

SAKE... WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

if you are travelling in JAPAN

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**SAKE IS PERHAPS A
DRINK THAT NO ONE
CAN UNDERSTAND
WHAT IT IS;**

that is except for the Japanese
themselves.

**TURKS CALL IT
RICE RAKI, IT IS
CALLED RICE WINE
IN EUROPE, WHILE
IN AMERICA MORE
STRANGELY, THE
NAME OF THE SAKE
IS RICE BEER.**

However, sake is only sake period because it is a beverage other than any of the above, both as a material and due to its production technique. Its name is Nihonshu in Japan. While Turkey is 1/3 the size of Japan, there are close to 2,500 different sake on the island which could only be an indication of not only its importance but how much of this drink is drunk. The biggest feature that reveals the difference of Sake is water and rice, but in my opinion, the beauty of the water used in sake is one step ahead of rice. Its construction is very different; first, you need a japanese rice with which you can make sake. The difference of this rice from the table race is the lower amount of protein in it.

BASICALLY, THERE ARE 9 DIFFERENT RICE TYPES, EACH FROM DIFFERENT REGIONS, USED IN MAKING SAKE;

Omdai, Tamazakae, Defa San, Oseto, Gohyakumangoku, Kame no O, Hatta Nishiki, Miyama Nishiki, and the king of not only nishiki, but of all the sake rice, the pride of Fukuoka and Hyogo regions; Yamada-Nishiki.

The rice is separated from the shells by washing it abundantly. The rate of starch decreases from the inner layers of the rice both in quality and quantity. This part is very important because the deeper you go, the better your chances of making a quality sake. Washed and yeasted rice is kneaded and rested by adding Koji, which is abundant in miso and soy sauce, produced by fermenting soybeans.

Thus, with the help of starch, yeast and Koji, it turns into sugar and alcohol, and then sake with an alcohol level between 12% and 20% is produced. This exceptional drink, which can be drunk cold in the summer, hot (atsukan) or cold in the winter, is consumed without waiting for a long time because it loses its fragrances.

Sake can be drunk anytime, anywhere, but it is better to consume it with small appetizers like Turkish raki. I can say that it suits Sashimi very well, but my only drawback here is using too much soy sauce. Excess soy sauce can suppress the sake flavor as excess salt can close our palette even at the beginning of the evening. If you do not eat alone, you will not pour your sake yourself, but if your companion pours sake in your glass, it is fine to touch the edge of your glass with one finger.



The Japanese are devoted to their customs and they see and expect you to try and understand their culture as a necessity of respect. If we want to give an example; let's say we are in Japan, we had a business meeting, and it ended. We were invited to dinner in the evening. We have the general manager, assistant and product manager responsible for us at the Japanese company.

First of all, the product manager makes the reservation, runs in front of you and enters the restaurant and arranges your place. If you are a guest, if the table is available, all three will sit in front of you, but the boss sits directly across you.

The first action is called 'Toriezu Biru', which can mean "beer" or "now beer time", and beers are ordered. If a draft beer is ordered, everybody says "kampai" (cheers) and the glasses are clinked. An important point here is that those who are hierarchically below should hold their glasses below you in this clinking. I try to keep it down no matter who is in front of me; I have not seen any harm so far.

LET'S NOT GET INTO WHAT WE EAT, OTHERWISE WE CAN NOT GET OUT.

If the incoming beer is a bottle (which can be a liter bottle), small glasses will be placed next to it.

At this stage, the first glass is offered to you by the boss.

Do not forget to hold the edge of your glass, then take the bottle and serve it to him (if you can find an opportunity from the product manager).

After the beers are over, sake will probably start. The system is the same here. The sake comes in small bottles or ceramic pots called "tokkuri", with small cute pots called "choko". The ritual meal continues in this way until the end.

Every city has a sake, but the shores of the Japanese Sea between Japan and Asia are more desirable. We only served Hakkaisan in our own Japanese restaurant for years.

Hakkaisan, along with Kubota, is the famous sake of the Niigata region. In Japan, there is nothing as enjoyable as going to nomiya (a traditional Japanese bar serving mainly sake), and to drink sakes from north to south, east to west accompanied by small appetizers.

I definitely try to end these holy evenings with a sake from the Wakayama region.

I'll say Rashamon or Kurumazaka if I can find one.

KAMPAI

Photocredit: Jam Hostel Sake Bar Kyoto

