically for those involved with retailing coffee tea and related products. Coffee Fest continues to evolve and stay at forefront of emerging trends.

If it looks like coffee, smells like coffee, goes well with or is coffee you will find it at Coffee Fest. Everything under the sun that would be found in an upscale coffee shop on either side of the counter, including the counter would be found on the exhibition floor at Coffee Fest. The best coffee retail education, training and workshops are found at Coffee Fest. Dedication to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles encompasses a wide array of initiatives that span before, during, and after Coffee Fest, as well as within our own organization, Clarion Events. This commitment is evident in our long-standing focus on diversity, the implementation of our attendee code of conduct, our on-site philanthropic endeavors like Clarion Cares, and our ongoing efforts to reduce waste at our events. We wholeheartedly embrace ESG principles and actively incorporate them into all facets of our operations and events. Our aim is to minimize our environmental impact, promote inclusivity and diversity, and contribute positively to the well-being of local communities.

Fancy Food Show

6/28-30

New York, NY
The Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York

In 2026, the Specialty Food Association will proudly host the 70th Summer Fancy Food Show in New York City. Thousands of specialty food suppliers will showcase their new, in-demand, and on-trend products to food industry attendees from every channel of trade. Buyers, brokers, distributors, investors, media, students, and manufacturers will find ways to check off their to-do lists, achieve their unique goals, and get inspired at the Fancy Food Show, specialty food's premier product discovery event. The Specialty Food Association is a thriving community of food artisans, purveyors, importers and entrepreneurs who bring craft, care and joy to the distinctive foods they sell. Established in 1952 in New York, the not-for-profit trade association provides its 3,000+ members in the U.S. and abroad the tools, knowledge and connections to champion and nurture their companies in an always-evolving marketplace. The Association (formerly the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, Inc.) owns and produces the Winter and Summer Fancy Food Shows, and presents the sofi Awards honoring excellence in specialty food. Delight your tastebuds, chew on emerging trends, and get facetime with all the right

people at one of the food industry's tentpole events.

July

School Nutrition Association – SNA

7/12-14

Charlotte, NC
Charlotte Convention Center

Known as the School Nutrition Event of the Year, SNA's Annual National Conference (ANC) is the largest and most vibrant gathering of K-12 school nutrition professionals in the country. Each July, thousands of school nutrition operators, directors, managers, state agency staff, and industry partners come together for four energizing days of learning, networking, and discovery.

ANC is where school nutrition comes to life. From cutting-edge education sessions and expert-led keynotes to the nation's largest exhibit floor dedicated to K-12 foodservice, ANC delivers the tools, ideas, and inspiration needed to elevate school meal programs and support student success. With a focus on both professional and personal growth, ANC is your moment to connect with peers, explore solutions, and celebrate the power of school meals in shaping healthy futures.

Texas Restaurant Show

7/12-13

Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center
San Antonio, TX
www.texasrestaurant.org

Texas Bar & Nightclub Convention has been acquired by the Texas Restaurant Show. This merger, to be known as the Bar & Nightclub Showcase, creates a single destination to explore the future of beverage driven business within the Texas Restaurant Show with upwards of an additional 100 booths and expands the show's audience to more than 8,000 industry professionals. Quincy Barnes, owner of SMC-Events and longtime director of the Texas Bar & Nightclub Convention, will help guide the transition and elevate the experience for attendees and exhibitors as the new Bar and Nightclub Showcase takes shape.

The enhanced 2026 Texas Restaurant Show will offer expanded products, services, and education designed for bars, nightclubs, and alcohol serving restaurant establishments, from beverage innovation and bar equipment to nightlife technology, compliance insights, and workforce solutions. Exhibitors will gain unmatched exposure to a larger pool of owners, buyers, and decision makers, while operators will access the tools, insights, and partnerships they need to grow. Stay inspired. Stay connected. Stay at the forefront.



How Ramen, Izakaya, and Premium Sake Found Their Place in American Dining

ラーメン、居酒屋、プレミアム日本酒は
いかにして米国の食文化に定着したのか

To mark 100 years of bringing the flavors of Japan to America, Mutual Trading looks back on its storied history—from its early days supplying pantry staples to immigrant communities, to its role in pioneering sushi as the first true gateway to Japanese cuisine in the United States.

In this third installment, the story shifts once again—this time to a period of diversification. By the 1990s, sushi was no longer a novelty. It had taken hold across the country, evolving from a niche offering in Little Tokyo to a recognizable fixture in American dining. As popularity expanded, so too did prospects for the business world to enter the Washoku industry as Japanese cuisine expanded beyond a single defining category.

What followed was not a singular breakthrough, but a steady unfolding. New formats emerged. Beverage programs evolved. Operators began exploring how Japanese cuisine could move beyond occasion dining to become engrained into consumers' routine dining lifestyle.

This period—spanning the 1990s through the early 2010s—marked a transition from introduction to expansion, as Japanese cuisine in America grew into something broader, more adaptable, and more deeply rooted in the restaurant landscape.

The Shift Toward Casual Dining

The forces that shaped this transformation were not limited to the kitchen. They were economic, cultural, and structural.

Following the Plaza Accord and the fluctuations of the yen through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Japanese corporate presence overseas began to contract. The expatriate communities that had once supported high-end Japanese restaurants grew smaller, and many establishments that relied on that customer base struggled to sustain themselves.

In their place, a new model began to emerge—one less dependent on corporate clientele and more aligned with everyday diners. Accessibility, value, and repeatability



The evolution of Japanese dining: Ramen that pushed boundaries, izakaya that changed the flow, and jizake that tied it all together.

became increasingly important.

At the same time, dining culture in Japan was undergoing a parallel shift. Izakaya-style establishments, built around small plates and social dining, were gaining popularity. Menus expanded beyond formal structures, incorporating approachable dishes such as curry rice and yakisoba—foods that could be served quickly, shared easily, and enjoyed without ceremony.

In the United States, these changes opened new pathways. Japanese cuisine could now exist outside the confines of special occasions. It could adapt to different price points, different service models, and to much wider audiences.

For Mutual Trading, the implications were clear. Supporting the next phase of growth meant moving beyond to help operators

く、柔軟で、そして外食産業の中に深く根付いた存在へと成長していきました。

ジュアルダイニングへの移行

この変革をもたらした要因は、単に厨房の中だけにとどまるものではありませんでした。経済的、文化的、そして構造的な変化が複合的に影響していたのです。

ブラザ合意や1980年代後半から1990年代にかけての円相場の変動を受け、日本企業の海外展開は次第に縮小傾向に転じていました。かつて高級日本食レストランを支えてきた駐在員コミュニティも減少し、そうした顧客層に依存していた多くの店舗は、存続の危機に直面することになりました。その一方で、企業顧客への依存度が低く、一般の消費者に寄り添った新しいビジネスモデルが台頭してきて、「手頃さ」「価格価値」「リピート性」が、これまで以上に重要な要素となっていました。

同時期、日本国内の外食文化にも変化が起きていました。小皿料理を中心に、仲間と気軽に楽しむスタイルの居酒屋業態が人気を集めていきます。メニューも従来の形式にとらわれず、カレーライスや焼きそばといった、スピーディーに提供でき、シェアしやすく、気負わず楽しめる料理が取り入れられるようになりました。

こうした流れはアメリカ市場にも新たな可能性をもたらします。日本食は特別な日の食事に限られるものではなく、より幅広い価格帯やサービス形態に対応し、より多くの消費者に受け入れられる存在へと進化していきました。

Mutual Tradingにとっても、その方向性は明確でした。次なる成長段階を支えるためには、寿司にとどまらない新たなメニューコンセプトの提案に加え、日本食調理の経験に限られた多様な人材でも運営できる体制づくりを、事業者とともに進めていく必要があったのです。

本シリーズ第3回では、再び時代は転換期を迎えます。テーマは「多様化」です。1990年代に入ると、寿司はもはや目新しい存在ではなく、リトル東京に限られた一角から全米へと広がり、アメリカの外食シーンにしっかりと根付いていきました。人気の拡大とともに、日本食は一つのカテゴリーにとどまらず、ビジネスとしても新たな参入機会が広がっていきます。

その後に起こったのは、単発的な大ブレイクではなく、着実な広がりでした。新たな業態が生まれ、ドリンクメニューも進化。事業者たちは、日本食を特別な機会のための食事から、日常の食生活に定着させる方法を模索し始めました。

1990年代から2010年代初頭にかけてのこの時期は、まさに日本食が「紹介」の段階から「拡大」の段階へと移行した時代でした。アメリカにおける日本食は、より幅広

manage diverse staffing with less familiarity in Japanese food preparation, along with rolling out new menu concepts beyond sushi.

Ramen: From Early Roots to a Scalable Category
Among the categories that would define this era, ramen occupies a unique place—both as an early arrival and as a late bloomer.

Ramen’s presence in the United States dates back further than many assume. One of the earliest known ramen specialty shops, Sapporo Ya, opened in Little Tokyo in 1970, introducing the dish to a small but dedicated audience. Later, Kouraku, established in 1979, would become one of the longest continuously operating ramen restaurants in the country, quietly sustaining the category across generations.

Despite this early foothold, ramen remained limited in scope for decades, largely confined to Japanese communities and overshadowed by the rapid rise of sushi. What changed in the 1990s and beyond was not the dish itself, but the conditions surrounding it.

Mutual Trading recognized that ramen’s potential lay in its ability to scale—to offer depth of flavor while remaining accessible,

cost-effective, and adaptable to different formats. To support that potential, the company focused on one of the most critical elements: consistency.

Early efforts included the domestic production of *nama ramen* (fresh noodles), a process that required both technical precision and operational discipline. Production began in the early hours of the morning, with teams working to achieve the texture, elasticity, and reliability needed for professional kitchens.

At the same time, Mutual Trading expanded access to the broader ecosystem of ramen ingredients—broths, tare, oils, and toppings—helping operators construct menus that balanced authenticity with efficiency.

Ramen’s rise was gradual, built on repetition rather than spectacle. But over time, it proved uniquely suited to the changing market. It could be positioned as both casual and specialized, affordable yet deeply satisfying. It invited customization while maintaining a clear identity.

What began as a niche offering evolved into a foundational category—one that would eventually anchor new generation of Japanese dining concepts across the United States.



Kouraku, the Much Adored Machi Chuka
Opened in 1979, Kouraku continues to this day as the much-adored Machi Chuka or the neighborhood Chinese Ramen shop, offering a lineup including Chinese comfort dishes. This late-night spot attracted post-game Dodgers fans of pitcher Hideo Nomo who himself dined here in the mid 90’s, and nowadays thirty years later, still draws in fans of Shohei Otani. Pictured here is their popular Tanmen vegetable ramen.



ラーメン：
初期段階から広がるカテゴリーへ
この時代を象徴するカテゴリーの中でも、ラーメンは特異な存在です。早い段階でアメリカに登場しながらも、本格的な成長を遂げたのは後年という、ユニークな歩みをたどってきました。

米国におけるラーメンの歴史は、多くの人が想像するよりもさらに遡ります。最も初期のラーメン専門店のひとつである「札幌ラーメン」は1970年にリトルトーキョーで開業し、限られたながらも熱心なファン層にこの料理を紹介しました。その後、1979年に創業した「こう楽」は、全米で最も長く営業を続けるラーメン店のひとつとなり、世代を超えて静かにそのカテゴリーを支え続けてきました。

こうした早期の定着にもかかわらず、ラーメンは長年にわたり限られた市場にとどまり、主に日本人コミュニティ内で提供される存在でした。また、急速に拡大した寿司の影に隠れる形で、その存在感は相対的に小さいものでした。

しかし1990年代以降に変わったのは、ラーメンそのものではなく、それを取り巻く環境でした。

Mutual Tradingは、ラーメンの可能性が「広がりやすさ」にあると捉えました。すなわち、深い味わいを持ちながらも、手頃で、コスト効率に優れ、さまざまな業態に適用できる点です。その可能性を支えるた

めに、同社は最も重要な要素の一つである「品質の安定性」を重視しました。

初期の取り組みとして、生ラーメンの国内生産に着手しました。これは高度な技術と厳密なオペレーション管理を必要とするプロセスでした。製造は早朝から始まり、プロの厨房で求められる食感や弾力、そして品質の安定性を実現するために、チームが一丸となって取り組んでいました。

同時に、Mutual Tradingは、スープ、タレ、オイル、トッピングといったラーメンを構成する要素全体へのアクセスを拡充し、事業者が「本格性」と「効率性」を両立したメニューを構築できるよう支援しました。

ラーメンの普及は決して派手なものではなく、日々の積み重ねによって徐々に広がっていきました。しかしその過程で、変化する市場において非常に適した存在であることが明らかになっていきます。カジュアルにも専門性の高い業態にも対応でき、手頃でありながら高い満足感を提供できる。そして、カスタマイズの自由度を持ちながらも、明確なアイデンティティを維持できる料理だったのです。

こうしてニッチな存在として始まったラーメンは、やがて日本食の中核を担うカテゴリーへと成長し、アメリカにおける新たな日本食業態の広がりを支える基盤となっていきました。



above:
Sapporo-Ya, the first ramen specialty shop in America, was busy with newly arriving Japanese families missing flavors of home and military servicemen returning from duty in Japan.
(Alan Miyatake, Toyo Miyatake Studio)

Sapporo-ya Luncheon			
Sapporo Ramen			
1. 塩ラーメン	Salt Ramen		135
2. しゅう油ラーメン	Shoyu Ramen		150
3. みそラーメン	Miso Ramen		160
4. バターラーメン	Butter Ramen		160
5. 冷やしラーメン	Cold Ramen		200
6. しょう油ラーメン	Shoyu Ramen		180
Teppan-yaki Chou Mein			
1. 鉄板焼ステーキ	Teppan Pork Chou Mein		150
2. 鉄板焼ビーフステーキ	Teppan Beef Chou Mein		160
Obananiyaki Fried Egg with Vegetables			
1. 牛乳と卵の炒め物	Beef & Egg Obananiyaki		135
2. エビと卵の炒め物	Shrimp & Egg Obananiyaki		200
餃子	Gyoza		120
ライス、お味噌汁	Rice with miso	20	
ソーダ	Soda	20	
アイス	Ice Cream	20	
デザート	Desert	20	
ビール	Beer	50	
日本酒	Sake	75	
日本酒	Sake	150	

right:
Sapporo-Ya’s lunch menu at the time of its opening in 1970. Exchange rate was 360 yen to the US dollar, which held prices down on import ingredients from Japan.



Izakaya turns dining into connections –

More variety, more flow, more togetherness for the guests.

Izakaya: A New Way of Dining

If ramen expanded what could be served, izakaya redefined how it could be experienced.

Traditional Japanese dining in the United States had long been structured around individual dishes and formal service. Izakaya introduced a different rhythm—one centered on movement, variety, and shared experience.

Small plates allowed for flexibility. Menus could shift with seasons, trends, or inventory. Diners were encouraged to order incrementally, creating a more dynamic and interactive experience. Beverage programs, rather than sitting alongside the menu, became integral to it.

For operators, this format offered practical advantages. It supported higher table turnover, diversified revenue streams, and reduced the risk associated with large-format dishes. It also aligned with broader shifts in American dining, where consumers were increasingly drawn to communal and exploratory experiences.

Mutual Trading's role in this transition was to support not just ingredients, but the structure behind the format. This meant expanding into a wider range of products—sauces, marinades, prepared items, and beverages—while maintaining the consistency and quality that operators depended on.

In doing so, the company developed new products to help enable a format that could adapt across markets, bridging traditional Japanese dining with contemporary expectations.

Jizake: A Turning Point in Sake

If the evolution of ramen and izakaya reflected changes in food, the emergence of jizake marked a turning point for beverages.

The shift did not begin with a strategy, but with a moment.

In the late 1980s, while attending a golf tournament in Hawaii, then president Noritoshi Kanai found himself seated in a restaurant when he noticed something unusual. From across the room, a fragrance drifted through the air—delicate, aromatic, and unlike the sake typically encountered in the United States.

He asked what was being served.

It was a Junmai Ginjo from Midorikawa Brewery in Niigata.

