

In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 7

Asahi Brewery

Osagoe 2167-4, Shuto-cho, Iwakuni-shi, Yamaguchi
Telephone: 0827-86-0120
<http://www.asahishuzo.ne.jp/index.php>

- Alcohol content: 16% ● Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage): 23%
- Amino acidity: Not public
- Nihonshu-do (Sake Meter Value + dry, -sweet): Not public
- Acidity: Not public ● Rice: Yamada-nishiki
- Volume: 720ml ● Price: 5,150 yen (tax inclusive)



Dassai Junmai Daiginjo Migaki Ni-Wari San-Bu

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



Taking Time to Brew a Sake for True Appreciation

Shocking. Perhaps an incongruous word to describe an elegant taste, but that was my initial impression when I took my first sip of this sake. At the time I was paying a visit to Asahi Shuzo, a small brewery nestled against the side of a slope amongst the mountains. From the master brewer down, the workers there were all young, and the place was filled with a good energy. After looking through the brewery I went to the tasting room where I was served a taster not from a bull's-eye patterned sake cup—as you might expect—but from a well polished wineglass. That's right, it was here that I became initiated into the art of enjoying sake from a wineglass. The flavor of Yamada-nishiki rice, brewed down over an immensely long 144 hours until it becomes bead-like, is

saturated with an extraordinary clarity. The instant the bottle was opened a sweet aroma redolent of tropical fruits rose up, and at that moment my heart filled with anticipation. Immediately the sake covered my tongue with a sweet-tartness that would melt ice, spread throughout my mouth, and then the dryness slowly showed its face. Many, I am sure, would be left speechless by the beautiful harmony of these three flavors of sweet, sour and dry. Some people claim that sake brewed from a highly refined rice has no flavor, but this is not so. The sharp sweetness after it has slipped down the throat, and the umami, are the flavors of rice itself. It would be fair to say that this sake has brought out a new appeal from the rice, one which has not been on display before. Just as women are transformed by make-up, so too is rice transformed in many ways depending on how it is

polished and brewed—as this sake proved.

For a star like this, fugu is my choice of accompaniment. The sake draws out the delectable taste of this white fish without destroying the delicate and simple flavor. Dishes incorporating fruit would also be a good match for the fruity aroma; chicken wings simmered in marmalade, apple and sweet potato salad, or marinated octopus and kiwi fruit. Basically it goes well with simple recipes that bring out the flavors of the ingredients.

One last thing: Dassai is not a sake that should be gulped down. Drink it slowly, and appreciate it just as the people who took so much time and trouble to make it did. In these days when everyone is looking for a slower life, it's a sake for our times.