

JAPANESE SAKE TYPES AT A GLANCE

Increasing Quality, Price, & Complexity. More Highly Milled Rice, Lower Temperature, Longer Fermentation, Premium Sake.

SEIMAIBUAI MILLING REQUIREMENT

No Minimum Seimaibuai Milling Requirement

DAIGINJO-SHU. 大吟酒. Extension of Ginjo-shu below that is brewed using even more painstaking, labor-intensive methods. Generally light, complex, and fragrant. Small amount of pure distilled alcohol is added. Just 3.6% of market along with Ginjo-shu below.

GINJO-SHU. 吟醸酒. Labor-intensive brewing, eschewing machinery; fermented at colder temperatures for longer periods. Light & delicate flavor, often with fruity/flowery touches. Small amount of pure distilled alcohol is added. Just 3.6% of market along with Daiginjo-shu above.

HONJOZO-SHU. 本醸酒. Brewed using a very small amount of pure distilled alcohol. Lighter and often more fragrant than Junmai-shu. This category includes **Tokubetsu Honjozo**, or "Special" Honjozo, a vague definition indicating Honjozo made with special rice or more highly milled rice.

RICE MILLING REQUIREMENTS
Seimaibuai 精米歩合. The number refers to what remains after milling. A seimaibuai of 60% means that 40% of the rice kernel is milled away. There is no minimum milling requirement for Futsu-shu or Junmai-shu, but for all other types, at least 30% of the rice kernel must be milled away. Generally, the more the rice is milled, the cleaner, lighter and more delicate the flavor.

SAKE RICE
Premium sake is brewed with special rice, not normal table rice. There are perhaps a hundred types, with a dozen or so being important. Each type leads to a different flavor profile. If you remember one, let that be Yamada Nishiki, "the king of sake rice."

Pinnacle of Sake Brewer's Art

JUNMAI-DAIGINJO-SHU. 純米大吟醸酒. Subclass of Daiginjo described at left, as only rice, water and koji are used. Along with Junmai Ginjo below, accounts for just 3.3% of the market.

JUNMAI-GINJO-SHU. 純米吟醸酒. Subclass of Ginjo-shu described at left, as only rice, water and koji are used. Along with Junmai Daiginjo above, accounts for just 3.3% of the market.

JUNMAI-SHU. 純米酒. Made with nothing but rice, water and koji mold. Usually a bit fuller than other types, often with a good acidity. Includes **Tokubetsu Junmai**, or "Special" Junmai, a vague definition indicating Junmai-shu made with either special rice or more highly milled rice.

GINJO
Top four grades known collectively as "GINJO"

PREMIUM SAKE
Top six grades known collectively as "Tokutei Meishoshu" 特定名称酒, meaning "Special Designation Sake."
All six are considered **PREMIUM**.

FUTSU-SHU : 普通酒
Normal Sake or "Table Sake"

This sake category constitutes nearly 74% of the entire market. Pure, distilled alcohol is added in copious amounts to increase yields. There are no special milling requirements, and the rice used is typically of lower grades or normal table rice.

NON PREMIUM SAKE
68.2%

CHEAP SAKE

Original seimaibuai milling requirement was 70%, but now it can be anything as long as number is listed.

Pure, distilled alcohol is added in copious amounts to cheap sake to increase yields. However, in the brewing of premium sake, it is used in very small amounts to enhance the fragrance and flavor.

The differences among the premium grades can be subtle -- e.g., Junmai Daiginjo & Junmai Ginjo are "not" unequivocally superior to their non-junmai counterparts, Daiginjo & Ginjo.

Nigori-zake (にごり酒) is cloudy sake, and is made by allowing some of the rice lees through into the final product. Nigori can be any one of the categories listed herein.

Nama-zake (生酒) is un-pasteurized sake, and while it can taste fresher, it must be kept refrigerated and is hard to care for and transport. Nama-zake, of which very little is made, is "not" unequivocally better than its pasteurized counterpart.

Sake is generally not aged, although there are exceptions, especially lately. Less important terms related to sake have been omitted for simplicity.

If you remember one word from this chart, let it be **"GINJO"**

酒 Pronounced Sake or Shu

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■ Color Code = Brewed using only rice, water, and koji mold. All other categories are brewed using some distilled alcohol.