At the time, the U.S. sake market was defined by domestic production and familiar patterns of service—warm, accessible, and modest in price. Mutual Trading's own top-selling sake reflected that reality: reliable, consistent, and widely accepted.

But this experience suggested something else entirely. A category existed that had not yet been fully introduced—one defined by nuance, craftsmanship, and regional identity.

For Kanai, it was not simply a matter of importing new products. It was an opportunity to redefine how sake could be understood.

Working closely with Tokyo Mutual Trading, the company began traveling across Japan, building relationships with breweries and sourcing premium sake that reflected the diversity of the category. Early introductions included brands such as Hakkaisan, Hakutaka, Kamotsuru, Kiku-Masamune, Kikusui, Kubota, Shimeharitsuru, Suigei, Sumiyoshi, Tamano Hikari, and Takenotsuyu, each offering a distinct expression of style and origin. Yet the challenge was not supply—it was perception.

居酒屋:新しい食のスタイル

ラーメンが「何を提供できるか」を広げたのに対し、居酒屋は「どのように楽しむか」を再定義しました。

これまでアメリカにおける日本食は、個別の料理とフォーマルなサービスを中心とした構成が主流でした。居酒屋はそこに新たなリズムをもたらします。すなわち、動き、バリエーション、そして“共有する体験”を軸としたスタイルです。

小皿料理は高い柔軟性を生みました。メニューは季節やトレンド、さらには在庫状況に応じて変化させることができます。来店客は料理を少しずつ追加注文しながら楽しむことができ、よりダイナミックでインタラクティブな食体験が生まれました。また、ドリンクは単に料理に添えられる存在ではなく、メニューの重要な一部として位置づけられるようになります。

この業態は、オペレーターにとっても実務的な利点をもたらしました。テーブル回転率の向上、収益源の多様化、大皿料理に伴うリスクの軽減などです。さらに、共に食事を楽しみ、新しい味を探索する体験を求める消費者の志向とも合致していました。

Mutual Tradingはこの変化において、単なる食材の供給にとどまらず、業態そのものを支える仕組みづくりを支援しました。具体的には、ソースやマリネ、調理済み食品、飲料など、より幅広い商品ラインナップを拡充しながら、事業者が求める安定した品質と一貫性を維持していきました。

こうした取り組みにより、同社は市場ごとに柔軟に対応できる新たな業態の実現を後押しし、伝統的な日本の食文化と現代の消費者ニーズをつなぐ架け橋となっていきました。

地酒:日本酒における転換点

ラーメンや居酒屋の進化が「食」の変化を映し出していたとすれば、地酒の登場は「飲料」における大きな転換点となりました。

その変化は、戦略から始まったものではなく、あるひとつの“瞬間”から生まれました。

1980年代後半、ハワイで開催されたゴルフトーナメントに出席していた出席していた当時の社長・金井紀年は、あるレストランで席に着いた際、これまでにない香りに気づきました。店内の向こうから漂ってきたのは、繊細で芳醇な香り—当時アメリカで一般的に提供されていた日本酒とは明らかに異なるものでした。

彼は、何が提供されているのか尋ねました。

それは、新潟・緑川酒造の純米吟醸酒でした。

当時、米国の日本酒市場は国産酒が主流で、温めて提供され、手頃な価格帯で親しまれる—そうしたスタイルでした。Mutual Tradingの主力商品である日本酒も、安定した品質と供給を背景に広く受け入れられていたのです。

しかし、この体験は全く異なる可能性を示していました。まだ十分に紹介されていないカテゴリー—繊細な味わい、職人の技、そして地域性に裏打ちされた日本酒の世界が存在していたのです。

金井にとって、それは単に新しい商品を輸入するという話ではありませんでした。日本酒の捉え方そのものを再定義する機会だったのです。

東京共同貿易と連携しながら、同社は日本各地を巡り、酒蔵との関係を築き、日本酒の多様性を反映したプレミアム日本酒の仕入れを始めました。初期には、八海山、白鷹、賀茂鶴、菊正宗、菊水、久保田、〆張鶴、酔鯨、住吉、玉乃光、竹の露といった銘柄が導入され、それぞれが産地やスタイルの違いを表現する個性豊かな日本酒として紹介されました。しかし、課題は供給ではなく、「認識」にありました。

顧客が慣れ親しんだ価格帯よりもはるかに高価で、冷やしたプレミアム純米吟醸が、アメリカのメニューにどのようにして受け入れられていったのでしょうか。

その答えは「教育」にありました。



Small plates that shift with the seasons, highlights fresh ingredients and flexible menus, easing restauranters on procurement and reduces waste.



from left:
Take No Tsuyu Junmai
Kamotsuru Junmai Ginjo
Tamano Hikari Junmai Daiginjo
Kubota Hekijyu Yamahai Junmai Daiginjo
Hakkaisan Tokubetsu Honjozo
Hakkaisan Junmai Ginjo
Kikusui Junmai Ginjo
Suigei Tokubetsu Junmai
Kiku-Masamune Kimoto Junmai
Gin Sumiyoshi "Silver Cap" Tokubetsu Junmai
Hakutaka Tokubetsu Junmai

Jizake: Riding on the heels of their immense popularity in Japan during the 80's, Mutual Trading develops the category and opens the door for Americans to enter into aromatic and pairing explorations – elevating dining experience with premium Jizake.

How could a chilled glass of premium junmai ginjo, priced significantly higher than what customers were accustomed to, find its place on American menus?

The answer lay in education.

Mutual Trading's sales members initiated a benkyo-kai, after-hours study sessions with reps learning the fundamentals of sake: how it's brewed, how it tastes, and how different grades of sake should be served. These sessions were practical and direct, focused on educating restaurant servers with the knowledge to communicate value to guests.

Gradually, the narrative shifted. Sake was no longer a single, uniform product, but a category with depth—one that could be paired, explored, and uplift guests' dining experience.

Over time, these grassroots efforts would evolve into the Sake School of America, formally established in 2010. Today, thousands of professionals have been certified through its sake programs - now expanded beyond to include shochu, wine, and spirits – to deliver the company's commitment in industry support.

Through this process, Mutual Trading did more than expand its portfolio. It's helped lay the foundation on new understanding and enjoyment of sake for American consumers, at the same time, heralded in much needed economic benefits for business operators.

A Broader Landscape Emerges

By the early 2000s, the cumulative effect of these developments began to take shape.

Japanese cuisine in America was no longer defined by a single-entry point. Sushi remained central, but it now existed

alongside ramen shops, izakaya-style dining, and increasingly sophisticated beverage programs.

Japanese specialty markets—Marukai, Nijiya, Yaohan (current day Mitsuwa)—expanded their presence, making ingredients more accessible and familiar to a broader audience.

At the same time, government-led initiatives began promoting Japanese food culture internationally, supporting events and educational efforts that further strengthened Japanese growers and suppliers' presence abroad.

Together, these forces created a more resilient ecosystem—one capable of evolving with changes in both supply and demand.

From Expansion to Integration

What defines this era is not a single moment, but a shift in position.

Japanese cuisine was no longer something to be introduced. It had become something to be integrated.

Operators could adapt it across formats and price points. Diners could engage with it in different ways—quickly or deliberately, casually or with intention. Categories that once stood apart began to connect, forming a broader, more cohesive landscape.

For Mutual Trading, this period represented a continuation of a long-standing role: not just introducing products but supporting the systems that allow those products to succeed. Ramen, Izakaya, and Jizake were not isolated developments—they were the result of sustained effort, built on relationships, knowledge, and a deep understanding of both producers and operators.

As the industry moves into the next century, new influences—from global travel to evolving consumer preferences—would once again reshape the landscape.

Mutual Tradingのの営業メンバーたちは、業務終了後に勉強会を開催し、日本酒の基礎知識、製造方法、味わいの特徴、適切な提供方法について学ぶ機会を設けました。これらのセッションは実践的かつ明確な内容で、レストランスタッフが来店客にその価値を伝えられるようにすることを目的としていました。

やがて、日本酒に対する認識は徐々に変化していきます。日本酒は単一で画一的な商品ではなく、深みのあるカテゴリーとして捉えられるようになりました。料理とのペアリングや飲み比べを通じて、食体験全体を高める存在へと進化していったのです。

こうした草の根の取り組みは、やがて2010年に正式に設立されたSake School of Americaへと発展していきました。これまでに、同校の日本酒プログラムを通じて、数千人ものプロフェッショナルが認定を受けています。現在では、日本酒にとどまらず、焼酎やワイン、スピリッツへと教育内容も拡大され、同社は業界支援への取り組みをさらに広げています。

このプロセスを通じて、Mutual Tradingは単に商品ラインナップを拡充しただけではありませんでした。米国の消費者にとっての日本酒への理解と楽しみ方の基盤を築くと同時に、事業者にとっても新たな経済的価値をもたらしました。

広がる展望

2000年代初頭になると、これまでのさまざまな取り組みの積み重ねが、ひとつの形として現れ始めました。

米国における日本食は、もはや単一の入口によって定義されるものではなくなくなりました。寿司は引き続き中心的な存在でありながら、ラーメン専門店や居酒屋業態、そして高度化するドリンクプログラムと並存するようになっていました。

マルカイ、ニジヤ、ヤオハン（現在のミツワ）といった小売店が展開を拡大し、食材はより幅広い層にとって入手しやすく、身近な存在となっていました。

同時に、日本政府による海外向けの食文化発信も進み、イベントや教育活動を通じて、日本の生産者やサプライヤーの存在感はさらに強化されていきました。

こうした動きが重なり合うことで、供給と需要の双方の変化に柔軟に対応できる、より強固なエコシステムが形成されていったのです。

「拡大」から「定着」へ

この時代を特徴づけるのは、特定の出来事ではなく、「位置づけの変化」です。

日本食はもはや「紹介されるもの」ではなく、「日常に溶け込み、定着するもの」へと変わっていきました。

事業者はさまざまな業態や価格帯に応じて日本食を柔軟に展開できるようになり、消費者もまた、カジュアルにも意図的にも、多様なスタイルで日本食を楽しむようになりました。これまで個別に存在していたカテゴリー同士がつながり、より広く、一体感のある市場が形成されていきます。

Mutual Tradingにとって、この時期はこれまでの役割の延長線上にあるものでした。単に商品を紹介するのではなく、それらが市場で成功するための仕組みを支える存在であり続けたのです。ラーメン、居酒屋、地酒はいずれも単独で生まれたものではなく、生産者と事業者双方への深い理解、関係性の構築、そして継続的な取り組みの積み重ねによって実現されたものでした。

そして業界が次の100年へと歩みを進める中で、グローバルな国境を越えた人の往来や消費者嗜好の変化といった新たな要素が、再びこの市場の姿を塗り替えていくことになるでしょう。



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Persistent Cost Increases and Enduring Demand Will Shape the Restaurant Industry in 2026

-National Restaurant Association report highlights industry growth tempered by margin pressures-

2026年の外食産業は、継続的なコスト上昇と堅調な需要によって形作られる
-全米レストラン協会の報告書は、利益率の圧迫により業界の成長が抑制されていると指摘-

America's restaurant industry is poised for a year of measured growth, though a cooling labor market, persistent cost pressures, and cautious household spending will continue to challenge operator margins. According to the National Restaurant Association's 2026 State of the Restaurant Industry report, total restaurant and foodservice sales are projected to reach \$1.55 trillion and restaurant operators are forecast to add more than 100,000 jobs.

This projected growth reflects an industry navigating a mixed economic landscape: operators are facing uneven traffic and elevated operating expenses, while consumers – particularly those in lower- and middle-income households – are increasingly stretched. Even so, restaurants remain deeply woven into American culture, with the majority of adults continuing to prioritize dining out, takeout, and delivery, even when budgets tighten.

"Restaurants remain an economic powerhouse that, even when faced with soft consumer spending and sustained margin pressures, drives job growth and fosters entrepreneurship," said Michelle Korsmo, President & CEO of the National Restaurant Association. "The industry's resilience is driven by its people, its adaptability, and its ability to evolve alongside consumers, making continued investment in workforce, innovation, and smart policy solutions essential to long-term growth."

Key findings from this year's report include:

*Modest growth is projected, but under continued pressures. Operators remain cautiously optimistic, even as rising costs and softer traffic persist. Many operators expect sales to hold steady or improve this year, and the Association forecasts modest real sales growth of 1.3 percent.

*Consumer demand remains solid, but their spending power is restrained. Consumers have strong pent-up demand for restaurant experiences. More than 7 in 10 consumers say they would use restaurants more frequently if they had more disposable income. This desire is especially strong among Gen Z and millennials, who continue to lead the industry's off-premises growth.

*The industry workforce will continue to grow, though it will be challenging to fill the open positions. Restaurant and foodservice employment is projected to reach 15.8 million jobs in 2026. Nearly three quarters of operators plan to hire but expect difficulties finding experienced managers and chefs. Longer term labor force challenges—particularly the shrinking 16-to 24-year-old population—underscore the need for sustained workforce development and immigration reform.

*Rising costs remain the industry's key stressor and is limiting operator margins. More than 9 in 10 operators cite food, labor, insurance, energy, and swipe fees as significant challenges. Last year, 42 percent of operators reported their restaurant was not profitable – highlighting the need for operational innovation, workforce investment, and smart policy solutions.

*Workforce development and technology could help release some of the margin pressure. In the current economic environment, restaurant operators are investing in training and tools to support hospitality with technology-driven efficiency. Advances in ordering, AI, and data analytics are helping operators streamline operations, manage costs, and enhance the customer experience.

A Snapshot of the Year Ahead

The uncertainty of 2025 will persist in 2026, requiring operators to rely on their creativity and adaptability to stay agile in the shifting operating



environment. This will mean balancing restrained consumer spending and elevated costs by leveraging technology to create efficiencies that bring down costs and free up staff to focus on consumer experiences.

Operators will be focused on investments in innovative solutions like digital ordering and payments, loyalty programs, automation, and targeted marketing that are strengthening guest engagement and removing friction points from the dining experience.

When it comes to the workforce guiding the consumer experience, operators are committed to building skilled adaptable employees through training and technology. This investment continues to shape the entire U.S. workforce, because more people have worked in restaurants than in any other industry, highlighting the industry's role in individual career growth.

All of this comes together to serve a customer hungry with curiosity and looking for value, not only in price, but in experience.

"Success for operators this year will hinge on their ability to get the math right in a still challenging economic environment," said Dr. Chad Moutray, Chief Economist for the National Restaurant Association. "After a year when 60 percent of operators reported softer customer traffic, there is cautious optimism for improvement. At the same time, operators remain laserfocused on controlling costs while delivering value and providing satisfying menu innovation that resonates with consumers."

