



FUKUOKA SAKE MAP
70 BREWERIES (IN ENGLISH!)
fukuoka-now.com/sake-guide

Sake in Fukuoka —福岡の酒事情—

福岡は焼酎大国と思いきや、蔵元数70、酒米の王様「山田錦」生産量は全国2位、大規模な杜氏集団が活躍する国内有数の酒処でもある。

RECOMMENDED SAKE SHOP

This month's cover was shot in front of "Sumiyoshi Syuhan." This shop has a fine selection of *shochu*, *sake* and wine at reasonable prices as well as very friendly service. 3-8-27 Sumiyoshi, Hakata-ku. Tel: 092-281-3815.

While in Japan *sake* (酒) refers to alcohol in general, to the outside world it means just one thing, the usually clear, fairly strong 'rice wine' that is served at your local Japanese restaurant back home. The drink being referred to is actually *nihonshu* (日本酒 lit. Japanese sake) an alcohol that has been produced in Japan since the Nara period.

Sake production was introduced to Kyushu in the 16th century, and led to the creation of *sake's* rival alcohol *shochu* (焼酎) a drink primarily based on the distillation of barley and other crops instead of rice. This piece of history means that Kyushu's reputation as a



producing region is based more on its *shochu* than its *sake* and yet, in Fukuoka Prefecture alone, there are over 70 breweries producing more than 1,000 varieties of high-quality *sake* each year.

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LOCAL BREWERIES

Fukuoka Prefecture has many *sake* breweries and a few of them are open to the general public to tour. Fukuoka Now recently visited two of these producers, Shinozaki and Morinokura:

Shinozaki is a large family-owned brewery located in Asakura City and produces 1.3 million litres of *sake*, *shochu* and *amazake* a year. It has a shop that sells a wide variety of alcohols brewed in house, as well as other souvenirs.

Also family owned, the **Morinokura brewery** has been making *sake* just outside of Kurume City since 1898 and has won many consecutive gold medals at the Annual Japan Sake Awards.

At both breweries we were able to sample *sake* and *shochu* as we toured the factory in dashing hairnets. We were given complete



access to the factories with the exception of the *koji* (fermentation) rooms which are kept under controlled conditions at all times. The tours were incredibly informative and can only be likened to entering Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory.

THE FUTURE FOR FUKUOKA'S SAKE

The future for Fukuoka's *sake* is promising. At a tasting event organised by local government agencies, a group of brewers was joined by two international *sake* experts, Stephen King (True Sake, San Francisco) and Carlin Kumada (Meishi No Yutaka, Hokkaido), who discussed strategies for the promotion of Fukuoka's *sake* internationally. This is part of a larger trend which has seen high-quality *sake* become increasingly available abroad, with dedicated *sake* shops being set up across the world. While it is likely to be more expensive than buying it in Fukuoka, *sake's* growing global presence means tasting, trying and becoming an expert does not need to be a pleasure confined to Japan. And if you're yet to cut your teeth on Japanese *sake*, Fukuoka is the perfect place to do so. With so many breweries and so many varieties to try, you're bound to find one-that you like!

Main Classifications of Sake

Futsushu (普通酒) or ordinary *sake* is the most prevalent *sake* on the market and comprises some 75-80% of all *sake* sold in Japan. It does not meet minimum rice polishing standards and is the type you'll find in 1.8l cartons in Japanese convenience stores for around ¥700.

Junmaishu (純米酒) is *sake* made up of water, *koji* mould, yeast and rice that has been polished so that at least 30% of the bran has been removed. This is the minimum standard of polishing for high-quality *sake*.

Honjozo (本醸造) is similar to *junmaishu* and is made up of rice (30% bran removed), water, *koji* mould and yeast. It differs in the addition of a small amount of distilled alcohol.

Ginjoshu (吟醸酒) is *sake* that is made up of rice, water, *koji* mould, yeast and a small amount of distilled alcohol. The rice is polished so that 40% of each grain is removed.

Junmai Ginjo (純米吟醸) is *sake* that is made up of water, *koji* mould and yeast. The rice is polished so that at least 40% of the grain is removed. Similar to *ginjoshu*, but with no extra alcohol added.

Daiginjo (大吟醸酒): *Sake* that is made up of rice, water, *koji* mould, yeast and a small amount of distilled alcohol. The rice is polished so that 50% of the grain is removed.

Junmai Daiginjo (純米大吟醸) is *sake* that is made up of water, *koji* mould, yeast and rice polished so that 50% of each grain is removed. Similar to *daiginjo*, but with no extra alcohol added.

WHET YOUR APPETITE?

We've got much more information online – including details and a map of 70 *sake* breweries and *shochu* distilleries in Fukuoka Prefecture.

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