

In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 3

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- Alcohol content: 15% ● Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage) 50%
- Nihonshu-do (Sake Meter Value + dry, -sweet) +2 ● Amino acidity:1.1
- Acidity:1.3 ● Rice: Yamada-nishiki (Kuchiyokawa Hyogo A-A)
- Volume: 720ml ● Price: 3,150 yen (tax inclusive)



Manzairaku Hakusan Junmai Daiginjo

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



A Sake that Combines Flowers with Strength

The first thing that came to mind when I tasted this sake was the legendary Empress Jingu, who is venerated at the Hachimangu Shrine. She was an endlessly courageous woman who crossed the sea while pregnant to attack the country of Shiragi (an ancient Korean kingdom). This sake is showy, but unites that with a dignified strength. Maybe that was the quality that evoked the awe-inspiring image of this legendary holy mother.

I'm sure many people imagine a sake with a flashy aroma when they think of Junmai daiginjo, but this is really very refined. The sweet-sour aroma reminiscent of berry fruits is light and gentle. It displays its individuality but is not overbearing—this consummate balance is perfection itself.

Another interesting aspect of this sake is its rich expression. Just when you think it's slipped down the throat like water, a slight viscosity—that makes you wonder if it was a mature sake—enfolds the tongue, then withdraws in an instant. A slightly sharp lingering acid aftertaste primes the tongue so that before you know it, your glass is empty. The more you drink the more deeply attractive it becomes. This unique flavor is due to a collaboration of the finest quality Yamada-nishiki rice and Manzairaku's original NK7 yeast. In any case, it's a hard sake to forget.

Drink it at 15 to 18 degrees. The smoothness is not impaired and you can enjoy the changes in its expression from one moment to the next. If you drink it at a higher temperature I recommend a Bordeaux glass for the aroma to expand in.

Tart foods go with the moderate flavor

and acidity of this sake. Something like canned tuna, cucumber and myoga ginger mixed with a ponzu (citrus and soy sauce) dressing or fried horse mackerel in a vinegar and shallot marinade would be good. For something unusual try cheese sandwiched between thinly sliced vegetables pickled in sake lees (sediment). Contrary to what you might expect from this strange combination, the cheese flavor and salty-sweetness matches this sake surprisingly well. You never know unless you try—experimenting will broaden horizons for you in the world of food and sake.

It's an ideal sake to have with a meal, but it would be a small luxury just to drink it by itself, and slowly enjoy its constantly changing expressions. This is the best love the holy mother gives us.