About the Report

The 2026 State of the Restaurant Industry report is the Association's annual analysis of the industry's size, sales, workforce, technology, menu trends, and consumer and operator sentiment. It serves as a guiding resource for operators, suppliers, policymakers, and media.■

米国の外食産業は、緩やかな成長が見込まれる一年を迎える見通しだが、労働市場の冷え込み、継続的なコスト圧力、そして家計の慎重な支出姿勢が、引き続き事業者の利益率を圧迫するだろう。全米レストラン協会の「2026年外食産業の現状」報告書によると、レストランおよび外食サービスの総売上高は1兆5500億ドルに達し、レストラン事業者は10万人以上の雇用を創出すると予測されている。

この成長予測は、複雑な経済情勢の中で事業を展開する業界の実情を反映している。事業者側は客足のばらつきや運営費の高騰に直面している一方で、消費者、特に低・中所得世帯の家計はますます逼迫している。それでもなお、レストランはアメリカ文化に深く根付いており、予算が厳しくなっても、成人の大多数は外食やテイクアウト、デリバリーを優先し続けている。

全米レストラン協会のミシェル・コロスモ会長兼最高経営責任者は、「レストラン業界は、個人消費の低迷や継続的な利益率の圧迫に直面しているにもかかわらず、雇用創出を牽引し、起業家精神を育む経済の原動力であり続けている」と述べた。「この業界の回復力は、そこで働く人々、その適応力、そして消費者と共に進化する能力によって支えられている。そのため、長期的な成長には、人材、イノベーション、そして賢明な政策ソリューションへの継続的な投資が不可欠である。」と続けた。

今年の報告書の主な調査結果は以下の通り：

* 緩やかな成長が見込まれるものの、引き続き厳しい状況が続くと予想される。コスト上昇や客足の鈍化が続いているにもかかわらず、事業者らは依然として慎重ながらも楽観的な見方を維持している。多くの事業者は、今年の売上高が横ばいになるか、あるいは改善すると予想しており、同協会は実質売上高が1.3%の緩やかな伸びを示すと予測している。



* 消費者の需要は堅調に推移しているが、購買力は抑制されている。消費者の間では、レストランでの体験に対する強い需要が蓄積されている。消費者の10人中7人以上が、可処分所得が増えればレストランをより頻繁に利用すると答えている。この傾向は、外食産業のテイクアウト・デリバリー市場の成長を牽引し続けているZ世代やミレニアル世代の間で特に顕著。

* 業界の労働力は今後も増加し続ける見込みだが、空いているポストを埋めるのは困難になる。レストランおよび外食産業の雇用者数は、2026年には1,580万人に達すると予測されている。事業者の4分の3近くが採用を計画しているものの、経験豊富なマネージャーやシェフの確保には困難が予想される。長期的な労働力不足の問題、特に16歳から24歳の人口減少は、持続的な人材育成と移民制度改革の必要性を浮き彫りにしている。

* コストの上昇は依然として業界にとって最大の懸念材料であり、事業者の利益率を圧迫している。事業者の10人中9

人以上が、食材費、人件費、保険料、エネルギー費、および決済手数料を大きな課題として挙げている。昨年、事業者の42%が自店のレストランは黒字ではないと報告しており、これは業務の革新、人材への投資、そして賢明な政策ソリューションの必要性を浮き彫りにしている。

* 人材育成と技術の活用により、利益率への圧力はある程度緩和できる可能性がある。現在の経済情勢において、飲食店経営者は、テクノロジーを活用した効率化によって接客サービスを支えるための研修やツールに投資している。注文システム、AI、データ分析の進歩により、経営者は業務の効率化、コスト管理、そして顧客体験の向上を図っている。

展望

2025年の不確実性は2026年も続く見込みであり、事業者は変化する経営環境において機動性を維持するため、創造性と適応力を発揮することが

求められる。つまり、テクノロジーを活用して業務効率化を図り、コストを削減するとともに、スタッフの負担を軽減して顧客体験の向上に注力できるよう、消費者の支出抑制とコスト上昇とのバランスを取っていく必要がある。

飲食店経営者は、デジタル注文・決済、ロイヤリティプログラム、自動化、ターゲットを絞ったマーケティングといった革新的なソリューションへの投資に注力し、顧客との関わりを深めるとともに、食事体験における不便な点を解消していくことになるだろう。

消費者体験を支える人材について言えば、事業者たちは研修やテクノロジーの活用を通じて、スキルが高く適応力のある従業員を育成することに力を注いでいる。レストラン業界で働く人の数は他のどの業界よりも多いため、こうした投資は米国の労働力全体に影響を与え続けており、個人のキャリア形成における同業界の役割の重要性が浮き彫りになっている。

全米レストラン協会のチーフエコノミスト、チャド・モートレイ博士は「今年、事業者にとっての成功は、依然として厳しい経済環境下で、経営のバランスを適切に保つことができるかどうかにかかっている。事業者の60%が客足の鈍化を報告した1年を経て、状況の改善に対する慎重な楽観論が見られる。同時に、事業者はコスト管理に全力を注ぎつつ、価値を提供し、消費者の共感を呼ぶ満足度の高いメニューの革新を実現することに注力し続けている。」と述べている。

今回のレポートについて

「2026年レストラン業界動向レポート」は、全米レストラン協会が毎年実施している、業界の規模、売上高、労働力、テクノロジー、メニューのトレンド、および消費者と事業者の動向に関する分析報告書であり、事業者、サプライヤー、政策立案者、メディアにとっての指針となる資料となっている。

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The Next Move in the Ramen Market

-MENPA's Breakthrough: Delivering 'Convenience × Authenticity'-

ラーメン市場の次なる一手

—“簡便×本格”を実現した MENPA の挑戦—



Traditionally, Japanese cuisine has been defined by sushi, tempura, and sashimi. In recent years, however, ramen has firmly established itself as a core pillar alongside these iconic dishes.

Even in a January 2024 survey, ramen ranked second among the dishes most enjoyed by international visitors to Japan, and global interest in it has continued to grow ever since. In the United States, the ramen boom that began in the early 2000s has continued to gain momentum, to the point where it has now firmly established itself as part of everyday food culture—often drawing lines of customers at popular shops. Against this backdrop, MENPA from Mutual Trading emerges as a groundbreaking new solution in the foodservice space, offering a way to replicate authentic ramen flavors with remarkable ease and consistency. More than just a food product, it is less a food product and more a tool—one that supports labor reduction, consistency, speed, and lower operating costs. In many ways, it signals a shift in the very model of how foodservice businesses can be run.

We spoke with Renee Arima, Vice President of Mutual Trading, who played a key role in the development of this innovative product.

かつて日本食の代表は寿司・天ぷら・刺身とされてきたが、近年はラーメンがその一角に確実に加わっている。2024年1月の調査でも訪日外国人の「特に満足した日本の食事」として第2位にラーメンが選ばれ、その後も世界的な関心は拡大し続けている。米国では2000年代初頭からラーメンブームが継続し、今や日常的に行列ができるほど食文化として定着した。こうした背景の中で登場したMutual TradingのMENPAは、本格的な味わいを簡便に再現する新しい業務用ラーメンとして画期的な存在となっている。単なる食品というより飲食店の“省力化”、“再現性”、“スピード”、“低人件費”などの運営モデルそのものを変えるツールであり可能性を秘めた製品である。今回この開発に携わったMutual Tradingの有馬副社長にお話を伺った。

the greatest challenge lay in achieving both precise flavor design and consistent reproducibility—ensuring that each component retains its distinct character even after microwave preparation. Through repeated prototyping and refinement across four distinct varieties—tonkotsu, miso, shoyu, and tantanmen—it took nearly four years to finally arrive at a level of quality we could truly stand behind.

JRN: In your view, what kinds of challenges in the restaurant and retail industries can MENPA help address?

Arima: One of MENPA's key strengths lies in its remarkably simple preparation process—just add water and heat it in a microwave. This allows even operators without specialized equipment or technical expertise to serve authentic, restaurant-quality ramen. As a result, even restaurants that have never previously offered ramen can easily introduce it as a new menu item, enabling them to broaden and diversify their offerings. Furthermore, with pre-portioned toppings and noodles engineered to deliver an authentic texture, MENPA achieves a level of quality that clearly sets it apart from existing ambient and frozen ramen products.

JRN: In the United States, ramen has become one of the most recognized Japanese foods, standing alongside—or in some cases even surpassing—sushi in popularity. How do you interpret the trajectory of ramen's growing appeal up to this point?

Arima: We believe the popularity of ramen in the United States will continue to grow in the years ahead. A wide variety of ramen styles

JRN: Could you tell us about the key features of your new product, MENPA, including the background behind its development and how it differs from traditional ramen?

Arima: Driven by the rising ramen boom in the United States, the concept began with a simple ambition: to create a ramen product that is easy to prepare, yet delivers an authentic texture and depth of flavor on par with traditional ramen. Clearly distinguishes itself from conventional instant noodles and other convenience products, MENPA was developed with an uncompromising focus on quality across every element—soup, noodles, and toppings. The result is a new category in its own right: a 'truly authentic ramen experience, made easy to serve.

JRN: MENPA strikes a balance between convenience and authenticity—but what was the most challenging aspect in achieving that equilibrium?

Arima: While MENPA is a frozen food product designed around the concept of effortless preparation for anyone,



Renee Arima
Vice President of Mutual Trading

have already been introduced to the market, and consumer preferences are becoming increasingly diverse with each passing year.

Notably, one of the most significant shifts has been the growing number of consumers who have traveled to Japan, leading to a rising demand for experiences such as, 'I want to enjoy the same taste I had in Japan once again.' To address these diverse needs, MENPA offers four flavors simultaneously, providing a wide range of options to suit different preferences.

JRN: In the context of Mutual Trading's history and ongoing initiatives, how would you position MENPA within your product lineup?

Arima: Mutual Trading has long been committed to introducing Japanese food culture to the U.S. market and supporting its widespread adoption, with sushi serving as one of its core contributions. MENPA is positioned as a new initiative that builds on this long-standing experience and network, representing the next stage in our mission to deliver authentic Japanese cuisine in a more accessible and convenient form. We aim to develop and expand MENPA as a product that delivers the value of Japanese cuisine across a wide range of

settings, extending beyond traditional dining occasions.

JRN: What is MENPA's primary target market, and could you also share the anticipated use cases, business formats, and customer segments?

Arima: In particular, we hope to see adoption from restaurants that have not previously offered ramen on their menus. It can be prepared effortlessly in a microwave and served as is, or enhanced with additional toppings, allowing each establishment to create its own original, customized menu offerings. For this reason, we envision MENPA being utilized across a wide range of business formats, including izakaya-style pubs, cafés, and hotels.

JRN: What is your vision for MENPA, and how do you see its future development unfolding?

Arima: Mutual Trading has long been dedicated to supplying high-quality Japanese food ingredients to Japanese restaurants across the United States. Building on the expertise we have developed through years of providing products that meet the exacting standards of professional chefs—including our strengths in product selection, procurement, and quality control—we aim to bring new offerings such as MENPA to the U.S. market. Going forward, we are also committed to contributing to an environment where more people can easily enjoy the appeal of Japanese cuisine.

JRN: Are there any plans for future product development or expansion of the lineup?

Arima: Taking into account current trends in the U.S. ramen market and evolving consumer preferences, we intend to continue expanding our flavor lineup and advancing the development of new products. Moving forward, we will continue to respond flexibly to market changes while striving to offer an increasingly compelling and well-rounded product lineup.■

JRN: 新商品「MENPA」の特長を、開発背景や従来のラーメンとの違いも含めてお聞かせください。

有馬: 米国でのラーメンブームの高まりを背景に、調理が簡便でありながらも本格的な食感と味わいを実現したラーメンを開発したいと考えたのがきっかけです。

従来の即席ラーメンや簡便商品とは一線を画し、スープ・麺・具材のすべてにおいてクオリティにこだわり、「手軽に提供できる本格ラーメン」という新しい選択肢として開発いたしました。

JRN: 「MENPA」は簡便性と本格性を両立していますが、そのバランスを実現する上で最も苦労された点は何でしょうか。

有馬: 冷凍食品でありながら、誰にでも簡単に調理できることをコンセプトとしているため、電子レンジ調理後でもそれぞれの味の個性がしっかりと表現されるよう、味の設計と再現性の両立に最も苦労いたしました。

とんこつ・味噌・醤油・担々麺の4種類それぞれについて試作と改良を重ね、約4年の歳月をかけてようやく納得のいく品質に上げることができました。

JRN: 外食業界や小売業において、「MENPA」はどのような課題解決につながるとお考えですか。

有馬: 水を加えて電子レンジで温めるだけというシンプルな調理工程により、専門的な設備や技術がなくても本格的なラーメンを提供できる点が大きな特長です。

そのため、これまでラーメンを扱っていなかったレストラン様でも新たなメニューとして導入しやすく、メニューの幅を広げることにつながります。

また、具材があらかじめセットされている点や、本格的な麺の食感を実現している点において、既存の常温・冷凍ラーメン商品とは一線を画す品質となっております。

JRN: 米国においてラーメンは、「Sushi」と並ぶ、あるいはそれ以上に認知が高まっている日本食の一つとなっております。これまでのラーメン人気の流れをどのように捉えていらっしゃいますか。

有馬: 米国におけるラーメン人気は、今

後も継続していくと考えております。すでに多様なスタイルのラーメンが市場に紹介されており、消費者の嗜好も年々多様化しています。

特に、日本への渡航経験を持つ消費者の増加により、「日本で食べた味をもう一度楽しみたい」というニーズが高まっている点は大きな変化です。

こうした多様なニーズに応えるため、「MENPA」では4種類のフレーバーを同時に展開し、幅広い味の選択肢をご提案しております。

JRN: Mutual Trading のこれまでの取り組みや歴史の中で、「MENPA」はどのような位置づけの商品とお考えでしょうか。

有馬: Mutual Tradingはこれまで、寿司をはじめとする日本食文化を米国市場に紹介し、広く普及させてまいりました。「MENPA」は、その長年の経験とネットワークを活かし、次のステージとして“より手軽に本格的な日本食を届ける”ための新たな取り組みとして位置づけています。

外食だけでなく、より多様なシーンで日本食の価値を提供するための商品として展開してまいります。

JRN: 「MENPA」の主な販売ターゲットについて教えてください。また、想定される利用シーンや、業態・顧客層などがあればお聞かせください。

有馬: 特に、これまでラーメンを提供していなかったレストラン様にご採用いただきたいと考えております。電子レンジで簡単に調理し、そのまま提供いただくことも可能ですし、トッピングを追加することで各店舗様独自のアレンジメニューとして展開することも可能です。そのため、居酒屋やカフェ、ホテルなど、幅広い業態での活用を想定しております。

JRN: 「MENPA」を通じて実現したいビジョンや、今後の展開についてお聞かせください。

有馬: Mutual Tradingはこれまで、米国の日本食レストランに向けて高品質な日本食材を提供してまいりました。

プロの料理人の皆様にご満足いただける商品を提供し続ける中で培ってきた選定力・調達力・品質基準を活かし、「MENPA」をはじめとする新たな商品を米国市場に展開していきたいと考えております。

今後は、より多くの方々に日本食の魅力を手軽に楽しんでいただける環境づくりに貢献してまいります。

JRN: 今後の商品展開やラインアップ拡充の予定があれば教えてください。

有馬: 米国のラーメン市場のトレンドや消費者ニーズを踏まえながら、フレーバーの拡充や新商品の開発を進めていきたいと考えております。

今後も市場の変化に柔軟に対応しながら、より魅力的なラインアップを提供してまいります。



Where Terroir Meets Technology: New Frontiers in Brewing

-Insights from Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. and Kobe Winery-



地域と技術が織りなす醸造の今

—白鶴酒造と神戸ワイナリー訪問で見た、日本酒・ワインの新しい挑戦—



I participated in a two-day Hakutsuru Brewery Tour in Higashinada-ku, Kobe, starting on February 3. Departing from the hotel at 8 a.m., we traveled by bus for about 30 minutes before arriving at a sake vessel crafting factory that stood like a single house amid vast open fields. After arrival, we enjoyed a sake vessel-making experience, engraving characters of our choice to create original, personalized vessels.

Lunch featured a food pairing of wild game cuisine using wild boar meat—tasted for the first time—and three types of sake from Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd.. We experienced the harmony between dishes that made use of local ingredients and sake, spending a luxurious moment. In the afternoon, we visited the bottling

facility of Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd.. In the large, neatly organized factory, we observed up close how sake was filled into as many as 10,000 bottles per minute. The Hakutsuru Sake Brewery Museum is a renovated sake brewery built in the early Taisho period and operated until 1969. In addition to displaying brewing equipment and tools preserved by the company, it presents the sake-making process in a three-dimensional format, using life-sized figures placed throughout the exhibits. From rice washing, rice steaming, cooling, introducing koji mold, and yeast starter preparation, through main mash fermentation and pressing preparation, pressing, sediment removal and pasteurization, aging, and finally barreling, we were able to experience the full traditional

sake-making process. Touching the brewing techniques that have been continuously passed down since the Edo period, the participants on the tour were visibly impressed as well.

In contrast to the traditional image, we also visited a microbrewery. In a compact brewing space of about 37 square meters, a rice polishing machine, rice washing machine, rice steaming equipment, koji-making machine, and fermentation equipment were densely installed, giving the impression that anyone with basic knowledge could try making sake. In the evening, we returned to the hotel and enjoyed another food pairing dinner with three types of sake from Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd..

