

In Praise of Fine Sake

Vol. 13

Sakai Brewery

Address: Nakazu-cho 1-1-31, Iwakuni-shi, Yamaguchi
Telephone: 0827-21-2177
<http://www.gokyo-sake.co.jp/>

- Alcohol content: 16-17%
- Seimaibuai (rice milling percentage): 40%
- Rice: 75% Saito-no Shizuku, 25% Yamada-nishiki
- Volume: 720ml
- Price: 3,255 yen (tax inclusive)



Gokyo Daiginjo Saito no Shizuku

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



An Elegant Taste To Intoxicate Even Angels

The city of Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture is not only where Sakai Brewery is located, but is also home to one of the three most famous bridges in Japan, the Kintai Bridge. The brewery's main brand, Gokyo, is named after this bridge and its five arches that span the river. It is a fine sake that sake drinkers find unforgettable because thanks both to the name and the flavor.

Gokyo Daiginjo Saito no Shizuku is made from Saito no Shizuku, a brewer's rice from Yamaguchi prefecture. The instant I opened the lid, a flowery aroma typical of daiginjo—suggestive of ripe princess melon and Hawaiian jasmine—wafted gracefully up. I could have become intoxicated from this indescribably elegant aroma alone.

Tilting my glass, the drops ran down the sides. In wine terminology this is known as “tears of wine”, and it told me that this sake had a slight viscosity. The taste was smooth and extremely pleasant, and seemed to encase the palate. A trinity of sweetness, dryness and acidity slowly made its way to the center of the palate. Finally, a lingering fresh acidity similar to orange beckoned to the finish.

Mention daiginjo and many people would think of the sweetish sake with a strong aroma that used to dominate once upon a time, but Gokyo Daiginjo Saito no Shizuku is a clear departure from that. It also has a good taste of rice umami, and you could drink it as much as you liked throughout a meal without tiring of it. It's a sake with a broad appeal that suits many tastes.

The right food to accompany this would be a simple dish that highlights the flavor of the ingredients. Something like the sweetness of seafood sashimi, such as shrimp or scallops, would be an especially good match. I recommend natural salt, not soy sauce, as a condiment. It brings out the inherent sweetness in the food, allowing the sake to be enjoyed without harming its delicate flavor. Fruits such as pineapple and mango would also be a good combination. Lightly sprinkle some natural salt on it just before eating and the glasses will empty even faster. When the heat builds up in the months to come, let your thoughts wander to the Kintai Bridge pictured on the label as you savor the crisp, chilled flavor of this sake.