

In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 8

Fujioka Brewery

Address: Ima-machi 672-1, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto, Kyoto-fu
Telephone: 075-611-4666
<http://www.sookuu.net/index.html>

- Alcohol content: 17% ● Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage): 50%
- Amino acidity: 1.2
- Nihonshu-do (Sake Meter Value + dry, -sweet): +2
- Acidity: 1.4 ● Rice: Aiyama
- Volume: 500ml ● Price: 3,000 yen (tax inclusive)



Soku Junmai Daiginjo Aiyama

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



A Taste of the Clear Blue Sky

My first encounter with this sake was at Ryosen, a Kyoto izakaya which, unusually for a Kyoto pub, serves sake in wineglasses. When I ordered "a local sake," they served me Soku. The bottle design was love at first sight, and after tasting the sake I was taken even more. When I'm head over heels with a sake, I simply have to see the face of the brewery that produces it. I wasted no time in setting off for Fushimi.

A sudden death forced the Fujioka Shuzo brewery into closing its doors in the past, but fifth generation Masaaki Fujioka's passion for brewing sake never waned, and after being trained at another brewery he was able to revive the business. This is why it is known as

the "resurrected brewery."

I chose Soku Junmai Daiginjo Aiyama from the wide selection offered. It had a youthful green tinge that was cool to the eyes, and a lovely, refreshing aroma. At first it slipped down my throat like water, but then came a strong sensation of fullness and a perfect feeling of satisfaction. With a flavor that combines the delicacy and robustness of rice, I imagine this sake is one that appeals to the very DNA of the Japanese people. The curtain call is a grapefruit-like acidity. Fine brewing that makes maximum use of the world-renowned water in this region manifests itself in the quality of this sake.

Don't overchill it when drinking; the umami of the rice can be best enjoyed at about 10 degrees. I recommend fresh

yuba (soy-milk skin) sashimi as an accompaniment. Instead of using soy sauce as the dipping sauce, try a sake infusion. Dip the yuba into a mixture of katsuobushi (dried bonito) and umeboshi (pickled plums) simmered in sake to heighten both the delicate taste of fresh yuba and the flavor of the sake. If it's fish you want try a simple salt-grilled gindara (sablefish) or kamasu (barracuda). It also goes well with dishes featuring deep-fried soba or mukago (yam bulbs) as ingredients.

Five hundred milliliters is an unusual size for a sake bottle, but one that is just right for two people to share along with a nice meal. Afterwards you'll feel as happy as on a clear blue day without a cloud in the sky.