The following day, we once again toured the facilities of Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. and experienced a sake and food pairing session. In the afternoon, we visited Kobe Winery in Nishi-ku, Kobe. In December 2024, Kobe Agricultural Promotion Corporation transferred its wine business to Hakutsuru, marking a new initiative to revive the regional brand “Kobe Wine.” Kobe Wine was launched in the 1980s as part of Kobe’s agricultural promotion initiatives, developed around the concept of “wine that pairs well with Kobe beef.” At its peak, annual sales reached one million bottles. In recent years, however, demand has declined and aging facilities have contributed to a drop in production to just under 200,000 bottles per year. Through the business succession, Hakutsuru Sake

Brewing Co., Ltd. has sought not only to preserve the brand but also to enhance quality, while strengthening collaboration with local farmers and building a more sustainable production system.

The first product launched after the succession, “Kobe Wine Minori,” is made from 100% Kobe-grown grapes and reflects a strong focus on quality, with processes such as hand harvesting and careful sorting. For Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd., this business succession is not merely a form of diversification, but an initiative with social significance aimed at preserving regional brands and supporting local agriculture.

In the evening, we returned to Kobe Port and boarded a cruise ship, taking in the night views of the harbor and Mount Rokko. Before long, conversation turned to the sake breweries, wineries, museums, and even the wild boar hot pot we had experienced over the past two days, and we found ourselves raising a toast with appetizers and sparkling sake. Although the time spent enjoying the night scenery felt brief, the cruise soon came to an end as we reflected on a rich and fulfilling two-day journey through Kobe.

Through visits to Hakutsuru Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. and Kobe Winery, the journey became an intellectually engaging experience that offered firsthand insight into sake and wine culture, pairing with local ingredients, and the ingenuity found in modern brewing facilities.■



神戸 戸市東灘区にある白鶴酒造工場見学ツアーに2月3日から2日間参加した。午前8時にホテルを出発し、バスで約30分、広々とした草原に佇む一軒家のような酒器製造工場に到着。到着後は酒器作り体験を楽しみ、各自好きな文字を刻印してオリジナルの器を作った。

昼食は、初めて味わうイノシシ肉を使ったジビエ料理と、白鶴の日本酒3種類を組み合わせたフードペアリングを堪能。地元の食材を活かした料理と日本酒の相性を体験し、贅沢なひとときを過ごした。午後は白鶴のボトリング工場見学。整然と整理された広い工場では、毎分1万本もののボトルに酒が充填される様子を間近で見学した。白鶴酒造資料館は、大正初期に建造され、1969年まで稼働していた酒蔵を改装したもので、同社に伝わる酒造りの設備や道具を展示するだけでなく、等身大の人形を随所に配して酒造工程を立体的に紹介している。洗米にはじまり、蒸米、放冷、麴取込み、酛仕込み、酛仕込み・酛出し、上槽、滓引き・火入れ、貯蔵、そして樽詰までの伝統的な酒造りの工程を体感出来て、江戸時代から連綿と伝わる酒造りの技法にふれて、同行した参加者も感心していた。

伝統的なイメージとは対照的な、マイクロブルワリーも見学。37平方メートルほどのコンパクトな醸造スペースには精米機や洗米器、蒸米装置、麴製造機、発酵設備がぎっしりと設置されており、基礎知識さえあれば誰でも日本酒造りに挑戦できそうな印象を受けた。夜はホテルに戻り、夕食でも3種類の白鶴酒とフードペアリングを楽しんだ。

翌日は、白鶴酒造の工場見学を再度行い、日本酒と料理のペアリングを体験。午後は神戸市西区にある神戸ワイナリーを訪問した。2024年12月、白鶴酒造は神戸農政公社からワイン事業を承継し、地域ブランド「神戸ワイン」の再生に乗り出した。神戸ワインは1980年代に神



戸市の農業振興策の一環として誕生し、「神戸ビーフに合うワイン」をコンセプトに発展。一時は年間100万本を販売したが、近年は需要低迷や設備老朽化で20万本弱に落ち込んでいた。白鶴酒造は事業承継を通じ、ブランド存続と品質向上を図るとともに、地元農家との連携を強化し、持続可能な生産体制を構築。承継後の第一弾商品「神戸ワイン 新酒 神戸みのり」は神戸産ぶどう100%を使用し手摘み収穫と選果を行うなど品質重視の姿勢を示した。白鶴にとって、事業承継は単なる多角化ではなく、地域ブランドと農業を守る社会的意義を持つ取り組みである。

夕方、神戸港に戻ると、港と六甲山の夜景を眺めながら、客船に乗船。訪問した酒蔵やワイナリー、資料館、そしてイノシシ鍋の話題で盛り上がる間もなく、前菜と泡酒で乾杯。夜景を楽しむ時間は短かったものの、充実した2日間の体験を振り返りながら、神戸港クルーズはあっという間に終了した。

白鶴酒造と神戸ワイナリーの訪問を通じて、日本酒とワインの文化、地元の食材とのペアリング、そして醸造現場の工夫を肌で感じることができた、知的好奇心を満たす旅となった。



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お問い合わせ: Japanese Restaurant Academy

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練習問題

- 1 次のうち、食を扱う場所で微生物の蔓延を防ぐために最も重要なことは何か?
- 食べ物を扱うときに手袋を着用すること
 - すべての身に着けている貴金属を外すこと
 - ヘアネットを被ること
 - 効率的に手を洗うこと

- 2 不適切に解凍された食品は危険を伴う可能性がある。なぜなら・・・
- その食品の味または色を変えるかもしれないから
 - 解凍中にバクテリアが増殖するかもしれないから
 - お客様が凍った食品の一部を偶然食べるかもしれないから
 - 不適切な解凍は中心の大部分が凍ったままになるかもしれないから

回答 :1)d 2)b

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June 2026

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Sake Industry's Corporate Efforts

日本酒業界の努力 P28

How Ramen, Izakaya, and Premium Sake Found Their Place
in American Dining

拉麵、居酒屋與高端清酒：
日本料理如何深耕美國餐飲市場 P30

Anime, Voice Actors, and Japanese Sake. Part 1

動漫、聲優與日本酒 其一 P34

What is yeast...? 酵母是什麼 P35

美國清酒燒酎烈酒研究所 P36

As Summer Arrives, Japan's Sake Industry Enters a New Season

東京地酒散步 / 迎來夏季的日本酒行業 P37

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Honorary Sake Sommelier



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Master Sake Sommelier
 Finalist of the 2nd World Sake Sommelier Competition.
 Graduated from Keio University Faculty of Law, Department of Political Science. Worked for Nomura Securities for 10 years. Former president of California Sushi Academy Former chief of planning dept. at Mutual Trading.



David Kudo

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 Born Kita-Akita City, Akita Prefecture.
 Took over as Executive Officer of the Japanese Food Trend News founded in 1991, when the predecessor was assigned back to Japan. Currently distributed as Japan Restaurant News (20,000 issues published electronically) in North America, Japan, and Southeast Asia.



Sake Industry's Corporate Efforts

The average amount an American spends at a full-fledged casual restaurant is, including beverages, about \$20. If we suppose the entrée is \$14.50, \$5.50 is spent on alcoholic beverages. The majority of glass wines are priced at \$4-7 for 180-220ml servings, and many bottled beers are \$3.50-4.50. Comparatively, sake from Japan with the same serving size as wine (180ml) is \$8.50-9.50. The price is 2.5 times higher, and the selections are more limited.

Japan-made sake utterly lacks selections in this price range. 720ml-bottle sake are sold in restaurants for \$40 and higher; this makes the product a challenge to order, or a special occasion-only option to many. Trader Joe's Charles Shaw made a splash in the wine world when it was introduced, and at \$2.99 for a 750ml bottle, it's still selling strong and bringing in new wine lovers. Many must have started with this "Two Buck Chuck," fallen in love with wine, and

begun buying more expensive wines. Initially considered as a threat to the normally \$4-5 wine industry, Charles Shaw contributed to expanding the wine industry that eventually benefitted all wine businesses.

There is no need to dramatically reduce quality to reach this price point, but Japanese corporations should be able to achieve a certain level of it, considering what has been achieved in the past with home appliances and cars. ■

日本酒業界の努力

美國人在一般餐廳的全套餐飲的平均單價約為20美元，包括酒水。假設平均主菜價格為14.50美元，在酒類上花費大約5.50美元。葡萄酒種類繁多，每杯約4至7美元（約180至200毫升），還有多種小瓶裝啤酒，價格為3.50至4.50美元。相比之下，日本的地酒（葡萄酒杯180毫升）換算價格約為每杯8.50至9.50美元。這個差異大約

是2.5倍，而且酒的種類有限。

但是，來自日本的日本酒在這個價格範圍內沒有變化。目前720ml的餐廳銷售價在40美元以上，這是一個要有勇氣的選擇，除非客人是在特殊場合才會購買。在葡萄酒的世界有Trader Joe's "Charles Shaw" 2.99美元的酒（750毫升），一時間在酒壇上是個熱門話題，至今依然健在，培養了很多葡萄酒愛好者。最初很多人

投資3美元，漸漸喜歡它，然後轉向價格更高的葡萄酒。起初，對於成本在4至5美元左右的葡萄酒行業似乎是一個威脅，但相反，可以說葡萄酒人口相對增加了，整體的餅也擴大了。

日本酒沒有必要大幅降低質量並把價格定在這個水平，但從日本過去的電器和汽車的例子來看，這可能取決於企業的努力。

SushiaSake

"Creative Sushi & Sake" illustrates the techniques of the finest sushi chefs throughout the world, concentrating on the artistic presentations, unique ingredients and advanced methods of preparation. The writers were all top Japanese professional chefs with many years of experience.
 (published in English by All Japan News, Inc., in 2005)

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32 fl.oz.



How Ramen, Izakaya, and Premium Sake Found Their Place in American Dining

拉麵、居酒屋與高端清酒： 日本料理如何深耕美國餐飲市場

為紀念將日本風味引入美國屆滿100週年，Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）深度回顧其傳奇歷史——從早期向移民社群供應生活必需品，到後來領航壽司產業，使其成為美國探索日本料理的首選門戶。

In this third installment, the story shifts once again—this time to a period of diversification. By the 1990s, sushi was no longer a novelty. It had taken hold across the country, evolving from a niche offering in Little Tokyo to a recognizable fixture in American dining. As popularity expanded, so too did prospects for the business world to enter the Washoku industry as Japanese cuisine expanded beyond a single defining category.

What followed was not a singular breakthrough, but a steady unfolding. New formats emerged. Beverage programs evolved. Operators began exploring how Japanese cuisine could move beyond occasion dining to become engrained into consumers' routine dining lifestyle.

This period—spanning the 1990s through the early 2010s—marked a transition from introduction to expansion, as Japanese cuisine in America grew into something broader, more adaptable, and more deeply rooted in the restaurant landscape.

The Shift Toward Casual Dining

The forces that shaped this transformation were not limited to the kitchen. They were economic, cultural, and structural.

Following the Plaza Accord and the fluctuations of the yen through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Japanese corporate presence overseas began to contract. The expatriate communities that had once supported high-end Japanese restaurants grew smaller, and many establishments that relied on that customer base struggled to sustain themselves.

In their place, a new model began to emerge—one less dependent on corporate clientele and more aligned with everyday diners. Accessibility, value, and repeatability



日本料理的演進：拉麵跨越了既有框架，居酒屋重塑了用餐節奏，而地酒（Jizake）則將這一切完美聯繫在一起。

became increasingly important.

At the same time, dining culture in Japan was undergoing a parallel shift. Izakaya-style establishments, built around small plates and social dining, were gaining popularity. Menus expanded beyond formal structures, incorporating approachable dishes such as curry rice and yakisoba—foods that could be served quickly, shared easily, and enjoyed without ceremony.

In the United States, these changes opened new pathways. Japanese cuisine could now exist outside the confines of special occasions. It could adapt to different price points, different service models, and to much wider audiences.

For Mutual Trading, the implications were clear. Supporting the next phase of growth meant moving beyond to help operators

轉向休閒餐飲的市場格局

形塑這場轉型的力量不限於廚房，更涵蓋了經濟、文化與結構性的變革。

隨著《廣場協議》簽署及1980年代末至1990年代日圓匯率波動，日本企業的海外駐點開始收縮。曾經支撐高端日料餐廳的外籍社群逐漸縮小，許多仰賴此類客群的餐館面臨生存挑戰。

取而代之的是一種嶄新的模式——降低對企業客戶的依賴，轉而貼近一般大眾讀者。親和力、價值感與可複製性變得日益重要。

與此同時，日本當地的餐飲文化也正經歷平行轉型。以小碟料理與社交用餐為核心的「居酒屋」型態日益盛行。菜單跨越了正式結構的框架，納入咖哩飯、炒麵等親民料理——這些食物出餐迅速、易於分享，且無需拘泥於禮節即可綻放美味。

在美國，這些變革開拓了嶄新的渠道。日本料理自此得以在特定場合之外進軍全新領域，適應不同的價位與服務模式，觸及更廣泛的受眾。

對於（共同貿易公司）而言，這份趨勢的意義十分明確：要支持下一階段的成長，必須跨出既有框架，協助經驗尚淺的營運人員掌握日本料理的製程，並推出壽司以外的新型態菜單概念。

在系列專題的第三章節中，敘事再度轉向——這次是進入了多元化的轉型期。到了1990年代，壽司不再是稀奇事物，它已在全美扎根，從小東京的小眾選擇演變為美國餐飲中廣為人知的指標。隨著熱度升溫，日本料理開始跨越單一品類的定義，為商業界進軍和食（Washoku）產業開拓了無限商機。

隨之而來的並非單一的突破，而是一場穩定的演進。新型態的餐廳湧現、飲品計畫持續進化，營運者開始探索日本料理如何從「特定場合的聚餐」跨越到消費者的日常餐飲生活。

這段跨越1990年代至2010年代初期的時期，標誌著從「引入」到「擴張」的轉型，日本料理在美國變得更具適應力、更宏觀，並在餐飲版圖中深深扎根。

manage diverse staffing with less familiarity in Japanese food preparation, along with rolling out new menu concepts beyond sushi.

Ramen: From Early Roots to a Scalable Category
Among the categories that would define this era, ramen occupies a unique place—both as an early arrival and as a late bloomer.

Ramen's presence in the United States dates back further than many assume. One of the earliest known ramen specialty shops, Sapporo Ya, opened in Little Tokyo in 1970, introducing the dish to a small but dedicated audience. Later, Kouraku, established in 1979, would become one of the longest continuously operating ramen restaurants in the country, quietly sustaining the category across generations.

Despite this early foothold, ramen remained limited in scope for decades, largely confined to Japanese communities and overshadowed by the rapid rise of sushi. What changed in the 1990s and beyond was not the dish itself, but the conditions surrounding it.

Mutual Trading recognized that ramen's potential lay in its ability to scale—to offer depth of flavor while remaining accessible,

cost-effective, and adaptable to different formats. To support that potential, the company focused on one of the most critical elements: consistency.

Early efforts included the domestic production of *nama ramen* (fresh noodles), a process that required both technical precision and operational discipline. Production began in the early hours of the morning, with teams working to achieve the texture, elasticity, and reliability needed for professional kitchens.

At the same time, Mutual Trading expanded access to the broader ecosystem of ramen ingredients—broths, tare, oils, and toppings—helping operators construct menus that balanced authenticity with efficiency.

Ramen's rise was gradual, built on repetition rather than spectacle. But over time, it proved uniquely suited to the changing market. It could be positioned as both casual and specialized, affordable yet deeply satisfying. It invited customization while maintaining a clear identity.

What began as a niche offering evolved into a foundational category—one that would eventually anchor new generation of Japanese dining concepts across the United States.



