

In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 5

Aoki Brewery

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- Alcohol content: 17~18% ● Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage) 50%
- Nihonshu-do (Sake Meter Value + dry, -sweet) +2.0
- Amino acidity: 0.8 ● Acidity: 1.5
- Rice: Gohyakumangoku (with koji and kake-mai)
- Volume: 720ml ● Price: 1,575 yen (tax inclusive)



Junmai Ginjo Kakurei Gohyakumangoku

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



The Sake that Completely Changed My Image of Echigo Sake

I still can't forget the shock of my first encounter with Kakurei. Niigata sake is predominantly a crisp, dry, light style of sake that flows like water over the palate. But Kakurei was different.

Instead of flowing like water, a rice-rich umami flavor superbly blended with a refined acidity left an intense impression on the palate. Ever since then Kakurei has become a familiar face and regular sight at the table in our house.

The Junmai Ginjo Kakurei Gohyakumangoku is one of my favorites in the line-up of Kakurei sakes. It has a refined acidity that is lovelier than anything, reminiscent of Muscat of Alexandria, the queen of grapes. This forms the core of its taste, with rice,

sweetness and umami shoring up the sides. The extremely gentle aroma would never interfere with the flavor of food. In short, this is a sake with a beautiful and dignified expression. You can sense in it the robustness of a woman from the bitterly cold snow country region.

It has a long reach that goes with any food, but I would suggest trying oysters and roe. The faint sweetness of Kakurei surrounds the distinctive pungency of these, while its sourness resets the palate. Chablis is often said to be a good accompaniment to raw oysters, but once you've tried this pairing there is no going back. I can also strongly recommend this combination from the viewpoint of becoming familiar with the latent potential of Kakurei. If you're eating fish roe, then Niigata Kashimaya salmon roe steeped in soy sauce is

another good match. With seasoning that's slightly on the strong side, it cries out for a chaser. Eat the salmon roe straight, or put just a tad on scallop sashimi to add sweetness to a consummate balance of flavors. Then luxuriate in the sumptuous spread of flavors across the palate.

Kakurei completely changed the image I had of Echigo sake. I'm sure it will continue to go out into the world as a steadfast sake for the times, and not betray the expectations of sake lovers. Numerous fans wait eagerly for Takafumi Aoki, president of Aoki Brewery, to stir up a revolution in the sake world. Takamori Saigo, the historical Meiji restoration figure the president takes after, also began a revolution, and was known as the last true samurai.