

In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 1

Katsuyama Sake Brewery

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- Separation method: centrifugal ● Alcohol content: 16%
- Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage): 35%
- Rice type: Yamada-nishiki (Hyogo Triple AAA)
- Volume: 720ml ● Price: 10,500 yen



Junmai Daiginjo Pure Undiluted Sake **Katsuyama Akatsuki**

Text/ Kaori Haishi (sake sommelier) Photography/ Susumu Nagao



Scintillating Fine Sake

“Hurricane of the sake industry” is the nickname for Jihei Isawa, the man who brought this sake to the world. While sake breweries were closing their doors one after another, unable to withstand the unprecedented business slump, Katsuyama Brewery not only weathered the adverse conditions, it turned them around.

Bringing this Junmai Daiginjo into the world took a very long time. In 2008 the brewery embarked on a course of whittling their original thirty-five products down to four, then thoroughly improving the quality of each. They also introduced a centrifugal separator and ran countless trials, finally producing junmai sake with a high grade of purity the following year.

Junmai is the classification for sake made

from rice milled down to at least 70% of its original size and made with only rice, water, yeast and the Koji mold. It has no additives. Junmai Daiginjo is almost identical, but the rice is milled down to at least 50 % of its original size.

With a tremble of excitement, I poured the sake. Without even bringing my nose to the glass, I could detect a sweet fragrance reminiscent of ripe melon rising from the side where I had poured. The color looked to be somewhat golden and shiny, with just the right viscosity. A sigh slipped out when I took a sip and my mouth filled with a softness that seemed to wrap my tongue in velvet.

The taste was excellent. Like a well-rehearsed routine, the first sweetness is followed by a dryness that leads into an elegant acidity to bring down the curtain. It's

hard to find words adequate enough to pay tribute to the complete drama that instantly unfolds in the mouth.

While this sake is more than sufficiently delicious at room temperature, when drunk slightly chilled the taste becomes even more clearly defined. It would go well with white fish and chicken dishes. High quality olive oil is also a good match, and I particularly recommend it with marinades, or oil-based pasta sauces. It might also go rather well with cheese or fruit.

It is something you would want to set aside a special time to enjoy, just for itself. Share it with someone special—a person you really care about—and as you sip it together, ever so slowly, try to sense the feelings of the people who made the sake.