幸樂：備受愛戴的「中華町」
創立於1979年的「幸樂」（Kouraku），作為備受愛戴的「中華町」（街坊日式中華料理店）營運至今，供應包含中華療癒美食在內的多樣化菜單。這間深夜食堂曾吸引無數道奇隊投手野茂英雄的球迷在賽後聚集，野茂本人也曾於90年代中期在此用餐；30年後的今天，這裡依然吸引著大谷翔平的廣大粉絲。圖中所示為其深受歡迎的「湯麵」（Tanmen）蔬菜拉麵。



上方圖片：
「札幌屋」（Sapporo-Ya）作為全美首間拉麵專門店，當時門庭若市，客群包含思念故鄉風味的新移民家庭，以及從日本服役歸來的軍人。

Sapporo-ya Luncheon			
Sapporo Ramen			
1. 塩ラーメン	Salt Ramen		135
2. しゅう油ラーメン	Soy Sauce Ramen		150
3. みそラーメン	Miso Ramen		160
4. ツuyuラーメン	Butter Ramen		160
5. 冷やしラーメン	Cold Ramen		200
6. しょう油ラーメン	Shoyu Ramen		180
鉄板焼きたて Teppan-yaki Choro Mein			
1. 鉄板ステーキ焼きたて	Teppan Pork Choro Mein		150
2. 鉄板ステーキ焼きたて	Teppan Beef Choro Mein		160
鉄板お好み焼 Okonomiyaki Fried Egg with Vegetables			
1. 牛玉お好み焼	Beef & Egg Okonomiyaki		135
2. えび玉お好み焼	Shrimp & Egg Okonomiyaki		200
餃子	Gyoza		120
ライス、お好み	Rice with protein	20	
ビール	Beer	American	30
ジュース	Juice	Cola	20
ソフトドリンク	Soft Drink	Japanese	75
デザート	Desert	Japanese Sake	150

右圖：
這是「札幌屋」1970年開張時的午間菜單。當時日圓兌美元匯率為360比1，這使得從日本進口食材的成本得以維持在較低水平。

拉麵：從早期根源到具規模性的類別
在定義這段時代的品類中，拉麵佔據了獨特地位——它既是早期的開拓者，也是大器晚成的典型。

拉麵在美國的足跡比許多人想像中更早，1970年便有拉麵專賣店「札幌屋」（Sapporo Ya）在小東京開張，向少數忠實顧客介紹這道料理。隨後於1979年創立的「幸樂」（Koraku），成為全美營運最久的拉麵店之一，默默地守護這項品類跨越世代。

儘管早已扎根，拉麵在隨後數十年間的規模依然受限，大多侷限於日裔社群，且光芒被迅速崛起的壽司所掩蓋。進入1990年代後，改變的並非料理本身，而是其周邊的市場環境。

Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）意識到拉麵的潛能在於其「可規模化」的能力——在保有風味深度的同時，兼具親和力與成本效益，並能適配各種營運型態。為了支持這份潛能，公司專注於最關鍵的元素：一致性。

早期的努力包含了在美國本土生產「生拉麵」（Fresh Noodles），這是一項結

合技術精準度與營運紀律的過程。每天凌晨便開始生產，團隊致力於打造專業廚房所需的口感、彈性與可靠品質。

與此同時，Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）擴大了拉麵食材生態系的佈局——從湯底、醬汁（Tare）、風味油到配料，協助營運者建立兼顧「正宗感」與「效率」的菜單。

拉麵的崛起是漸進式的，建立在持續的深耕而非一時的噱頭。然而在時間印證下，拉麵展現出對市場格局演變的高度適應力。它既能定位為休閒日常，亦能展現專精的職人特色；雖然價位親民，卻能提供深層的飽足感與慰藉。它在鼓勵客製化選擇的同時，依然保有鮮明的身分連結。

這項最初僅存在於小眾市場的選擇，如今已進化為一個基石品類——更在日後成為支撐全美新一代日本料理餐飲概念的核心支柱。



居酒屋將用餐轉化為情感連結

為賓客帶來更多樣性、更流暢的節奏以及更深厚的凝聚力。

Izakaya: A New Way of Dining

If ramen expanded what could be served, izakaya redefined how it could be experienced.

Traditional Japanese dining in the United States had long been structured around individual dishes and formal service. Izakaya introduced a different rhythm—one centered on movement, variety, and shared experience.

Small plates allowed for flexibility. Menus could shift with seasons, trends, or inventory. Diners were encouraged to order incrementally, creating a more dynamic and interactive experience. Beverage programs, rather than sitting alongside the menu, became integral to it.

For operators, this format offered practical advantages. It supported higher table turnover, diversified revenue streams, and reduced the risk associated with large-format dishes. It also aligned with broader shifts in American dining, where consumers were increasingly drawn to communal and exploratory experiences.

Mutual Trading's role in this transition was to support not just ingredients, but the structure behind the format. This meant expanding into a wider range of products—sauces, marinades, prepared items, and beverages—while maintaining the consistency and quality that operators depended on.

In doing so, the company developed new products to help enable a format that could adapt across markets, bridging traditional Japanese dining with contemporary expectations.

Jizake: A Turning Point in Sake

If the evolution of ramen and izakaya reflected changes in food, the emergence of jizake marked a turning point for beverages.

The shift did not begin with a strategy, but with a moment.

In the late 1980s, while attending a golf tournament in Hawaii, then president Noritoshi Kanai found himself seated in a restaurant when he noticed something unusual. From across the room, a fragrance drifted through the air—delicate, aromatic, and unlike the sake typically encountered in the United States.

He asked what was being served.

It was a Junmai Ginjo from Midorikawa Brewery in Niigata.

At the time, the U.S. sake market was defined by domestic production and familiar patterns of service—warm, accessible, and modest in price. Mutual Trading's own top-selling sake reflected that reality: reliable, consistent, and widely accepted.

But this experience suggested something else entirely. A category existed that had not yet been fully introduced—one defined by nuance, craftsmanship, and regional identity.

For Kanai, it was not simply a matter of importing new products. It was an opportunity to redefine how sake could be understood.

Working closely with Tokyo Mutual Trading, the company began traveling across Japan, building relationships with breweries and sourcing premium sake that reflected the diversity of the category. Early introductions included brands such as Hakkaisan, Hakutaka, Kamotsuru, Kiku-Masamune, Kikusui, Kubota, Shimeharitsuru, Suigei, Sumiyoshi, Tamano Hikari, and Takenotsuyu, each offering a distinct expression of style and origin. Yet the challenge was not supply—it was perception.

居酒屋:飲食體驗的新維度

如果說拉麵拓展了「料理的內容」，那麼居酒屋則重新定義了「體驗的方式」。

長期以來，美國的日式餐飲多環繞著單一主菜與正式服務，居酒屋則引入了一種截然不同的節奏——一種以動態、多樣性與共享體驗為核心的型態。

小碟料理賦予了靈活性。菜單能隨季節、趨勢或庫存動態調整，鼓勵食客採進階式點餐，營造出更具互動感的氛圍。飲品計畫不再只是配角，而是成為菜單不可或缺的一環。

對於營運者而言，這種模式提供了極高的實務優勢。它支援了更高的翻桌率、實現了營收來源的多元化，並降低了與大型主菜相關的風險。此外，它也契合了美國餐飲市場更廣泛的格局轉變——當時的消費者日益受到社交共享與探索性用餐體驗的吸引。

Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）在此轉型中的角色，不僅是供應食材，更是支援整套營運結構。這意味著將產品線擴展至醬料、醃漬品、半成品及各類飲品，同時維持讓營運者信賴的品質一致性。

藉此，公司開發了多款新品，協助居酒屋型態跨越市場界限，在傳統日本料理與現代消費期待之間架起橋樑。

地酒(Jizake):清酒產業的轉折點

若說拉麵與居酒屋的演進體現了食物的變革，那麼「地酒」（Jizake）的湧現則標誌著飲品市場的轉捩點。

這場變革並非始於縝密的策略，而是源於一個瞬間。

1980年代末，金井紀年會長在夏威夷參加高爾夫球賽後，在餐廳用餐時注意到一件不尋常的事。一股細緻且芬芳的香氣飄散在空氣中，與當時美國常見的清酒截然不同。

他詢問後得知，那是來自新潟縣「綠川酒造」的純米吟釀。

當時，美國清酒市場多由本土生產與熟悉的服務模式主導：加熱飲用、親民且

價位適中。Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）當時最熱銷的產品亦反映了此一現實：品質穩定且接受度高。

然而，這次體驗揭示了一個全然不同的領域：一個尚未被引進、以細膩感性、極致工藝與地區身分連結為核心的高端品類。

對金井而言，這不僅是進口新品的問題，更是一個重新定義大眾對清酒認知的機會。

透過與 Tokyo Mutual Trading 密切合作，公司開始走訪全日本，與各酒造建立夥伴關係，並採購能體現品類多樣性的優質清酒。早期引進的品牌包括八海山、白鷹、賀茂鶴、菊正宗、菊水、久保田、〆張鶴、醉鯨、住吉、玉乃光及竹之露，每一款都展現了風格與產地身分連結的獨特表達。

然而，當時的挑戰並非在於供應——而是在於「大眾認知」。

一杯冰鎮的高端純米吟釀，其售價遠高於當時消費者的認知，要如何才能在美國菜單上綻放光芒？

答案在於「教育」

Mutual Trading的銷售同仁發起了「學習會」（Benkyo-Kai），這是一種在工餘時間進行的學習課程。業務代表們在會中深入研習清酒的基礎知識：從釀造工藝、風味特質，到不同等級清酒應有的服務禮儀。這些課程內容實務且直接，旨在賦予餐廳服務人員足夠的專業知識，好讓他們能向賓客精準傳達產品的價值。

漸漸地，市場敘事發生了轉變。清酒不再是單一且平面的產品，而是一個具備深度的品類——可以進行餐酒搭配、探索，並昇華賓客的用餐體驗。

隨著時間推移，這些草根式的努力演變為2010年正式成立的「美國清酒學校」（Sake School of America）。至今，已有數千名專業人士透過其計畫獲



隨季節更迭的小碟料理強調食材的新鮮度與菜單的靈活性，不僅減輕了餐廳經營者的採購壓力，更有效減少了食材浪費。



from left:
Take No Tsuyu Junmai
Kamotsuru Junmai Ginjo
Tamano Hikari Junmai Daiginjo
Kubota Hekijyu Yamahai Junmai Daiginjo
Hakkaisan Tokubetsu Honjozo
Hakkaisan Junmai Ginjo
Kikusui Junmai Ginjo
Suigei Tokubetsu Junmai
Kiku-Masamune Kimoto Junmai
Gin Sumiyoshi "Silver Cap" Tokubetsu Junmai
Hakutaka Tokubetsu Junmai

地酒 Jizake: 緊隨80年代地酒在日本的巨大熱潮，Mutual Trading開發了此品類，為美國人開啟了探索香氣與餐酒搭配的大門，透過高端地酒昇華了整體用餐體驗。

How could a chilled glass of premium junmai ginjo, priced significantly higher than what customers were accustomed to, find its place on American menus?

The answer lay in education.

Mutual Trading's sales members initiated a benkyo-kai, after-hours study sessions with reps learning the fundamentals of sake: how it's brewed, how it tastes, and how different grades of sake should be served. These sessions were practical and direct, focused on educating restaurant servers with the knowledge to communicate value to guests.

Gradually, the narrative shifted. Sake was no longer a single, uniform product, but a category with depth—one that could be paired, explored, and uplift guests' dining experience.

Over time, these grassroots efforts would evolve into the Sake School of America, formally established in 2010. Today, thousands of professionals have been certified through its sake programs - now expanded beyond to include shochu, wine, and spirits - to deliver the company's commitment in industry support.

Through this process, Mutual Trading did more than expand its portfolio. It's helped lay the foundation on new understanding and enjoyment of sake for American consumers, at the same time, heralded in much needed economic benefits for business operators.

A Broader Landscape Emerges

By the early 2000s, the cumulative effect of these developments began to take shape.

Japanese cuisine in America was no longer defined by a single-entry point. Sushi remained central, but it now existed

alongside ramen shops, izakaya-style dining, and increasingly sophisticated beverage programs.

Japanese specialty markets—Marukai, Nijiya, Yaohan (current day Mitsuwa)—expanded their presence, making ingredients more accessible and familiar to a broader audience.

At the same time, government-led initiatives began promoting Japanese food culture internationally, supporting events and educational efforts that further strengthened Japanese growers and suppliers' presence abroad.

Together, these forces created a more resilient ecosystem—one capable of evolving with changes in both supply and demand.

From Expansion to Integration

What defines this era is not a single moment, but a shift in position.

Japanese cuisine was no longer something to be introduced. It had become something to be integrated.

Operators could adapt it across formats and price points. Diners could engage with it in different ways—quickly or deliberately, casually or with intention. Categories that once stood apart began to connect, forming a broader, more cohesive landscape.

For Mutual Trading, this period represented a continuation of a long-standing role: not just introducing products but supporting the systems that allow those products to succeed. Ramen, Izakaya, and Jizake were not isolated developments—they were the result of sustained effort, built on relationships, knowledge, and a deep understanding of both producers and operators.

As the industry moves into the next century, new influences—from global travel to evolving consumer preferences—would once again reshape the landscape.

得認證——現已擴展至燒酎、葡萄酒及烈酒領域——實踐了公司對支持產業發展的承諾。

在此過程中，Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）所做的不僅僅是擴張其產品組合。它協助奠定了美國消費者對清酒全新認知與鑑賞的基石，同時也為餐飲經營者帶來了迫切需要的經濟效益。

宏觀版圖的浮現

進入2000年代初期，這些發展的累積效應開始顯現。美國的日料料理不再由單一門戶定義。壽司依然核心，但已與拉麵店、居酒屋型態餐飲及日益精緻的飲品計畫並駕齊驅。

日本超市——如 Marukai、Nijiya 及 Yaohan（現為 Mitsuwa）——也擴張了版圖，讓日式食材更貼近大眾。

同時，政府主導的計畫開始在國際間推廣日本飲食文化，透過活動與教育，進一步強化了日本生產者與供應商在海外的地位。

這股合力打造出一個更具韌性的生態系統——使其具備隨供需變化而持續演進的能力。

從擴張到深度融合

定義這個時代的並非單一瞬間，而是立場的轉移。

日本料理不再是「待引進」的事物，而是「待融合」的元素。

營運者能在各種型態與價位中靈活運用。食客也能以不同方式參與其中——無論是快速用餐或悉心品味、休閒社交或具感性的正式饗宴。曾經各自獨立的品類開始產生連結，交織成一個更宏觀且具凝聚力的市場格局。

對於 Mutual Trading（共同貿易公司）而言，這段時期代表了其長期角色的延續：不僅是引進產品，更是支援讓這些產品走向成功的系統。拉麵、居酒屋與地酒並非孤立的發展——它們是基於深厚關係、專業知識以及對生產者與營運者深入理解下，多年持續努力的印證。

隨著產業邁向下一個百年，從全球旅遊趨勢到演變中的消費者偏好，全新的影響力將再次重塑市場格局。



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日期：6月15日（周一）（中文线上课程）
时间：9:00 am – 4:00 pm PT
12:00 pm – 7:00 pm ET

课程费用：~~\$475~~（含教材及12款清酒品鉴样品）
• MTC客户专享价：\$298（37%优惠）
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Kosuke Kuji
Nanbu Bijin Inc.
Fifth Generation
Brewery Owner

Timothy Sullivan
Sake Samurai



Takao Matsukawa
International
Sake Sommelier
Latin Region Specialist
Mutual Trading



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Sara Guterbock
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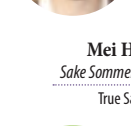
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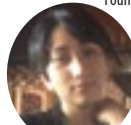
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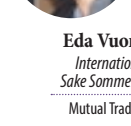
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酒豪大陸

California
SAKE
CHALLENGE

by Kosuke Kuji 224



Kosuke Kuji

Fifth Generation Brewery Owner
Nanbu Bijin, Inc.

Born May 11, 1972. Entered Tokyo University of Agriculture's Department of Brewing and Fermentation. In 2005 became the youngest person ever to receive the Iwate Prefecture Young Distinguished Technician Award. In 2006 was selected to be a member of the board of trustees of his local alma mater, Fukuoka High School. Currently is featured in a number of media outlets including magazines, radio, and television.

*Positions of Public Service:
Chairperson, Cassiopeia Corporation Youth Conference;
School Board Member, Fukuoka High School, Iwate Prefecture, Vice-Chairman, Technology Committee, Iwate Prefecture Brewers and Distillers' Association

Anime, Voice Actors, and Japanese Sake Part 1
動漫、聲優與日本酒 其一

A pillar of Japan's cultural heritage, sake earned a place on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2024.

And then there's Japanese anime—another pillar of the nation's subculture, captivating audiences across the globe. From Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba to One Piece and Dragon Ball, these iconic titles continue to command massive international followings.

