



### Plum wine of Ohyama-machi Hita City, Oita Prefecture Yumehibiki, a Premium Plum Wine From Oyama-machi, Where Plums are Prized

Photos (Left page)/Text: Yuko Iida Photos (Right page): Satoru Naito

Made with Oshuku plums patiently nurtured by contract farmers, this plum wine is slowly matured in white oak barrels.

Oyama-machi is a small town nestled among forested mountains in the city of Hita, in Oita Prefecture. This hilly region, with almost no flat land, is naturally poorly suited to rice production. This is why, since around 1960, the entire town has worked hard to promote the cultivation of plum and chestnut trees. With the government mainly concerned with promoting rice production, the town came up with a clever slogan for their efforts—"Plant plums and chestnuts and let's all go to Hawaii!"—which proved successful. Farm income grew, and today Oyama-machi is known for having the highest ratio of passport holders in all of Japan. This initiative set the precedent for the "one town, one product" movement that was to follow.

Since that time, Oyama-machi has continued to focus on producing fine quality plums. While this work has included upgraded technology, the town also developed a unique composting material utilizing the rich resources available from the

surrounding forests. With healthy earth to grow in, the plum trees send out strong branches and roots, warding off disease and pests. This is also why levels of pesticide use have naturally fallen off over time.

Today, the plum trees which the townspeople have labored over with such care number nearly 12,000. Each year, nine plum varieties come into riotous bloom, beginning with the Nankou variety in March, followed by the Nanaore, the Shirakaga, the Oshuku and others. Finally between late May and July, the trees become laden with green fruit. This is when farm families are busiest, harvesting the plums, drying and pickling them and processing them into plum jam.

#### Use of the Finest Plums Brings Acclaim at Competition Overseas

This is how plums from Oyama-machi have come to be known as "Green Diamonds," and Yumehibiki is made with one of those varieties, the Oshuku plum. Premium Yumehibiki is produced by transferring plum wine that has been aged for three years to used white oak whiskey barrels, where it is allowed to ripen further. The lingering aroma of malt enhances the sweet-tart flavor of the plums, while the refreshing pungency of the white oak imparts an elegant, rich finish. The result is a subtle, flavorful plum wine that might even be called

sensual.

Even the name of the Oshuku plum has romantic origins. During the mid-Heian Period, the plum tree on the grounds of the Seiryō-den (the Emperor's palace in Kyoto) had died, and it was decided that a tree would be moved from the gardens of Ki no Naishi, daughter of the famous poet and courtier Ki no Tsurayuki. On a branch of that tree she tied a waka, or poem, which read "Although this plum tree is being moved at the request of His Imperial Majesty, I wonder where the bush warbler that kept its nest in this tree each year will keep its nest now?" Upon reading this poem, the Emperor is said to have returned the plum tree. Oshuku is written with the characters for "bush warbler" and "shelter."

When the plum trees are in full flower, the bush warbler can be seen hopping from branch to branch among the blossoms, its beautiful song echoing among the hills as it stops to rest. Produced among such tranquil scenery, diligently nurtured by the farmers of Oyama-machi, these plums become Yumehibiki, a premium-quality plum wine.



Shiny green plums are the product of lovingly nurtured trees.

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### PLUM WINE YUMEHIBIKI



#### Yumehibiki Barrel-Finished Premium Plum Wine

Contents: 500ml  
Alcohol: 20%  
Price: 3,333 yen (excl. tax) (With wrapping cloth)  
Ingredients: Oshuku plums from Oyama, brewed alcohol, syrup