WEDNESDAY LESSONS #27: YAMAHAI

2/7/2024



SAKE 1

MASUMI “Sleeping Beauty”
Junmai Ginjo Hiyaoroshi
Bottle (720ml): $35

Nagano, Japan
Rice: Miyamanishiki, Yamadanishiki
Polishing: 55%
Yeast: #7 (proprietary version)
Acidity 1.9
Starter: yamahai, ABV 15%

Miyasaka Shuzo, makers of the famous Masumi brand, is famous for being the birthplace of Kyokai Kobo #7 in 1947: a breed of yeast that changed sake forever. About 3 years ago Masumi committed entirely to yeast #7 (their own strains), reformulating all of their recipes to be made with #7. This hiyaoroshi, Aka (not in the US) as well as the junmai daiginjo “nanago” are made with yamahai method to increase the depth and enhance the mouthfeel of their very distinct products, which carry a light sweetness and rich depth suited to the local cuisine. Nagano, and Suwa in particular, is famous for miso, soba, vegetables, pickled nozawana and eel, which used to travel upriver from the ocean to Lake Suwa. This isn’t sashimi country, so the sake reflects that: being suited to richer, saltier mountain cuisine, rather than the light and fresh cuisine of the seaside.



SAKE 2

TEDORIGAWA “Silver Mtn”
Junmai
Bottle (720ml): $34

Ishikawa, Japan
Rice: YN, Gohyakumangoku
Polishing: 60%
Yeast: Proprietary (#14 related)
SMV: +4, acidity 1.5
Starter: yamahai, ABV: 16%

This is a connoisseur’s junmai sake, dry, sharp and smooth all in one. Its mild astringency, characteristic of sakes made using the old yamahai method, is balanced by a faintly discernible sweetness. In recent years popular taste in Japan has moved away from the “light and dry” Tanrei Karakuchi style towards more full-flavored sakes. At the center of this movement have been the bold, assertive sake of the Hokuriku region, made in the Noto Toji style. Within this tradition, Tedorigawa stands apart for its elegance and finesse. The brewery uses a proprietary strain of Kanazawa Yeast (#14), which has a mild aroma profile with low acidity, as well as a suite of unique techniques and protocols to produce sake that have richness and complexity, yet are perfectly smooth, balanced and very clean.



SAKE 3

TEDORIGAWA “U”
Junmai Yamahai
Bottle (720ml): $39

Ishikawa, Japan
Rice: Ishikawamon
Polishing: 60%
Yeast: Propietary (#14 related)
SMV: -6, acidity 1.6
Starter: yamahai, ABV: 13%

Yoshidagura (Yoshida = family name, gura = brewery) is a new brand from the brewery famous for its classic Tedorigawa brand. Yoshidagura encopasses Yasu and his team’s more innovative, forward-thinking styles. Tedorigawa is the classics, Yoshidagura is the new. This sake is named “U”-- a reference to kindness, affection, *yasashii* 優しい as well as “you.” Yoshidagura is where Yasu explores new styles and flavors, but more importantly, endeavor to address the issues facing the sake industry: declining consumer interest, energy consumption (cold storage, production), and lack of regional identity. “U,” with its strong regional identity, more natural- but also modern- techniques, and fresh and low alcohol style, considers these issues thoughtfully.



SAKE 4

KOKKEN
Junmai 3Y
Bottle (720ml): $41

Fukushima, Japan
Rice: Yume no Kaori, Yamadanishiki
Polishing: 60%
Yeast: Utskushima yume kobo
SMV: +3, acidity 1.7
Starter: yamahai, ABV 15%

Award-winning Kokken Sake Brewery was established in 1870 and is surrounded by virgin Beech forests and meadows in the lush and snowy Southern Minami Aizu region of Fukushima (Japan’s 3rd largest prefecture, home to a wide range of lakes, forests and mountains, giving them very large and diverse terroir for sake brewing). Utilizing the teachings of the Nanbu Brewmasters’ Guild and their own local touch, they produce exclusively Tokutei Meisho-shu (Premium Grade Sake like Junmai, Daiginjo, etc.) and only use sake-specific rice varietals, specializing in local Fukushima strains. Kokken produces many different sake (especially Junmai), but their brews are well-loved by locals and at least 60% of their sake is consumed in Fukushima.



SAKE 5

SHINOMINE “666”
Junmai Omachi MNG
Bottle (720ml): $34

Nara, Japan
Rice: Omachi (Akaiwa)
Polishing: 66%
Yeast: #6
SMV: +6, acidity 2.6
Starter: yamahai, ABV: 17%

Master brewer Tetsuya Sakai favours the time-tested sake rice varietals. “New breeds are made for easy farming, not great brewing,” he says. The heirloom Omachi, identified in 1859, is as old and classic as it gets. 666 is brewed using yamahai method, 66% polish rice and yeast #6. Sakai-san intended this sake to be carried through by a fresh acidity, designed to age.

SAKE 6- BONUS

TAMAGAWA “Cuvee Sauvage”
Junmai Yamahai MG 2017
NFS (Suitcase)

Kyoto, Japan
Rice: Kitanishiki (Hyogo)
Polishing: 66%, yeast: ambient
Starter: yamahai, ABV: 15.5%

To make this, we take the 21% genshu, dilute, pasteurize and then age for three years and up at room temperature. This aging period brings softness, rich umami and deep colour. The namagenshu version is stocked at Sunflower for home aging.

SUNFLOWER SAKE

Sunflower Sake is a retail shop, tasting room, and educational center in Portland, Oregon, focusing on craft sake from around the world. Sunflower ships year-round and offers affordable, biweekly Wednesday sake classes. Thank you so much for joining us tonight!

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