Bringing these animated worlds to life are the voice actors—the seiyuu—whose performances shape the very soul of each story. The depth, emotion, and atmosphere of anime owe an immense debt to their craft, and in many ways, they stand among Japan's most defining actors on the global stage.

作為日本傳統文化的日本酒，在2024年也被列入了聯合國教科文組織的世界非物質文化遺產。

而同樣作為日本文化席捲全球的，則是「日本動畫」。《鬼滅之刃》《海賊王》《龍珠》等作品，都在世界範圍內擁有極高的人氣。

而為這些動畫注入生命的，正是「聲優」們。我認為，動畫世界觀的塑造，在很大程度上依賴於聲優們的力量，他們可以說是代表日本的

Yet behind its dazzling global success, the world of anime is anything but easy. The content itself is celebrated worldwide for its immense creative power and cultural value—and the revenue it generates is nothing short of enormous. The content itself commands immense value and generates significant revenue worldwide, a testament to its powerful appeal. And still, when measured against that strength, the recognition and compensation afforded to voice actors often fall short. It's long felt as though seiyuu deserve far greater acknowledgment for the vital role they play. I've loved anime for as long as I can remember. For years, I dreamed of collaborating with it—but the industry felt so vast, so formidable, that I eventually set the

演員。然而，動畫業界也是一個相當嚴苛的世界。動畫作品本身的內容實力與價值，已經獲得了全世界的高度評價，圍繞動畫產生的收益也極其龐大。

但與這種強大的內容影響力相比，聲優們的價值卻依然沒有得到足夠的認可，我一直認為，聲優們理應獲得更高的評價。

我從以前開始就非常喜歡動畫，但由於動畫內容產業本身實在過於龐大，要與動畫作品展開合作非常困

難，因此我一度放棄了這個想法。不過，我發現許多為動畫注入靈魂、代表作品形象的聲優們，其實都非常喜歡日本酒。於是，我開始與聲優們展開各種合作活動。

我希望通過讓聲優與作為日本傳統文化的日本酒相結合，不只是通過動畫本身，而是以另一種形式來展現聲優們的魅力，並進一步拓展他們的價值。因此，從下一次開始，我想繼續和大家分享這些相關活動的故事。

With this initiative now underway, I'll be sharing more in the coming installments about these collaborations and the stories behind them. ■

日本酒百味百題

Yeast is a general term that refers to single-celled microorganisms (fungi) that propagates due to germination or cell division. Yeast has the effect of breaking sugar

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What is yeast...? 酵母是什麼

down to alcohol and carbon dioxide (gas). Approximately 5 ~ 10 microns (1 micron = 1/1,000 of 1 millimeter) in size, yeast comes in various shapes – egg-shaped, sphere-shaped, sausage-shaped, etc. Similar to mold, yeast is naturally distributed throughout the natural world (called wild yeast).

Sake does not use food ingredients with distinct characteristics (like grapes pressed to produce wine), nor does it use secondary food ingredients to add aroma (like hop used to add aroma to beer). Since the sake characteristic is greatly influenced by the yeast properties, it is important to select the proper yeast that suits your purpose. Yeast creates the distinct Ginjo aroma as well.

While there are various types of yeast, the type described here is the typical fermentable yeast, saccharomyces, of which the saccharomyces cerevisiae is the most representative yeast for brewing with strong alcohol fermentation capabilities, often used as baker's yeast (yeast to make bread), beer (beer brewer's yeast), wine (wine producer's yeast), and other general uses to brew alcohol. Saccharomyces sake – referred to as sake yeast - belongs to the saccharomyces cerevisiae species and is used to brew Japanese sake. Sake yeast can produce highly concentrated alcohol up to 20 percent, characteristic for its strong fermentation capabilities under low-temperatures.

Also, yeast used to ferment alcohol consists of two types: top fermentation yeast and bottom fermentation yeast. For example, the main yeast used to brew beer worldwide - such as in Japan and Germany - is the bottom fermentation yeast, which ferments under the

fermentation mash; while yeast used to brew English ale or stout, etc., is top fermentation yeast, which ferments on top of the fermentation mash and bubbles while fermenting. Brewer's yeast is classified as top fermentation yeast, the same type of yeast as ale and stout.

Generally, quality sake yeast is highly aromatic and characteristic for its strong fermentation capability, while low in the ability to generate acid. Currently, the widely used quality yeast is the "Association Yeast," distributed by the Brewing Society of Japan. However, each prefecture is actively developing its own yeast. Long-established sake brewers have their unique yeast attached to their buildings, bed soil, etc., and this yeast is called home-grown yeast." Traditional sake brewing procedures cultivated this home-grown yeast to produce sake yeast. However, in recent years, small to medium-sized regional breweries are starting to see a revived application of this "home-grown yeast."

◆ ◆ ◆

酵母是通過出芽或分裂方式繁殖的單細胞微生物(真菌類)的總稱,具有將糖分分解為酒精和二氧化碳的作用,也稱為“Yeast”。其大小約為5~10微米(1微米為千分之一毫米),形狀多種多樣,有卵形、球形、香腸形等。與黴菌一樣,酵母廣泛分佈於自然界中(稱為野生酵母)。

日本酒不像葡萄酒那樣使用具

有強烈個性的原料,也不像啤酒那樣添加類似啤酒花的副原料來賦予香味。因此,日本酒的特色很大程度上受酵母性質的影響,所以必須選擇適合目的的酵母。吟釀酒特有的芳香也是由酵母產生的。

酵母種類很多,其中典型的發酵型酵母屬於Saccharomyces酒酵母。尤其是屬於Saccharomyces cerevisiae的酵母,是最具代表性的釀造用酵母,酒精發酵能力很強,不僅用於麵包發酵(麵包酵母),還廣泛用於啤酒(啤酒酵母)、葡萄酒(葡萄酒酵母)等各種酒類的釀造。用於日本酒釀造的,則是在分類上屬於Saccharomyces cerevisiae的Saccharomyces sake,也被稱為清酒酵母。清酒酵母的特點是能夠生成高達20%的酒精濃度,並且具有低溫發酵也很強的特徵。

此外,用於酒類發酵的酵母,還可分為「上面發酵酵母」和「下面發酵酵母」。例如,日本、德國等世界主要啤酒所使用的酵母,是在酒醪下部進行發酵的下面發酵酵母;而英國的艾爾和世濤啤酒所使用的酵母,則是在酒醪上部發酵,並在發酵過程中產生大量泡沫,屬於上面發酵酵母。清酒酵母也與艾爾、世濤啤酒酵母一樣,被歸類為上面發酵酵母。

一般來說,優良的清酒酵母具有發酵力強、產酸能力低、香氣高雅等特點。目前,被廣泛使用的優良酵母是由日本釀造協會提供的“協會酵母”,但以各縣為單位開發獨自酵母的活動也日益活躍。另外,長期從事釀酒的酒藏中,往往會有固有酵母附著並棲息在建築物、地面泥土等處,這種酵母被稱為“家附酵母”。過去傳統釀酒中,人們會培養這種家附酵母來製作酒母。近年來,地方中小型酒藏中,重新恢復並應用這種「家附酵母」的趨勢日漸明顯。



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米国酒焼酎蒸留酒研究所

Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America was founded with the purpose to promote further understanding of Japanese sake, shochu and beer in a shared where 500 million people enjoy wine in North America. We strive to increase Japanophiles by furthering understanding of the sake culture through online Japanese sake and shochu colleges and books related to Japanese sake, shochu and beer, etc. Especially sampling parties directly approaches consumers and no doubt contributes to expanding the market. Also, our final purpose is to facilitate communication with sake breweries, sake producers, and distribution companies, etc., to introduce Japanese sake, shochu and beer to American consumers in a way that's easy-to-understand.

Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America 美國清酒燒酎烈酒研究所

Japanese sake type

- Differ according to the combination of flavor and aroma

Knowing the type of Japanese sake helps to select sake according to your purpose. The diverse characteristics of Japanese sake brewed across over 1,500 sake breweries nationwide vary greatly in flavor, even within the same brand, depending on the ingredients and production method used.

There is no definite flavor characteristic of Junmai or Ginjo for example, as some are sweet while others are dry. Also, sweet sake flavor further varies widely in richness, fruity sweet, or refreshingly sweet, etc.

Therefore, various classifications are possible depending on your chosen criteria. For example, the rice polishing ratio could be another reference point to narrow your sake type. The lower the rice polishing ratio, the more refreshing the flavor. The higher the rice polishing ratio, the stronger the flavor.

Sake can also be classified according to how you enjoy your sake. Some sake types are more flavorful when enjoyed chilled, while others are more flavorful enjoyed hot. Refreshing sake and Ginjo are delicious chilled, while rich sake like Kimoto-Junmai is delicious hot. ■

日本酒的類型——因味道與香氣的組合而不同

了解日本酒的類型，可以幫助人們根據目的選擇合適的酒。

日本全國有1500多家酒藏釀造日本酒，其特點千差萬別。即使是同一品牌，也會因原料或釀造方法的不同，而呈現出完全不同的風味。

不能簡單地斷言“純米酒一定怎樣”或“吟釀酒一定怎樣”。無論是什麼酒，都有甜口和辛口之分。即使同為甜口，也有醇厚型甜口、果香型甜口、清爽型甜口等，變化十分豐富。

根據關注點的不同，可以對日本酒進行各種分類。例如，可以根據精米步合來推測酒的風味。精米步合越低，酒的味道通常越清淡；精米步合越高，酒的風味則往往越濃厚。

也可以按照飲用方式進行分類。

日本酒中，有適合冷飲的，也有適合溫熱後飲用的。

清爽型的酒以及吟釀酒，冷飲時更加美味；而像生酏系純米酒這樣口感醇厚的酒，則加熱後更好喝。

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Tokyo Jizake Strolling

東京地酒散歩

by Ryuji Takahashi



Ryuji Takahashi

Regional Sake Specialty Store "Ji Sakeya" Owner, Master Sake Sommelier, Shuto-Meijin, and the charismatic guru of ordinary sake.

Plans and manages events and seminars with his own unique flare to introduce the appeal of Japanese sake and cuisine, unaffected by the latest trends, while managing a jizake retail store.

As Summer Arrives, Japan's Sake Industry Enters a New Season

迎來夏季的日本酒行業

In recent years, prices across the Japanese sake market have been steadily rising. While it is natural for discretionary items to follow the upward trend seen in essential goods, there is a crucial difference: sake is, at its core, a luxury rather than a necessity. As a result, unlike everyday staples, these price increases are more likely to trigger noticeable consumer restraint and a pullback in demand.

On top of this, the increasingly prolonged and intense summer heat is dampening consumer appetite, creating a double blow that could make this summer a challenging season for Japan's sake industry. Interestingly, a similar pattern can be seen in other premium indulgence categories. According to coffee bean wholesalers—another representative of the world of discretionary goods—coffee prices are also rising. While iced coffee offers some relief during the hotter months, bean sales still reportedly drop significantly compared to the winter season.

In contrast, categories such as tobacco appear far less sensitive to price fluctuations. Even with steady price increases, many smokers—driven by long-standing nicotine dependence—do not readily change their habits, even when costs double compared to earlier years. Demand also tends to remain largely unaffected by seasonal shifts. Younger smokers, moreover, often have no reference point for past pricing levels, and with the emergence of alternatives such as electronic cigarettes, the sense of 'rising cost' may feel less pronounced than expected. Among sake enthusiasts, younger consumers are said to spend surprisingly generously on sake. However, the overall number of people who drink it on a regular, everyday basis remains relatively small. While there are always a few devoted drinkers across all age groups who stick exclusively to sake even in the height of summer, overall consumption still declines significantly during the hot season. In many cases, it is gradually displaced by other alcoholic beverages such as beer and highballs,

which tend to dominate summer drinking occasions.

As long as record-breaking heatwaves continue, this situation is unlikely to change. Many producers attempt to offset the downturn by introducing refreshing seasonal sake and proposing new ways to enjoy Japanese sake, yet the results remain a world apart from winter sales figures. From summer through autumn, local breweries—having already completed their brewing season—turn their focus elsewhere, with sake events and tasting gatherings held across various regions in an effort to keep the culture alive during the off-season.

However, even these efforts are beginning to face new challenges. Outdoor events are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain under the intensifying summer heat, leading to a gradual shift toward indoor venues. This transition brings its own complications: venue costs are typically higher indoors, which in turn pushes up participation fees. As a result, attendance among sake enthusiasts may also be affected. At the same time, breweries may be required to take on a larger share of sponsorship responsibilities, potentially placing additional financial strain on their operations. In such a scenario, these events risk becoming dominated by major brands and well-established labels, leaving smaller local breweries with fewer opportunities to showcase themselves and connect directly with consumers.

With the rise of remote work in recent years, the long-standing habit of grabbing a beer after work may be gradually fading. Yet, it is also possible that the image of Japanese sake itself has not significantly evolved over the past few decades. In Japan, even wine culture reflects a certain temperature-conscious mindset—few people reach for chilled red wine, for example, with red typically served at room temperature and white well chilled. As long as these associations persist, sake may continue to struggle to position itself as a natural choice for hot summer days.■

這幾年，日本酒的價格幾乎全面上漲。由於生活必需品價格也在上漲，因此嗜好品價格上漲本身並不奇怪。但與生活必需品最大的不同在於，嗜好品終究只是嗜好品，因此消費者會明顯減少購買。再加上每年愈發漫長的酷暑導致消費慾望下降，今年夏天對日本酒行業來說，恐怕會是相當艱難的一季。順便一提，作為同屬嗜好品代表的咖啡豆店也表示，咖啡豆價格同樣大幅上漲。雖然夏天還有冰咖啡這一商品，但與冬天相比，咖啡豆銷量依然會明顯下滑。相比之下，香煙則不同，價格即便上漲一些也無關痛癢。尼古丁成癮者即使面對比過去貴上兩倍左右的價格，很多人也不會戒煙，而且季節變化對消費影響也不大。年輕吸煙者並不知道過去的價格，再加上如今還有以前沒有的電子煙，因此他們或許並不覺得香煙變貴了。從這一點來說，日本酒愛好者中的年輕人似乎也願意為日本酒花錢，但問題在於，日常飲用日本酒的人總體數量實在太少。雖然各年齡層中也有一些人在盛夏依然只喝日本酒，但夏季的消費量還是會大幅減少，並被同屬酒類的啤酒和高球酒所取代。只

要破紀錄的酷暑持續下去，這種情況恐怕就不會改變。各家公司雖然試圖通過推出清涼感十足的季節限定酒，或提倡新的日本酒飲用方式來渡過難關，但與冬季銷售額相比，結果依然有著天壤之別。從夏季到秋季，由於地方酒藏已經結束釀造，因此各地也會舉辦許多日本酒活動。然而，隨著酷暑加劇，戶外活動也逐漸變得難以舉辦，室內活動開始增加。這樣一來，與戶外活動相比，場地使用費用更高，活動參加費也會上漲，進而影響日本酒愛好者的參與人數。也許酒廠的贊助部分也會越來越大，進而給酒廠經營帶來負擔。這樣一來，活動可能會變成只有熱門品牌和大型廠家才能參加，小型地方酒廠則可能失去宣傳自己的場所。近年來居家辦公增多，下班后喝杯啤酒的習慣應該多少有所淡化，但也許日本酒在人們心中的形象，這幾十年來並沒有發生太大變化。的確，日本人中會喝冰鎮紅葡萄酒的人也不多。如果還停留在「紅葡萄酒要常溫飲用、白葡萄酒要冰鎮」這種觀念上的話，那麼在炎熱的天氣里，人們恐怕也很難想到要喝日本酒。

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melier Competition.

Graduated from
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ment of Political Science. Worked
for Nomura Securities for 10 years.
Former president of California Sushi
Academy Former chief of planning
dept. at Mutual Trading.



David Kudo

Sake Sommelier
Master Sake Sommelier

Born Kita-Akita City,
Akita Prefecture.

Took over as Exec-
utive Officer of the
Japanese Food Trend News founded
in 1991, when the predecessor was
assigned back to Japan. Currently
distributed as Japan Restaurant News
(20,000 issues published electroni-
cally) in North America, Japan, and
Southeast Asia.



Sake Industry's Corporate Efforts

The average amount an American spends at a full-fledged casual restaurant is, including beverages, about \$20. If we suppose the entrée is \$14.50, \$5.50 is spent on alcoholic beverages. The majority of glass wines are priced at \$4-7 for 180-220ml servings, and many bottled beers are \$3.50-4.50. Comparatively, sake from Japan with the same serving size as wine (180ml) is \$8.50-9.50. The price is 2.5 times higher, and the selections are more limited.

Japan-made sake utterly lacks selections in this price range. 720ml-bottle sake are sold in restaurants for \$40 and higher; this makes the product a challenge to order, or a special occasion-only option to many. Trader Joe's Charles Shaw made a splash in the wine world when it was introduced, and at \$2.99 for a 750ml bottle, it's still selling strong and bringing in new wine lovers. Many must have started with this "Two Buck Chuck," fallen in love with wine, and

begun buying more expensive wines. Initially considered as a threat to the normally \$4-5 wine industry, Charles Shaw contributed to expanding the wine industry that eventually benefitted all wine businesses.

There is no need to dramatically reduce quality to reach this price point, but Japanese corporations should be able to achieve a certain level of it, considering what has been achieved in the past with home appliances and cars. ■

사케 업계의 노력

미국인이 본격적인 캐주얼 레스토랑에서 지출하는 평균 단가는 음료를 포함해 약 20달러 전후다. 메인요리 가격이 평균 14.50달러라고 가정했을 때, 술값으로 지출하는 금액은 5.50달러 전후다. 와인은 한 잔(약 180~200ml)에 약 4~7달러로 다양한 종류가 있으며, 맥주도 작은 병에 3.50~4.50달러로 선택의 폭이 넓다. 이에 비해 일본산 사케는 대체로 와인 한 잔(180ml) 분량에 8.50~9.50달러 정도다.

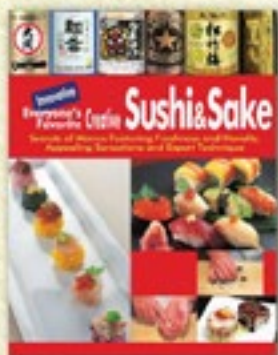
이 차이는 약 2.5배에 달하며, 그 종류도 한정되어 있다.

하지만 일본산 사케의 경우 이 가격대에서 선택의 다양성이 전혀 없다. 현재 720ml에 레스토랑 판매가격이 40달러가 넘는 이 가격대에서는 꽤나 용감한 선택이거나 특별한 날 외에는 대상에서 제외된다. 한때 와인계에서 화제가 되었던 트레이더 조의 'Charles Shaw' 2.99달러짜리 와인(750ml)은 지금도 여전히 건재하며, 많은 와인 애호가들을 양성하고

있다. 우선 3달러를 투자하고 마음에 들면 점차 고가의 와인에 빠져드는 사람들이 많을 것이다. 처음에는 4달러에서 5달러 전후의 와인 업계가 위협을 느꼈다고 하는데, 오히려 와인 인구가 상대적으로 늘어나면서 전체 파이가 커졌다고 할 수 있다.

품질을 극단적으로 낮춰서 이 가격으로 만들 필요는 없지만, 가전제품, 자동차 등 일본의 과거 사례를 볼 때 기업의 노력 여하에 따라 가능하지 않을까?

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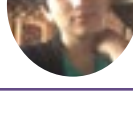
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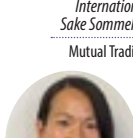
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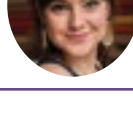
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Kosuke Kuji

Fifth Generation Brewery Owner
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Born May 11, 1972. Entered Tokyo University of Agriculture's Department of Brewing and Fermentation. In 2005 became the youngest person ever to receive the Iwate Prefecture Young Distinguished Technician Award. In 2006 was selected to be a member of the board of trustees of his local alma mater, Fukuoka High School. Currently is featured in a number of media outlets including magazines, radio, and television.

*Positions of Public Service:
Chairperson, Cassiopeia Corporation Youth Conference;
School Board Member, Fukuoka High School, Iwate Prefecture, Vice-Chairman, Technology Committee, Iwate Prefecture Brewers and Distillers' Association

Anime, Voice Actors, and Japanese Sake Part 1
애니메이션과 성우와 일본술 1편

A pillar of Japan's cultural heritage, sake earned a place on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2024.

And then there's Japanese anime—another pillar of the nation's subculture, captivating audiences across the globe. From Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba to One Piece and Dragon Ball, these iconic titles continue to command massive international followings.

Bringing these animated worlds to life are the voice actors—the seiyuu—whose performances shape the very soul of each story. The depth, emotion, and atmosphere of anime owe an immense debt to their craft, and in many ways, they stand among Japan's most defining actors on the global stage.

일본의 전통문화인 일본주. 2024년에는 유네스코 세계무형문화유산에도 등재했습니다.

또한, 마찬가지로 일본 서브컬처로서 세계를 석권하고 있는 「일본애니메이션」.

귀멸의 칼, 원피스, 드래곤볼 모두 전세계적으로 인기 많은 작품입니다.

그 애니메이션에 생명을 불어 넣는 것이 바로「성우」입니다. 애니메이션의 세계관은 이 성우들의 역량에 좌우되는 것이 매우 크고, 일본을 대표하는 배우라

Yet behind its dazzling global success, the world of anime is anything but easy. The content itself is celebrated worldwide for its immense creative power and cultural value—and the revenue it generates is nothing short of enormous. The content itself commands immense value and generates significant revenue worldwide, a testament to its powerful appeal. And still, when measured against that strength, the recognition and compensation afforded to voice actors often fall short. It's long felt as though seiyuu deserve far greater acknowledgment for the vital role they play. I've loved anime for as long as I can remember. For years, I dreamed of collaborating with it—but the industry felt so vast, so formidable, that I eventually set the

고 저는 생각합니다.

하지만, 애니메이션의 세계는 상당히 혹독한 곳이며, 애니메이션 자체의 콘텐츠와 가치는 전 세계에서 높게 평가되고, 애니메이션의 수입도 막대하다고 생각합니다.

그 강력한 콘텐츠 힘에 대해 성우들의 가치는 아직 저조하고, 성우들을 더욱 높게 평가하는 것이 좋다고 생각하고 있습니다. 저는 예전부터 애니메이션을 무척 좋아했습니다만, 애니메콘텐츠와 콜라보레이션하는 것은 애니메이션 세

idea aside. Then I noticed something unexpected: many of the very voices that bring anime to life—the seiyuu themselves—share a deep appreciation for Japanese sake. That realization opened a new path. By partnering with these voice actors, I began launching a range of collaborative projects that bridge the worlds of anime and sake in a fresh, meaningful way.

By bringing voice actors' talents beyond the realm of anime and into dialogue with Japan's traditional culture of sake, I set out to express their artistry in new ways—and to expand how their value is perceived.

With this initiative now underway, I'll be sharing more in the coming installments about these collaborations and the stories behind them. ■

계가 너무나도 거대한 콘텐츠라서 힘들어 포기하고 있었습지만, 애니메이션에 생명을 불어넣는 그 애니메이션을 대표하는 성우들 중 일본주를 즐기는 경우가 상당히 많다고 하여, 성우들과 콜라보하여 활동을 다양하게 개시하였습니다.

성우의 가치를 애니메이션 뿐만 아니라, 일본 전통문화인 일본주와 함께 함으로써, 한층 색다른 형태로 표현하거나, 가치를 넓히거나 하는 활동을 시작하였기 때문에, 다음 회부터는 그러한 활동 이야기를 펼쳐나가고자 합니다.

日本酒 百味百題

Yeast is a general term that refers to single-celled microorganisms (fungi) that propagates due to germination or cell division. Yeast has the effect of breaking sugar

What is yeast...? 효모란 무엇인가?

down to alcohol and carbon dioxide (gas). Approximately 5 ~ 10 microns (1 micron = 1/1,000 of 1 millimeter) in size, yeast comes in various shapes – egg-shaped, sphere-shaped, sausage-shaped, etc. Similar to mold, yeast is naturally distributed throughout the natural world (called wild yeast).

Sake does not use food ingredients with distinct characteristics (like grapes pressed to produce wine), nor does it use secondary food ingredients to add aroma (like hop used to add aroma to beer). Since the sake characteristic is greatly influenced by the yeast properties, it is important to select the proper yeast that suits your purpose. Yeast creates the distinct Ginjo aroma as well.

While there are various types of yeast, the type described here is the typical fermentable yeast, *saccharomyces*, of which the *saccharomyces cerevisiae* is the most representative yeast for brewing with strong alcohol fermentation capabilities, often used as baker's yeast (yeast to make bread), beer (beer brewer's yeast), wine (wine producer's yeast), and other general uses to brew alcohol. *Saccharomyces sake* – referred to as sake yeast - belongs to the *saccharomyces cerevisiae* species and is used to brew Japanese sake. Sake yeast can produce highly concentrated alcohol up to 20 percent, characteristic for its strong fermentation capabilities under low-temperatures.

Also, yeast used to ferment alcohol consists of two types: top fermentation yeast and bottom fermentation yeast. For example, the main yeast used to brew beer worldwide - such as in Japan and Germany - is the bottom fermentation yeast, which ferments under the fermentation mash; while yeast used

to brew English ale or stout, etc., is top fermentation yeast, which ferments on top of the fermentation mash and bubbles while fermenting. Brewer's yeast is classified as top fermentation yeast, the same type of yeast as ale and stout.

Generally, quality sake yeast is highly aromatic and characteristic for its strong fermentation capability, while low in the ability to generate acid. Currently, the widely used quality yeast is the "Association Yeast," distributed by the Brewing Society of Japan. However, each prefecture is actively developing its own yeast. Long-established sake brewers have their unique yeast attached to their buildings, bed soil, etc., and this yeast is called home-grown yeast." Traditional sake brewing procedures cultivated this home-grown yeast to produce sake yeast. However, in recent years, small to medium-sized regional breweries are starting to see a revived application of this "home-grown yeast."

◆ ◆ ◆

효모란 발아 또는 분열에 의해 증식하는 단세포 미생물 (균류)의 총칭으로, 당분을 알코올과 탄산가스 (이산화탄소)로 분해하는 작용을 한다. 이스트라고도 부른다. 크기는 5 ~ 10마이크론 (1마이크론은 1000분의 1 밀리미터) 정도이며, 달걀형, 구형, 소세지형 등 다양한 형태를 하고 있다. 곰팡이와 같이 자연계에 넓게 분포한다 (야생효모라고 부른다).

일본주는 와인의 포도같이 개성있는 원료를 사용하는 것이 아니고, 맥주의 홉과 같은 향미를 더하는 부재료도 사

용하지 않는다. 일본주의 특색은 효모의 성질에 크게 영향받기 때문에, 목적에 맞는 효모를 고르지 않으면 안된다. 긴조주에 특유의 향을 만드는 것도 효모이다.

효모에는 여러가지 종류가 있지만, 전형적인 발효성효모는 사카로미세스속 효모이다. 그 중에서도 사카로미세스·세레비시에에 속하는 효모는 가장 대표적인 양조용효모로 알코올발효력이 강하고, 빵의 발효(빵효모)외에, 맥주(맥주효모), 와인(포도주효모) 등 주류전반의 양조에 쓰여지고 있다. 일본주 양조에 쓰여지는 것은 분류상 사카로미세스·세레비시에에 속하는 사카로미세스·사케로, 청주효모라고도 불린다. 청주효모는 20%까지 고농도 알코올을 생성가능하고, 저온상태의 발효에도 상당히 강한 것이 특징이다.

또한 주류 발효에 사용하는 효모에는 상면발효효모와 하면발효효모가 있다. 예를들면, 일본이나 독일을 비롯한 전세계의 주된 맥주효모는 모로미(발효액)의 하부에서 발효하는 하면발효효모지만, 영국의 에일이나 스타우트 맥주등에 사용되는 효모는 모로미의 상부에서 발효하여 발효중에 거품이 올라오는 상면발효효모이다. 청주효모는 에일이나 스타우트 맥주 효모와 같은 상면발효효모로 분류된다.

일반적으로, 우수한 청주효모에는 발효력은 강하지만 산을 만드는 능력은 낮고, 향이 강한 특징이 있다. 현재, 우량효모로 널리 사용되는 것은 일본양조협회에서 배포하는 「코카이효모」인데 현단위의 독자 효모개발도 활발히 진행되고 있다. 그런데, 오랫동안 양조를 이어온 양조장에는 고유의 효모가 건물이나 바닥 토양등에 붙어 살고 있고, 이 효모「집붙이효모」라고 부른다. 예전 전통적인 양조에서는 이 집붙이 효모를 배양하여 술효모를 만들었지만, 요즘에는 지방의 중소양조장등에서, 이「집붙이효모」의 부활, 응용화의 움직임이 눈에 띄고 있다.

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Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America was founded with the purpose to promote further understanding of Japanese sake, shochu and beer in a shared where 500 million people enjoy wine in North America. We strive to increase Japanophiles by furthering understanding of the sake culture through online Japanese sake and shochu colleges and books related to Japanese sake, shochu and beer, etc. Especially sampling parties directly approaches consumers and no doubt contributes to expanding the market. Also, our final purpose is to facilitate communication with sake breweries, sake producers, and distribution companies, etc., to introduce Japanese sake, shochu and beer to American consumers in a way that's easy-to-understand.

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Japanese sake type

- Differ according to the combination of flavor and aroma

Knowing the type of Japanese sake helps to select sake according to your purpose. The diverse characteristics of Japanese sake brewed across over 1,500 sake breweries nationwide vary greatly in flavor, even within the same brand, depending on the ingredients and production method used.

There is no definite flavor characteristic of Junmai or Ginjo for example, as some are sweet while others are dry. Also, sweet sake flavor further varies widely in richness, fruity sweet, or refreshingly sweet, etc.

Therefore, various classifications are possible depending on your chosen criteria. For example, the rice polishing ratio could be another reference point to narrow your sake type. The lower the rice polishing ratio, the more refreshing the flavor. The higher the rice polishing ratio, the stronger the flavor.

Sake can also be classified according to how you enjoy your sake. Some sake types are more flavorful when enjoyed chilled, while others are more flavorful enjoyed hot. Refreshing sake and Ginjo are delicious chilled, while rich sake like Kimoto-Junmai is delicious hot.■

일본주의 종류

—맛과 향의 조합에 따라 다르다.

일본주의 종류를 알면 목적에 맞는 술을 고를 수 있다.일본 전국의 1500개 이상의 양조장에서 만들어지는 일본주의 특징은 천차만별이고, 같은 브랜드라도 원료나 제조방법의 차이로 인해 맛이 전혀 다를 수도 있다.

준마이주든, 긴조주든, 단언할 수도 없이, 각각 단맛도 있고, 매운맛도 있다. 또한, 달콤한 맛에도 풍미가 있는 단맛, 과일향의 단맛, 상큼한 단맛 등, 다양한 종류가 있다.

어디에 주목하느냐에 따라 다양한 분류가 가능하다. 예를들면 정미비율에 주목하여 맛을 분류할 수 있다. 정미비율이 낮은 술은 깔끔한 맛으로. 정미비율이 높은 술은 상당히 강해지기 쉽다.

마시는 방법에 따라 분류할 수도 있다.

일본주에는 차게해서 마시는 것과 따뜻하게 마시는 것이 있다.

상큼한 술이나 긴조주는 차게하면 좋고, 생계준마이주와 같이 풍미가 있는 술은 따뜻하게 하면 맛이 좋다.

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Plans and manages events and seminars with his own unique flare to introduce the appeal of Japanese sake and cuisine, unaffected by the latest trends, while managing a jizake retail store.

As Summer Arrives, Japan's Sake Industry Enters a New Season

여름을 맞이하는 일본주업계

In recent years, prices across the Japanese sake market have been steadily rising. While it is natural for discretionary items to follow the upward trend seen in essential goods, there is a crucial difference: sake is, at its core, a luxury rather than a necessity. As a result, unlike everyday staples, these price increases are more likely to trigger noticeable consumer restraint and a pullback in demand.

On top of this, the increasingly prolonged and intense summer heat is dampening consumer appetite, creating a double blow that could make this summer a challenging season for Japan's sake industry. Interestingly, a similar pattern can be seen in other premium indulgence categories. According to coffee bean wholesalers—another representative of the world of discretionary goods—coffee prices are also rising. While iced coffee offers some relief during the hotter months, bean sales still reportedly drop significantly compared to the winter season.

In contrast, categories such as tobacco appear far less sensitive to price fluctuations. Even with steady price increases, many smokers—driven by long-standing nicotine dependence—do not readily change their habits, even when costs double compared to earlier years. Demand also tends to remain largely unaffected by seasonal shifts. Younger smokers, moreover, often have no reference point for past pricing levels, and with the emergence of alternatives such as electronic cigarettes, the sense of 'rising cost' may feel less pronounced than expected. Among sake enthusiasts, younger consumers are said to spend surprisingly generously on sake. However, the overall number of people who drink it on a regular, everyday basis remains relatively small. While there are always a few devoted drinkers across all age groups who stick exclusively to sake even in the height of summer, overall consumption still declines significantly during the hot season. In many cases, it is gradually displaced by other alcoholic beverages such as beer and highballs,

which tend to dominate summer drinking occasions.

As long as record-breaking heatwaves continue, this situation is unlikely to change. Many producers attempt to offset the downturn by introducing refreshing seasonal sake and proposing new ways to enjoy Japanese sake, yet the results remain a world apart from winter sales figures. From summer through autumn, local breweries—having already completed their brewing season—turn their focus elsewhere, with sake events and tasting gatherings held across various regions in an effort to keep the culture alive during the off-season.

However, even these efforts are beginning to face new challenges. Outdoor events are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain under the intensifying summer heat, leading to a gradual shift toward indoor venues. This transition brings its own complications: venue costs are typically higher indoors, which in turn pushes up participation fees. As a result, attendance among sake enthusiasts may also be affected. At the same time, breweries may be required to take on a larger share of sponsorship responsibilities, potentially placing additional financial strain on their operations. In such a scenario, these events risk becoming dominated by major brands and well-established labels, leaving smaller local breweries with fewer opportunities to showcase themselves and connect directly with consumers.

With the rise of remote work in recent years, the long-standing habit of grabbing a beer after work may be gradually fading. Yet, it is also possible that the image of Japanese sake itself has not significantly evolved over the past few decades. In Japan, even wine culture reflects a certain temperature-conscious mindset—few people reach for chilled red wine, for example, with red typically served at room temperature and white well chilled. As long as these associations persist, sake may continue to struggle to position itself as a natural choice for hot summer days.■

최 근 몇년간, 일본주의 가격이 전반적으로 상승하고 있다. 생활필수품의 가격이 오르고 있어서, 마찬가지로 기호품의 가격이 오르는 것도 이상하지 않지만, 생활필수품과 크게 다른 것은 기호품은 어디까지나 기호품이기 때문에 상당히 구매를 미루는 경우가 있다는 점이다. 게다가 매년 길어지는 여름폭염에 따른 구매욕구의 감퇴의 더블펀치로 올해 여름은 일본주 업계에 큰 어려움을 초래하지 않을까 우려된다. 참고로 기호품의 대표인 커피 원두가 계에 물어보니, 역시 커피원두의 가격은 급등하고 덧붙여 여름에는 아이스크림이라고 하는 아이템이 있지만, 겨울에 비하면 역시 원두의 판매량은 상당히 떨어지는 듯하다. 그에 비해, 담배등은 다소의 가격상승은 별거아니다. 니코틴 중독자는 예전에 비해 두배의 가격이 정도로는 그만두지 않는 사람이 많고, 계절도 관계없다. 젊은 흡연자는 옛날의 가격을 모르고 이전에는 없던 전자담배등도 있어서 특별히 비싸졌다고 생각하지 않는 지도 모른다. 그말대로라면 일본주 애호가도 젊은 사람들은 의외로 일본주에 돈을 많이 쓰는 듯하지만, 어쨌든 일상에서 일본주를 마시는 절대수가 적다. 전 연령층에서 한여름에도 일본주만 마시는 사람은 다소 있지만, 역시 여름의 소비량

은 크게 줄어, 같은 알코올 음료인 맥주나 하이볼로 대체되고 있다. 기록적인 폭염이 이어지는 한, 이 상황은 변하지 않을 것이다. 각사는 시원한 계절주나 새로운 일본주 마시는 법의 제안하며 버티려 하지만, 결과적으로 겨울 매출에 비하면 천지차이다. 여름부터 가을까지는 지역 양조장은 양조를 마쳐서 여러 곳에서 일본주 이벤트가 열린다. 하니만 그것도, 야외행사는 폭염으로 점점 불가능해지고, 실내 이벤트가 늘어난다. 그러면, 야외 이벤트에 비해, 장소 이용비도 비싸지고, 이벤트 참가비가 상승해서, 일본주 애호가 모임에도 영향이 생길 것이다. 어쩌면 양조장의 협찬부분도 커지게 되고 양조장 경영에 부담이 생길 지도 모른다. 그러면, 인기 브랜드나 대형 메이커만 참가하는 이벤트가 되고, 작은 지역양조장에게는 PR장소를 잃어갈 지도 모른다. 재택 근무가 증가한 요즘, 퇴근후 맥주를 마시는 습관은 다소 사라지고 있을 테지만, 어쩌면 일본주의 이미지가 지난 수십년간 크게 변하지 않았을 지도 모른다. 확실히 차가운 레드와인을 마시는 사람도 적은 것이 일본인. 레드와인은 상온, 화이트와인은 차가운 상태라고 말하는 한 더운 날에 일본주가 되지는 않을 지도 모른다.

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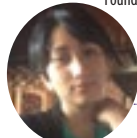
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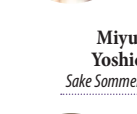
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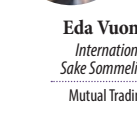
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Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America
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酒豪大陸

California
SAKE
CHALLENGE

by Kosuke Kuji 224



Kosuke Kuji

Fifth Generation Brewery Owner
Nanbu Bijin, Inc.

Born May 11, 1972. Entered Tokyo University of Agriculture's Department of Brewing and Fermentation. In 2005 became the youngest person ever to receive the Iwate Prefecture Young Distinguished Technician Award. In 2006 was selected to be a member of the board of trustees of his local alma mater, Fukuoka High School. Currently is featured in a number of media outlets including magazines, radio, and television.

*Positions of Public Service:
Chairperson, Cassiopeia Corporation Youth Conference;
School Board Member, Fukuoka High School, Iwate Prefecture, Vice-Chairman, Technology Committee, Iwate Prefecture Brewers and Distillers' Association

Anime, Actores de Voz y Sake Japonés - Parte 1

El sake japonés es una tradición cultural japonesa. En el 2024, fue declarado Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial de la Humanidad por la UNESCO.

Y luego está el anime japonés, otra subcultura japonesa que está conquistando el mundo.

Guardianes de la Noche, One Piece, Dragon Ball: todas son increíblemente populares a nivel mundial.

Quienes dan vida a estos animes son los actores de voz.

Creo que la visión del mundo del anime se debe en gran medida al talento de estos actores, quienes representan a los mejores artistas de Japón.

Sin embargo, el mundo del anime es bastante competitivo. Si bien el poder y el valor del contenido de anime en sí son muy apreciados a nivel mundial, y los ingresos que genera son enormes,

Siento que el valor de los actores de voz aún es relativamente bajo en comparación con este poderoso contenido, y que merecen mucho más reconocimiento.

Siempre me ha encantado el anime, pero colaborar con este contenido era increíblemente difícil, debido a la enorme cantidad de franquicias que existen, así que había abandonado la idea. Sin embargo, descubrí que muchos de los

actores de doblaje que dan vida al anime también son grandes aficionados al sake, así que comencé a colaborar con ellos en diversas actividades.

He iniciado proyectos para expresar y potenciar el valor de estos actores, no solo a través del anime, sino también combinándolos con el sake, una bebida tradicional japonesa. En futuras publicaciones, hablaré sobre estas actividades.



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¿Qué es la levadura?

La levadura es un término general para los microorganismos unicelulares (hongos) que se reproducen por gemación o fisión y tienen la capacidad de descomponer el azúcar en alcohol y dióxido de carbono. También se les llama levaduras. Tienen un tamaño aproximado de 5 a 10 micras (1 micra equivale a 1/1000 de milímetro) y presentan diversas formas, como ovaladas, esféricas y alargadas. Al igual que el moho, se encuentran ampliamente distribuidas en la naturaleza (se denominan levaduras silvestres).

El sake no utiliza materias primas distintivas como la uva para el vino, ni ingredientes auxiliares para añadir sabor como el lúpulo para la cerveza. Las características del sake están muy influenciadas por las propiedades de la levadura, por lo que es necesario seleccionar una levadura adecuada. La levadura también es responsable del aroma único del sake ginjo.

Existen muchos tipos de levadura, pero las levaduras fermentativas típicas pertenecen al género *Saccharomyces*. Entre ellas, las levaduras de la familia *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*

son las más representativas en la elaboración de cerveza. Poseen una gran capacidad de fermentación y se utilizan en la producción de todo tipo de bebidas alcohólicas, como pan (levadura de panadería), cerveza (levadura de cerveza) y vino (levadura de vino). La levadura utilizada en la elaboración de sake se clasifica como *Saccharomyces sake*, también conocida como levadura de sake. Esta levadura se caracteriza por su capacidad para producir alcohol en altas concentraciones, de hasta un 20%, y por su gran resistencia a la fermentación a bajas temperaturas.

Además, las levaduras utilizadas en la fermentación de bebidas alcohólicas se clasifican en levaduras de alta y baja fermentación. Por ejemplo, las levaduras utilizadas en las principales cervezas del mundo, incluidas las de Japón y Alemania, son levaduras de baja fermentación que se descomponen en el fondo del mosto. Sin embargo, las levaduras utilizadas en las cervezas ale y stout británicas, son de fermentación alta, es decir, se descomponen en la superficie del mosto, produciendo abundante espuma

durante la fermentación. La levadura de sake se clasifica como de fermentación alta, del mismo tipo que las levaduras utilizadas en las cervezas ale y stout.

Generalmente, la levadura de sake de calidad superior posee un gran poder fermentativo, pero una baja capacidad de producción de ácido, y se caracteriza por un aroma intenso. Actualmente, la levadura de calidad superior más utilizada es la "levadura Kyokai", distribuida por la Asociación de Destilería de Sake de Japón, pero el desarrollo de levaduras únicas a nivel prefectural también está en auge. Cabe mencionar que las destilerías de sake con muchos años de tradición tienen sus propias levaduras únicas, arraigadas en los edificios y el suelo, conocidas como "levaduras de la casa". En la elaboración tradicional del sake, estas levaduras propias se cultivaban para hacer el fermento inicial, pero en los últimos años se ha observado un movimiento notable entre las pequeñas y medianas destilerías de las zonas rurales para revivir y utilizar estas "levaduras propias".



SAKE SOMMELIER CLUB

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Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America

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Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America was founded with the purpose to promote further understanding of Japanese sake, shochu and beer in a shared where 500 million people enjoy wine in North America. We strive to increase Japanophiles by furthering understanding of the sake culture through online Japanese sake and shochu colleges and books related to Japanese sake, shochu and beer, etc. Especially sampling parties directly approaches consumers and no doubt contributes to expanding the market. Also, our final purpose is to facilitate communication with sake breweries, sake producers, and distribution companies, etc., to introduce Japanese sake, shochu and beer to American consumers in a way that's easy-to-understand.

Tipos de Sake: Diferentes

Combinaciones de Sabor y Aroma

Comprender los tipos de sake te permite elegir el adecuado para cada ocasión.

El sake producido en más de 1500 bodegas en todo Japón, presenta una amplia variedad de características e incluso una misma marca puede tener sabores completamente diferentes según los ingredientes y los métodos de elaboración.

No se puede afirmar categóricamente que el sake junmai o el ginjo sean todos iguales; algunos son dulces, otros secos. Además, incluso dentro del sake dulce, existen variaciones como dulzor intenso, dulzor

afrutado y dulzor refrescante.

Es posible realizar diversas clasificaciones, según los criterios que se consideren. Por ejemplo, se puede inferir el sabor centrándose en el grado de pulido del arroz. El sake con un bajo grado de pulido tiende a tener un sabor refrescante. El sake con un alto grado de pulido tiende a tener un sabor más intenso.

El sake, también, se puede clasificar según su forma de servirse.

Algunos sakes se disfrutan mejor fríos, mientras que otros se disfrutan mejor calientes. Los sakes ligeros y refrescantes, como el sake ginjo, se disfrutan mejor fríos, mientras que los sakes más intensos, como el sake junmai estilo kimoto, se disfrutan mejor calientes.

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Sake Navigator

Presented by Sake Shochu Spirits Institute of America



Tokyo Jizake Strolling

by Ryuji Takahashi

東京地酒散歩



Ryuji Takahashi

Regional Sake Specialty Store "Ji Saakeya" Owner, Master Sake Sommelier, Shuto-Meijin, and the charismatic guru of ordinary sake.

Plans and manages events and seminars with his own unique flare to introduce the appeal of Japanese sake and cuisine, unaffected by the latest trends, while managing a jizake retail store.

La industria del sake japonés con la llegada del Verano

En los últimos años, el precio en general del sake japonés ha aumentado. Si bien no sorprende que los precios de los artículos de lujo también subieran, dado el incremento en los precios de los productos básicos, la diferencia clave radica en que los artículos de lujo, al fin y al cabo, son artículos de lujo, lo que conlleva a importantes recortes en el gasto de los consumidores. Además, el aumento del calor veraniego y la consiguiente disminución del gasto de los consumidores crean un doble problema, lo que probablemente hará que este verano sea difícil para la industria del sake japonés. Casualmente, según una tienda de café, otro minorista representativo de artículos de lujo, dice que los precios del café en grano se han disparado. Si bien el café helado es un producto popular en verano, las ventas de café en grano siguen siendo significativamente inferiores a las del invierno. En cambio, los precios de los cigarrillos no parecen afectarles demasiado. Muchos

adictos a la nicotina no dejarán de fumar aunque el precio se duplique con respecto al pasado, y la estación del año no parece influirles. Los fumadores más jóvenes quizás no recuerden los precios anteriores, y con la existencia de los cigarrillos electrónicos, es posible que ni siquiera perciban el aumento de precio como particularmente significativo. Hablando de eso, parece que los jóvenes aficionados al sake están sorprendentemente dispuestos a gastar dinero en esta bebida, pero el número absoluto de personas que la beben a diario es pequeño. Hay personas de todas las edades que beben solo sake incluso en pleno verano, pero el consumo disminuye significativamente durante esta estación y se sustituye por otras bebidas alcohólicas como la cerveza y los highballs. Mientras continúe la ola de calor sin precedentes, esta situación no cambiará. Cada empresa intenta superar el verano ofreciendo sakes de temporada refrescantes y nuevas formas de beberlo, pero el resultado es una

enorme diferencia en comparación con las ventas de invierno. Del verano al otoño, las bodegas locales de sake han terminado su producción, por lo que se celebran eventos de sake en diversos lugares. Sin embargo, los eventos al aire libre se están volviendo cada vez más imposibles debido a la ola de calor, y los eventos en interiores están aumentando. Como resultado, los precios del alquiler de los locales son más altos que para los eventos al aire libre, y las cuotas de inscripción a los eventos aumentarán, lo que afectará la capacidad de atraer aficionados al sake. También es posible que aumente la parte del patrocinio por parte de las bodegas de sake, lo que podría suponer una carga para la gestión de las mismas. Si esto continúa, el evento solo contará con marcas populares y grandes fabricantes, dejando potencialmente a las pequeñas destilerías locales sin una plataforma para promocionarse. Con el aumento del teletrabajo en la actualidad, la costumbre de tomar una cerveza después del trabajo



probablemente esté desapareciendo, pero tal vez la imagen del sake no haya cambiado mucho en las últimas décadas. De hecho, pocos japoneses beben vino tinto frío. Mientras la gente insista en tomar el vino tinto a temperatura ambiente y el blanco frío, el sake podría no ser la bebida preferida en un día caluroso.

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